

Darkness Has A Problem With Hope

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Date: 03 July 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Acts chapter 25. Paul has been before Festus, and he has just appealed to Caesar. And Festus has just said, after conferring to Caesar, you have appealed to Caesar, you shall go.

From verse 13. Now, when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, There is a man left in prison, left prisoner by Felix.

And when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face, and had an opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against them.

So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat in the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed.

Rather, they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion, and about a certain Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.

[1 : 2 6] Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.

Then Agrippa said to Festus, I would like to hear the man myself. Tomorrow, he said, you will hear him.

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.

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.

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. But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him.

[2 : 3 3] 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. For it seemed to me unreasonable in sending a prisoner not to indicate the charges against him.

So Agrippa said to Paul, You have permission to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hands and made his defense. I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, that 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. My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

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. 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 the Jews, O King. Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

[4 : 05] 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.

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.

In this connection, I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 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.

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.

And I said, who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 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.

[5 : 34] 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.

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 to great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass, 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.

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.

But Paul said, I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. 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.

King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe. And Agrippa said to Paul, in a short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian?

[7 : 08] Paul said, whether short or long, I would to God, that not only you, but all who hear me this day might become such as I am, except for these chains.

Then the king arose, and the governor, and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, and when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, this man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.

And Agrippa said to Festus, this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. Amen. We pray that God would bless the reading of his word.

In Acts 25 and 26, as we read earlier, and we're thinking about the fact that darkness has a problem with hope.

Now, have you ever started a job and been thrown into the deep end? You ever recall in your working life or any other role that you've been in, starting a job and immediately flung into the deep end?

[8 : 12] Now, Lynn, I can't actually say in public what happened when I started Threshold. Needless to say, I was flung into the deep end. Maybe you could think about Kami and the pie stand in Hamot and Aki's, you know, serving mince pies to Kilmarnock fans when they were looking for Kelly pies.

Flung in at the deep end but done a marvelous job. Well, here's the situation. We get the sense with Festus, this new procurator in the province.

He's actually the replacement of Felix. Now, Nero had to remove Felix due to complaints and misadministration. And now he sends Festus to replace him.

But no sooner than he arrives as he flung into the mess that Felix left behind between the Jews and this Jewish Roman prisoner called Paul. Three days in, it says, for Festus.

But two years on for the Jews, two years on and they're still trying to kill Paul. What does that say? Having a new procurator in the province might mean that their plan is back on track.

[9 : 21] Their plan to ambush Paul. All they need to do is convince Festus to move Paul. Remember, the last time Paul was moved, he had a band of 470 soldiers protecting him.

Now, the Jews are thinking, if we can just get Festus to move Paul, we can put enough pressure on him at the beginning of his administration, perhaps he'll be happy to comply just to get rid of this headache.

But we learn from our passage today something that we didn't learn before. You see, back at the start of chapter 25, when they urged Festus to summon Paul to Jerusalem for the sake of the ambush, Festus in verse 4 said, he simply said, Paul was being kept in Caesarea and he intended to go down there.

If they wanted to send men to go with him, they are free to do that. But in our passage, as Festus is telling these things to King Agrippa, he tells him the reason that he refused to summon Paul to Jerusalem.

verse 16, it says this, Festus says, it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused men met the accusers face to face and had an opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him.

[10 : 45] Isn't this striking? This statement compared to the Jewish authorities and the Roman authorities, this makes Judaism and consequently makes God look unjust compared to the great pagan nation of Rome and their emperor.

They're wanting to do something against the law and this Roman procurator has to say, no, no, no, that's not the way of the Romans. It's not the way of the Jews either, by the way.

It's not the way of God either. But these Jews are wanting to do this thing, misrepresenting their own law, misrepresenting their own religion, misrepresenting their own God, and it makes Rome to look like, oh, we're going to enact justice, we're going to do things properly if you don't.

The attitude of the Jews makes a mockery of their religion and God. What a terrible thing. They're so eager to charge Paul for crimes against Moses, yet Moses would condemn them.

Now, at least Moses had concern for the reputation of God. But these things, these bloodthirsty Jews and their actions seem to have no regard for what that says about their religion, what it says about their God, what it says about their own legal system.

[12 : 03] And what this does here is it only plays into the idea that Rome has to rule this nation because they can't rule themselves. Clearly, they can't govern themselves if they're acting like this.

