6/9/24 - Acts 26:1-32 - "Jesus Freak: Your Apologetics Won't Save Them"

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[0:00] Our scripture reading is from the book of Acts chapter 26. This continues the account of Paul giving his testimony before King Agrippa and Governor Festus.

The book of Acts chapter 26. So Agrippa said to Paul, You have permission to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense. I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, 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.
[1:15] 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.
[2:16] 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's hard for you to kick against the goats. 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.
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.
[4:01] 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 are out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you out of your mind.

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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?
[5:13] 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 him. 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. This is the word of God.
Praise be to God. Good morning, Steel Valley Church. Good morning. My name is Carmen Arroyo. For those of you who do not know me, I am a pastoral apprentice here at Steel Valley Church, and it is a great honor and a privilege to be presenting to you today's sermon on Acts 26.
But before I do, I wanted to ask you guys, How many of us like movies? Yeah? Yeah? Only a few people?
[6:38] All right. That's what I thought. Have you guys ever seen a preview for a movie that you were so excited that you couldn't wait to see in the theaters? Yeah? Yeah?

So, in fact, I can actually remember a certain movie while I was actually in school that I couldn't wait to see. How many of you guys have ever heard of the movie The Waterboy?
Yeah? All right. Good. So, some of you who may not have known or may not know what The Waterboy is, it stars Adam Sandler, and it's about a young man named Bobby Boucher who was a lowly waterboy for a college football team until the coach discovers, who's played by Fonzie from Happy Days, who actually discovers his amazing talent to tackle people three times his size.
So, he signs The Waterboy as a new star player for the football team, and Bobby must keep it a secret from his overbearing and domineering mother.
So, I could not wait to see this movie growing up. I was, that was all me and my friends were talking about. We loved Adam Sandler. We were looking forward to it. And over the last next few weeks, speaking of domineering mothers, I remember badgering my poor mother week after week, day after day about this movie.
[8:02] I wanted to see it. I needed to see it. All my friends were going to go see it. And so, finally, my mom agreed to bring me, the gracious person that she is, to go see the movie, despite it being PG-13.

I think I was like 12 or something at the time. So, then the day finally came. The day had arrived, and the movie was released in theaters. And I badgered my mom again.
I'm like, mom, we have to get the ticket. All my friends are going to be there. There is going to be a line surrounding the movie theater. And she's like, okay, Carmen, just shut up, we'll go. And we ended up going, and we went an hour early.
And guys, I'm telling you, the line, it was nuts. It was crazy. It was non-existent. We were literally the only ones in the parking lot.
And it was absolutely terrible. But hey, it was fun times. So, now, thankfully, like I said, I had a very graceful mother who took my ferocity for seeing the water boy and listened to me.
[9:06] And listened to me. And took me to go see it. So, like I said, I think she just did it for me to shut up. But, and she listened. So, what I'm trying to get at here is, how many of us, when we're trying to persuade someone about something, it falls on deaf ears?

Whether it be a movie or a book or maybe a new restaurant that we just tried out. Or maybe, Brent, country music. You have to try it out. It's good.
It's really good. I'll pray for you. I'll pray for you. It's frustrating, isn't it? When you try to convince someone, like, hey, this is good. This taco is really delicious. But it falls on deaf ears.
What happens when you try to talk to someone regarding something a little bit more serious? When you give advice to your friends when they're having issues or a dilemma in their life, whether it's their finances or their health or their marriage or even their salvation?
What is it that when we share this gospel and defend it well, it sometimes seemingly falls on deaf ears? Don't they know that we're trying, we're doing this out of love?

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[10:18] Don't they know that there is great hope and peace in having their faith in Jesus Christ? We're talking about internal life or eternal damnation.

We explain to them. We try to reason with them. We share with them our testimony and how God has changed us. So why don't they listen? It's surely something we need to work on.
I need to know more. I need to study more. I need to be more convincing. They need to see. They must see. But instead, they run. They delay. And they even sometimes become hostile.
Call us names and consider us freaks. It must be something we're doing wrong. Either in our evangelism, that is the proclamation, the sharing of the gospel message, or our apologetics, the defense of our faith.
What can we do to better persuade and open the eyes of those who God brings into our lives so that we can see the light, so that they can see the light that is in Jesus Christ?
[11:28] Well, in today's sermon, I've titled, Jesus Freak, your apologetics won't save them. We'll be diving deeper into today's text by first examining Paul's defense of his faith by way of leveraging his audience's presuppositions and his personal testimony in front of King Agrippa and Festus and then the response.

