

Paul's Concluding Words before King Agrippa

So far in his defence before King Agrippa, the Apostle Paul has given his testimony of what happened to him until that day Jesus stopped him in his tracks on the road to Damascus. All of this was just background information, and didn't really explain why Paul was seized by the Jews in the first place. Paul's next few words briefly explain how he followed the leading of the Lord in his life from that day forward. Here is how he worded his defence: ACTS 26:19 *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.* Let's look at these words a little closer.

In verse 19 Paul wants to make sure King Agrippa is listening to this next, and most important part of his testimony as it pertains to the charges brought against him, so Paul directly calls King Agrippa to attention by stating: *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:...* . The word "whereupon" essentially carries the thought: as a result of. Stated another way we could find Paul saying here: "As a result of Jesus appearing unto me, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

The word "disobedient" is found exactly thirteen times in scripture. Thirteen is the number that points to REBELLION. Webster's Dictionary defines REBELLION as a defiance of, or opposition to any authority, or control. Twice in scripture Paul mentions those that are "disobedient to parents" as he chronicles a long list of things found in the hearts of the rebellious. {Study ROMANS 1:28-32 and 2 TIMOTHY 3:1-8.} In GENESIS 14:4 we find this statement: *...in the thirteenth year they rebelled.* (Sounds like the common teenager doesn't it.) Do you think Paul would be "disobedient" unto his heavenly Father, and as a result be found in rebellion of Him? No, of course not. And here in ACTS 26:19 we find Paul telling King Agrippa, *...I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:...* .

Consider the fact that Saul of Tarsus was a very prolific law abiding Pharisee, who knew very well the law of Moses, and had rehearsed in his mind probably every day since his youth these words found in EXODUS 20:12 *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.* Do you think he even considered being disobedient to the higher authority of Jesus Christ? Again the answer is no, and later in life Paul referenced his thought process in EPHESIANS 6:1-3, writing: *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.* Saul of Tarsus wanted to do the right thing himself, and knew in his heart to not be disobedient unto the heavenly vision he had just had of Jesus Christ.

Lest we get the idea that the Apostle Paul was never disobedient, nor showed signs of REBELLION, let's read something he wrote in TITUS 3. TITUS 3:1 *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. 3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* Notice in verse 3 how Paul pointed out some foolish things he himself had participated in, such as being disobedient, and even hating one another!

Let's zero in on hating one another for a minute. This is just the opposite of "love one another." Thirteen times in scripture we read this phrase "love one another." Jesus told His disciples in JOHN 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* Hating one another is in direct REBELLION to "love one another." Let's not be in direct REBELLION to God. In his very first epistle Paul stated: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9 *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.* Again in ROMANS 13:8 Paul wrote: *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* For myself, I don't want to be in direct REBELLION to God, nor do I want to be found disobedient to His word. Thus by the grace of God I will "love one another" with the help and guidance of the Holy Ghost, allowing Him to direct my heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ... (see 2 THESSALONIANS 3:5). *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another...* 1 JOHN 4:11.

We mentioned that thirteen is the number associated with REBELLION. Interestingly we also find the phrase "power of God" exactly thirteen times in scripture, showing us that the "power of God" can be worked in us, and overcome any REBELLION that may be found in our hearts, proving the superiority of the "power of God."

We spent a lot of time discussing all of the things Jesus instructed Saul of Tarsus that he was to do with the remainder of his life in ACTS 26:16-18, and none of these things would we have considered Saul of Tarsus qualified to do. Nor was he thus qualified at this particular point in his life. Perhaps even Paul himself felt the same way, and hopefully he did, for it was the Lord's business to make him the minister, the witness, and the Apostle that he became. Good thing that Jesus sees things differently through His eyes than we do, for scripture plainly states in ISAIAH 46:9 & 10 to: *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:...* Stated another way, Jesus was telling Saul of Tarsus in so many words here on the road to Damascus that He was going to make the chiefest of sinners, the chief Apostle unto the Gentiles, which we know He did! None of this happened over night either as we recall Paul's life, but the first steps on his overcoming journey began that day on the road to Damascus when Saul of Tarsus ...was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:...

Ponder for a moment Paul's immediate reaction to this heavenly vision. The Lord had just told him what he was to do with the rest of his life, but how to begin, and where to proceed next with these instructions remained a question to Saul of Tarsus, so we find in ACTS 9:6, and in ACTS 22:10 Saul of Tarsus asking Jesus this question: *"what wilt thou have me to do?"* Jesus understood that Saul of Tarsus needed immediate guidance as to what to do next, seeing that he ...was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:... so the Lord told him: *...Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do...* ACTS 9:6. ACTS 9:8 & 9 explains what happened next: *And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.* Saul of Tarsus didn't eat or drink for three days, and was blind these three days, and he was left to think and ponder about what had just happened unto him. Verse 11 further notes that *"he prayeth."* Saul of Tarsus had plenty to pray about, for in one sentence Jesus had told him he was going to be a minister, and a witness, and a testimony, and an Apostle unto the Gentiles, of the things he had already witnessed, and the things he would later witness. That he would be pursued by the Jews, and delivered from the Jews. And that he would be delivered from the Gentiles too, after he first preached unto them. That he would preach about forgiveness of sins, while turning the heathen from darkness to light, and turn them from the power of Satan unto God. He was to then teach them about an eternal inheritance among all them which are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ. Saul of Tarsus' constant prayer these three days would include questions like: "How am I to do all of these things you have given me to do Lord?" Then he would ask: "Lord, how can I do all of this seeing I am now blind?" Perhaps Saul of Tarsus prayed: "Who am I Lord, that I should be the Apostle unto the Gentiles? How can I, a now