Now, how awful is it when that is still the case? When religion makes a mockery of God, whatever religion it is, religion makes a mockery of God. When religion makes a mockery of morality or when religion seems less virtuous than the secular legal system.

What does that say? What does it say about the name of Jesus when his churches need secular law to enact justice? As though those who are supposed to be led by the Spirit who gave the law cannot live by it themselves.

Now, we can give the Jews a hard time here. And they were doing things against their own law. But there's a very good reason that they were doing this.

There's a very good reason that we see this in our passage and today. And it has to do with the fact, and Paul reveals this, has to do with the fact that there is a real darkness over the world.

[13 : 14] And those who live in the darkness are captured by the power of Satan. Now, I've just said that and that is a really unpopular and offensive thing to say. But as your series and acts suggests, we are talking about a king and his kingdom.

And there's only really two kingdoms at play. There's the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan and the kingdom of light ruled by Jesus. Yet, make no mistake, just because they are currently both in operation side by side.

They are in no way equal forces. 1 John states that the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. And Paul says in Colossians that in the meantime, people are being rescued and transferred out of the domain of darkness and placed into the kingdom of Jesus.

And so, when we read about the Jews who were supposed to represent God, who were given the law, yet they are promoting injustice, they are making a mockery of their law, their religion, making a mockery of God, what we are supposed to understand is that the problem isn't with the law.

The problem isn't with Judaism. The problem isn't with their God. The problem is that they themselves are under the power of Satan. They are under the ruler of darkness and they are thus acting in accordance with darkness.

[14 : 35] Now, this is important because when we see the same behavior today, we mustn't ever think that the problem is with the Bible. We mustn't ever think that the problem is with Christianity or the problem is with Jesus.

The problem is with people who walk in accordance with the darkness and not the light. Oh, how the world, how the world loves to put the blame somewhere else, to blame the Scriptures.

Your Bible is the thing that's making you do this. Your religion, there's something wrong with Christianity if you're acting like this. Ah, this Jesus can't be who you say is if you're acting like this.

No, the problem's not with Jesus. The problem's not with Christianity. The problem's not with the Word. The problem's with people bound in darkness or people acting according to darkness, people walking in the darkness.

And so, we see that here with the Jews. Problem's not with something that God set up the nation of Israel. Judaism, the law that He gave them.

[15 : 42] Problem's not with any of that. Even Paul in Romans says, is the law bad? No, the law's not bad. That's not where the problem lies. The problem lies in sin.

But Paul, what is his crime? What is Paul's real crime? Because they brought these charges before Festus and he found out that they were all rubbish. No evidence at all.

And he gets to the heart of it and he's like, this is about your religion and about this certain man, Jesus. See, Paul's true crime, verse 19, Paul's true crime is about a certain Jesus who was dead but Paul asserted to be alive.

Paul's true crime is asserting Jesus who died to be alive. Folks, may that be our only crime.

In fact, may we all be found guilty of that very crime, asserting Jesus who died still to be alive. If that was the big charge against Paul, he wouldn't have denied it.

[16 : 50] He would have gladly said that he was guilty. But they're trying to dodge the fact, the Jews are trying to dodge the fact that Paul doesn't say these things out of thin air. This thing that he's asserting that Jesus is alive, Paul's not pulling that out of thin air.

He proves from Moses and the prophets, which they apparently hold to, he proves from Moses and the prophets that Jesus is alive. Folks, may we be found guilty of asserting that Jesus is alive.

But also, may we show from the Scriptures, may we be able to show from the Scriptures that our claims are not from thin air. You see, our culture today likes to think that we make these things up, that Jesus' resurrection is fanciful thinking.

May we be able to show from the Scriptures that these things are so. Now, prior to Festus, we learned in chapter 24 that Felix had a rather accurate knowledge of the way.

And Felix's wife, Drusilla, was Jewish as well. She was Jewish. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, the first, the one who killed James in chapter 12.

[18 : 03] She was also the sister of Bernice in this, and King Agrippa in this chapter. And so Felix at least had an understanding of all these things, but Festus, he's out of his depth.

He doesn't have a clue about the Jewish religion and about these things, about Jesus. And it just so happens, just so happens when he starts his administration and he's faced with this trial that King Agrippa shows up to welcome him.