In true thematic fashion, we're going to travel back in time to set the stage and watch as Paul contends with his audience, see the conflict rise to a perilous and dramatic climax, to finally being shown how it all ends.
In doing so, we'll be able to learn from Paul and see what can be done by us to bring a spiritually dead sinner to saving faith and bring them into the kingdom of heaven.
Let us pray. Father, as we approach you today and glorify your name and come as a family to worship you, I pray that these words and that your Holy Spirit comes down and is able to soften our hearts and open our eyes and our ears, Father, that we're able to hear your words and know the will you have for our lives.
Father, I pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, for those of you who have been with us over the last few weeks, we've been making our way through Acts and we've seen Paul make his journey to Rome.
[13:06] So, for those of you who are just joining us today, you may be asking, how did we get here? What's going on? Why am I joining this story near the end?

We're in chapter 26. Aren't there only 28 chapters in Acts? What? Huh? So, never fear for your trusty expository tour guide is here. So, keeping with this movie and cinematic theme as read by Duffy so beautifully, we're going to go back in time so come with me on a journey in a world where faith is tested and courage is the only way forward.
One man's journey will captivate audiences everywhere. Join Paul as he embarks on a journey to Rome through turbulent times navigating betrayal, persecution, and miraculous encounters along the way.
Cue the various scenes flash across the screen. Paul preaching in the marketplace in Damascus and Jerusalem and Judea to all the Gentiles healing a crippled man in Lystra, facing off against his enemies, being kidnapped, beaten, escaping death, and finally he's arrested.
But Paul's ultimate test comes when he stands before King Agrippa and the governor Festus, having the opportunity to share his message with the powerful rulers of their time.
[14:26] Cue the action sequence, the dramatic music being played as the scene cuts to a grand courtroom filled with murmuring spectators and as Paul, dressed in chains, stands confidently before King Agrippa II, Festus, and others, all great and small, his eyes filled with determination.

Will his words sway their hearts or will he face the consequences of his unwavering faith? As the fate of his life hangs in the balance, Paul must defend his beliefs with unwavering conviction, cue the dramatic music score, building as attention reaches its peak.
It's a battle of wills and beliefs. Only one outcome will decide Paul's fate. Final shot. Paul confidently, standing, completely ragged, in complete contrast to the regality and the pomp and circumstance of his audience, the king.
with King Agrippa leaning forward in anticipation, Paul begins his defense and the screen fades to black.
All right. You guys still with me? All right, good. So, because the stage has already been set and we see, we can see in today's opening verses, we see Luke recounting Agrippa's opening line to Paul, you have permission to speak for yourself.

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[15:52] And so, Paul begins his contention with the audience or what we like to call the conflict. So, now, let us not forget Paul, or as he was formerly known as Saul's upbringing here for just one moment.

Remember that as a child and a young man, Saul was highly educated and went on to become a lawyer with the aspirations of joining the Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish Supreme Court of approximately 71 Jewish men who ruled over the Jewish lives and religion.
Having experience in the court, it wasn't lost on him of the importance of having this type of authority to speak in front of a king for himself. So, in a true Shakespearean fashion, Luke describes Paul's motion of reaching out his hand.
Now, the Bible doesn't really explain on what that hand gesture was, have a good idea of what it's not, but, provided the description of Paul's demeanor in previous chapters, I would suspect it was a humble in nature.
So, what we see next in verses 2-3 is Paul's recognition of who his audience is and being the highly skilled orator he is, he begins his defense by leveraging the presuppositions King Agrippa had to create a common basis, a commonality between the two of them.
[17:15] Now, some of you might be thinking, presuppo what? So, it's just a 10-cent word meaning something that is assumed beforehand, like a presumption or an assumption or a preconception.

