

v. 23 The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in....

LAST Major SERMON of Paul in Acts > LONGEST Speech of Paul in Acts

...with great pomp... = DISPLAY of PAGEANTRY, POWER, Great PEOPLE
Greek word POMP = **FANTASIA**, root word of FANTASY, FANTASTIC!

Luke is suggesting it was all fantasy, all even then in the process of passing away. The pomp and the pageantry passed away first. That day the servants took down the flags and it was all over. In time the people also passed away. They died. Eventually, even the Roman Empire passed away. It was overrun by the barbarians.

But the gospel of Jesus Christ to which the apostle Paul was called to bear witness prevailed. It prevailed, not only on that day because it was the truth... it also prevailed in the decade to come and the decade after that and the century that followed that and the millennium after that. So it is that the gospel of Jesus Christ is with us in power even today, when Rome is just a memory. James Boice

See this ETERNAL GOSPEL of Jesus thru LENS of Servant Paul...

v. 1 Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself..."

1. Paul the Pharisee: Searching

v. 5 according to the *strictest sect of our religion*, I lived as a Pharisee.

LISTENERS Knew SAUL of TARSUS > Keen Student of Rabbi GAMALIEL

MANY Knew his Knowledge, Zeal, and APOSTASY as Follower of the WAY

I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee.

Acts 23.6

Pharisee: Those who bound themselves together in small groups pledged to live strictly according to the law, especially in maintaining the ritual purity which was demanded of priests in the Old Testament and by tithing all their produce.

I. Howard Marshall

TODAY NEGATIVE Word – Colored by Jesus’ EXPOSURE of HYPOCRISY

1st C HEROES of Faith: Barcelona Football Club, St. Louis Cardinals

I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Galatians 1.14

PAUL was WAY DOWN the ROAD > FAR AHEAD of MOST JEWS

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. Philipians 3.4-6

Paul the Pharisee SEEKING > a. Truth of God: Revelation

TEXT BOOK of JEWISH School > TORAH – Studied, Memorized, Interpreted
v. 4 "The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem..."

FOCUS > Paul’s Message to JEWS > ROME already found NO GUILT in Him

...if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God...you are instructed by the law... you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth Romans 2.17-20

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew...Much in every way! First of all, *they have been entrusted with the very words of God.* Romans 3.1

Commends AGRIPPA Knew v. 3 all the Jewish customs and controversies

Herod the Great had tried to destroy the infant Jesus. His son Antipas... beheaded John the Baptist...His grandson Agrippa slew James the son of Zebedee with the sword. Now we see Paul brought before Agrippa’s son. R.B. Rackham

UNDERSTOOD, **As WE Should:** GOD Revealed thru WRITTEN Word

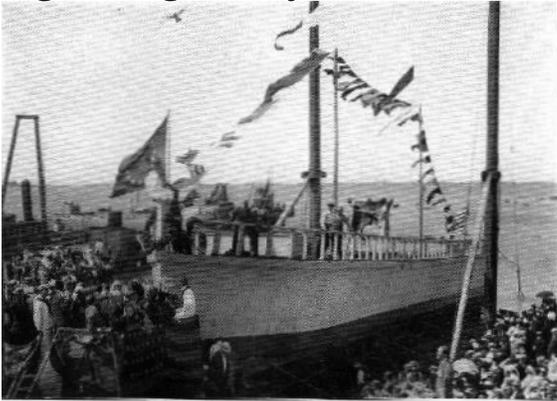
TRUTH of GOD > FIRST Enters the MIND > Requires THINKING

God Left us with BOOK > Servants of GOD Teach & Preach from Living BOOK

b. Power of God: Resurrection

v. 8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

Paul EXPLOITED this BELIEF to His ADVANTAGE in mtg of SANHEDRIN Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.) There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. Acts 23.6-9



LAUNCHING OF THE CLERMONT

1807 Inventor Robert FULTON – Launched 1st Steamboat on Hudson River, NY

Crowd Gathered – “Fulton’s Folly” – “It will NEVER START, Never Start.....”

