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5, N. Sept 19, 84 AM

BEFORE AGRIPPA

Acts 26

INTRODUCTION: *Be wonderful if anyone we present to would accept Christ!*
" " Paul " " - Not so

A great assembly had been called as we will note in the previous chapter.

V. 22 - Agrippa had said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man speak." And in V. 23, they gathered in great pomp. What an assembly. Here were all the dignitaries who had gathered in all the pomp and display - they enter the audience chamber with their military officer and the chief men of Caesarea. And at the command, they brought in Paul, the prisoner. And they were going to listen to this man speak. You remember, the reason why Paul was in Caesarea - he had been taken in the temple by the mob. And the Jews have tried him. And then he went on to Caesarea, where Felix the governor had listened to his case. And you remember the lawyer brought charges against him of being sacreligious. Of course Felix, the governor, was replaced by Festus. And Festus, after 10 days of being in power, went to the throne of judgement in Chapter 25, and called Paul into account. To his surprise of Festus, the trial was terminated. The proceedings were closed because Paul was a Roman citizen. He was being tried by Roman law, which he did, to appeal his case unto Caesar. Now it was the business of Festus to send forth a letter or a report that would be official. Along with documents that would have bearing upon the trial and the disposition of the trial. Festus, however, was unsettled about this because the charges were so vague he could not find anything wrong with Paul.

*Every family tree has some sep in it!
(One family had plenty -*

Hence, King Agrippa and Bernice, his sister, came down with great pomp and display to visit Festus in Caesarea. And Festus told him about his famous prisoner which he had held for two years. And had appealed to Caesar.

King Agrippa said he would like to hear the man and the arrangements were made.

And this was a very dramatic moment. It was a pagan assembly. It was perhaps designed for the entertainment of Agrippa and Bernice. Who were living a shameful life.

And King Agrippa suggests that Paul speak to the group.

There are two or three ways to outline this chapter and I have decided to use these three terms. First, delightful reminiscing, V. 1-5. Second, declaring the resurrection, V. 6-23. Third, decisions with results, V. 24-32.

I. DELIGHTFUL REMINISCING - V. 1-5

In V. 1 - Agrippa said unto Paul, thou art permitted to speak. And Paul stretched forth his hand.

Enjoy a story 1st time - some reminiscing - gets dull after 12th time around

V. 2 - I think myself happy, King Agrippa. Paul said it would be a delight for him to reminisce about past things in his life. He had received now the permission to speak. Agrippa seems to be sort of a master of ceremony. He is a guest. And here is a grand display with Festus simply introducing Paul. And Paul is allowed to talk on his own behalf. And no charges are made against him. No real proof of any charges were layed out. But this was a dramatic moment. And this is the fullest of all of Paul's defenses. He has no word or censor of his enemy, or resentment, but he ceases this opportunity to preach Christ. There is a great deal of dignity in this moment, he is now bearing the name of Christ before Kings. And Paul said, what he is going to speak will be truthful.

Dr. Carroll said that men under great occasions many times lose their head like a young hunter who goes on a hunt and sees a deer for the first time and has

"buck fever". Or what young person has not at some time had stage fright. You give some young person a part in a play, he memorizes it, he practices it, and then when he gets up before the crowd all of a sudden he loses his place. And I have even seen adults have this problem. They would memorize something and because of some stage fright, they'd forget it.

*Walker
anger
E. Langdon* 1st sermon last year *Engel* - *Spivey 10/11 - started*
Song leader - imitated on 1/11

It may be something like young bride grooms - they have what is known as marriage fright. I've stood up to marry men that were shaking like a leaf. So that the women had to hold them up. I never had a woman to lose her self-possession. I've known men to be scared nearly out of their wits. In fact, I have had them to pass out.

Not make up, this is Real History - like Furg on freeway with his kopper hung!

Now Paul exhibits the most marvelous self possession of voice and the clearest ideas. There is not a wasted word as we listen to his address. In which he says, I delightfully accept this challenge of reminiscing, about my past life, and telling you King Agrippa about it.

The Jews have accused me of their customs, their laws, and their traditions.

The Jews have always had hope in the coming of a Messiah - they all believe that. The whole of the Jewish people believe also, this glorious fact.

V. 3 - He recognizes that King Agrippa is an expert. He says, you are special, a man who knows. You are a man who has tasted. Now Agrippa had the care of the temple, the appointment of the high priest, the care of the sacred vestments in his care.