I think by the providence of God, someone who knows the Jewish ways, someone who can be standing before Paul for Paul to give a testimony, Paul to give a testimony before Festus and someone next to him to say, yeah, yeah, he's telling the truth.

Yeah, these things are right. Yeah, these things do come from the Old Testament. Providence of God. Now, this Herod Agrippa, this King Agrippa that's in our passage, he's the great-grandson of Herod the Great, the one who tried to kill the infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

And he's the grandson of Herod Antipas who killed John the Baptist and who Jesus was brought before. And he's the son of King Agrippa who killed James in chapter 12.

[19 : 21] But he himself was struck down by God. When King Agrippa in chapter 12 was killed, this king, his son, was only 17 years old. He was only 17 and the emperor was advised against giving him the same provinces.

And so, he was given rule over a smaller place up in Lebanon. And later, Nero extended his rule to Galilee. Nevertheless, he was given authority to appoint a high priest and to govern the temple and so on.

So, he was not unaware of things in Jerusalem. Festus was glad to see him. Not only does he want some insight into the case, Festus has a real problem on his hands.

Paul has appealed to Caesar and Festus doesn't really know what to write in the paperwork. And while a Roman citizen, any Roman citizen, had the right to appeal to the highest court, it couldn't be done without reason.

After all, the emperor wanted to know that his procurators were competent, that they could do their jobs. So, Festus has a real issue. After Felix has been removed for misadministration, he doesn't want to look incompetent, sending a prisoner without any reason.

[20 : 37] So, the next day, Agrippa is brought to examine the prisoner and review the case. And look at the entrance that he gets. Festus gives him this grand entrance. Verse 23, they come in with great pomp, great pomp, enter the hall with military tribunes and prominent men of the city, all their garb on, you know, here comes the king, probably trumpets and all sorts going off.

Compare that with the next sentence. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. You get a sense that Luke might have been in the visitor's gallery watching all this.

And the picture here, the picture here is that Paul, Paul is the least impressive person in this room. The king with great pomp and entourage, the king is free, the king is powerful, the king is dignified, he's greatly honored.

And then there's Paul, perhaps wearing a simple prisoner's tunic. I don't know if they would have been orange back then, but he's got the prisoner's garb on, standing there, unimpressive, nothing impressive about him.

He's not free, he's not powerful, he's a man of small stature, brought in at the mercy of another, without any honor, and in chains.

[22 : 05] All this looks, and this is important for us to see, all this looks to the untrained eye to be a sorry situation for a follower of Jesus. But two things are apparent here.

Firstly, just as Jesus said to Pilate in John 19, there would be no authority over Paul unless it was granted by the Father in heaven. None whatsoever.

All this pomp, all this power, Festus commanding Paul to come in, it's only by God's sovereign grace. It's only by his sovereignty, and it's only by his will that all this is happening.

That's the first thing. God is in control, and Paul can rest assured that he, although it looks like a sorry situation, although Paul looks like the least impressive, and the most weak person in that room, Paul is right where God wants him.

Right where he wants him. Number two, the second thing is that Paul can recall the words of Ananias back in chapter nine of Acts.

[23 : 17] Remember, Jesus chose him to carry his name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. So what Paul is doing in this passage, in this prison, before the pomp of King Agrippa, at the command of the procurator, Festus, and with all the others, what he is doing is exactly what Jesus chose him to do.

Exactly. Before kings, before Gentiles, before Jews. Although he's in chains, although he is without honor, he doesn't look impressive. I'm sure he feels weak.

He can also remember the other words that were given to him. For I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake. Paul is right in the center of God's will here.

Make no mistake about it. Everyone else thinks that Paul is at the mercy of so on and so forth. Paul is right at the center of God's will. Paul in this situation looks in every way unsuccessful, unimpressive, lacking in power, lacking in purpose, lacking in control, lacking in choice.

Have we ever felt like that? Christians across the globe, have they ever felt like that? No success, unimpressive, no power, lacking in purpose, lacking in control, with no choice.

[24 : 40] Right at the heart of the will of God, firmly in the center of God's will, there are things that happen that we are passive, things in which we are passive.

There will be things that we really do not have any control over. There will be things that we have no choice over. But here is the choice of Paul. Paul has been in some ways passive about all these things that are happening to him, but not without being in the will of his Lord.

