

Acts 26:1–32 — A Clear Witness in a Corrupt Court

Paul is standing in Caesarea before Herod Agrippa the Second. Festus, the new Roman governor, is in a bind: Paul has appealed to Caesar, but there are no legitimate charges to send with him. So this hearing is not really about justice. It is an attempt to craft paperwork that will protect Festus' reputation.

Yet God is doing something far greater. Paul is being given another public platform to testify that Jesus Christ is alive.

Paul's Strategy: Respectful, Direct, and Scripture-Based

Agrippa grants Paul permission to speak, and Paul stretches out his hand and begins his defense. He treats Agrippa with respect—not flattery, not fear—because he knows Agrippa understands Jewish customs and the Scriptures.

Paul starts with his past: everyone knew he had been a Pharisee, trained in the strictest tradition. Then he states the heart of the issue:

“I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.”

He is not preaching a new religion. He is saying the promises given to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus.

And then Paul presses the question that cuts through all the political fog:

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”

If God is God—Creator, Sustainer, Judge—then resurrection is not a contradiction. It is exactly the kind of act God is able to do.

Paul's Testimony: From Persecutor to Preacher

Paul does not minimize his former life. He confesses he opposed the name of Jesus, imprisoned believers, and consented to their deaths. He even admits he tried to force some to blaspheme.

Then he tells what changed everything: on the road to Damascus he saw a light brighter than the sun and heard Jesus speak:

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”

Paul had been resisting God's conviction. The Lord was not merely correcting him—He was confronting him with grace and truth.

Jesus then gives Paul his commission: to be sent to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to turn people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so they may receive forgiveness and an inheritance among those set apart by faith in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Paul Preached

Paul summarizes his message with plain clarity:

“That they should repent and turn to God, and do works indicating repentance.”

Repentance is not mere regret. It is a real turning—a change of direction that shows up in how a person lives. Paul is not teaching salvation by works. He is saying true turning to God produces fruit that matches the turning.

He also insists he has not invented anything:

“I have said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.”

Then he gives the core: the Messiah would suffer, rise from the dead, and bring light to Jews and Gentiles. That is the gospel in summary form—cross and resurrection, promised beforehand, now fulfilled.

Festus Interrupts, Agrippa Is Cornered

Festus bursts out:

“Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.”

Paul answers calmly:

“I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

Then Paul turns to Agrippa and presses him with a direct appeal:

“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.”

Agrippa responds with the famous line:

“Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian.”

However you take Agrippa’s tone, the tragedy is the same: he is close enough to feel the force of the truth, but not willing to yield.

Paul replies with the heart of an evangelist:

“I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

Paul wants them to have Christ—without the chains.

The Verdict That Proves the Point

The officials withdraw and agree:

Paul has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment.

Agrippa tells Festus:

Paul could have been released—if he had not appealed to Caesar.

But God had already set Paul’s direction. Rome was not an accident. It was providence.

Practical Application

1. God advances His purpose even through broken systems

This hearing is driven by politics, image-management, and power. Yet God turns it into a pulpit. When you feel stuck under unfair people or flawed systems, remember: the Lord is not trapped by what traps you.

2. A clean conscience strengthens a bold witness

Paul can speak plainly because he is not hiding. Integrity gives courage. Ask yourself: what needs to change in private so your public testimony carries weight?

3. Repentance must be real, not theatrical

Feeling bad is not the same as turning. If you keep returning to the same sin while calling it repentance, you are confusing emotion with surrender. God calls us to turn—and to walk in newness of life.

A Challenge for Believers

Do not settle for being “almost” obedient.

Paul says, “I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.” That is a good question for every believer: where have you heard the Lord clearly, but delayed actual obedience? Step into what you already know God has shown you—one faithful step at a time.

Invitation to Non-Believers

Agrippa’s words still haunt the room: “Almost.”

Almost convinced.

Almost ready.

Almost persuaded.

But “almost” still leaves you outside the kingdom.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. The resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He is not merely a teacher from the past—He is the risen King who calls you now.

Turn to Him today. Confess your sin honestly. Ask God to forgive you because of what Jesus did at the cross. Entrust your life to the risen Lord Jesus Christ—not as an idea, but as your Savior and your King.

Do not live on the edge of surrender. Come all the way in.