former persecutor of Christians, be a preacher to sinners, and to Christians? Lord I can't do this. Lord, I need your help. Help me Lord!" When Saul of Tarsus got to this point, the Lord showed him in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, and praying that he would once again receive his sight. Mean while the Lord had showed Ananias of Damascus where Saul of Tarsus was, and that he had this calling upon his life to become the great Apostle Paul, who would bear the name of Jesus before the Gentiles, and kings, like Agrippa, and before the children of Israel, and that the Lord Himself would show Saul of Tarsus how great things he must suffer for Christ's names sake. Furthermore the Lord told Ananias that he was to lay hands of Saul of Tarsus, and pray that he would once again receive his sight, but more importantly that he would receive the Holy Ghost, by whose power Saul of Tarsus would be enabled to do all that would be required of him as the Apostle unto the Gentiles!

Here is how all of this is worded in ACTS 9:10-17: *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Three days of fasting and praying ended for Saul of Tarsus like this when Ananias of Damascus laid his hands on him and prayed these words we just read in ACTS 9:17. Saul of Tarsus' prayers of the last three days were answered when Ananias of Damascus prayed for him. We read in ACTS 9:18 *And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.* When the power of the Holy Ghost came upon believing Paul in ACTS 9:18 *...immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales...* . The scales that fell from Saul's eyes were given to him of the Lord to protect his eyes from that blinding light that Paul saw in the way on the road to Damascus three days earlier. In one sense its show us of God's great love and thoughtfulness towards us in every aspect of our lives. Had the Lord not given Saul "scales" to protect his eyes, he may very well have been physically blind the rest of his life. The scales falling off are also representative of the truth that can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. Those who haven't been filled with the Holy Ghost have "scales" over their spiritual eyes, which keep them from seeing all the things God would like them to see, the deeper truths we value so much. That's why being filled with the Holy Ghost is such a spiritually eye opening experience. Jesus told his disciples in JOHN 16:12-15: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* How can you be guided into all the truth without the Holy Ghost? You can't. Further how can you see all the truth without the guidance of the Holy Ghost? You can't. If you haven't received the Holy Ghost since ye believed (see ACTS 19:2-6) then there are "scales" over your spiritual eyes, which keep you from seeing all of the truth. Saul of Tarsus received the Holy Ghost *...and arose, and was baptized...* in water, an outward expression of an inward belief that he had accepted Jesus as his own personal Saviour; had received Jesus forgiveness of his sins, and was to be counted among those who believed in the resurrected Jesus Christ. Brother Copley points out that a fellow Jew will not believe that a Jew is saved if they are not willing to be baptized in water, thus when a Jew is baptized in water the unbelieving Jews denounce the baptized Jew from Judaism, and even from their own family. They are

referred to by other Jews as "the blotted out," having denounced Judaism and accepted the message of the Saviour. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:22 correctly states: *For the Jews require a sign,...* . Water baptism was a definite sign unto the Jews that one had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. If Saul of Tarsus' traveling companions had any doubt about his salvation, these doubts were eliminated when he was baptized by Ananias of Damascus.

ACTS 9:19 continues: *And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.* Paul, while with the disciples certain days here at Damascus, was also learning basic principles he would later teach, such as is found in PHILIPPIANS 1:6 *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:...* . While at Damascus ACTS 9:20 records this of Saul of Tarsus: *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* Here again we reference what we read above in ACTS 26:19 on how Paul noted to King Agrippa: *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:...* . But the only results we find of Saul of Tarsus' preaching there at Damascus is that which is noted in ACTS 9:21 & 22: *But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.*

Before we continue on to ACTS 26:20, where Paul explains to King Agrippa in one sentence on what took place in the next twenty plus years of his life, let's review in our own mind the road that the heavenly vision of Jesus Christ had taken the Apostle Paul on. After getting saved on the road to Damascus, and then getting filled with the Holy Ghost three days later, and subsequently preaching in the synagogue in Damascus, the Holy Ghost led him into the deserts of Arabia for a time span of approximately three years... (study GALATIANS 1:17 & 18). During this three year span in Arabia, the Lord revealed unto Paul the gospel of grace and glory which we love so much, and what has been preached in our assembly for more than seventy years now. Paul records in GALATIANS 1:11 & 12 *"...of those things in the which I will appear unto thee..."* that Jesus spoke to him about on the road to Damascus in ACTS 26:16. GALATIANS 1:11 *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* While in Arabia don't you know that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were hunting for their old buddy Saul of Tarsus, for they no doubt had invested much time and effort and money in promoting this young man into becoming the great persecutor he had become, and now he had betrayed them would be their reasoning. As for Saul of Tarsus GALATIANS 1:17 records in part: *...I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.* Damascus however was no longer a safe haven for Paul, still then known as Saul of Tarsus, and ACTS 9:23-25 gives this account: *And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.* Paul himself recorded this event in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33: *In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: 33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.* (One has to wonder if Ananias of Damascus was one of the disciples who helped Paul escape Damascus. Perhaps he was.) After escaping Damascus where was Paul to go? GALATIANS 1:18 and ACTS 9:26 tells that Paul then returned to Jerusalem for the first time since being saved. Paul wasn't exactly received with open arms by the Christians at Jerusalem as ACTS 9:26 notes: *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.* However on the scene amongst the disciples there in Jerusalem was a well traveled man named Barnabas, also known as The son of consolation, (study ACTS 4:36), who introduced Paul to the disciples of Jerusalem. ACTS 9:27 & 28 records it like this: *But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.* Paul wasn't at Jerusalem very long, only fifteen days according to GALATIANS 1:18, where he

