

Acts 26b verses 16-32

16 Jesus personally appeared to Paul. This was one of the requirements of an Apostle. They had to be a witness that Jesus was resurrected and alive. (Acts 1:22) He appointed Paul to be a servant. That is what Jesus called Himself. (Mark 10:45) Jesus often referred to the servant songs of Isaiah as being fulfilled in Him. (Isaiah 42:1-7) The Old Testament prophets referred to themselves as servants of the Lord (Deuteronomy 34:5), but Jesus was the ultimate Servant. Now Paul is appointed to stand in the role of a servant. He did give us much of the theology of the New Testament. His life was no longer his own. He now moved at the instruction of the very Lord he once persecuted.

He is also appointed to be a witness. Jesus is not dead but alive. As Paul was speaking he was a witness of that fact (what he had seen of Jesus). He is also a witness of the power of Jesus to transform a life. His letters would become a witness of "what I will show you". All of us have a similar call, not that we are Apostles, but that we are called to be servants of the Lord and to witness what we have seen of Jesus and what He shows us.

17a Rescue sounds nice, but as we will see, it doesn't mean that Paul won't suffer. (Acts 9:16) It does mean that God will keep him from being killed by Jews and Gentiles until his service is completed. Can you count the number of times he was rescued from death?

17b-18 "sending you to them" – both Jew and Gentile needed to be turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. Both needed to receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus. Both needed to be delivered from the power of Satan (a real living intelligent being). He can direct us into religious bondage as well as bondage to selfish desires. This new place is the Kingdom of God. If you have trusted in Christ as your Savior, you have a place among those who are sanctified (set apart just as Paul was being set apart as a servant of God). (Colossians 1:13-14)

19 Paul's defense is that he is obeying God! He is not polluting the Jewish faith, but bringing it to its Messiah. Reading between the lines, Paul has just said that Judaism is as broken and as needy as any Gentile nation. If anyone could see that it would have been Agrippa and Bernice who were constantly dealing with Jewish problems.

20 To both Jew and Gentile Paul preached to repent and show their repentance with a changed life. Repent is to turn ones mind around. If your belief has truly changed, your actions will follow. (James 2:20) Our missionaries to Mongolia are having problems with this word. To the Mongols it means to feel sorry for what you have done, but that doesn't mean you won't go out and do it again. The

Greek term Paul uses is much more than that. It means a change has taken place that results in changed actions.

21-23 Paul's defense continues with obedience to the vision. Agrippa knows the pride of Jewish leadership and how hard it would be for them to hear a call to repent and that killing the messenger is a Jewish tradition. Paul insists that his message is thoroughly Jewish and faithful to Moses and the prophets. This tells us that Paul could clearly see Jesus' suffering and resurrection and proclamation of the Gospel as a fulfillment of the predictions of a Messiah by Moses and the prophets. (For more on the topic read my book - Jesus Concealed in the Old Testament)

24 This would have gone over Festus' head. He had only heard of messiahs that lead others in gorilla warfare. The idea of one that suffers as a god seemed ridiculous. As far as resurrection goes, the Romans thought death was when one was finally free from the constraints of the body. They couldn't imagine wanting their body back.

25 Paul declared that it wasn't a subjective opinion but objective truth. He chose the perfect word to counter the charge of madness (*mania*) – reasonable (*sophrosyne*). The word was used to express the ideal philosophy and had to do with one's knowledge of and relationship to deity.

26-27 Paul turns to Agrippa knowing they share the same Old Testament background and that he has probably heard the Gospel. It happened right under his nose and the facts can be investigated.

28 Paul could have gone on to show him how the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus but he was interrupted, which is what he asked them not to do when he began. (26:3) Agrippa probably knew where Paul was headed and didn't want to go down that road. There was too much at stake for him as far as power and position go.

29 Paul expresses his earnest desire that all that were listening (whether soon or in the distant future- differs from KJV) have what he has, a relationship with Jesus – except for the chains (perhaps a dramatic gesture at that point of holding up his chains). It was a way for Paul to declare the blessedness of knowing Jesus and his earnest desire to share his faith for their good. Do you share that passion?

30 –32 They concluded that Paul hasn't done anything worthy of imprisonment or death. Technically Festus could still set him free, but it would risk offending the emperor. Once an appeal was made it was a Roman right to have the emperor hear his case.