Engines Chugged – Belched Smoke – Launched Successfully

Crowd changed its Chant – “It will NEVER STOP, Never Stop....”

POWER of God – Not always MAJORITY Opinion – ALWAYS UNSTOPPABLE
IF God is TRULY GOD > There is NOTHING that He CANNOT DO!

c. Plan of God: Redemption

vs. 6,7 ...my hope in what God has promised our fathers...the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night

This is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."
Isaiah 43.1

Truth of God > HELD by the JEWS / Power of God > Benefits the JEWS

Plan of God > ONLY for the JEWS

APOSTLES before PENTECOST > Reveal their Jewish ETHNO-CENTRICITY

"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1.6

NOTHING in Paul's Background or Thinking > Sympathetic to JESUS Way

2. Paul the Persecutor: Striving

v. 9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did..."

a. Fury > Thought PREACHERS of the WAY were LIARS > Jesus HOAX

Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. Acts 9.1

BREATHING OUT = **Angry Animal** > EVEN his BREATH is DANGEROUS

MURDER: Deep ROOT of ANGER, BITTERNESS > RIPENED to MURDER

RELIGIOUS ANGER Can Be VERY TERRIFYING > Rages in World Today

I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man 1 Timothy 1.13

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. Galatians 1.13

Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Acts 8.3

Verb describes WILD ANIMAL MANGLING its VICTIMS

Jesus: FALSE Messiah CURSED by God > Messiah: CROWN NOT CROSS

...Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews... 1 Corinthians 1.23

SPEECH to JEWISH MOB trying to KILL HIM

Paul: "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was *just as zealous for God as any of you are today.* Acts 22.2,3

Paul's REACTION to JESUS and Followers > FULL VENT of his ANGER

b. Frustration > Can't KILL the MESSAGE – BLOOD Makes it SPREAD

vs. 10,11 ...I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

...a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered...Those who had been scattered *preached the word wherever they went* Acts 8.1,4

Instead of DESTROYING the FAITH -- he DISPERSED the FAITH
NORTH – SOUTH – EAST –WEST > KINGDOM of JESUS ADVANCES

With Every NEW Follower > ANGRY SAUL is MORE FRUSTRATED

c. Futility > Paul's ARMS were too SHORT to BOX with GOD!

vs. 14,15 Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.

SURPRISE! SURPRISE!! > DISCOVERED God's ENEMY > It is YOU!!

NOT FURTHERING the Work of God > had been FIGHTING AGAINST IT!!

JESUS GUY > Is REAL DEAL >> FOLLOWERS are TRUE ISRAEL of GOD

In that moment, Paul made two surprising discoveries: Jesus of Nazareth was alive, and He was so united to His people that their suffering was His suffering! Paul was persecuting not only the church, but also his own Messiah! Warren Wiersbe

PERSECUTION > NOT Sign of STRONG BELIEF > UNCERTAINTY

KILLING People who DISAGREE > NOT Very Confident you're RIGHT!

Need to STRENGTHEN their POSITION by SILENCING their CRITICS

NO CONFIDENCE in their OWN CONVICTIONS > REVEALS DOUBTS

3. Paul the Preacher: Servant

3rd Time Luke records PAUL'S TESTIMONY > in JUST 28 Chapter Book
SIGNIFICANCE of Paul > Leading JEWISH Scholar >> Devoted Apostle
DEFENSE of his LIFE & MINISTRY > GOSPEL brings LIFE, DIE for IT

IMPORTANCE of OUR Testimony > IRREFUTABLE, UNDENIABLE
Theology is DEBATABLE "Jesus is GOD" > Wide Area of CONFLICT
'Jesus CHANGED My Life' > We can SAY it >> People can SEE IT!