Jesus has got him exactly where he wants him. And the one choice, the only choice that Paul has been given is whether he will give a defense or not. The only choice that Paul has given is whether he will speak as he ought to.

Will Paul carry the name of Jesus before this king, this procurator, these tribunes, prominent men, anyone else? Where is the power of the Holy Spirit?

You see, sometimes we look for great signs and wonders and miracles, and we've seen things like that throughout the book of Acts, but throughout the book of Acts, one of the primary things the Spirit does is help people speak the gospel and help people speak truth as they ought to.

[25 : 55] It's the very thing that Jesus said would happen, isn't it? Don't worry about what you will say. The Holy Spirit will give you the words. Let me just say in John chapter 14, Jesus said, the Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance all the things that I have said to you.

Likewise, Paul is not going into this scenario having no knowledge of the Scriptures. Paul knows the Scriptures. Paul not only studied them growing up as a Pharisee, he spent most of his ministry persuading people from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

And so, while I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit helps people speak, I also believe that the Spirit will use what you already know.

and I'm not trying to limit the Spirit in any way. He can do what he pleases. But that is to say that the Spirit illuminates the Word to us. See, we want the Word in our heart.

Jesus said, the Holy Spirit will bring to you remembrance the things that I've said, not the things that I've not said, not the things that you don't know. Don't worry, the Holy Spirit will bring to you remembrance the things that I have said to you.

[27 : 08] The things that you know about the Word, you can trust the Spirit to bring them to your remembrance. Because this is what Peter says is a more sure word.

The point being that we have a written testimony, the standard of true doctrine to which any spirit and idea is tested against. So, if we want to have courage, if we are ever in a situation and we want to have courage and confidence when we're faced with the challenge and the choice of whether we will speak when we're intimidated, one way we can prepare is by putting the words in our hearts prior to any of that.

And should the time come, what does it say? Out of the heart, the mouth speaks. Now, one more thing before we get to Paul's actual speech.

Notice that Festus is only really looking for something to write in his appeal. Festus isn't looking for a judgment here. Despite the petition and condemnation by the Jews, Festus has already judged that Paul has done nothing deserving death.

Again, isn't that staggering? The Jews are so willing to kill one of their own people, yet a Roman procurator wants to keep him alive. Is that not the same thing we saw with Jesus?

[28 : 35] How many times did Pilate try and get Jesus off the hook, but the Jews were shouting, crucify him? It's the same thing going on here. Paul is walking in the footsteps of Jesus. It's a mockery of the God who is the giver of life that his very own people want death.

Yet Luke wants his readers to see what that really reveals about the Jews. Why have the Jews rejected Jesus? It's a big question in Luke's whole account when he's talking to Theophilus, when he's talking to people who have perhaps heard rumors about Paul and rumors about Christianity, when they're perhaps doubting their confidence in the gospel that Paul brought them.

What is it Luke wants them to know when they're under pressure, when people are under pressure by the Jews, the unbelieving Jews, the ones who are saying, no, that's not the Messiah?

What is it Luke wants to say? Why have they rejected Jesus? Why do they want to kill Paul? Why are they rejecting Christianity if it is apparently the fulfillment of Judaism? Well, this is the reason.

Because they are living under the power of Satan. They are acting according to the darkness that is in them. And darkness, as we'll see, has a real problem with hope. Now, Paul begins his defense by saying he is glad.

[29 : 56] He's glad to give a defense before King Agrippa. because verse 3 of chapter 26, the king, unlike Festus, the king's familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews.

So he says, I beg you, please be patient, please listen. Paul goes through his story. And who he was is no secret to the Jews.

Paul says, look at the verses, Paul says, it is known by all the Jews. This is known by all the Jews, who I am. Again, he says, they've known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, which, by the way, they're not.

Paul is saying that before he was even a persecutor of the Christians, he was a well-known Pharisee. He was no insignificant student of Gamaliel. And then three times he brings up the word hope.

Notice that from verse 6. Three times he brings up the word hope. The first time he brings it up, hope is personal to him. Do you see that?

[31 : 05] My hope. My hope. The second time, his hope is Israel's hope. He says, our twelve tribes hope to attain.

