

Having started Paul's defense before Agrippa last week (vv1-18), we come this to Paul's conclusion of his defense (vv19-23), and his subsequent interaction with his hearers (vv24-32).

- I. The Conclusion of His Defense (vv19-23)
- II. The Interaction with His Hearers (vv24-32)
- III. Observations

I. The Conclusion of His Defense (vv19-23)

1. Having mentioned his conversion (vv14-16) and commission (vv17-18), Paul now describes his response to that commission.
2. (1) A summary of his ministry (vv19-21)v19—"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance."
3. Here Paul first describes where and what he preached in fulfillment to being sent as an apostle by Christ.
4. (a) Where he preached—"I declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles."
5. As he was in rout to Damascus when he was converted, he first began to preach the truth in Damascus.
6. And then, if you remember, after the Jews plotted to kill him in Damascus, he was taken to Jerusalem.
7. And then, after three years of training in the desert of Arabia (Gal.1:17-18), he was sent out as a missionary from the church in Antioch.
8. And thus began Paul's missionary journeys throughout the Gentile nations which lasted the next 20 years.
9. (b) What he preached—"I declared...that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance (he preached to Jew and Gentile that they should repent and believe, and then prove their repentance by their changes lives)."
10. This is what our Savior sent him to do (v18)—"to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God."
11. Thus to repent is "to turn from darkness and the power of Satan" which is evidenced in a life of contrition.
12. (2) A summary of his message (vv22-23)—here Paul underscores that he preached nothing more than the teaching of the OT.
13. V22—"Therefore, having obtained help from God to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come."
14. By "small and great" is meant regular people with no influence, and people with great authority and influence.

15. Paul bore witness to the truth before regular people, religious people, and Jews and Gentiles in authority.
16. He said nothing to these people but what the "prophets and Moses said would come"—that is, Christ and His salvation.
17. V23—"That the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."
18. Notice Paul summarizes his message, a message derived from the OT, as having three main (primary) themes.
19. (a) That Christ would suffer—this is the substance of the very first prophecy recorded in holy Scripture.
20. Gen.3:15—"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."
21. While the promised Messiah would crush the head of the serpent, he would do so through suffering (he shall bruise his heel).
22. And then, all throughout the OT we have the sufferings of Christ foretold through prophecies and pictures.
23. (b) That Christ would rise from the dead—the OT foretold the resurrection of Christ through various means (promises and pictures).
24. Ps. 16:10—"For You will not leave My soul in Sheol (grave), nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption (Acts 13:34)."
25. Isa. 53:10-12—"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand...Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."
26. Jonah 1:17—"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights (Matt. 12:40)."
27. (c) That Christ would proclaim light to Jews and Gentiles—while Christ did this Himself in His earthly ministry, the OT Scriptures are full of prophecies that Christ would carry the gospel, through His church, to all the nations.
28. This is true from the very beginning when the distinction between Jews and Gentles begins (in God's promise to Abraham).
29. Gen. 12:3—"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (**Isa. 42:1-9; 49:5-6**)."
30. Thus, Paul provides a summary of the OT Scriptures (**Acts 3:19-21, 24-25; Acts 24:14-15; Acts 26:22-23; Acts 28:23**).

II. The Interaction with His Hearers (vv24-32)

1. Beginning with v24 to the end of the chapter, Luke recounts the interaction of Paul with three people (groups of people).
2. (1) Festus (vv24-25)—having sat quiet through Paul's defense, Festus finally erupts in (with) a loud voice.