abode with Peter. What a remarkable display of the love of God manifest in the life of Peter here. Obviously Peter lived up to the commandment that the Lord had spoken unto him, and his fellow disciples in JOHN 13:34 *...That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* Peter himself later wrote in 1 PETER 1:22 *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:...* . During these fifteen days that Paul was in Jerusalem we read in ACTS 9:29 *And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.* For Paul it seems there was no place in the world to safely abide, and since they were trying to kill him in Jerusalem he next headed for his boyhood home of Tarsus. ACTS 9:30 states it like this: *Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.*

GALATIANS 1:20-24 covers some of this journey from Jerusalem to Tarsus, stating: *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.* Tarsus was located in Cilicia, {see ACTS 22:3} so Paul probably went by ship from Caesarea north on the Mediterranean Sea to some other sea port(s) of the regions of Syria first as he continued towards his boyhood home of Tarsus. For the next approximate five years Paul makes his headquarters Tarsus as he begins his ministry preaching to those in Cilicia, and some of the regions of Syria. Most of the sufferings of Paul that we find listed in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:23-33 happened unto him during this five year period of time in his life, which would have included the stripes above measure he received in whippings, and beatings, even with rods, some of his previous prison time, the many times he faced certain death, three ship wrecks, the eight fold perils of 2 CORINTHIANS 11:26, the many times he was left hungry, thirsty, in cold and nakedness, and his narrow escape from certain death back in Damascus. Inwardly he felt the care of all the churches. During this time Paul got a proper education from the Holy Ghost, and learned to *...endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* {2 TIMOTHY 2:3} During this time the gospel of the Apostle Paul was worked into his life, and he began to experience just what it meant to be a race course runner, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus that he later wrote about in 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24, and PHILIPPIANS 3:14. Most all of this took place before he even began his first missionary journey.

During the time since the stoning of Stephen, the church at Antioch, Syria was established, and Barnabas, whom Paul knew from his days at Damascus, was sent by the disciples of Jerusalem unto the church in Antioch. ACTS 11:23-26 briefly explains what took place after Barnabas went to Antioch. ACTS 11:23 *Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. 25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* Paul was at Antioch teaching the Christians for a year, like we just read, then he and Barnabas returned again to Jerusalem with relief from the church at Antioch. According to ACTS 12:25 Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from Jerusalem bringing John Mark with them. In ACTS 13 the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on what we call Paul's first missionary journey. They were probably on this missionary journey the better part of two years going from Antioch, Syria unto Cyprus, to Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, where Paul was stoned, Derbe, then back tracking through these same places as they returned again to Antioch. During this journey hundreds of Gentiles were saved. ACTS 13:46-48 begins to tell how the Gentiles received Paul's gospel: *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the*

Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Once back in Antioch, Syria we read this account in ACTS 14:27 & 28: And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

While back in Antioch, Syria during this long time with the disciples certain men from Jerusalem came and taught that if a man wasn't circumcised after the manner of Moses, they couldn't be saved. Paul and Barnabas, and Titus then went from Antioch unto Jerusalem where the great conference was held in ACTS 15 concerning whether or not it was necessary to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. Of course their conclusion was that the Gentiles were not under the law of Moses, and were not subject to Moses commandments. Judas and Silas returned with Paul and Barnabas and Titus back to Antioch, Syria after this conference with a letter unto the Gentiles from the Apostles of Jerusalem stating that the Gentiles were free from the law. After a considerable period of time Paul wished to return to the churches that he and Barnabas had established, but Barnabas wanted to add once again John Mark to their company, which Paul thought not to be a good idea, since John Mark had left them on the previous missionary journey. So Paul and Barnabas parted ways, and Paul commenced his lengthy second missionary journey taking Silas with him.

During this second missionary journey, which was sponsored once again by the church of Antioch, Syria, Paul did visit again the churches he established on his first missionary journey. At Galatia he added Timothy to his ministry. Then he moved into new territory, expounding the gospel unto those of Troas, Philippi, and Thessalonica, where mention was made in ACTS 17:6 of how *...These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;...* . Later Paul would write unto the Gentiles of Thessalonica about *...how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come...* 1 THESSALONIANS 1:9 & 10. From Thessalonica Paul then went to Berea, Athens, and Corinth, where he preached for a year and a half, and met Aquila, and his wife Priscilla, both of whom later became prominent in expounding Paul's gospel. Aquila and Priscilla accompanied Paul as far as Ephesus as he finished his second missionary journey. Paul then went first to Jerusalem, and then back to the church at Antioch, Syria. Paul's second missionary journey lasted about three years.

