



**Bible Study – January 10, 2024**

**Series: A Study About Sharing Your Faith**

**Lesson 3: From Defense to Testimony Acts 26:1-23 ESV**

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## **Introduction**

Many people hear personal testimonies about a person's faith and are moved by the Holy Spirit to change or convert their lives for Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle was a person in the Scriptures who eloquently shared his faith. When Paul shared His faith, he was defending himself and his ministry. His first defense occurred after his arrest in Jerusalem ([Acts 22:1-21](#)). During his speech, Paul spoke of his conduct before his conversion, after his conversion to the faith, and his commission to do the work of the ministry.

Paul's second defense took place after His arrest in Caesarea. While in captivity here, he made his defense appeal to Felix, the high priest, leaders of the Sanhedrin Council, and their lawyer who would prosecute him ([Acts 24:1-21](#)). During his speech before them, Paul told them that he was not in Jerusalem long enough to be accused of starting a riot; not one of his accusers could state when he incited the riot, and his worship was according to the Law and the Prophets. Also, his faith was as a Christian and part of the Way, and his hope was in the resurrection just like his accusers. Two years passed, and Festus succeeded Felix.

Paul was given over to Festus after he arrived as governor. Shortly after the arrival of Festus, Paul's accusers stated their case to him. These accusers were the chief priests and leading men among the Jews who asked that Paul be sent back to Jerusalem. They had plans to murder Paul during the journey to the city. However, Festus was wise enough to tell them that Paul would remain in Caesarea. So, Festus insisted that those leading men go with him and make their charges against Paul there ([Acts 25: 1-12](#)). When Festus returned to Caesarea, he held another trial for Paul. The Jews who came back at Festus' insistence made many serious charges against Paul. Once more, Paul defended himself, denying the allegations against him. When Paul was asked if he wanted to return to Jerusalem to stand trial there, he appealed his case to Caesar. Festus and the tribunal council said he would be sent to Rome to plead his case to Caesar.

Our lesson focuses on Paul's defense and sharing his faith with King Agrippa. Why did King Agrippa show up in Caesarea? The king and Bernice came to Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus, who was new in his territories. However, Festus made the case he was handling about Paul known to Agrippa. He shared with the king all of the charges brought against Paul by the Jews and how Paul replied to their charges, including appealing to Caesar. What Agrippa heard about the case stirred his interest in it. So, he asked Festus to bring Paul to him so that he could listen to his case. Let us examine Paul's defense and testimony and be encouraged to share our faith without fear and intimidation.



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**Complimentary Remarks | Acts 26:1-3**

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." (Acts 26:1-3 ESV)

Paul was granted permission to speak by Agrippa, and Paul commands the attention of everybody present by motioning his hand. As Paul spoke, he offered the king a sincere compliment for taking time to listen to his defense about the many accusations made by the Jews against him. Could this be viewed as some form of flattery to the king? No, this was a genuine remark made by Paul because he knew that King Agrippa knew the Jewish customs. So, he urged the king to be patient and attentive to the things he said.

**Q. Why were these remarks a necessary approach by Paul to begin his defense?**

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**Paul's Early Life History**

**Acts 26:4-8**

"My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion, I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope, I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? (Acts 26:4-8 ESV)

With boldness in his speech, Paul declared to the king that from childhood, he lived according to Jewish customs. These customs include hope in the resurrection from the dead by the people of Israel (*Exodus 3:6*). Paul's emphasis on hope in the promise made by GOD to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes confirmed Jesus' defense of the resurrection from the dead (*Matthew 22:31-32*).



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**Q. What does Paul mention that is the one key point to King Agrippa that is important today about the resurrection from the dead?**

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#### **Paul's Former Zeal for Opposing Christ's Way** **Acts 26:9-11**

"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.  
(Acts 26:9-11 ESV)

Paul told King Agrippa about his opposition to Jesus' name and the people of the Way. He spoke of his actions for putting saints in prison and consenting to their death (See Acts 8:1-3). He did some hateful things against the church in attempting to make the saints blaspheme by denouncing their belief in Jesus and getting approval to arrest them in foreign cities (See Acts 9:1-2).

**Q. How many times did the Holy Spirit knock on your heart before you said yes to Jesus?**

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#### **Paul's Conversion and Commission** **Acts 26:12-18**

"In this connection, I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles--to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of



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Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' (Acts 26:12-18 ESV)

Paul's defense before King Agrippa and others listening to him became the testimony of his faith. It was the opportune time to share his belief in Jesus Christ. He told of every detail that led to his conversion to the Christian faith. Details include his authorized journey to Damascus, his divine encounter with the light brighter than the sun, hearing a voice calling his name in Hebrew, and asking, "Why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." Jesus was warning Paul that all his efforts to stop the "good news" message and attack the church were in vain and a destructive ruin for him. Perplexed or puzzled, Paul asked, "Who are you, Lord? Here, Paul acknowledged that someone greater was present and offered a term of respect like "Sir." Jesus replied to who He was as the one persecuted and harassed by Paul. This tells us that when Christ's church is harassed, He is persecuted. Having been struck down by the Lord's divine power, Paul is told by Jesus what his commission and future would be from that point on. His commission (V 20) resembles the Messianic commission (See Isaiah 61:1).

**Q. What made you cry out and say, "Have mercy on me, Lord?" Is it a part of your faith testimony?**

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**Paul's Ministry**  
**Acts 26:19-23**

"Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. For this reason, the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day, I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles." (Act 26:14, 19-23 ESV)

Paul wrapped up his testimony by telling King Agrippa that he obeyed the heavenly vision given to him. Also, he preached the gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles, calling them to repentance, for which he was captured by the Jews to be killed. He told the king that with GOD'S help, he has testified to those who are small and great, proclaiming what the prophets and Moses declared



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would happen to Christ. That Christ suffered death and rose from the dead to declare light to both the Jews and the Gentiles.

#### The End Result (Read Acts 26:24-29)

Paul's testimony stirred the souls of those listening. Festus yelled out to Paul that he was out of his mind and his great learning was the cause of it. King Agrippa responded to Paul by asking if he thought he could persuade him to become a Christian in that short time. Paul did not back down in silence. He continued by saying that he wished everybody present would hear him and be saved. This is a compelling conclusion for him sharing his faith.

**Q. What would be your desire when sharing the gospel?**

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#### Endnotes

1. Drs. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1983), 424-426.
2. Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture is taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®*, ESV®, Copyright©2001, 2007, 2011, 2016 by Crossway Books and Bibles, A Publishing Ministry of Good News Publishers and used by permission. All rights reserved.