So, for example, if I said, Jane quit smoking, the presupposition there was that Jane smoked. Get it? Yeah? Okay, good. So, what we see here in verses 2-3 is that Paul is ecstatic to see King Agrippa.
Why? Because Paul now has the opportunity to share his defense, his testimony, the gospel with the king who's also Jewish. Therefore, the presupposition here would be that since King Agrippa is Jewish, then he, King Agrippa, would know and be familiar with the Jewish prophets, the law, the promises of their God, and everything that has been said to their forefathers, that they have this common ground.
And so, like for instance, how many of us go on vacation? Yeah? Everyone goes on vacation. So, or we might have lived outside of Youngstown.
And if you ever had that opportunity to talk to someone and you're either on vacation or you're living outside of Youngstown or your hometown if Youngstown is not your home and you run into someone and you have that conversation like, oh, where are you from?
[18:34] Oh, I'm from Ohio. Oh, what part of Ohio? Oh, just south of Cleveland. Oh, what part of south of Cleveland? I'm from that area. I'm from Youngstown. What? I'm from Youngstown. And then you have this common thing going back and forth and you start talking about like, oh, where'd you go to school?

Where'd you grow up? Do you know so and so? Such and such? And you know what? Bellaria has the great pizza. Uh-uh. Briar Hill has the great pizza. And so you have this commonality, you have this presupposition that since they also know where you came from, they also must know the things that you're talking about.
Right? That's what's going on here. You see, what happens is that I imagine Paul must have felt when, this is how I imagine Paul must have felt when he saw King Agrippa.
He's like, dude, I know you. We study the same things. We pray the same prayers. Do you know so and so? Who's your favorite prophet? You remember all that stuff that they were teaching us when we were kids?
Dude, I have news for you. So sit back and listen. Let me explain. You see, church, Paul knew exactly who King Agrippa was.
[19:45] And coming from a long line of Jewish royalty, King Agrippa's forefathers being responsible for the killings of all the babies during the birth of Christ, John the Baptist, and James the son of Zebedee, he sought to leverage these presuppositions to build up his own credibility and as he begins telling Agrippa about who he was before meeting Jesus Christ.

And that's how we get into verses 4 and 5. And to paraphrase Paul here, what he's saying here in verses 4 and 5 is saying that I am the most Jewish of all the Jews that ever Jewed before.
Paul was the goat, to use a football terminology. The goat, the greatest of all time. The Tom Brady of the Pharisees, which also just so happened to be the hardest team to work for.
They didn't mess around. Their rabbis were the hardest coaches to play for. The Bill Belichicks, you can say. That ensured all of their players were kept in line. And just in case you don't believe me,

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just go and ask my teammates, Rob Gronkowski and Jason Edelman.
They'll tell you, I am the goat. I followed all the rules. If you guys don't know those references, you can talk to me after service. I'll explain it to you.
[21:09] What he's doing here at church is making the link between him and the Pharisees and the hope they have in their God. And we read in verses 6-8 of this hope in God that has been promised to them and their forefathers and the 12 tribes for which Paul now stands trial for.

You see, this hope in God is deeply rooted boldly and plainly all throughout the Old Testament. God is the basis of hope because of his known character, his past deeds of salvation, and his covenant with Israel.
Israel. As Wheeler Robinson, a British theologian, put it, the basis of Israel's hope is the peculiar relation which exists between itself and Yahweh.
The God who brought his people out of slavery binds himself to them. He is faithful and his promises cannot fail. And since Israel belongs to him and he is trustworthy, they can confidently hope in him.
This hope was the conviction among the people of Israel that God would one day come and deliver his people in so much the same way that he has done for those who are enslaved by Egypt and provide a Messiah from the line of David.
[22:27] You see, Agrippa and the other Jews in the audience would have known this and they would have understood this intimate relationship and the dependence of Israel to Yahweh. They're longing for the Lord, the yearning for the redemption and so much so that the prophets called God's people prisoners of hope as found in Zechariah chapter 9 verse 12.

