

Paul wrote this about half way through his third missionary journey.

1Co 2:1-6 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.

Acts 26 is...

Paul speaking nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified to the rulers of his age

He was somewhat prophetic here when he wrote “it is not wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age”

- PRAY

Allow me to take some time to get to know these people .

Paul had been in prison in Caesarea 2 years under rule of Felix

Due to some “questionable leadership” Felix is recalled to Rome and replaced by Festus.

- 70 Yrs old.
- Holds position for 2 yrs and dies in office.

Festus takes the obligatory tour of the region.

There in Jerusalem the chief priest brings up Paul’s name...what a grudge. (still on the hit list)

- Festus finds no issue so tries get this over with and do the Jews a favor, but it backfires.
- Paul appeals to Caesar
  1. Either sick of it...fair and swift trial.
  2. Using it to get to Rome
  3. Save neck from Jews.
- Now Festus finds himself between a rock and a hard place.
  1. Wants to appease the Jews
    - But Paul is a Romans citizen, so can't release him to murderous unfair trial.
  2. Paul has appealed to Rome for justice.
    - Will report that he has been held unjustly for two years.

A couple days later...

Herod Agrippa II visits to give his respects to Festus

Some History on House of Herod – so you can get a feel for the character.

- Begins with Herod the Great – who we know of from the Gospel of Luke and his attempts to kill Jesus as a child by having all the first borns killed.
  - Wed to Cleopatra
- The territory of rule is split between three of his sons (the Tetrarch).
  - Herod Antipas – The Herod who meets Jesus in the Gospels.
- Aristobulus, the youngest, is not one who receives any reign.
  - But he fathers Herod Agrippa I
- Agrippa I
  - Executed James, Imprisoned Peter , Died of worms - Acts 12
  - Prior to this the area that was ruled by the Tetrarch had just about been dissolved.
  - Indebted to the Roman emperor ; Tiberius
  - Thrown in Prison for mentioning his desire for Tiberius death and Caligula to take the throne.
  - Caligula seats him with almost the entire Herod territory.
- Agrippa II
  - By this time lost control of most of Israel.
  - Consorted with half sister Bernice, Half Sister – oldest daughter to Agrippa I
    - Married to her uncle prior to this, Herod of Chalcis.
    - Rumors of an incestuous relationship between Agrippa II and Bernice.
    - Leaves Agrippa for Titus (Roman General who later destroys Jerusalem)
    - When she returns to Rome she is shunned
    - So she leaves Titus and returns to Agrippa II
    - Though: Josephus' describes her to have been a devout Jew who begged Florus, another later governor of Judea, to stop massacring the Jews.
    - Josephus also goes on to say that the incestuous relationship between she and her half brother became the gossip of Rome.
  - Other half sister, Drusilla married to Felix (who we met back in Acts 24)
    - The youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I
    - She would have been close to 20 years old at the time.
    - She had married the king of a small region in Syria but divorced him at the age of 16 to marry Felix.
    - Felix Enticed her away by a magician.
    - Goes to Rome with Felix – Dies in Vasuvius, volcano eruption at age of 21

Not very respected family...very limited power in the region.

Acts 25:13

But none the less, Festus requests help (cultural) from Herod.

To try comprehend the crimes of Paul – so Festus can translate them to Roman law.

SO they have a hearing:

<p>Act 25:23 So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.</p>
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And that is where we find ourselves. In the audience of the new procurator, King Herod, and “military tribunes and the prominent men of the city”

Now I'd really like to paint some imagery in your head.

In Caesarea this Audience hall was excavation 1976-79 with a continuation in 1993.

- The palace is located on a spit into the Mediterranean sea.
- The Audience hall is North side.
- Deep blue waters, a line of tan warm beaches meandering along the coast as far as you can see.
- Political capital of the region.
- Herod's Palace

Excavation found Hypocaust...heated floors.

- They entered in “Great “Pomp” - set the scene.
- Then enters Paul
- Church tradition has interpreted Paul to be weak, poor eyesight...and in fact ugly.
  - 2 Cor 10:10 – Paul describes himself as weak.
  - Gal 6:11 – (One of his first letters) Paul is writing in large letters.
- Read Acts 25:23 - Acts 26
  - Interruption note @ 25:26
  - Festus refers to Nero as “My Lord” [Gr] *kuróō* - supreme lord
    - Also used to refer to Jehovah.
    - First time we see leadership referred to as deity.
- Note Paul's tone of respect.
  - “O king” 3 – 4 times.
  - And when Festus calls him insane, Paul addresses him as, “most excellent Festus”
  - Even though Agrippa is a swine
  - Festus just referred to Nero as a god.
- It must take some remarkable humility.

We can see Paul's humility develop over the years.

