

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

LX. Mining The Wealth Of Paul's Pressured Message To Agrippa

(Acts 26:2-18)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 26:2-18 records very insightful parts of Paul's pressured speech to Agrippa, for this king's "background made him eminently qualified to hear Paul" as he was "well acquainted with the Jews' religion" as one who was also "a practicing Jew," Ibid., p. 423-424. We thus view this passage for our insight and edification:

II. Mining The Wealth Of Paul's Pressured Message To Agrippa, Acts 26:2-18.

- A. When Paul gave his introductory remarks to king Agrippa, as we learned in our previous lesson in this series, he was under significant pressure due to the setting itself, Acts 26:2-3 with Acts 25:22-26:1; Ibid., p. 424.
- B. Then, typical of his previous addresses to his countrymen in the temple, to Felix and to Festus, Paul's address to Agrippa provided his own testimony of his early life and persecution of the Church followed by his conversion on the road to Damascus and of God's call that he evangelize Hebrews and Gentiles, Acts 26:4-18.
- C. However, two important statements by Paul in this pressured setting give important theological insight for us:
 1. Paul's reference to the existence of Israel's twelve tribes being actively involved in his era in Acts 26:7 counters British-Israelism that contributed to the errors behind major cults that we face today:
 - a. British-Israelism is the view that the Israelis in the time of Judah's last king Zedekiah at the Babylonian invasion and captivity ended up migrating to Britain and became Anglo-Israelis. (Jan Karel Van Baalen, The Chaos of the Cults, 1973, p. 163-164) When the Babylonian Captivity had ended, only two of the original twelve tribes allegedly came back from Babylon – the tribes of Benjamin and Judah – where the other ten tribes are alleged to be the "lost tribes," comprising the Anglo-Israelis, Ibid., p. 164-166. British-Israelism thus holds that God's covenant to Abraham is fulfilled by Americans who came from Britain as Anglo-Israelis to America, and this view has helped lead Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism, and early Russellism, the latter two entities influencing the Jehovah's Witnesses, to be errant, Ibid., p. 162, 257.
 - b. However, Paul's statement in Acts 26:7 that all twelve tribes of Israel in his day after the Babylonian Captivity served God day and night in Israel, hoping for Messiah's arrival, if errant as British-Israelism would claim, would have been disastrous for Paul to make to Agrippa, for this king knew about the number of Israel's tribes in the land in Paul's day! Agrippa never questioned the accuracy of Paul's claim about Israel's twelve tribes in Acts 26:28, so Paul's claim about the twelve tribes must be true!
 - c. Other post-Babylonian Captivity passages in Scripture that counter British-Israelism include (1) Ezra 2:28 that mentions men from Bethel and Ai in northern Israel returning to the land, (2) Ezra 6:17 that mentions the offering of sin offerings for the twelve tribes, implying all of them had returned to Israel and (3) Luke 2:36-38 that identifies the elderly woman Anna who testified of the infant Jesus as being of the tribe of Asher, one of the ten northern tribes alleged to have been "lost"!
 2. Paul's citation of Christ's words to him on the road to Damascus in Acts 26:15-18 gives evidence of the Gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ apart from works (as follows):
 - a. Paul's gospel of justification by faith without works in Ephesians 2:8-9 was sufficiently questioned so that he went to Jerusalem to have it tested by the other Apostles, Galatians 2:2. Paul claimed that the apostles gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, certifying the validity of Paul's Gospel, Galatians 2:9.
 - b. However, even more significantly for us, in Acts 26:15-18 where Paul cited Christ's words to him on the road to Damascus, at v. 18b, Paul cited the phrase "them which are sanctified by faith that is in me," evidence that Jesus Himself spoke of salvation by faith in Himself as being the Gospel of salvation! John 3:16 and other citations of Christ also verify this Gospel to be the true one according to Jesus Himself!

Lesson: *The pressured setting of Paul's address to Agrippa nevertheless elicited his words in Acts 26:7 and 18 that verify the error of British-Israelism and its errant influence on the cults of Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism, and Jehovah's Witnesses and the validity of Paul's Gospel of justification by faith as testified by Jesus own words.*

Application: *(1) May we thank God for the pressured setting Paul faced for our benefit. (2) If God lets us face a pressured setting like he did Paul in his facing Agrippa, may we be confident that He has a good reason for it.*