As the psalmist wrote in chapter 130 verses 5 through 8, I wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word, I hope.
My soul waits for the Lord more than the watchman for the morning more than the watchman for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord for with the Lord there is steadfast love and with him is plentiful redemption and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.
That the promises made for redemption has come and that the wait is over and if they both believe in the same God who they trust and know of his character who created everything, then how, how could anyone who believes in Yahweh think it crazy that he raises the dead?
This is the connection Paul was trying to make. This is what he was relaying in verse 8. Isn't it interesting that even then there are people still trying to put God in a box, limiting him and his power to fit their own presuppositions?
[24:14] What about you? What are your presuppositions about God? Do you really know him?
What we see next in Acts 26 verses 9 through 11 is yet another qualifier that Paul gives during his defense of faith.

It was almost like he caught himself and anticipated the questions his audience might have asked. Saying like, well, if you're this goat of a Jew, a Pharisee, why was it so easy for you to believe Jesus?
Doesn't sound like you were really that good of a Jew to me. Having been an apprentice here at SVC and studying with Brent over the last year or so, I couldn't help but notice this and see this in today's verses.
So I'm going to pull back the curtain a little bit and see how the sausage is made here. And what we are supposed to do as pastors is anticipate some of the questions our audience might have.
And so that is what we see here with Paul. and it makes sense, right? Anyway, back to Paul. He anticipates these questions and in the next few verses he confronts them by providing his own personal response when he initially heard of Christ and these Christians that they were anathema, that Saul believed they should be damned.
[25:43] Saying in verse 9, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. So much so that Saul in prison cast his vote against and attempted to force believers of the way to blaspheme the name of Christ.

Again, he was in his audience's shoes. He hated this Christ movement. He thought that they were freaks and fueled by anger and rage he chased them out to other cities to blot them from existence. Christians. He once stood where his audience stands now. He never would have thought he, Saul, would one day from going from chasing believers to chasing Christ himself.

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So what changed Paul? How did he go from this ravenous Pharisee going and trying to snuff out Christians in this movement to being one of the greatest apostles for us this day for we Gentiles? How did he do it? How did he go from calling them, from being a Pharisee and killing them to calling them saints like we do in verse 10? This is where we go into Paul's salvation and this is why he tells Agrippa and the others about his conversion when he met the holy God on his way to Damascus.
[27:10] This actually is the third account of Paul's conversion and like most things that are repeated they're pretty important. So we'll stop here for a second. Looking at Paul's testimony I want us to focus in on a few areas of imagery and phrases he shares that would have struck a chord with Agrippa and the rest of the Jewish audiences.

So if you want to go ahead and follow with me with your fingers we're going to go to verses 13 through 15 first. that this imagery of despite it being midday when the sun would have been at its brightest a brighter light came from heaven and caused everyone to fall to their knees with Saul responding to the voice he heard as Lord.
We have two things going on here that would have caused any well-read Jew to take notice especially Agrippa. by Paul bending the knee in complete fear and submission he calls upon the name of the Lord he is embodying the verses written in Isaiah chapter 45 verse 23 which reads that to me that to me every knee will bow and every tongue will swear allegiance.
and then in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 13 you shall fear only the Lord your God and you shall worship him and swear by his name.
That name was Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior and the fulfillment of the law and promises made by our God.
[28:55] Amen. Second let's go ahead and although in other accounts of conversions we see in earlier versions of Acts Paul is told in a conventional manner to just get up.

But here in verse 16 of Acts 26 the wording stand on your feet followed by a divine instruction closely resembles the account of the call of Ezekiel whom Yahweh is sending to Israel to speak to them.
found in Ezekiel chapter 2 verses 1 through 4. It's also echoed again in Jeremiah chapter 1 through 7 which is another prophetic call similar to Ezekiel.
These phrases would have been like alright I remember that. Okay that makes sense. Third the phrase we see in verse 18 come with me.
to open eyes is based on the mission of the servant in Isaiah chapter 42 verse 7 which reads to open the eyes that are blind to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon from the prison those who sit in darkness.
[30:10] And if we go further down in Isaiah chapter 42 to verse 16 where God himself promises I will turn the darkness for them into light. So it is natural to make this part of the task of God's aging here.