And Agrippa was qualified to give Paul an understanding and a sympathetic mind. So Paul delighted in reminiscing about this. He was recalling certain things to the mind of the king. They had some accusations against him - he had hope in the resurrection of the dead. And he had also been commissioned to preach to the Gentiles. And he claimed that Jesus was the Messiah. So these three great crimes seems to be something in the back of Paul's mind as we hear and goes back over the past history. He is going to testify about the resurrection, his preaching of salvation to the Gentiles, and his claim that Jesus is the Messiah.

V. 4 - Paul recalls my manner of life from my youth. Was at the first among mine own nation, at Jerusalem. Which is a delightful experience for Paul. He is going to tell them about the days of his youth. And of the time that he spent at Jerusalem. My life as a young person, and I want to tell you about my conduct he says, as a young person.

Henry VanDyke wrote some very simple words that are easy to remember and we should really never forget. He wrote these words about the manner of life - for a person that would be ideal.

He said there are four things that a man must learn to do. If he would make his record true.

First, to think without confusion clearly.

Second, to love his fellow man sincerely.

Third, to act from honest motives purely.

✓ Fourth, to trust in God and Heaven securely.

The poet had an idea that this ought to be the manner of life for a man. And it is a very good suggestion. You think about these rules which he has given for a man to think without confusion clearly. A man ought to think clear. About the things of life. And a man ought to love his fellowman sincerely. Now this is something that needs to be given our attention. Now love has been profane - that love has been misused so many ways. And it is so seldom that we get down to the Greek Agape, love, which is not primarily on emotions and is fixed on attitude of will and God's plan. We need to have that, in our lives. And then we need to act from honest motives purely - that is actions that go deeper than reason. It is an action that we know is right. And that comes from the depth of the individual and it causes him to automatically react. And then to trust in God and Heaven securely. That means to truly trust and commit all to God. In what God has to say.

V. 5 - Paul acknowledges that he was a Pharisee. This, as he recalls, is literally - even your old king knew about me before hand. I had my public education in Jerusalem and here with the Pharisees I was brought up on their religion. And what he is saying is - it was an old word for religious work and discipline. He said I have very great reverence and it has not just been an external ritual with me. Now Paul knew the games and the rules that the Pharisees played by. And Paul had become one of the leaders and one of the stars of that group. And he reminisces about this.

Now he is going to give a sharp contrast between his youth and the present.

II. DECLARING THE RESURRECTION - V. 6-23

V. 6 - And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise, the hope of the Messiah, made of God. The hope of the resurrection and the promise of the Messiah. He is here developing his idea and now I stand, he says, to be judged for this hope and for this promise that was made of God unto our Fathers.

He is pointing out the judgement that he is under. And he is pointing out what God had promised.

V. 7 - Unto which promise our twelve tribes. Now Paul had knowledge here that there was a certain national pride and sense of unity inspite of the dispersing. The Jews were looking for the coming of the Messiah. And the Messiac hope had been the red thread running through the Jewish history. Even though the Jews refused to see Jesus as the Messiah. The Jews of all the people of the world, here was the main spring. This was the very hope. The Messiah in whom he believed was the grand hope of all the Jewish people. And this is found throughout the Old Testament. It was mighty in that it extended to all 12 tribes. And day and night they kept their ceremonies looking for the Messiah with a burning hope in their hearts.

V. 8 - Why should it be thought incredible with you, that God should raise the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead demonstrates that that Messiah was the true one. They would not accept the fact of Christ's resurrection. They could not deny it. The proof of it did not win them. Should it be thought a thing incredible. Can it be possible that any rational being can question God's power to do so. Matt. 28:6. This was one of the doctrine's of the resurrection - that if God does raise the dead, and only God can do it. The resurrection has

challenged science and philosophy, to reason and logic to disprove it. To history to reproduce it. And to time to forget it.

There have been many attempts on the part of unbelievers to deny or explain away the greatest of all miracles. But their effort has been in vain. The resurrection stands today as the best event of history with authority. No one has been able to silence the eloquence of the empty tomb.

And now he is risen and proclaims the joyful story - the Lord is on high. And we in him, are raised to endless glory and never can die.

V. 9 - I did many things contrary to Jesus Christ. The cause I now support, once I hated. I understand this prejudice for they were once my own. While I lived a Pharisee, I felt it to God and to my people to oppose Jesus. And I manifested my opposition and persecution of the Disciples, Paul says.

V. 10 - I shut many of the Disciples up in prison. I voted for their death. And he says, I had the authority that the saints should come under my power. The word used here, I both shut up - means I shut them up like a trap door. And he mentions the chief priest, though he was a Pharisee himself, both parties were co-operating in their battle of the saints.

