

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-41 Paul's Trial Before Agrippa

I was once called to meet with the president of a country in Africa. I was excited, but also nervous. I wanted to show him proper respect; however, I also wanted to witness to him about Christ. In today's story from the Book of Acts, Paul had a similar experience. He was called before Agrippa, king of Judea, and he was determined to tell him about Jesus.

When King Agrippa arrived in Caesarea with his wife Bernice, Festus came to him and told him of his dilemma. "I have listened to the charges against Paul," he told the king. "I have found no legitimate crime with which to charge him. However, Paul has appealed his case to Caesar and must now go to Rome to stand trial.

"So here then is my question, O King, what should I write in my letter to Caesar? What shall I say is Paul's crime?"

Agrippa replied, "Before I answer you, I'd like to hear for myself what Paul has to say." So, they arranged to meet with Paul the next day.

The following day, Paul offered his defense. He explained to the king that his 'crime' was nothing more than believing that there would be a resurrection of the dead. He then told Agrippa how he had once persecuted the church, and how one day he had encountered the risen Lord. "I was on my way to Damascus," he said, "when the Lord appeared as a blazing light from heaven, brighter than the noonday sun."

"The Lord told me" he continued, "that he had appointed me to be his servant and a witness of all that I had seen and heard. He said to me, 'I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.'"

Pausing for a moment, Paul said, "So then King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven." The apostle concluded his defense: "I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—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" (Acts 26:12-23).

As Festus listened to Paul, he grew more and more restless. Then, suddenly he blurted out, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane." This Paul denied.

Then, turning to the king, he said, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

Agrippa evaded the question and retorted, "Really Paul, do you think that can persuade me to be a Christian in such a short time?"

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.”

Having heard this, the king and his entourage left the room. After conferring with them, Agrippa rendered his decision. He said, “This man has done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment.” Then, turning to Festus, he said, “He could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar” (Acts 26:24-32).

In today’s story, Paul told Agrippa that Jesus had appointed him “as a servant and as a witness” of the things he had seen. What was true for Paul is true for us today. Christ has also appointed each of us as his servant and his witness. Let’s look more closely at each of these sacred duties.

First, Jesus has appointed us as his servants. This means that he is our Lord, and we are his bondservants. In today’s story, Paul tells Agrippa of his first meeting with Jesus. On that occasion he completely submitted himself to Jesus, twice calling him ‘Lord.’ In his letters, Paul often refers to Jesus as the “Lord Jesus Christ” and to himself as “a servant of the gospel.”

To make Jesus our Lord, is to surrender ourselves to him and his plan for our lives. Today, far too many Christians view Christ merely as their source of personal blessing. They want him to be their Savior and Provider, but refuse to acknowledge him as Lord and Master. Jesus, however, demands that we unconditionally submit ourselves to him. He said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Not only has Christ called us to be his servants, he has also commissioned us to be his witnesses. Jesus told Paul that he had appointed him as a servant and as a witness of what he had seen. Earlier, when Jesus commissioned his disciples he commanded them to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). He further told them that they would be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In today’s story, Paul explains further his commission from Jesus. He tells Agrippa that Jesus sent him to the Gentiles to do three things:

1. To open their eyes to the truth of the gospel,
2. To turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, and
3. To offer them forgiveness of sins, and a place among God’s people.

Paul then said, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God” (Acts 26:17-20).

Not only did Paul remain true to Christ, he remained true to his mission and message. He faithfully preached about Christ’s death and resurrection. He taught how, through faith in Him and repentance toward God, Jews and Greeks could find life everlasting. Today, we have been called to do the same. As Christ’s bondservants, we must obediently submit ourselves to him. And as Christ’s witnesses we must proclaim his name to all.

Paul has now finished his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea. He will soon be on his way to Rome. However he will not go as he had previously expected. Rather than going as a freeman, he will go to Rome in chains. We will talk about his perilous journey in our next lesson.

This lesson is **important** because we learn from Paul how we are to conduct ourselves when we are challenged by those who oppose our faith in Christ.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that in all circumstances every Christian is required to submit himself or herself to Christ as his servant and witness.

Let's **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. Who conducted Paul's final trial in the Book of Acts?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "King Agrippa," you answered correctly.
2. What dilemma caused Festus to ask Agrippa for his opinion?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that Festus did not know what to write to Caesar concerning what crime Paul had committed, you are correct.
3. What was the outcome of Paul's trial before King Agrippa?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that Paul was sent to Rome to stand trial before Caesar, you answered correctly.
4. What two things has Christ appointed every Christian to do?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "Christ has appointed every Christian to be his servant and his witness," you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it several times until you can tell the story of Paul's trial before King Agrippa. Then, preach a sermon or teach a lesson on the two requirements of every follower of Christ, to be his servant and his witness.