It's important that he makes the parallel to Christ and the servant found in the Old Testament. That through Christ's work on the cross Jesus has commanded Paul after his conversion as he commands all of us to be witnesses and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
You see church sharing your testimony and getting personal with those you share the gospel with is very important and using commonalities between you and those you're talking to can lead to more fruitful conversations versus just harshly rebuking them in their sin.
Paul was humble but bold when he shared how the God of their fathers intervened in his life that he's here today in that very courtroom because of the hope of Israel is alive.
The resurrection that they all believe in and are waiting for has come by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that even though Agrippa may have a problem with what Paul is saying about Jesus that he actually understands where Agrippa is coming from.
[31:41] He used to be the same way. So I can hear Agrippa now and like many we interact with today they'll ask so what nice story Paul or Saul or whatever your name is what's the point of all this I like it it makes sense it sounds cool but what good does that do me how many of us only share our story and get so caught up in how it means in our lives and what is happening to us and what he's doing and all these different things like oh I see this I pray for this and oh this is what God's doing in my life but we actually don't direct them to the Bible itself we're so self-focused on me me me but we don't bring them back to what the scripture actually says what about the opposite for those of us that are like well the scripture says this so we have to do that the scripture says this so we have to

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do that the scripture says this so we have to go there what are you doing you're being harsh you're not forming relationship you're not being humble you're not being winsome you're a sinner too right so like

Paul we've all been commissioned and then in the next few verses what we'll be reading out lays out Paul's response after his conversion he applies what has been revealed to him through his ministry and what we see here in Acts 26 verse 19 that Paul obeyed this new vision this new mission provided to him from heaven and explained exactly what he did the so what to all this information he just spoke about I can see the exchange now that Paul might have had with King Agrippa or Festus or some of the other people in the court with questions like so what exactly are you doing here Paul I'm declaring the word I'm preaching look at verse 20 why are you doing this because the God of our father sent me haven't you been listening where have you been doing this well

I started in Damascus and Jerusalem and then Judea and then amongst all the Gentiles like the song goes I've been everywhere man I've been everywhere there no that this news is so great how could I just share it with someone just my neighbors or my friends just around me I went everywhere well how did these people respond Paul dude they're trying to kill me that's why I'm here so okay then what exactly is this message you're preaching well I thought you never ask message actually hasn't changed since the prophets and Moses has foretold that the Messiah this Jesus Christ is the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 and is the same message to small and great alike because the need is the same for small and great alike and it involves repentance it involves turning away from the darkness it involves turning away from sin it involves turning away from the devil it involves turning away from what we preoccupy ourselves with and turning again and returning to God to Christ to the goodness and to the promises that they've kept that is what I'm preaching is that even though you sin and sin again and again and again he is graceful and merciful and he loves you and he wants to be rejoined with you that is what I'm preaching that he is the light of this world and he lived and he died and he suffered and he has risen again you see church we are all lost and we have no hope in this world without

God without Christ we try to find ourselves in many different ways through therapy drugs alcohol or even placing our identity and hope in other distractions to preoccupy our time with movies or sports or TikTok or sometimes even our own family I can't wait to see who wins the Super Bowl this year oh I can't wait to watch that new movie that's coming out this fall oh I can't wait to play that video game oh I can't wait to do what what are you preoccupying your time with your energy with who are you identifying yourself as oh I'm a parent I have these kids I have to provide for them I have to feed them I have to clothe them what happens when they go oh I'm a son I'm a worker I need to make sure I work I provide for my family I provide for my wife I provide for these kids what happens when you lose your job where are you keeping your identity where are you holding your hope church it's not man-made things that we should be having our hope in but the true and only hope and our true and only purpose and our true and only reason why we're even here is to glorify and worship the living God now there's nothing explicitly wrong with these things but they aren't who we are meant to be and who we're supposed to have our hope in and that we must understand here is that the Bible actually says there is only one message that has been the same message since Moses that we are all broken sinners and thank

God for Jesus Christ he has come to save us that is where we can be found in Jesus Christ and have our faith in and he is our hope can you feel it Paul's laying into it he's doing his stride he's building his case he's starting to hit his stride and after laying the foundation of who he is how he's changed what he's doing where he's been and now he's preaching the hope of Israel through Jesus Christ that it's alive and it's it's this point where it's a breaking point and everyone there's no turning back now everyone has their eyes on him and thinking about everything that he's saying it's not lost on his audience am I a sinner am I in darkness is this Jesus actually the promise foretold to us by the fathers when a voice cries out Paul are you out of your mind and in doing so we've reached the scriptures climax now Paul as we read through 24 through 29 was interrupted by Festus now we don't know why

