

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

LXI. Heeding Paul's Example To Witness With Patience

(Acts 26:19-32)

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 26:19-32 records Paul's closing remarks before king Agrippa with an exchange with Festus and Agrippa that revealed Paul's discreet patience in witnessing. We view the passage for our insight and application:

II. Heeding Paul's Example To Witness With Patience, Acts 26:19-32.

- A. In Acts 26:19-23, Paul brought the testimony of his conversion to Christ before king Agrippa to a climax, stating how he simply obeyed the heavenly vision that he had received from Christ on the road to Damascus:
 - 1. The apostle said that he obeyed what Christ had directed him to do in the vision, Acts 26:19.
 - 2. He explained that he then showed people first in Damascus and then in Jerusalem, all Judaea and Gentiles afar off that they should repent and turn to God, doing works that represented that repentance, Acts 26:20.
 - 3. However, Paul added that Jews who were opposed to Paul's ministry calling caught him in the temple and tried to kill him, but upon gaining help from God, Paul told how he had continued to that day witnessing to small and great about what Moses and the prophets had said would come, Acts 26:21-22.
 - 4. What Paul claimed that Moses and the prophets had predicted Messiah would suffer, rise from the dead and be a light of salvation truth to the Hebrew people and to the Gentiles, Acts 26:23.
- B. When Paul made this statement about Christ's resurrection, Festus, the proconsul of Judaea, "with his Greek outlook, thought the doctrine of the Resurrection was impossible (cf. 17:32; 23:6-7), so he interrupted Paul," claiming "Paul was out of his mind, that his education was driving him insane," Acts 26:24; *Ibid.*, p. 426.
- C. Paul responded, respectfully addressing Festus as "most noble Festus," but denying that he was insane, that what he spoke was both true and reasonable, Acts 26:25 NIV.
- D. Very wisely, Paul then spoke of king Agrippa to the proconsul Festus, noting that none of these things about which he spoke were hidden from him, for the rise of the Christian faith had not been done in secret, but was openly known in Israel, Acts 26:26. After all, Agrippa "was well-schooled in Judaism, and Christianity was no esoteric [obscure] secret society," *Ibid.*; brackets ours.
- E. Paul then addressed king Agrippa himself, asking if he believed the Hebrew Old Testament prophets, adding that he, Paul, knew that Agrippa believed them, Acts 26:27.
- F. This statement put Agrippa "in a corner. If he accepted the prophets he would be forced to admit Christ Jesus fulfilled them," what could be disastrous for him (1) as a ruler of Jews in heeding the witness of a Christian to become a Christian, (2) with that witness, Paul, also being hated by the Jews! "His only escape was to parry the question with an interrogative of his own," *Ibid.* Agrippa thus replied to Paul, essentially saying, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" (Acts 26:28 NIV; *Ibid.*)
- G. Paul answered, "Short time or long – I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains," Acts 26:29 NIV.
- H. Agrippa then stood up along with Festus and Agrippa's wife Bernice, and the other officials who sat with them, and they went aside to take counsel on responding to Paul's defense, Acts 26:30-31a. In their private discussion, they concluded that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or bonds, the same conclusion reached by the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:9), by Claudius Lysias, the commander in Jerusalem (23:29), and the proconsul Festus (25:25) before them, Acts 26:31b; *Ibid.*
- I. Agrippa even told Festus that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar, he could have been set free, Acts 26:32 NIV.

Lesson: *When testifying of his personal conversion and calling to proclaim the Gospel of Christ before the dignitaries of the Judaeian Proconsul Festus and king Agrippa together with other officials present, Paul respectfully addressed his audience and expressed great patience in waiting upon all his hearers to trust in Christ.*

Application: *(1) As we testify to the unsaved, may we show them respect and patience, for our hearers, like Agrippa, can be hindered by peer pressure from making sudden decisions for Christ. (2) Sometimes, the fact that we are the witness itself inhibits the unsaved from trusting in Christ it was in the case of the hated Paul's witness to Agrippa, so God may use another believer at a later day to lead the one we seek to evangelize to trust in Christ!*