I gave my vote, Paul says, against them. I cast down my pebble, a black one. Now the ancient Greeks used white pebbles for acquittal. Rev. 2:17. And black ones for condemnation, as here the word is used.

They literally cast the pebbles into the ern. Acts 19:19, Acts 1:26. So Paul cast his vote against these people.

V. 11 - He spent a great deal of time punishing everyone that he could get his

hands upon. He persecuted them.

Get the vivid picture here Luke is painting of Paul. It is like the success in hunting big game. He is going to capture this big game.

V. 12 - Finds him on an errand. He is going up to Damascus, with a commission. Paul had caused the Christians to leave Palestine - Chapter 11:19. Now he is going to follow them and he is going to go up and carry his persecution to them.

So Paul in talking about declaring the resurrection, goes back into his conversion in these verses that we are talking about. He goes back into his past. And he places himself now in V. 12 - on the road to Damascus. And this is the place where he met Jesus.

V. 13 - He said it was mid-day. The middle of the day, and there came a super natural light - a brightness that came down from Heaven. And a voice came

V. 14 - And said, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Here is a good question, why should Paul persecute Jesus. Had the Lord ever hurt him.

An excellent question today - why do you turn your back upon Jesus. Why do you leave him out of your life. Why do you disobey his command. Why do you rob him of tithes and offerings. Why do you give most of your energy to the world.

Why do you give most of your talent to things that are glamorous. Instead of humbly hiding in the cross of Christ in service.

V. 15 - Paul had a question. Who art thou, oh Lord. And Jesus answered, I am the one whom thou persecutest. V. 15. And it is hard, Jesus said to him - to kick against the pricks with the goad at your heels. And you are kicking. You will receive a severe wound. Here is a man plowing with an oxen. He had an iron goad in his hand. Now when the oxen kicks and backs instead of going forward, he is injuring himself. And this is the place where Paul finds himself - in this situation.

V. 16 - Jesus gave him instructions to stand upon his feet. I have a purpose for you - I am going to make you a minister. I am going to help you to witness - the thing he says. Here is the personal eye-witness of the risen Lord. No wonder he could talk about the resurrection. Face to face with the living Lord.

V. 17 - He is instructed that he will preach to the Gentiles.

V. 18 - That their eyes will be opened and will turn them from darkness to light. And from the power of Satan unto God. Their eyes are going to be opened. They are morally blind. Now, he is not going to give them new eyes - but he is going to open them.

He is going to turn light on. They are going to see God.

Forgiveness is going to come. Their sins will be cancelled out. Eternal blessedness will come. And they will have possession of him.

V. 19 - I was not disobedient. Now here is the secret of Paul's life. Not disobedient. He went on to tell what he had done. How he had turned from the old life.

What was the secret of Paul's life. He had a vision. Instead of turning his back upon it, he followed it and did exactly what Christ had told him to do.

Many of you who listen to me have had a vision or an impression, you have seen something in the word of God that you ought to do - and you still say no to God.

Can you say I have lived up to the light I have. Now we ought to say No to many things when the Devil tempts us or leads us astray, but we should never say "No" to God. God gives you the best. He calls you to be faithful to his church. And how do we answer - we answer "No".

He calls us to love one another. And we answer "No" - we will not love one another. He calls us to tithe, and we say "No" - I can't trust God to provide for my needs.

I had a man once to come up and thank me for a sermon that I had preached. He said it helped him to see where he was not giving much to his church. And he decided to raise his gift to \$10 a week. More than his tithe would amount to at that time. Now that great spirit will help to build a great church.

Jesus never says no to us - and it is foolish to spend your life in opposition to God's will. We cannot expect joy, happiness, and power when we go

up against God. God says so - you ought to do this. And we say, I will not.

Now what Paul is saying here is - I was not disobedient.

V. 20 - He tells about his missionary travels around Judea and to the Gentiles, and about his work and how he went through many dangers.

V. 21 - He relates how the Jews caught him in the temple and they planned to kill him.

V. 22 - He tells how God had helped him. That God had been his ali - and the things of Moses had come true. In strict accordance to the Old Testament. There was no new doctrine that he was giving. He was giving what the prophets in the Old Testament had said. God has been my ali and all the Jews against me have failed thus far. So Paul had come literally in the reminiscence of his whole life - and finally he is declaring the resurrection of Jesus Christ in V. 23.

He says, the Messiah was the subject of suffering. The cross of Christ has become the stumbling block. And the resurrection of the dead, at this point, Paul had often disgussed with the Jews. Now others have been raised from the dead, but Christ is the first. And he no longer dies. Rom. 6:19.

III. DECISIONS AND RESULTS - V. 24-32.

Some very interesting things resulted in the decisions that were made and in the results reported by Luke.