[39:17] Festus did it but knowing Paul's ability as an orator just maybe just maybe he started to feel the immense amount of guilt or shame or maybe anger maybe he was uncomfortable just like maybe some of you are right now when you're thinking about your own sins and falling short of the glory of God just like all of us Festus is a son of Adam who loves sin it's hard to give up something

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we love even when it's bad for us isn't it or maybe he's regretting introducing Agrippa to Paul I mean Agrippa is the king and they're spending their day listening to this babbler or maybe he drank too much coffee and he really needed to use the restroom who knows but whatever it is has caused him to as we read to politely get Paul's attention excuse me

Paul have a quick word let's take a quick break and see if we can reschedule this another time I think the king is getting a little bit bored no he interrupted him he screamed he shouted in a loud voice Paul are you out of your mind your great learning is driving you out of your mind again let us not forget who Paul was as Saul and his journey up to this point preaching and being a part of evangelizing and being a trained lawyer I'm sorry a trained lawyer when he was Saul and as he was Paul the years evangelizing and defending his faith in the streets and the temples and the marketplaces all around the world this outburst didn't faze him as we read on in verse 25 I am not out of my mind most excellent Festus but I'm speaking true and rational words you see Paul was not only bold but he was also respectful he was also winsome how do we respond when we're confronted out of anger or frustration do we respond to the people in our lives with that same winsomeness that same loving kindness respect now see what
Paul does next he really is a master at his craft in the next few verses Paul literally pits Festus against King Agrippa now everyone reads text differently in their own heads and but since I'm the one up here today I can see it going something along like this no Festus I'm not crazy at all sir you see Agrippa understands what I'm talking about he knows he's a Jew too and none of what I'm saying has been kept a secret all of Israel knows about this Jesus guy and his resurrection right King Agrippa tell Festus go on tell him that you believe our prophets the promises of our God I know you do I just know it it's truly amazing that instead of becoming a hot head Paul surgically pivots the conversation and looking at the king
Paul speaks directly to him filled with conviction hoping that everything he's been saying has landed that Agrippa sees he has to see it's what our people have been waiting for the evidence is all there just look and see the power of our God Jesus Christ transformed lives he saved me he can save you too brother hopefully we do the same thing in our lives when we truly see other people how Paul sees them and have the conviction to truly want them to turn from darkness to see the light to have hope and spend the rest of eternity reunited in a perfect love found in our God and when we have those conversations and we lay it out on the table we ache anticipation for the response now reading this this must have taken
Agrippa a little bit off guard because instead of answering Paul's question directly he does like any other politician we see on TV today he answers a question with another question and in verse 28 we read in a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian how Paul could have responded to Agrippa Agrippa the thoughts that could have been racing through Paul's head everything that he could have been thinking everything that he laid out all the evidence all the references everything what did I do wrong what did I not say what was I not personable trained or persuasive enough brothers sisters how many of us have felt this way when we're trying to share our faith or defend our faith to someone but what we see here instead his reply shows us exactly who we are and what we are doing simply put we are only the witness the ambassadors of
[45:31] Christ and through us God shines this light in our conversations so we must not be troubled in these moments because it is not about us it is not about me it is not about you we are simply an instrument in a moment of time in our sense of authority of boldness is found in our conviction that although we might believe we didn't say the right thing God is still being glorified and his word and timing is perfect so we read on to Paul's reply in verse 29 where he actually says whether short or long I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might come such as I am except these chains I can just see it

Paul looking around the courtroom into the eyes of Agrippa into the eyes of Festus into the eyes of Bernice and then across the crowd of the high ranking officials and commoners all of them who probably thought they were just coming here to get a glimpse at a king toy around with some prisoner some scum some freak and they had these presuppositions about him about what he was saying about what he was doing around all the city just to have them all shattered and be sent home with their heads reeling the full extent of Paul's offense that day was not known to Paul to Luke nor will it be known on this side of heaven by any of us however as this scene ends Luke does give us a glimpse into what's to come next so as we look at the resolution the next setting in today's text the closing verses seem quite abrupt again all of us when we read narratives like this we