And the third time, the hope is objective and reasonable. For this hope, I am accused by the Jews, O King. Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

Come on now. Can God not do that? You see, Paul is first saying that he lived in strict accordance with the Jews. And secondly, he's saying that he has now personally attained the hope that belongs to the nation.

Something promised to all the Jews if only they would receive it. And third, he is reasoning that those who believe in God should not find it strange that God could raise the dead.

Talking about Jesus. Now, I wonder if Paul is having a go at the Sadducees because they seem to be the ones that have a stronghold in the Jewish council.

[32 : 06] But in any case, it's a good and fair point, isn't it? Why have a God if this God is limited or impotent? So, Paul's appealing to King Agrippa's knowledge to show that Paul is doing something that is neither contrary to his own character as a Jew, nor is it contrary to the hope of Israel promised by God to their forefathers.

And he's adding that it is absurd to think that the God of Israel, the very God that King Agrippa would know well about, absurd to think that he couldn't raise the dead.

How crazy to think that he couldn't raise this Jesus from the dead. Paul is showing that his assertion that Jesus is alive is neither contrary to Judaism, neither is it contrary to the power of God.

Come on, folks. That's what he's saying. These Jews think it's strange that this Jesus would be raised from the dead. Do they not know their own God? Do they not know their own scriptures that predicted this?

Come on, King Agrippa, you know this. So, he goes on to say about what he did to the Christians at first. Now, he's in some ways identifying with his accusers.

[33 : 23] He went out, he himself, in raging fury against the name of Jesus, opposing those who claimed that he was alive. Now, we know that Paul is not lying.

Paul is not lying, but he's also not glorifying his persecution days. You see, what he is doing by identifying with his accusers in a truthful and honest way is he is getting ready to explain theologically why he did that.

He's saying, this is what, you know, yeah, I get it. I get what the Jews are doing. I did the same thing, but let me tell you theologically why I did that. So, when we get to his conversion story, there's a number of details that are new to us, a number of details that we didn't hear in Acts 9, a number of details in his own defense, but we trust that these details are true and that both Luke is waiting to reveal them now and Paul is employing these new details for a very good reason.

There's two things to notice. Number one, Jesus said that Paul has been kicking against the goads.

You'll notice that in verse 14, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? In Acts chapter 9, we didn't get the next bit, but now we hear Jesus saying this, it's hard for you to kick against the goads.

[35 : 05] this is the first reason that Paul's saying, this is why I did this persecution thing. This is why I went out in rage and fury against the Christians. I did what they were, I once did what they are doing now and this is why, because I was kicking against the goads.

Now, what does that mean? Paul is explaining that while he lived a thoroughly Jewish life, and although he's saying that Jesus' resurrection was the hope of Israel all along, the reason he opposed the name of Jesus and persecuted the Jews is because he was being slow and stubborn to accept the truth about Jesus.

He was fighting against his own scriptures. He was fighting against his own God. He's saying, I was kicking against the goads. Stubborn, slow to understand and accept the truth about Jesus.

it's like a child. Imagine a child when they're being disciplined starts thrashing out, thrashing and kicking and screaming. That's what Paul's persecution of the Christians was, that Jesus was pressing in at him, probably through Stephen and his testimony.

Jesus is pressing in on Paul who knew the scriptures and Paul thrashes out and persecution. No, I don't want to accept it. I don't want to do it.

[36 : 33] I don't want to submit. Yet the reality was that this was a symptom of the real problem. And number two, this is what Paul says, I'll accept that these Jews are doing that to me.

I once did that. Here is why. Because like me, it is a symptom of being blind and in the darkness and under the power of Satan.

That's the new information we get in chapter 15, isn't it, and 16 and following. To open their eyes that they might turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

Something we didn't realize before from Acts 9 or Acts 22, Jesus, when he appeared to Paul, told him that when he was sending them to the Jews and Gentiles, he was sending them to open the eyes, implying that their eyes are blinded, so that they may turn from darkness to light, implying that they are in darkness, turn from the power of Satan to God, implying that they are under the power of Satan, that they might receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are being sanctified by faith in Jesus.

Why did Paul oppose the name of Jesus and persecute the Christians in raging fury, hunting them down to foreign cities? Because Paul himself, though a devout Jew, was nonetheless blind, in darkness, and living under the power of Satan.