3. (a) Festus' accusation, v24—"Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, 'Paul, you are beside yourself? Much learning is driving you mad!'"
4. The phrase "you are beside yourself" means he was "out of his mind"—his great learning had driven him mad.
5. While Fesus was a Greek and thus ignorant of the OT Scripture, he could tell Paul was highly educated.
6. As he was not a believer, he no doubt considered all that Paul had said as insane and foolish teaching.
7. This includes his conversion and commission, his diligent and relentless labors, and especially his doctrine.
8. The death and resurrection of Christ, deliverances from darkness to light, Satan to God, all seemed foolish.
9. All that Christ had said seemed insane to Festus—the death and resurrection, darkness and light, God and Satan.
10. 1Cor. 1:18—"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."
11. (b) Paul's response, v25—"But he said, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.'"
12. By "truth" he means his words are consistent with Scripture and by "reason" he means they are reasonable.
13. This means the Holy Scripture are consistent with a right use of reason—the Christian faith is reasonable.
14. (2) Agrippa (vv26-29), v26—"For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner."
15. Paul now turns his attention to king Agrippa, who he describes as knowing the things he's been saying.
16. Not that Agrippa was a Christian and believed the OT rightly, but he did believe the OT Scriptures were a revelation from God.
17. Furthermore, he believed the prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of sinners.
18. He obviously did not believe that Christ was the Messiah, nor did he believe he needed salvation from sin.
19. But he believed there was one God and He believed that this one God revealed Himself to father Abraham.
20. V28—"Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian'"—he was coming close to being persuaded.
21. He was becoming convinced by Paul's teaching, that what he was saying about Christ was in fact true.
22. He was almost persuaded to become a Christian—that is, to repent from his sin and believe on Christ.
23. Having heard about how Paul had been converted and how he understood the meaning of the OT Scripture.

24. And these things were beginning to weigh upon him—his conscience was becoming concerned or alarmed.
25. V29—"And Paul said, 'I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.'"
26. Here Paul reveals his heart—he wished that Agrippa, Bernice, Festus, the commanders, and all the prominent men of the city would become Christian.
27. John Calvin—"Paul's response testifies with what zeal, to spread the glory of Christ, this holy man's breast was inflamed, when he patiently suffers his present bonds in which Festus had bound him, and does desire that might escape the deadly snares of Satan, and to have him and his partners to be partakers with him of the same grace."
28. (3) Crowd (vv30-32)—having interacted with Paul, King Agrippa and others, rise up and gather together.
29. They huddle together to discuss what they've witnessed, and their conclusion is found at the end of v31—"This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains."
30. V32—"Then Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'"
31. This represents Agrippa's final conclusion—having heard all that Paul had to say, he was an innocent man.
32. And so, as we shall see next week, because he appealed to Caesar, he would be sent to Italy under Roman guard (27:1).

III. Observations

1. Here I want to summarize this beautiful and very instructive passage with three broad and practical observations.
2. (1) The nature and necessity of repentance—I want to begin by turning you back to the content of Paul's preaching (v20 – 'that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance').
3. Over the years there has been great confusion as to what repentance entails and whether or not it's necessary (some have believed it's only for the Jews and not Gentiles, whereas others have turned it into a meritorious work).
4. (a) Its necessity—Paul preached to all the Jews and then Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God (20:21 – 'testifying to Jews and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward').
5. (b) Its nature—the Greek word rendered "repent" literally mean "to change the mind" about you and God (it fundamentally means you agree with what God says about you, Him, and salvation).
6. This change of mind is described in v18 as turning from darkness and Satan or as seeing them for what they are.
7. Nobody ever turned to light without turning from darkness nor have they turned to God without turning from Satan.
8. (c) Its fruit—"and do works befitting repentance"—that is, having turned from darkness and Satan to light and God, now bring forth the fruit of repentance which entails sorrow for sin, shame because of sin, hatred for sin, and forsaking of sin.