His third missionary also started from Antioch, Syria, and took Paul back again through Galatia, and then to Ephesus where he established the church at Ephesus, and remained for the better part of three years. ACTS 19 records most of this, where we read: *10...so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. ...20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.* So much so that Paul's ministry affected the business of the idol makers, to the point that there was a great uproar of the idol makers at Ephesus. The Lord moved Paul on. After Ephesus Paul again briefly visited the churches he established on his second missionary journey before returning again to Jerusalem bringing alms to his nation. His intention was to then return back to the church in Antioch, Syria, and continue his ministry there for a while, then make a journey to Rome, and Spain. However he was seized by the Jews in Jerusalem, and quickly arrested by the Romans, and held prisoner by them in Jerusalem. When a plot to kill him was discovered, Paul was quickly rushed to Caesarea, and placed in custody of the Roman governor. The first governor that held Paul hostage was Felix, who really held Paul against Roman law. Festus took over being governor from Felix after two years, and in an effort to resolve the issues between Paul, and the Jews of Jerusalem, Festus heard Paul's case, however Paul appealed his case unto Caesar. Before governor Festus had opportunity to send Paul to Rome to appear before Caesar, King Agrippa came to congratulate Festus on his appointment as governor, and Paul's name came up, and Agrippa agreed to hear for himself Paul case.

What we have just reviewed in Paul's life, since his seeing the heavenly vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus, is covered in four verses of ACTS 26 in Paul speech before King Agrippa. Before we look at Paul's brief description before Agrippa on what took

place in some twenty plus years of his life, let's first go back and once again consider what Ananias of Damascus was shown by the Lord in a vision back in ACTS 9:15. Recall here Ananias was questioning the Lord concerning the calling of Saul of Tarsus, *...But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:...* (ACTS 9:15). Realize our focus in the review we just did was on what took place in Paul's life since seeing the vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus. We dug into some detail on how the Lord brought Saul of Tarsus to the point he was called the Apostle Paul, and this transformation from chiefest of sinners to chief of the Apostles didn't happen over night, but rather through a growing process in the Lord that lasted years, and really continued until the day the Lord took him home. But the Lord told Ananias of Damascus that when Saul of Tarsus would appear before kings, like King Agrippa, the focus wasn't to be on Paul, but rather on his bearing Jesus name before the king. Thus we find the emphasis in ACTS 26:20-23 to be upon Christ, and not upon Paul's accomplishments. Such is the characteristics of all good testimonies, that is what God has allowed Jesus Christ to do in our lives! And in essence Paul preached before King Agrippa the very same thing he first preached in the synagogues of Damascus back in ACTS 9:20, which stated: *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* Here is how Paul stated twenty plus years of his testimony, as he proclaimed Jesus name before King Agrippa: ACTS 26:20 *But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

Of everything Paul told King Agrippa, these were the most important words addressed to the king. Verse 20 concludes that when Paul witnessed, taught, ministered, or preached, his message remained the same to whomever, and where ever he spoke: *...that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.* The Greek words "repent," and "repentance" used here are close akin to each other. "Repent" is a verb, number 3340 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, *metanoeo* {met-an-o-eh'-o}. *Metanoeo* comes from two Greek words, *meta* meaning after, and implies change, and *noeo* meaning to perceive (in ones mind). In other words repent means to change ones mind for the better, or heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins. The Greek word for "repentance" is number 3341 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, *metanoia* {met-an'-oy-ah}, and carries the meaning of "repent" to it's resultant after affects, showing how one has turned from sin, and turned to God through faith in the precious shed blood of Jesus Christ, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past... {study ROMANS 3:21-26}. Such action is manifest by deeds reflecting a changed heart, which is what Paul meant by stating that those who repented did works worthy of their repentance. Of course we know that Jesus is the heart examiner, (study JEREMIAH 17:10), and seven times in REVELATION 2 & 3 we find Him saying to each one of the seven churches, *"I know thy works,"* meaning: He knows each and every heart; He knows who has kept His word; He knows who has labored in the things of God, their service, whose heart is passionate for the things of God, and similar things that reflect Christ in their lives. Such were the kind of works worthy of their salvation that Paul encouraged each and every believer to follow after. Such *...works meet for repentance...* fill the pages of Paul's epistles. This is one reason he encouraged us to follow him as he followed Christ... (1 CORINTHIANS 11:1). What Paul is making known unto King Agrippa in a few words here in verse 20 is that Christians are to be known by their changed lives, having been justified by their belief in Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead. It was Jesus Christ who changed Paul's life, and it is Jesus Christ who changes all who *....repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.*

Paul continues his defence before King Agrippa *...ACTS 26:21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That*

Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

King Agrippa had already been told by Festus back in ACTS 25 of the Jews desire to have another hearing concerning Paul back in Jerusalem, however Paul had appealed unto Caesar. One of the specific things noted by Festus unto the king was *...when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive...* ACTS 25:18 & 19. Now here in ACTS 26:22 & 23 Paul affirms the writings of the prophets, and Moses in the Old Testament to be true, *...That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.* This statement aligns exactly with what Festus told Agrippa concerning Paul, and his affirming Jesus to be alive. These words pricked deep into King Agrippa's heart, as we will see a little later in verse 28.

