

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 75

I. Exposition of Chapter Twenty Six (Continued).

A. Verses 24-32 – Festus and Agrippa Respond to Paul’s Message and Testimony.

1. Verse 24 – “Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!’” – The message that Paul was bringing was so foreign to Festus’ thinking that he accuses Paul of being out of his mind. It’s clear that the Roman worldview and culture was completely contrary to this kind of thinking, especially the idea of the resurrection of the dead. Grant Osborne asserts:

“Festus, like Romans generally were (see Pilate at the trial of Jesus in Luke 23), is completely befuddled by the incomprehensible logic and beliefs of the Jews. He thinks Paul must have lost his mind and interrupts his concluding statements, ‘Your great learning is driving you insane.’”¹

2. Verse 25 – Paul speaks respectfully to Festus and says, “I am not mad, most noble Festus...” The word “noble” means; “mightiest, strongest, noblest, most illustrious, best, most excellent.”² This is a lesson for us when addressing those who oppose us. Then Paul states that he spoke “...the words of truth and reason.” The English Standard Version renders this: “...I am speaking true and rational words.” Commenting on this, Osborne states: “In other words, he believes that the evidence and the facts support what he is saying, and that if Festus will just use his logic or reasoning better, it will bear up everything he has said.”³

3. Verses 26-27 – Paul now turns toward King Agrippa and challenges him. Warren Wiersbe adds some important thoughts:

“The apostle ‘cornered’ Agrippa and ignored Festus. Paul knew that Agrippa was expert in these matters, that he read and believed the prophets, and that he was acquainted with the events concerning Christ. The more light a person has, the more responsible he or she is to make a right decision. Note that it is possible to have faith short of salvation. Agrippa believed the prophets, but this faith did not save him.”⁴

4. Verse 28 – “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me to become a Christian.’” – The way this is translated, one would think that Agrippa was close to accepting Christ. But, it seems that most scholars see this as a poor translation. Dr. Stanley Horton presents different views pertaining to this:

“In [by] a little’ could mean ‘in brief’ or ‘in a few words.’ Or it may mean ‘in a very short time.’ Consequently, some say Agrippa meant ‘In brief, you are seeking to persuade me to become a Christian’ (cf. NIV, NCV), and they interpret this simply as an expression of surprise. Others interpret the reply as irony: ‘In so short a time do you really think you can persuade me to become a Christian (or act, or live, like a Christian)?’ (cf. LB). Still others take it to be a sharp rejection, ‘In brief, you are trying to persuade me to act (play the part of) a Christian’ (cf. NAB). It may be better to take it as noncommittal, but, whatever the translation, it is clear Agrippa was rejecting Paul’s efforts to convert him.”⁵

5. Verse 29 – “And Paul said, ‘I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.’” – It was always Paul’s goal to win people to Christ. Warren Wiersbe writes:

“Sad to say, there are two kinds of people—‘almost Christians’ and ‘altogether Christians.’ Agrippa was an ‘almost Christian’—he understood the Word, heard the truth, but refused to do anything about it. His intellect was instructed, his emotions touched, but his will was unyielding.”⁶

6. Verses 30-31 – Agrippa and Festus’ Conclusions.

- a. Verse 31 – “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.” – This is the same conclusion of the Commander, Claudius Lydias (23:29), and Festus had already said this to

¹Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 452.

²Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977)

³Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries, 453.

⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 351.

⁵Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 391.

⁶Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 351.

Agrippa as is recorded in 25:25.

7. Verse 32 – **“Then Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.’”** – This seems to be more of a political decision rather than a legal one. It was in the power of Festus, as governor of Judea, to set him free but for fear of the Jews he decided to pass the decision up to Caesar. Osborne writes:

“In the end nothing changes (vv. 30–32). Justice is fleeting, and these two upper-echelon leaders are no different, knowing Paul should be freed but afraid to incur the wrath of the Jews by doing so. Paul is the model for us all. Light will rarely find anything but opposition from darkness, and the people of light must be willing to endure injustice when proclaiming God’s truth.”⁷

II. Exposition of Chapter Twenty Seven.

A. Verses 1-8 - Paul’s Journey to Rome Begins.

1. Bible Scholar F.F. Bruce describes this account of the voyage as follows:

“Luke’s narrative of the voyage and shipwreck of Paul on his way to Italy is a small classic in its own right, as graphic a piece of descriptive writing as anything in the Bible. It has long been acknowledged as ‘one of the most instructive documents for the knowledge of ancient seamanship.’ It bears clear evidence of being the account of an eyewitness, who viewed the sea through Greek eyes and, while not himself a seaman versed in the technical vocabulary of sailing, described his experiences in his own vigorous language.”⁸

2. Concerning this voyage, Dr. Utley writes: **“This trip to Rome was attempted at a dangerous time of the year for sailing (cf. 27:1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 14). Usually November–February was the most dangerous time to travel, with a two to three week marginal period before and after. The regular grain shipments to Rome took ten to fourteen days, but because of the wind direction the return could take sixty days.”⁹**

3. Verse 1 – **“And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.”**

a. The use of the word **“we”** here indicates that Luke, the writer, was amongst those who sailed with Paul.

b. **“...Julius, a centurion...”** – Centurions are always mentioned in a positive way in the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 8:5-13; Acts 10). Stanley Horton writes:

“Julius, like many of the centurions mentioned in the Gospels, was a warm-hearted officer, sympathetic to Jew and Christian alike. The next day at Sidon, Julius, treating Paul with humanitarian kindness, permitted him to go to his Christian friends there to obtain care for his needs.”¹⁰

c. **“...the Augustan Regiment.”** – Scholars seem uncertain as to what this regiment was. A regiment consisted of 1000 men and Julius would have been over 100 of those men as a Centurion. Dr. Thomas Constable states:

“Scholars have not been able to identify the ‘Augustan Cohort’ (a battalion of 1,000 soldiers, cf. 21:31) with certainty. Some of them believe this was the cohort responsible for communications and service between the emperor and his provincial armies. However, this group may not have been in existence this early in Roman history...These Augustan cohorts served various police and judicial functions.”¹¹

4. Verse 2 – **“So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.”**

a. **“...sail along the coasts of Asia...”** – This means they sailed along the coast of modern-day Turkey.

b. **“Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica...”** – This man, along with Luke, was Paul’s companion during this voyage. Stanley Horton writes:

“Luke took passage on this ship to be with Paul. So did Aristarchus, a Macedonian believer from Thessalonica (also mentioned in Col. 4:10 and Philem. 24). They went along to help him and serve him in

⁷Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 457.

⁸F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Acts*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 540.

⁹Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 279.

¹⁰Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 394.

¹¹Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 473-474.

every way they could. Thus, Paul did not travel as an ordinary prisoner. He had friends.”¹²

5. Verses 3-8 – Through some treacherous winds, Paul makes it to Fair Havens.

¹²Horton, 393.