PAUL > Radical Change – Attacker to Apostle – Destroyer to Defender
AMIDST All the POMP and PAGEANTRY – Kings, Governors, Nobles
Paul's HONORED Title – Given by King of Kings – SERVANT

v. 16 "...I have appeared to you to appoint you as *a servant and as a witness* of what you have seen of me and what I will show you..."

'SERVANT' = 'an under rower' = LOWLY SERVANT on a Galley Ship

a. Discovered God > Long SPIRITUAL SEARCH Now COMPLETE

1) Power of God > Power of Jesus KNOCKED Paul OFF PROUD PEDESTAL

vs. 13-14 I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground...

Met Face to Face with ALL POWERFUL GOD > Name was Jesus of Nazareth

...our Lord Jesus Christ...God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. 1 Timothy 6.14-16

SAW as MUCH of GOD as MAN CAN SEE and LIVE to TELL About It!

2) Truth of God v. 14 'It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

PROVERB used in BOTH > Classical GREEK and Ancient HEBREW

IMPOSSIBLE to FIGHT AGAINST God > Cannot Change your DESTINY

As God 'sent' his prophets to announce his word to his people, so Christ 'sent' his apostles to preach and teach in his name, including Paul...now 'sent' to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

John Stott

Old Testament Prophets	Paul the Apostle
<p>I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north-an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by <i>brilliant light</i>. Ezekiel 1.4</p> <hr/> <p>This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, <i>I fell facedown</i>, and I heard the voice of one speaking. Ezekiel 1.28</p>	<p>v. 13 About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a <i>light from heaven, brighter than the sun</i>, blazing around me and my companions.</p> <hr/> <p>v. 14 We all <i>fell to the ground</i>, and I heard a voice saying to me...</p>
<p>God called to him from within the bush, "<i>Moses! Moses!</i>" Exodus 3.4</p> <p>The LORD came and stood calling... "<i>Samuel! Samuel!</i>" 1 Samuel 3.10</p>	<p>v. 14 and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, '<i>Saul, Saul</i>'</p>
<p>I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple... Isaiah 6.2</p>	<p>vs. 15,19 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus" ...I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven</p>
<p>"Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Jeremiah 1.17</p>	<p>v. 16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness...</p>
<p>"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6.8</p>	<p>v. 17 I am sending you to them...</p>
<p>the people of the land... will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with</p>	<p>v. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles.</p>

you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. Jeremiah 1.18-19	
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TRUTH of God > FOUND it's CENTER in JESUS -

Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2.2-3

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form... Colossians 2.9

...the truth that is in Jesus

Ephesians 4.21

3) Plan of God v. 23 ...proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

JESUS will REACH ALL NATIONS > IRONY 'Apostle to the GENTILES'

His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 2.15-18

FIVE Historical Events – GOD in CHRIST – ACTS in Time & Space World

1. BIRTH – Incarnation – ETERNAL God becomes MORTAL MAN – Baby

2. DEATH – God Man – SLAIN upon CROSS, Divine Punishment for SIN

3. RESURRECTION – Impossible for DEATH to HOLD Him – LIVING ONE

4. PENTECOST – Exalted Jesus gives SPIRIT to Church – JESUS Comes!

5. RETURN – Jesus 'God-Man' will Return – POWER, GLORY, VISIBLE!

ONCE, For ALL, UNREPEATABLE SAVING Events – Work of God for Us

b. Declared the Gospel

The contrast between the dazzling garb of the high and mighty and the humble clothes of the chained prisoner suddenly become meaningless, for Paul displays the quiet dignity of a man with a message.

Simon Kistemaker

1) See God's Truth > Unless God OPENS EYES we CANNOT See

v. 17 I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light...

ENEMY of TRUTH wants to KEEP US from GOD of TRUTH --

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4.4

World of MOCKERY – Slogans – Ridicule – Disdain > But who Reads for Selves?

Who will DARE to OPEN God's Word – Ask Him for LIGHT – and SEE!