Let's look a little closer into this statement from verse 23: *...That Christ should suffer,...* . The Greek word "suffer" used here is unique, only found this one time in scripture. It is the Greek adjective *pathetos* {path-ay-tos'}, number 3805 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, and denotes one who has suffered, or is destined to suffer, such as was the case in the suffering of death by Jesus Christ. The suffering of Christ was unique too in that He tasted death for every man! HEBREWS 2:9 records it like this: *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* He who knew no sin, was made sin for us 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 tells us, and there is no way any of us could ever experience this kind of suffering! *That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles...* is the way God designed His plan of salvation for us from the ages past. All of the suffering things Paul went through in his life pale in comparison to what Jesus suffered for you and me. The Apostle Paul understood this, and that's why he wrote in ROMANS 8:18 *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* The next statement that we will look at in what Paul proclaimed to King Agrippa actually magnified the point of how we are to be helped through the sufferings He brings our way. We find this back in verse 22.

Part of what Paul noted to King Agrippa in verse 22 was that Paul had *...therefore obtained help of God,...* . The Greek words used in just this statement are very powerful. For example, the Greek word for "help" here is *epikouria* {ep-ee-koo-ree'-ah} (number 1947 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), which is found only this one time in scripture, as is the phrase "help of God." Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words tells that the word "help" used here "strictly denotes such aid as is rendered by an *epikouros*, an ally; an auxiliary." There is no way Paul could have survived this long had he not received "help of God." Nor could you or I. We are all a walking miracle of God, and should all acknowledge *...Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.* Early on the Lord had revealed to Ananias of Damascus that Paul would appear before kings, and more recently in ACTS 23:11 Jesus Himself had told Paul that he would be a witness for Him also at Rome. To get to either of these points in his life Paul would need "help of God." Paul was given a glimpse of what he was to do, but was also told by Ananias of Damascus that the Lord would show him what great things he would suffer for Christ's name sake. Again Paul would need "help of God." And so do all race course runners. Each of our individual race courses is filled with God designed obstacles to show us all that we too need "help of God." Each race course runner will face individually designed hindrances on our path; obstructions placed there that only God can help us overcome! None of us can run each others race course, nor are we to try to do such a thing. Let's endeavor not to be an obstacle in one another's race course either, but rather encourage one another, like Paul did, to *...run with patience the race that is set before us, ...* HEBREWS 12:1. When our race course is over may we too acknowledge the words of Samuel found in 1 SAMUEL 7:12 *...Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.* Here is how Paul later expressed this same thought in HEBREWS 13:5 & 6 -- *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have:*

for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Recall from ACTS 26:3 that Paul had especially asked King Agrippa to hear him patiently, which request King Agrippa has followed. And Paul has briefly gave his life's testimony, with the emphasis on being what Jesus has performed through him, and with him. These words of verse 23 *That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles....* caused Festus to interrupt Paul. Here is how ACTS 26:24 records this event: *And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.* Lest we forget, King Agrippa was hearing Paul at the request of Festus, so Festus felt like he could interrupt Paul's witness before King Agrippa. Recall also that Festus died within his first two years as governor, thus this testimony of Paul's was perhaps Festus' last chance to get saved! What else we know of Festus is recorded for us in ACTS 25 & 26, which includes his thoughts expressed unto King Agrippa on Jewish worship, and Paul's testimony of Jesus. As a quick review of Festus' handling of Paul from ACTS 25, we find that Festus wasn't quiet sure what to make of Paul's testimony, nor what to write unto Caesar about the charges laid against him. The stumbling point for both governor Festus, and governor Felix before him concerning Paul revolved about his teaching that Jesus Christ indeed arose from the dead. Governor Festus had told King Agrippa back in ACTS 25:19 how Paul had witnessed *...of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* Before that we read of Paul saying unto then governor Felix in ACTS 24:21...*Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.* And even before this, when before the Sanhedrin council, Paul told them *...Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question....* ACTS 23:6. Saul of Tarsus himself didn't believe that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God, who died for our sins, and rose again from the dead until the day Jesus Himself arrested him on the road to Damascus. After that what else could Paul preach without acknowledging *...That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles....* ACTS 26:23? Belief in Jesus Christ our resurrected Lord and Saviour is how one gets saved. ROMANS 10:9 & 10 again states: *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Governor Festus' outburst in ACTS 26:24 confirms that he didn't believe in Christ's resurrection: *Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.* The day before Festus had confessed to King Agrippa that he *...doubted of such manner of questions,...* or stated another way, he being unfamiliar with such concepts as the resurrection of the dead, felt perplexed, or without a way to proceed next in dealing with Paul. Now after hearing Paul's passionate Holy Ghost inspired witness again the next day, Festus blurts out as one translator puts it: "Paul, you are raving mad, much learning is driving you insane." No doubt the Holy Ghost inspired words of Paul had pricked Festus' heart, and he didn't like His conviction.