[38 : 00] And by saying that about himself, he's saying that's why the Jews are doing what they're doing. It's not because what I'm saying is untrue, King Agrippa, it's because the Jews are in the darkness, it's because their eyes have been blinded, it's because they're under the power of Satan.

For if they could see, if they were in the light, they would testify that these things were written about by Moses and the prophets. This is why they accuse Paul, this is why they so badly want him dead.

Is that not a behavior of the darkness to want somebody dead? To want death rather than life? Even God said that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

You see, sometimes we think that Satanic behavior would be some sort of strange occultic like activity. But really, here's what satanic activity looks like.

Opposing the name of Jesus. In many forms. It comes from the darkness. Opposing the name of Jesus.

[39 : 11] The Antichrist Antichrist. And so are those that are blinded by him. So are those that live in accordance with the darkness that is within them.

And so Paul is saying here, though, this problem is not just for the Jews. This is one of the big things that Paul is saying. This is not just a problem for these Jews.

Yeah, look at them. They want me dead, but here, this problem is a worldwide problem. Problems not just for the Jews, but for everyone, Gentiles included, Festus included.

Paul's defense is that Jesus is not only the hope of Israel, Jesus is the hope of the world. To open the eyes of the world by the gospel, that everyone, not just the Jews, that everyone, all people may turn from darkness to light, that all people may turn from the power of Satan to God, that all people might receive forgiveness of sins.

Do we need it? Yes. Does the world need it? Yes. All people would receive forgiveness of sins and a place among the sanctified in Jesus.

[40 : 25] All people. That's the glorious thing about the gospel. Paul is saying all the world need this. You, Festus, need this. Everyone needs this.

But here's the glorious thing, here's the good news. Jesus is offering it. Jesus is the very one that can open your eyes. Jesus is the very one that can take you out of darkness and bring you into light.

Jesus is the one who can release you from the power of Satan to God. Jesus is the one who can forgive you, clear your debt. Jesus is the one who can give you a place among the sanctified.

Jesus is the one who can save you. He's the only one. God will what's the alternative? To remain blind? To remain in the darkness? To remain under the power of Satan?

To have no forgiveness but only guilt? Only judgment? The same destination as Satan himself? To not have a place among the sanctified? Paul states plainly that this is in complete accordance with Moses and the prophets.

[41 : 34] Verse 22 he said, I'm saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass. 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.

That's what the mission of the church is, to proclaim light to the world. That's the gospel. Yet how do people respond? How does Festus respond?

Paul, you are out of your mind. Now the message of light does some strange things, does sound strange to those in the darkness.

And all the more it sounds strange to those who are unaware of the story. Festus was unaware of the scriptures. And that's why Paul turns and says, I'm not out of my mind. King Agrippa knows about this, don't you King?

You see sometimes the world thinks that we are out of our minds. Sometimes when we say things about our faith, an ancient faith, the world thinks that we're out of our minds.

[42 : 42] Because we're living in a post-Christian culture, a non-Christian culture, a culture that's not familiar with the Bible, not familiar with Judaism, they don't see the connections with Jesus, they think that we're pulling these things out of thin air, but we're not.

And so, we also must be careful not to assume that they know what we're talking about, or that they would know the meaning of our Christian words. We need to assume that the world is unaware of these things.

Our culture, our culture is unaware of these things, like Festus. People in our culture often think that faith equals blind belief.

A man rose from the dead? You're out of your mind. No, we're not. We're not pulling these things out of thin air. People in our culture think that faith is unreasonable, but we shouldn't give them that impression.

We shouldn't give them that impression. We should be able to reason from the Scriptures that these things are so. Paul says, I'm not out of my mind, most excellent Festus. I'm speaking true and rational words.

[43 : 56] And he tells him that the king should know about these things. If Festus doesn't want to listen to Paul, then he should at least respect his friend, King Agrippa, who can attest to what Paul is saying.

It isn't some novel idea that Paul came up with. The king, yeah, Paul is talking about what the Old Testament talks about. So Paul challenges the king.

He says, do you believe the prophets? King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe. I know that you know what I'm talking about here. He's not calling King Agrippa a believer in Jesus, but rather he's saying at the very least, Agrippa knows that Paul is not out of his mind.

Agrippa knows that what Paul is saying is true and rational. May it be that when we speak about the hope within us that we are found saying that which is true and rational. See, Paul, Peter writes this in his first letter.

