

PM Acts 26 Paul's Mission Statement

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Date: 01 March 2020

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 00] is from Acts chapter 26. And this will be the passage that we'll be looking at a little later. Once again, I apologise for my cough.

I hope it won't be a distraction. The Lord helped me through this morning, and I trust He will tonight as well. Acts 26.

So Agrippa said to Paul, You have permission to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defence.

I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defence 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.

[1 : 27] 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 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.

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.

[2 : 45] 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.

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. 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.

[4 : 11] 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 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're 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?

[5 : 56] I know that you believe. And Agrippa said to Paul, in a short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian? 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.

Then the king rose, 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. may God. Our second reading is from Paul's letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, and verses 1 to 14. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae.

[7 : 43] Grace to you, and peace from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before, in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit, and increasing, as it also does among you, since the day you heard it, and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[9 : 45] let's come now, again. Well, let me invite you to turn with me to Acts chapter 26, where Paul says that the Lord had sent him to the Gentiles, in verse 18, 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.

There is a verse in Proverbs, chapter 22, and verse 29, Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings. He will not stand before obscure men. Think of Joseph being raised up to become chief minister to Pharaoh, or think of Daniel becoming chief minister to the king of Babylon, or indeed think of Isaiah.

We noted just in passing this morning how he was called to give advice to kings. Well, here is Paul standing before a king.

Though for a very different reason. He has not been elevated to some high office of state. He is not being asked for his advice.

[11 : 43] He is on trial. Even so, he uses his opportunity well as a skillful evangelist, effectively preaching the gospel to King Agrippa, and to the whole court.

Here in our text, you have a brief outline of that gospel. A summary of Paul's message. We could describe it as Paul's mission statement.

It is in fact very strikingly similar to our Lord's own mission statement in Luke 4, where he quotes from Isaiah 61, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Do you notice the similarities? Recovery of sight, liberty to the captives. The basic ideas are the same. There is of course a big difference.

[13 : 12] Jesus could say afterwards, today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. He was the fulfillment. Whereas Paul could only point to the one who fulfilled it.

but the underlying gospel is the same. Paul's message is Jesus' message. Sometimes you know people try to put a wedge between the two and say that they like the message of Jesus but Paul somehow twisted it and made it over theological.

No, Paul's message was the same message that our Lord Jesus Christ preached. It's also strikingly similar to other short summaries of the gospels in Paul's letters.

That's why I read Colossians chapter 1 in verse 12 Paul says that God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Again, it's very similar isn't it? Though again, there is a difference. Here in Acts 26 Paul is speaking of his own ministry and of the human response how we must turn from darkness to light.

[14 : 46] In Colossians he is tracing it back to its divine origin. to God himself delivering us out of darkness. But it's the same great change that he's talking about.

Darkness to light, Satan to God. Well, I want us to consider Paul's gospel this evening under two headings.

A call to conversion and the blessings of conversion. First though, we need to look at the background.

Paul is on trial here before King Agrippa defending himself against the accusations of the Jews. It all began back in Acts 21 with Paul being arrested in Jerusalem.

Paul had actually come to Jerusalem on a mission of peace bringing gifts from the Gentile churches. But his presence in the temple had caused a riot.

[16 : 03] the Jews were angry with him. Firstly, for preaching Jesus as the Christ. Secondly, for preaching him to the Gentiles.

And thirdly, because he was preaching that it wasn't necessary anymore to keep the old laws of the Jews because Christ had fulfilled them.

when a rumor went around that he had even brought a Gentile into the temple which actually he hadn't that was the last straw.

They tried to lynch him and the Romans had arrested him for his own protection. Notice again the similarity with Jesus.

They tried to kill Jesus didn't they when he spoke about salvation for the Gentiles in Luke chapter 4 in Nazareth. Now they're doing the same to Paul.

[17 : 10] Two long years had dragged on since then. We complain sometimes that justice takes too long in this country that sometimes cases drag on for months on end.

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