We now get a wonderful glimpse of the mind set of Paul, and where his focus clearly was. Try and imagine what you would have done in the same situation. You are giving your testimony before a king, a governor, and his piers, and you are interrupted by the governor, what would be your reaction? None of us know for sure, because we haven't been placed in the same situation as Paul, but maybe in a similar setting our reaction will be tested. Could we follow the instruction found in JAMES 1:19 & 20: *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* Paul wasn't quick, or harsh, or even wrath with governor Festus, for Paul's focus was clearly upon the Lord, and Paul was being His witness, and letting the Holy Ghost direct his speech. Perhaps PROVERBS 15:1 came to his mind: *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.* Perhaps by now Paul was familiar with the words Jesus spoke unto His disciples back in LUKE 12:11 & 12: *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.* The Holy Ghost inspired Paul how to answer Festus. We must

also note that PHILIPPIANS 2:5 was being worked into Paul's life here: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:...* . So having the mind of Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, after being accused by governor Festus of being mentally unbalanced, or mad, Paul answers in verses 25 & 26 ...*I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.*

Note here in Paul's answering the governor, that he politely addresses him as "most noble Festus," which instantly shows that Paul was of a clear mind, and hadn't taken offense to Festus' accusing him of being a mad man. Paul's manner of answering Festus essentially showed he was very much in control of his emotions, and that he truly did ...*speak forth the words of truth and soberness.*

Paul had been prepared by the Holy Ghost since the days of Ananias of Damascus of the important testimony he was to be before kings, and certainly Paul knew here that the Lord was dealing with the heart of King Agrippa. Though Satan influenced Festus to try and knock Paul off of his course of testimony, Paul remained focused on being a witness for Christ unto King Agrippa. Thus we find Paul saying in verse 26: *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.*

Paul's testimony before King Agrippa wasn't really about Paul, or his own accomplishments, but rather his testimony was about Jesus, and what things Jesus had brought Paul's way in his life while accomplishing God's divine purpose in Paul's life. In other words Paul was acknowledging before King Agrippa that Jesus Christ is indeed very much alive, and His Divine work has been carried on through the lives of Christ's disciples. Paul knew King Agrippa had knowledge of Christ, and those who were called Christians, and of some of the many things that had taken place throughout Christendom since the death of Jesus on the cross. This is why Paul acknowledged in verse 26 *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.*

Notice in verse 26 that Paul uses the phrase "these things" twice in addressing the king. The phrase "these things" is found approximately three hundred times in scripture, and studying the phrase "these things" will take you from GENESIS to the last words in REVELATION. Let's take a quick look at some of "these things" referenced of Jesus. In JOHN 16: we read these words of Jesus: *1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. 2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. 5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. ...25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. ...33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* Note that Jesus referenced "these things" seven times in JOHN 16. The Apostle John took note of "these things" Jesus spoke about, and later wrote of himself in JOHN 21:24 & 25 stating: *This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.* Later in 1 JOHN 5:13 John again writes: *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* To each of the seven churches in REVELATION 2 and 3 we read of Jesus addressing them to note "these things" which He was specifically writing unto them. The last word John records in REVELATION are these: REVELATION 22:20 *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our*

Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Thus we see the importance placed in scripture of “these things” spoken of, and written about, and accomplished by Jesus.

After His resurrection Jesus appeared unto his disciples several different times. One of these occasions is recorded in LUKE 24:46-48 where we read again these words spoken by Jesus: *And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things.* Within the next couple of years Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin council for the second time after being warned of them not to speak any more of the things of Jesus. We then read this account starting in ACTS 5:30 of how Peter answered the council: *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

One of the people who learned from the Apostles of “these things” told of Jesus was Stephen. Stephen was falsely accused by the very same Sanhedrin council that threatened the Apostles above about teaching the things of Jesus. In ACTS 7 Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin council, and falsely accused of saying things against Moses, and against God, so ...*Then said the high priest, Are these things so?...* ACTS 7:1. Stephen then inspired of the Holy Ghost preached his impromptu sermon of ACTS 7, testifying in the process that all the things said and done of God were true. ACTS 7:50-54 records Stephen’s closing words of his testimony before them, quoting from ISAIAH 66 saying: *Hath not my hand made all these things? 51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. 54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.* It was “these things” of the testimony of Jesus Christ that caused the unbelieving Sanhedrin to then slay Stephen. It was this very testimony of Stephen that pricked the conscience of one Saul of Tarsus. Saul realized that “these things” Stephen spoke about of the history of Israel were indeed true, and no doubt many times wondered if “these things” Stephen spoke about concerning “the Just One” were indeed true too. His conscience told him “these things” spoken of Jesus were true. So many that he persecuted verified that “these things” spoken of Jesus were indeed fact too. Then on the road to Damascus Saul of Tarsus met “the Just One,” and knew in an instant that all “these things” spoken of Jesus were indeed true. Then Jesus also told him right there on the road to Damascus that he was going to be a minister and a witness of “these things” which he had witnessed, and would witness in the future. Then later the Holy Ghost would inspire the Apostle Paul to write over thirty “these things” scriptures. Taking what he had learned from Stephen, Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 10:6 *Now these things were our examples,...* referencing the things that happened unto Israel. A few verses later Paul again referenced Israel when he wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 10:11 *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

Now back before King Agrippa, Paul has witnessed a good confession of “these things” of God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ unto the king. So in answering governor Festus, Paul acknowledges once again King Agrippa ...*to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews...* as he stated in verse 3 by here mentioning in verse 26 to governor Festus: *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.* In stating this Paul acknowledges that King Agrippa knew about Jesus, and knew what it meant to be a Christian.