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picture things differently hear things differently and process things differently but in verses 30 through 31 we see
Agrippa stand up did he shoot up and storm off of the seat or did he somberly rise and take a moment as he was walking away to look back at Paul did he sit there and contemplate what he's just heard and realize his sins before he left we we don't know the Bible doesn't tell us however what we do know is that Agrippa believed Paul to be innocent he's done nothing wrong worth of him being in prison nor to receive death with Agrippa telling Festus this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar thus ending this chapter and with the camera slowly zooming out panning across the courtroom and as we see the royal processions leaving there's Paul standing alone an innocent man in chains who is about to embark and sail away to
Rome to see Nero cameras zooms out even further screen fades to black the end brothers sisters what we need to realize here is that we are all sinners every single one of us and we are in desperate need of a savior while this presupposition this what I just said should provide Christians with a tremendous degree of comfort it's also a principle that must be repeatedly drilled into our head as we defend the faith and evangelize that the Bible is emphatically clear that salvation is exclusively a gift of God's grace therefore from an apologetics and evangelistic standpoint this means that there is absolutely nothing that can be done by us to bring a spiritually dead sinner to saving faith it is not our job to produce salvation in the heart of the unbeliever
God brings into our lives because we do not have the power to do so that regardless of our best efforts we cannot argue anybody into the kingdom of heaven this is clearly evident in today's passage that even the apostle Paul who came into contact with Christ was a master orator studied the prophets and the law extensively couldn't persuade king Agrippa by himself even after he boldly and humbly revealed the evidence for Christ in a way Agrippa would have understood in the final analysis it will be impossible to enjoy contentment in our evangelistic and apologetic efforts until we rest in God's absolute sovereignty over the salvation of men whereas God is the one who saves sinners we are those who brings his unchanging message of salvation and the truth of his word to those we have opportunities to share it with and in accordance with
[51:22] God's loving kindness he is pleased to use apologetics as one of the appointed means to bring sinners to saving faith in Jesus Christ so while it may not be our job to save anyone we should nevertheless strive for the highest degree of excellence in evangelism and apologetics because we never know how he's going to use it to those who belong to him to be drawn to him saturating this perspective into our bones as a Christian will eventually result in the freedom from the unrealistic expectations about our calling and task in the great commission to proclaim and defend the faith whether we're contending for the hope that is in us with our family members our co-workers or even a hostile citizen in the public square our solace resides in recognizing that our calling is not to save sinners rather our calling is to simply put a stone in the unbeliever's shoe while reflecting Christ-like characters through our interactions with them only in our internal state will it be unveiled how

God was pleased to use a seemingly insignificant time and insignificant interaction and insignificant piece of truth that was shared to accomplish the salvation of his elect some of you may be sitting here today still uneasy about this I know I wrestled with this myself how am I going to be a witness for Jesus Christ if I can't even convince my closest friends and family to believe how am I going to defend my faith when I can't recall a verse or a chapter when I need it the most how am I going to save my children how am I how am I how am I it's not about us it's never been about us the message has never changed and it is always will and always will be about him our
God our Lord Jesus Christ he is the one that created everything out of nothing he is the one that hung the stars in the sky he formed the oceans of the deep he shaped the mountains and the valleys he is the one that created us from dust from dirt he is the one who planted the sea of hope into his people into his church and is he the living water that saturates our dusty bones that brings us to new life so what are we we're just the water boy filled with his holy spirit that by believing in him as the scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water so we continue to fill each other's cups with the living water of Jesus Christ's gospel for the wells of our father's love are deep and will not only save us but give us ever lasting life now believer that was all for you to the person who hasn't been walking with
Jesus you've been going through some things you've been fighting against God and you've been kicking against the goats how long how long God steers you to this church God steers you to this video God brings you here this morning and you hear this message God calls you to believe in him

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and I invite you to come take a drink drink the living waters of the great I am if anyone is here today and has a desire and recognizes the work God has done in you and you want prayer please get with me or any of the other pastors today I would love to pray for you solely Deo Gloria for the glory of God alone let's pray let's pray

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