First, what about the decision of Festus. V. 24. We, today, many times think of people saying Amen as giving approval of something they believe. But V. 24 - Festus did not say Amen, in a loud voice. Festus said, Paul you are besides yourself. Much learning doth make thee mad. It was a natural interruption - he had heard Paul talk before. He had heard Paul talk about a voice from Heaven. He had heard Paul talk about a man that rose from the dead. Until evidently he could no longer contain himself. He said, Paul, you are simply raving mad. Your enthusiasm is just too much. You have spoken about visions, resurrections, and you are going mad. Your learning has turned you around. And you are crazy and mentally deranged.

Is it madness to take a stand for Christ. Is a man out of his mind when he does things for Christ. I think it is kind of madness when people are more earnest about money and about power and pleasure - and they are so foolish, that they are not giving attention to Christ's salvation and eternal life.

V. 25 - Paul speaks again. He is not ruffled or rude. He is not even excited. He says, I am not mad Festus. I am just speaking the words of truth and soberly. I am preaching with a sound mind. Which is directly opposed to madness. And my Gospel is truth. Here is the first decision recorded. Now when we come to this - second, Agrippa's decision.

V. 26 - Paul says an unusual thing. He is bearing down on the resurrection. He has spread the mighty Gospel and the power of the Gospel truth - it has been shaking the monarch. And Festus had just charged Paul with madness. While Festus continues to stew and Agrippa begins to tremble. And Paul continues his appeal.

The crafty man has his dark rooms. And the impostor his hidden wires and

invisible screws. The truly honest person hides behind no curtains. Now the case of Christianity, Paul says was not done while men were asleep. V. 26. Not done in a corner. It was not in a huddle - lest any man should detect a flaw in the process. There was brightness on every side and there was a challenge to every enemy. One of the things that makes the Gospel so powerful is, it is open and subject to inspection. Because it was not done behind the curtain. It was in the plain daylight.

V. 27 - King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets. He stirs this man - what is it to be a Christian. A creed or orthodox. This is the aim of the Gospel that Paul is driving at. Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Paul was trying to get this man to believe as he believed. Paul believed in the atonement of Christ as the only hope. He made the will of Christ the rule and conduct of his life. Now he was asking Agrippa what will you do. The love of Christ that inspired Paul - how earnest he was. He had crossed seas and endured hardship, and traveled over land. And Jesus was his friend. And angels had been his servants. And Heaven was going to be his home.

He challenged the king to believe in the Messiah and what the prophets had said.

V. 28 - Here was his decision - almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian, Almost, only. Agrippa was a king. He said, I believe. I know what you have been saying is right.

This was the greatest mistake the king ever made when he turned down Jesus.

If he had accepted Christ that day, later he would have met Paul in Heaven. And he could have said, thank you Paul, all that you told me about Jesus was true. Do not turn Jesus down.

The tragedy - almost repenter of his sins, almost accepted Christ. He was in sight of Heaven. He could almost hear the Heavenly choir sing. If only he had taken a step forward, but he turned back at this point.

This word almost may have referred to a little time - or a short time somewhat. In a small measure or degree. Or it may have been that Agrippa may have said it with scorn. Do you mean that such a small effort of trying to persuade me to become a Christian. When Paul appeared before Agrippa to plead not for his life, but the soul of Festus, the Roman Governor, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice. There was not a word of apology in his preaching. This almost, Agrippa was on the verge of accepting Christ. And of course it may be translated to mean - with a little effort. Do you in a few words, or with so little effort, or in so short of time expect to make me a Christian.

This was an embarrassing experience with all of his pomp and splendor in the Roman court. A prisoner had preached a sermon and Paul had been interrupted by Festus. Who accused him of insanity and declared that his decision was to go on as an atheist.

And now Agrippa, who makes his decision, treats Paul with scorn. And says, enough of this. To sum up the matter, you almost turned me into a believer. Why was this attitude - probably Agrippa's position. He was king. And the history of the Herod's was a very bloody history. They were oppressors of the people.

And had he become a Christian, it would have cut him off from the Jews and made him useless to the Romans, and he would have lost his position.

So like Felix, Agrippa was leading the life of gross immorality. And Felix trembled and put it off for a convenient season which never came. And now Agrippa is making his decision - and what he is saying is, stop the sermon. Stop the sermon.

Why are People almost persuaded? - I am waiting for somebody else! husband, wife, son, friend
"Lack courage - timid -"
"Just an good hypocrites in ch!" "Afraid of what?"
"Hold out!"

