

Sermon Date: March 23, 2014  
Paul Defense before Agrippa – Acts 26:1-32  
Brian Fuery

Read Acts 26:1-32

1. How does Paul masterfully get Agrippa's attention in v. 1-3? What do we know about Agrippa (v. 3, 27)?
  - a. Some might say Paul appeals to Agrippa by leaning into Agrippa's world, meeting him where he is at. Comment on how this might be a parallel to how God the Father leaned into our world, approaching us where we are at? See *John 1:14*, *Romans 8:3*, ***Philippians 2:5-8***, *Hebrews 4:15*.
  
2. For the third and final time in Acts, we hear the story of Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts chapters 9:1-19; 22:5-21, now in Acts 26:12-18). N.T. Wright (Acts for Everyone, pg. 212-213) makes the following observation from v. 18 that Paul's calling to the Gentiles and the Jews involves four very specific tasks:
  - a. To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light
  - b. To turn them from Satan/darkness to God
  - c. To receive forgiveness of sins. "The point about forgiveness is not just that the individual will have a clear conscience and a sense of God's presence close by without criticism or condemnation, but much more that if the Gentiles have had their sins forgiven there is no reason whatever why they should be full members of Jesus' extended family." (Wright)
  - d. That they might receive an *inheritance* among those who are made holy through faith. "This is where it was going: the Gentiles according to Jesus Himself belong within the same family as the Jews." (Wright)

How does this grip you?

3. In Paul's testimony (v. 20) he emphasizes repentance, turning to God, and performing deeds appropriate to repentance. Brian gave us the following definitions: Repentance means to 'change your mind, to reconsider.' To turn means to 'change your ways.' And to prove means 'to adopt behavior compatible with repentance.' In his definition, Brian pointed out that our beliefs change our behaviors – it's not the behavior that changes the belief. How can we not respond to the changes done within us? What do you think about this?
  
4. Brian made an astute observation about "walking with the Spirit" that often as believers our struggle has a lot to do with not letting go of our past hurts, sins, failures. From (Philippians 3:12-14) Brian pointed the connection to what Paul describes 'forgetting what is behind' = letting go, wiping out, and 'pressing on' = stretching ahead. Have you had difficulty with this in your life?

5. N.T. Wright (pg. 214) once again makes some astute observations about vv. 22-23:
  - a. Paul's message is rooted in Israel's scriptures
  - b. The message is about Jesus the Messiah.
  - c. The message is about the suffering Messiah.
  - d. He would be the first to rise from the dead.
  - e. This is a message about God's light shining on all people alike.

Comment on this dense message packed into these two verses.

6. How does Paul claim that he is fulfilling rather than undermining the most ancient traditions and richest hopes of his people (26:19-23)? "Paul wasn't 'converted' *away from* one God or religion, but was 'called' *to* a radical new understanding of the same God as the basis for a radical new fulfilment of that same religion." (N.T. Wright, pg. 212).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. For the final time in Acts, an official appointed by Rome vindicates Paul of wrongdoing against Rome. We have seen this at Philippi (16:25-40), in Corinth (18:14-17), a form of it in Ephesus (19:35-41) and in Jerusalem (23:26-31). Now Paul is finally headed to Caesar for his final trial, a final trial which will not be itself recounted in Acts. If you had to guess, what may all this indicate about who Luke hoped would read this book?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Why do you think Paul then directed his final question to Agrippa (v. 27)? What do you think was the nature of Agrippa's response to Paul in v. 28? Was he mocking? What is the nature of Paul's response back to Agrippa (v. 29)? How was the tone of Paul's response different than Agrippa's tone toward Paul in this section of verse (27-29)? What might we learn from this example as we speak up about the faith to unbelievers?