We should always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us, to do it with gentleness and respect. There's no point, if you're ever accused of being out of your mind, there's no point in acting out of your mind in response.

[45 : 09] It's only going to prove their point. here's the thing. We can really be confident, though. We can be confident that our faith and our hope really is true and rational.

Our culture wants to accuse us of being unrational, irrational, unreasoned. Our hope really is true and rational.

Jesus rose from the dead is not a new thing, and it's not an irrational thing. It's really not an irrational thing. When you look at the evidence of the resurrection, there's no better explanation of all the events that happened than that he actually rose from the dead.

Is it too hard for God to raise Jesus from the dead? Is it too hard for God to raise anyone from the dead? Isn't what happened to Jesus what all the law and prophets and Psalms predicted would happen?

Isn't Jesus really the hope in which the prophets and Moses spoke about? Yes. And have these things been done in a corner? No.

[46 : 17] Our world likes to pretend that there wasn't even a Jesus in existence. These things were not done in a corner. History attests, greater than any other person that lived, history attests to the person of Jesus and what he did.

We can be confident. Could Paul persuade King Agrippa to become a Christian in such a short time. Who knows? But Paul's desire is that he would, along with everyone else who hears.

It's Paul's desire. Paul's effort is that he would speak clearly, reasonably, and truthfully, proving that Jesus is the hope not only of Israel but of the world.

That's his effort. But Paul's confidence is neither in his own desire or his own effort. But Paul's confidence is in the power of God who turned someone like him from darkness to light in the first place.

If Jesus, in Paul's mind, if Jesus can do that for him, it's no problem. Jesus, if he wants, can turn Herod into a Christian if he wants, in that very moment.

[47 : 26] We just need to speak the gospel. Her confidence is in the power of the gospel. Paul says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel. There's a power of salvation to all who believe.

The Jews first, then the Greeks, the Gentiles, the whole world. The power of the gospel and the power of God. God is the one who opens the eyes of the blind. God is the one who takes people out of darkness into light.

God is the one who releases people from the power of Satan to God. God is the one who gives forgiveness and a place among the sanctified. And here's the funny thing.

The thing that they don't realize and what they say at the end of all this is how Paul could have been set free if he didn't appeal to Caesar.

Paul, you could have been set free if you didn't appeal to Caesar. You see, what they don't realize is Paul is about the only person who really is free. In that entire room, Paul is about the only person who's free.

[48 : 31] They think that he could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar, but the bigger point is that they can be free. Free from darkness, free from the power of Satan, free from judgment, if only they appeal to the name of Jesus.

One thing to appeal to Caesar, another thing to appeal to Jesus. They think that Paul is not free. Paul is about the only free person there. And he's saying, you can be free if only you appeal to Jesus.

If only we could see the chains that people are carrying about these days. If only it was obvious to the eye, the darkness that the world is under, the chains that they are dragging around.

If only they could see the chains that they're dragging around. If only we could all see how magnificent the light that comes from Jesus is.

A light that's brighter than the sun. Paul wants King Agrippa, Festus, all the men there, the whole world, that they would know Jesus.

[49 : 39] The magnificent Savior, the King who is reigning. The one who can open the eyes of the blind. Who did that for Paul? He was blind and Jesus opened his eyes. The one who can take a person from darkness to light.

Jesus did that for Paul. did they not do that for me and you? The one who can take someone from the power of Satan to God. How is it that any of us have dragged our bodies out this morning to a church to praise God?

Because we're no longer under the power of Satan. How is it that any human being captured in this world gives praise to the name of Jesus? Only by the power of God.

only by the one who has released them from darkness and brought them into light. How is it that any of us can have confidence that we are free from condemnation?

Romans 8, there is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. It's for me and you. How is that possible but by the power of God through Jesus Christ to give us forgiveness?

[50 : 43] And how is it possible that we have hope? We are not Jews. Most of us are not. Because this hope is not just for Israel. It is for Israel. It is.

But the hope is for the whole world. It's a hope that me and you share. May God help us by his spirit to proclaim the light and to proclaim this hope to the entire world.

Assist us, it says in the first song, doesn't it? Assist us in doing this. We pray in Jesus' name. Let us sing a final song in Christ alone. I think most people know that one, eh?