2) Set free from Satan's Grip > Spiritual Enemy of our Souls

vs. 17,18 I am sending you to them to... turn them...from the power of Satan to God

BREAK the Grip of the PRINCE of DARKNESS, FATHER of LIES

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy....

John 10.10

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1.13-14

3) Saved from Sin's Penalty > JUSTICE of CROSS, SIN Paid in FULL

v. 18 so that they may receive forgiveness of sins

v. 18 'by faith in me' > FORGIVENESS Received thru FAITH in FORGIVER

v. 20 I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

NOT JUST WORDS > SIGN of True Forgiveness in NEW OBEDIENCE

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...

Ephesians 1.7

SALVATION is by FAITH > But it is SEEN in OUR GOOD WORKS

4) Secure in God's Presence > Gospel NOT Just NEGATIVE

GOSPEL demands GIVE UP – GREATER Gain New LIFE & LIFESTYLE

v. 18 'so that they may receive...a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

MOST of Us > FOREIGNERS, STRANGERS in NATION of CHINA

TRUE if I live Here 90 Years! NO Equality for NON CITIZENS – BARRIERS

...you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household
Ephesians 2.19

The new life in Christ and the new community of Christ always go together. John Stott

5) Spoken to All People > All NEED Him, All WELCOME to Come

vs. 19,20 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached...

v. 22 I stand here and testify to small and great alike.

v. 29 I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am

Teachers are sent not to scatter their words vainly in the air or to make an empty noise, but to bring life-giving light to the blind, to transform people's hearts into the righteousness of God, and to ratify the grace of salvation that is obtained in Christ's death. But they can only do any of this if God works through them. The praise will be His, as the effect comes from Him.
John Calvin

Paul JOURNEY: SEARCHING, STRIVING, SERVING, **How about YOU?**

BEIJING Today > Kind of FANTASIA > NEW, SHINY, MEGAPOLIS

New Buildings – New Roads – New Subways – New Cars – New Opportunities

WHO BENEFITS?? > Rich, CONNECTED, Others CHASED Out of CITY!
 Our CALLING > People of FAITH in FANTASIA > Perspective amid POMP!
 We BELONG to ETERNAL GOD > Live in UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM
 LIVE for ETERNITY --- Not just for TODAY --- Seek TIMELESS VIRTUES

Perhaps GREATEST QUEEN of ENGLAND was VICTORIA – reign 75 Years
 EXPLORATION & CONQUEST > FURTHEST REACHES of British Empire

‘the sun never set on the British Empire’

1897 – EMPIRE Celebrated QUEEN VICTORIA – Honored for 75 year RULE
 POET – Rudyard KIPLING – Wrote ‘Recessional’ for this OCCASION
 PEOPLE thought INAPPROPRIATE, perhaps RUDE, CHRISTIAN Reminder
 KIPLING’S FAITH More ENDURING than RULE of EARTHLY MONARCH

God of our fathers, known of old—
 Lord of our far-flung battle line—
 Beneath whose awful hand we hold
 Dominion over palm and pine—
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—
 The Captains and the Kings depart—
 Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
 An humble and a contrite heart.
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away—
 On dune and headland sinks the fire—
 Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
 Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!

Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
 Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe
 Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
 Or lesser breeds without the Law—
 Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
 Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
 In reeking tube and iron shard—
 All valiant dust that builds on dust,
 And guarding calls not Thee to guard.
 For frantic boast and foolish word,
 Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

Amen.

Rudyard Kipling, ‘Recessional,’ 1897

GREAT Meeting in Acts 26 > Royal POMP and Robust PREACHER

Stand as ETERNAL WARNING – Lest we FORGET, Lest we FORGET!

Acts 25:23-26:32

23 The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24 Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. 26 But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. 27 For I think it is unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him."

26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: 2 "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. 4 "The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. 6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. 7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. 8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? 9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. 12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 16'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' 19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. 20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. 21 That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. 22 But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen- 23 that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles." 24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane." 25 "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do." 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" 29 Paul replied, "Short time or long-I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." 30 The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. 31 They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." 32 Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."