Lest we think that King Agrippa didn’t have knowledge of Jesus before he met the Apostle Paul, recall that Agrippa’s great uncle was Herod the Tetrarch, who Pilate had

Jesus brought before in LUKE 23! And now Paul has told King Agrippa that the Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared before Agrippa's great uncle, has years after His death appeared unto Paul himself on the road to Damascus. And that Jesus is still very much alive, and has fulfilled the Old Testament scripture from Moses and the prophets of what was said of Him, *...That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles....* (ACTS 26:23). This statement then gets Paul back to the first question he asked King Agrippa in verse 8, which was: *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* Of course we know from reading Paul's defence before King Agrippa that he didn't wait for the king to answer his question, but rather answered for himself how it was that he, Paul, came to a personal affirmation that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, explaining all of this in his testimony of Jesus Christ found in verse 9-23, which we have just studied.

The conclusion Paul was inspired of the Holy Ghost to bring to King Agrippa concerning Jesus Christ took him back to those things found written in the Old Testament by Moses, and the prophets concerning the Messiah, which things Paul categorized into the four statements of verse 23: (1) *That Christ should suffer...* (2) *that Christ ...should be the first that should rise from the dead...* (3) *that Jesus ...should shew light unto the people...* (the Jews in other words), and (4) *that Christ ...should shew light unto the... ..Gentiles...* . Then Paul goes back to square one, and asks in verse 27 -- *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?* As a Jew, and having grown up learning the teachings of the Old Testament, like all the Jews who were in attendance that day, the only answer Paul knew King Agrippa could give would be "yes" I believe the prophets. For King Agrippa to say "no" I don't believe the prophets would have caused much concern among any Jews present at this hearing. Paul anticipates Agrippa's answer concerning his believing the Old Testament prophets, and says: *I know that thou believest.* The next logical question would then be for Paul to ask Agrippa, "do you believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah foretold in Old Testament scripture, who came to earth and was made flesh, and lived and dwelt among us, the Light of the world, who also suffered and died for our sins on the cross of Calvary, whom God raised from the dead, and who showed Himself alive unto many, including myself, after His resurrection?" But Paul never got to ask this question, though King Agrippa anticipated it, so we read in ACTS 26:28 *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*

This scripture was the inspiration behind the song "Almost Persuaded" written by Philip Bliss. Philip Bliss was only thirty-eight years old when he died. In those short years Philip Bliss wrote the words and music for many of the Hymn's we still sing, such as: Hold the Fort; Once for All; Let the Lower Light's be Burning; Hallelujah, What a Saviour; Jesus Loves Even Me; along with many other songs. He wrote the music only for It Is Well With My Soul, along with several other songs. The inspiration for "Almost Persuaded" came from a sermon Philip Bliss heard one Sunday night in a little church in Ohio, where the Pastor Mr. Brundage was reading from the book of ACTS -- *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* Pastor Brundage ended his sermon with these words: "To be almost saved is to be entirely lost." These words of the pastor stuck in Philip Bliss's heart, and shortly there after he penned these words to Almost Persuaded:

- (1) "Almost persuaded" now to believe;
 "Almost persuaded" Christ to receive:
 Seems now some soul will say,
 "Go, Spirit, go Thy way;
 Some more convenient day
 On Thee I'll call."
- (2) "Almost persuaded," come, come today;
 "Almost persuaded," turn not away:
 Jesus invites you here,
 Angels are lingering near,
 Prayers rise from hearts so dear,
 O wanderer, come.

- (3) "Almost persuaded," harvest is past!
"Almost persuaded," doom comes at last!
"Almost" cannot avail,
"Almost" is but to fail!
Sad, sad, that bitter wail,
"Almost," but lost!

History records that on one occasion in the Agricultural Hall in London, in 1874, after one of the sermons of D.L. Moody, his request was for the congregation to bow their heads while this song was sung. An eerie silence fell over the fifteen thousand who were present that night during the singing of this song, and only the Lord knows how many gave their heart to Him through the conviction of the Holy Ghost, and the words to this song. No doubt untold thousands have gotten saved because of this song.