Agrippa is not the only one that have done that. Today men hear the Gospel and they feel the call. They feel the urge toward God and they turn the Lord down. And they slip back into the old life and walk the pathway that leads to Hell. If you feel the slightest impression towards Christ, invite and receive him gladly.

Why did they fail - not because the Gospel was not sufficient in its power. But it was because they were not ready to commit their lives to it. He did not wish to give his life to the power of Christ.

Was this safe for Agrippa? What were his gains. Did the Gospel do him any good. No, if he died in that state of almost, it was probably better if he had never heard Paul or seen him.

Are you almost a Christian - have you heard the thunder and seen the flashes of justice. And felt the condemnation of sin. And trembled at the wrath of Hell to come. Almost a Christian - but the more light, the deeper you fall into despair. If there is one cry of misery of the lost - it will be, almost a Christian. And that is a sad failure when you resist the appeal and are disobedient to it.

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V. 29 - Paul said, with the earnestness of his soul, I would to God, not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Dr. Bond - Crowd of People "if I am right & you are wrong you have lost your souls in perdition - but if I am wrong & you are right - I have lost nothing in the beauty & holiness of the Christian life"

What a great yearning, Paul said he wished that everyone who listened to him preach that day had the same faith that he had in his heart. Except he said, I would not wish these chains off on anyone.

The story of an old preacher, Peter Cartwright, claimed God's condemnation and salvation for sin. Andrew Jackson, then President of the U. S., entered the church. A man interrupted the preacher and said, Mr. Cartwright, what about Andrew Jackson. Mr. Cartwright replied, if Andrew Jackson does not repent of his sin, and accept Jesus Christ as his Saviour - he will die and go to Hell just like any other poor miserable sinner, and so will you.

Agrippa could not get away from Jesus - and neither can you. You may turn me off right now. But the Gospel still remains.

V. 30 - Bernice made the decision that day. It says that the king arose and Festus arose, and Bernice. And they that sat with them.

V. 31 - And when they were gone aside, Bernice made a decision. Neither did she say, I will accept this Christ. And receive him. So the decisions and results were that here were three people, listened to the Gospel of the resurrection, and all three walked out, before the invitation could be clinched.

That was a sad day. When the king and the governor, and Bernice walked out.

V. 31 - The entertainment was over. They were eager for conversation among themselves. And the dignitary began to discuss Paul's wonderful speech. But he had not won a single one to Christ. But they could only agree among themselves in that private hearing. He was not guilty of death.

V. 32 - Agrippa said this man could be set at liberty - but he has appealed to Caesar and we have no power over that. Now this statement perhaps helped Festus somewhat. Even though there was no honor in it--he could send him on favorably to Caesar without any condemnation.

In conclusion - it was a great mistake for Agrippa to turn down Jesus. Years ago a woman in Glasglow, Scotland, rented an empty store building. In this building she started a Sunday School Class for rough boys. She carried on the work for many years. She won some boys to Christ. And she sent them out to live good lives. When she died, some of these boys came back to the funeral. Some of them were now important men in the country. They bought a tombstone for her grave and under her name they had these words inscribed - "All that she ever told us about Jesus is true."

If Agrippa had accepted Christ that day, later he would have said to Paul in Heaven, thank God, what you said about Jesus was true. Paul verified what he was saying as truth. Paul said I wish that all of you who hear me this day will do as I - that is an heir of the King. But it was strange - the king left with his heart of lust. If only he had done an about face and had really accepted in his heart Jesus as he knew that he should have. It would have been different. He was almost convicted.

Do not delay, do not postpone, do not say - I am almost persuaded.

Hershel Ford told a story about a soldier coming home from the Civil War.
Four years he had been away from home and separated from his family. Four years
 he had nothing but blood shed and suffering. He came to the river which separated
 him from his home. Which was on the hill on the other side. He was eager to
get home. And to clasp his loved ones to his bosom. He got into a boat and
rowed into the stream. He did not know it - but the boat was leaking. When he
 arrived in the middle of the stream, at the deepest point, the boat sank. And
 since he was not able to swim - he went down to a watery grave. He was almost
home - but he lost his life. One can get almost home spiritually. And lose his
 soul forever.

Come, all the way to Jesus today. It is not far to the Kingdom.

"Almost" cannot avail,
 " is but to fail!
 " Sad, sad that bitter wail
 " But lost.

And the Spirit & the Bride say Come, & let him that hears the
 say, come, and let him that is thirsty come, and
whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely R. 22:17
 Sal. is ours for the asking, for the responding, for the having.
 May we give our hearts in faith & trust to him for his
 wonderful gift & us —