1. Gal 2 [49] – Equal to Apostles
2. 1 Cor 15:9 [55] – Least of all the Apostles (after 1<sup>st</sup> missional Journey)
3. 2 Cor 11 [61] – Least of all people  
That is where we find him here.
4. 1 Tim 1:12-15 [end of life] – Worst of all sinners.

Pro 16:9  
The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

- The remarkable way that the Lord works...
- In our weakness he places us in the most protestant crowd.
- Incredible what the Lord can do with us if we are humble.

Festus opens

Act 25:24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

Act 25:25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him.

Act 25:26 But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write.

Act 25:27 For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

- Presents the premise of the hearing.
  - Not a trial more like an arraignment hearing.

Act 26:1 So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

Act 26:2-3 "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

- The reason Paul, "consider myself fortunate"
- Heritage of the house of Herod.
  - Herod dynasty reigning over Israel for almost 100 yrs
  - Long interest in Jewish culture.
  - Jewish blood – Half Hebrew, Half Edomite.

Act 26:4 "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

Act 26:5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

- Begins the presentation on "Who I was ..."
- Of the most strict belief.

Act 26:6-7 And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

- He brings up the 12 tribes here ...
  - Dispel the idea that the tribes are dispersed and that God's "promise" is still valid.
  - Dispersion theory...
- Paul studied it, he knew the promise.

The Torah is largely a story of Man's failure and God redeeming.

- Over and over again.

**Gen 22:18** "... in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

- Jacob [Israel], on his death bed, gives prophetic blessings to his offspring who become the 12 tribes of Israel.

**Gen 49:10** The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*. KJV

- Shiloh – Hebrew meaning "the one who is the rightful owner."
  - The rightful owner of the scepter (he who holds the scepter holds the rule)
  - As presented by Isa with a little more detail...

**Isa 9:6-7** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

- The diaspora: Dispersion of the Jews.
- "...because you have obeyed..." Judah shall rule until the rightful owner comes
- Many have thought..and still think on long the lines...
  - But in their disobedience God has removed the scepter and withheld Shiloh
  - Rome is in power.
  - But Rome took power after Herod the Great...The Shiloh had come.

- But the real clincher is Deuteronomy

**Deu 18:15** "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers--it is to him you shall listen--

**Deu 18:18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

**Deu 18:19** And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

**Deu 18:20** But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

**Deu 18:21** And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'

**Deu 18:22** when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.

- Here is the controversy on a platter...Agrippa
- The hope in the promise of the Messiah...

**Act 26:6-7** And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

**Act 26:8** Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

- How could you believe Gen chapter 1 and question resurrection.

**Act 26:9** "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

**Act 26:10** And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them.

**Act 26:11** And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

**Act 26:12** "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

- Remember that grudge I mentioned from Acts 25.

- I, Paul, carried that same grudge.
- I was where you are at, a critic, dead in my sins.
- Paul says about himself in a letter to Timothy:

1Ti 1:13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,

but...

Act 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.

Act 26:14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

- Kick against the goads!
  - An idiom for stubborn resistance
- This is the first time we hear this statement in Paul's testimony.
  - Suggests that Jesus had presented Himself to Paul in some other way prior to this.
  - Discussion point...how resistible is Grace?

Act 26:15 And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'

Act 26:16-18 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles--to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

- His calling..
- Paul seems to save time here and compile Jesus' commands to him into one statement.
  - Spoken to Ananias, To Paul in Jerusalem..etc...

Act 26:19-20 "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

Act 26:21-22 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:

Act 26:23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

- The stumbling block is the resurrection.

|1Co 1:23 but we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

- Just for curiosity asks around. Most Americans claim to be Christian.
  - Believe in God...but my bet is they will stutter at the discussion of the resurrection.
- A little research: (No) stories of resurrection prior to Jesus.
  - Not exhaustive by any means.

|Act 26:24 And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind."

- Ouch, I'd probably strike back ... Call me crazy look at the leadership around here.
- Notice Paul's response.

|Act 26:25 But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words.  
Act 26:26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.  
Act 26:27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

- Ask Agrippa Festus, these occurrences were all over the news.

|Act 26:28 And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"

- Now I am not sure if his remark is sincere or sarcastic

|Act 26:29 And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am-- except for these chains."

- But Paul doesn't care, he just wishes that all have the same peace Jesus has brought him.

|Act 26:30 Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them.  
Act 26:31 And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment."  
Act 26:32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

- Sent Paul is sent to Rome with no charge...Acts 27

- As an ambassador for the Christ.

|2Co 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal |  
|through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. |

- The testimony of Paul ... nothing but Jesus the Christ and him crucified.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. **1Co 11:1**

- Humble, sacrificial, doing only that which the father calls us.

PRAY