Back to Paul before King Agrippa in ACTS 26:28 *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* Much debate is found in the commentaries, and different translations of this verse, mostly about the sincerity of Agrippa's statement. PROVERBS 21:1 reads: *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will.* Only the Lord Himself knows what truly was in King Agrippa's heart as he made this statement. However it was that Agrippa intended this statement to be heard, the Apostle Paul took the king's statement at face value, ignoring any negative tone that may have been present in the king's voice. Keep in mind that the Apostle Paul was being about the Lord's business, and Paul knew he was being heard by more than just the governor and King Agrippa. In fact Paul had announced loud and clear in verse 26 *...For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.* By Agrippa saying *...Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian...* shows how close he was paying attention to Paul's persuading him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ so that he too could be saved! Perhaps it was with the memory of King Agrippa in mind that the Apostle Paul later wrote to Timothy in 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-6 *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* Certainly Paul here in ACTS 26 had just testified to a king, and some others in authority of receiving forgiveness of sins from the One and only Authority who can grant such requests, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

We must realize that there were three personalities in focus here in ACTS 26, with differing opinions of Jesus. The Apostle Paul is the man whose eyes, and ears, and heart was focused upon God, and doing His will, whom we see as the main character in ACTS 26, who also points all who will see, read and hear him to Jesus. Festus, the governor, figures the heathen, who remains content living his life in sin, and unbelief of the fact *...that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures....* 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3. King Agrippa knows what it means to be a Christian, but falls short of accepting Jesus as his own personal Saviour, being only almost persuaded by the very Apostle he should be following!

Paul quickly answers King Agrippa again in verse 29, stating: *...I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* Paul makes sure all that heard him that day knew he relied on a higher power than King Agrippa, and the first words out of Paul's mouth in commenting to Agrippa is *...I would to God...* meaning: I would to God that you were persuaded to become a Christian. Actually Paul's words were a little stronger in meaning than even that. An expounded translation of the meaning of what Paul said reads something like this: "It would be my prayer to God, that both in some degree, and in a great degree, that not only thou, oh King Agrippa, but also all that hear me this day would be persuaded, whether by few words or many, and whether you mean it would take much more than this, or only a little more than what has been said already to become a Christian, such as I am, except without the restraints of these bonds." If there

had been any audience commotion after Festus interruption, or Agrippa's response, it was quickly squelched by Paul's one sentence calm appeal, the equivalent of an altar call. The Holy Ghost was speaking to all that heard Paul that day, and no doubt a great silence fell over the assembly as the governor and king pondered what next to do. Obviously Paul had shown he wasn't a mad man as Festus had stated, and surly all in attendance had witnessed an outward expression of the inward peace Paul manifested in his bearing Jesus name before King Agrippa. They knew he had something that they didn't have, which boils down to this: Paul had forgiveness of sins, and they all were still dead in trespasses and sins. Paul also knew that the Lord was dealing with their hearts as his lips fell silent. Paul said nothing more as the Holy Ghost spoke to their hearts.

How much time elapsed between verses 29 and 30 we are not told. Paul had just told this crowd of so called important people about the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, who had set him free from the bondage of sin on the road to Damascus. In so many words Paul had also told the king, and those in attendance, of the freedom that he had been given from his sins, and how the Lord had led him through thick and thin over much of the world preaching to all men every where *...that they should repent and turn to God...* as we noted in ACTS 26:20. Paul had just preached this same message to King Agrippa, and his wife Bernice, and to governor Festus, and to all those present at this hearing. To the outside observer it appeared that Paul was the prisoner, which he was, but he was also free in Christ. JOHN 8:36 *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* So we note that to the heart examiner it was Paul who experienced freedom, and it was the so called important people who were really the ones in bondage here. The only one we know of in this whole assembly at peace with God was the Apostle Paul. He had already written in ROMANS 5:1 *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:...* Once one knows Jesus as their own personal Saviour they too have peace with God, and then they can experience the unexplainable, the peace of God. PHILIPPIANS 4:7 *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* Those who heard Paul speak that day before King Agrippa couldn't understand the peace Paul was displaying. And Paul himself was experiencing God's peace in his heart, and mind during this most trying time in his life, and all the observers here at Caesarea witnessed it. Later Paul was also able to encourage each of us as we face the "all things" in life, as he penned COLOSSIANS 3:15 *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

As we mentioned above, before Agrippa Paul was finished speaking, but the Lord continued speaking to the hearts of the hearers. Though we don't know the final eternal out come from Paul's witness before King Agrippa that day, we do know that Paul's words still echo even today, for we have them recorded here in scripture. Agrippa said no other words to Paul. Neither did governor Festus. Paul was now silent before the king. And Agrippa had heard him patiently as Paul had requested back in verse 3. Rather than submit to the persuasion of the Holy Ghost to become a Christian himself, without saying a thing, King Agrippa dismissed himself, as did Festus, as did Bernice, in order, then those of the assembly departed too. They kind of went out in the reverse rank they came in. ACTS 26:30-32 records it like this: *And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.*

Thus chapter 26 of ACTS ends with kind of an odd scene, that being the Apostle Paul left alone with the centurion guarding him. No doubt, Paul had many times before witnessed to this centurion, and as he waited for Agrippa's verdict in releasing him, we must note again that Paul felt in his heart the peace of God. Paul knew in his own heart a fact first found in GENESIS 28:15 as God spoke to Jacob, then repeated by Moses unto Israel in DEUTERONOMY 31:6 & 8, then repeated again by the Lord unto Joshua in JOSHUA 1:5, and then later spoken by David unto his son Solomon in 1 CHRONICLES 28:20, and finally summarized by Paul in HEBREWS 13:5 *...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Paul was alone with the Lord having now completed the work he was fore ordained to do at Caesarea. It was now the Lord's time to move Paul on.