9. This is the problem many people have—they want to put the fruit of repentance before turning to God (but notice where Paul put it—he puts the fruit of repentance (sorrow and hatred for sin) after believing) (as there is faith and the fruit of faith so there's repentance and the fruit of repentance).
10. Repent, turn to God in Christ (that's believing), and then bring forth the fruit of repentance (sorrow for sin, hatred for sin, shame for sin, and forsaking sin).
11. William Bridge—"All tears of repentance flow from the eye of faith. The more a man by faith is able to see a pierced Christ, the more his heart is pierced for sin committed. The more by faith a man is able to see a wounded Christ, the more will his heart be wounded for sin committed."
12. (2) The sad reality of an almost Christian—here I'm thinking of King Agrippa and v28—"You almost persuade me to become a Christian."
13. King Agrippa was almost persuaded of the truth—he stood on the edge of the kingdom and considered entering.
14. His conscience was pricked and yet he refused to believe—he was almost convinced to become a Christian.
15. In the language of Mark 12:34, he was not far from the kingdom of God—he was at the very gate of the city.
16. There are many Agrippas in our day who are almost persuaded to be Christians but remain outside the city gates.
17. Thus, at this point I want to take a few minutes and answer the question, why? Why do people remain almost Christians?
18. (a) They have a mere historical belief—King Agrippa was someone who believed but was not Christian.
19. That is, he believed in the historical facts of the Scripture, but did not believe in the Christ of those facts.
20. Dear friends, it's very possible to merely believe the facts revealed in Scripture and not be a Christian.
21. Jas. 2:19—"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble."
22. King Agrippa had been raised in a Jewish home—he was no doubt familiar with the Scriptures of the OT.
23. He believed the basic facts of the OT—created the world, chose the nation of Israel, and foretold the Messiah.
24. But he failed to rightly understand these facts and he failed to really believe them with regards to himself.
25. (b) They have believed a false or faulty gospel—by this I mean, they have believed a lie that keeps them from the kingdom.
26. Oh they may give general credence to the Bible in general, but they have failed to understand the gospel.
27. This is why the majority of the Pharisees failed to enter the kingdom and even hindered others from entering.
28. Why? Because they sought to enter the kingdom through works—they sought to obtain life by law-keeping.

29. Matt. 23:13—"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."
30. (c) They have deceived themselves in thinking they are a Christian—by this I mean, they remain as almost Christians because they believe they are Christians.
31. This is why they never truly enter into the kingdom of God because they believe they are already citizens.
32. They have deceived themselves in believing, that because of very reasons, they are presently safe in Christ (when in fact, they are in no better condition than Agrippa was).
33. (3) The gracious heart of a true evangelist—here of course I am thinking of Paul as he says in v29—"I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am."
34. It was Paul's desire that not only King Agrippa would become Christian but "all" who heard him that day.
35. Dear friends, this is the gracious heart of a true evangelist—he longs for the salvation of every hearer.
36. (a) This desire is submissive to God's sovereign will—by this I mean, Paul knew not everyone would believe.
37. He knew that man by nature refuses to believe, but he also knew that God has an elect people who will believe.
38. Thus, we mustn't think that Paul's desire is without limitation or understanding (he could have said at the end of v29 – 'If the Lord wills').
39. This is implied in the phrase "I would to God" which means his desires were ultimately subject to God.
40. (b) This desire is reflective of God's revealed will—that is, His will or desire as made known in Scripture.
41. Throughout Scripture we are exhorted to preach the gospel to every creature and promise salvation if believed.
42. This promise of salvation comes as a promise from God—God Himself promises you salvation if you believe.
43. Thus throughout Scripture this exhortation to believe the gospel comes both as a command and invitation.
44. We could say—sinners are commanded and they are invited to come (and they are promised salvation if they do).
45. And here's my point—God has made it known within Scripture that this promise is genuine and sincere.
46. God has revealed Himself, within Scripture, as kind and compassionate toward sinners in the gospel (**Deut. 5:29; Isa. 48:17-18; Ezek. 33:11**).
47. This is why Paul desired the salvation of his hearers, because God has revealed in Scripture, that He desires the same (God Himself is the gracious Evangelists)
48. 2 Cor. 5:20—"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we entreat on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."