

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by

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CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

ALMOST PERSUADED

(Acts 25, 26)

OUTLINE

Key verse - 26:28, 29

New procurator, Festus - Jews wanted Festus to send Paul to Jerusalem - Festus refused - Paul tried before Festus - Festus found no evidence of crime - Asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem to be tried - Paul appealed to Caesar - Agrippa allowed to hear Paul - Paul made a strong appeal on behalf of Christ - Agrippa almost persuaded - None of the Roman officers could find guilt in Paul.

Some of the lessons:

1. Justice is one of the essentials of good government.
2. Faith in God enables a man to remain composed under trial.
3. Belief in the resurrection of the dead is vital to our faith.
4. To the skeptic obedience to God's call seems to be foolish.
5. Belief in the prophets and in Christ are inseparably linked together.
6. A man who will not believe on Christ rejects the best evidence.
7. One who is not fully persuaded to be a Christian is still at an eternal distance from Christ.

After Paul was arrested by the Roman captain, Lysias, he had been allowed to make a defense on the castle stairs. The next day Lysias attempted to give him a hearing before the Jewish council. When he was transferred to Caesarea he was tried by Felix with the Jews accusing; later he was given a hearing by Felix and Drusilla. After two years he was tried again under Festus, the successor of Felix, with the Jews still bringing the same charges against him. Later he was heard by Festus and Agrippa. Thus, after Paul's arrest before he was taken to Rome, he had six public hearings and several private conferences; but following them all the Roman officials, Lysias, Felix, Festus and Agrippa were unable to find any charge against him that was worthy of punishment.

Chapters twenty-five and twenty-six are inseparably connected and constitute one story.

In this passage there is a new procurator over Judea in the person of Porcius Festus, and, according to Josephus, a new high priest at Jerusalem in the person of Ishmael. Though Festus was a skeptic in religion, yet in civil matters he seems to have been a more just governor than Felix. There was no change, however, in the attitude of the new high priest or of the Jews toward Paul. They besought Festus, shortly after he had been made governor and had gone to Jerusalem, that he would send Paul there to be tried.

Their purpose was to kill Paul by the way. Festus would not give his assent to this request, but told the Jews that he was returning to Caesarea shortly and those of them who desired might come and accuse him if there were any charges which they wished to urge against him.

BEFORE FESTUS

When Festus had returned to Caesarea he commanded Paul to be brought for a hearing. The Jews laid many complaints against him which they could not prove. The charges were in substance the same as those which they had presented to Felix. When Paul was given the opportunity to speak for himself he showed that none of the charges were true. He had not been guilty of heresy or sacrilege or sedition. Festus wanted to please his subjects as much as possible, therefore he asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged. Paul knew the underhanded plan of the Jews, how they had plotted against his life before he was taken from Jerusalem, and that they would likely assassinate him by the way if he consented to go there again. The only way to get away from Caesarea without being taken again to Jerusalem seemed to be to appeal to Caesar. Every Roman had the right to appeal to Caesar, and this Paul did. There is no more need to criticize Paul for this than there is to criticize any innocent man today who appeals to a higher court when he has failed to get justice in a lower one. Paul was quite open and fair about his statement. He said to Festus that he had done no wrong to the Jews as he well knew. If he had done wrong he was willing to suffer the penalty, but if not he had a right to a fair trial and civil protection. In all probability he used the legal formula, "*Caesarem appello*," "**I appeal unto Caesar.**" It is also likely that Festus used the common Latin form, "*Caesarem appellesti; ad Caesarem ibis*," which means, as translated in chapter twenty-five, "**Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go**" (Acts 25:12). Festus conferred with the council before granting Paul's request, but he had little choice in the matter for any Roman citizen might appeal to the Emperor.

FESTUS' VIEW OF THE CHARGE

Festus was perplexed as to what statement of the charge against Paul to make to Caesar. He had not been able to discover any civil charge to lay against him, and the Emperor would think that he was a weak governor if he could not settle matters of indifference, and of merely local significance without troubling his majesty about it. Festus did not want to prejudice himself in the sight of the Emperor, therefore he utilized the visit of Agrippa, shortly after this, in order to learn what was the significance of the charges of the Jews against Paul. Agrippa came, shortly after Festus had been made procurator, to pay his respects to him. He brought with him his sister Bernice, who was also a sister of Drusilla.

After they had visited together for some days Festus told Agrippa of Paul. He said that he had heard the case, the accusations and the defense, and he was surprised because, so far as he could see, the whole discussion was over a matter of their own superstition, of one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. He knew that Caesar was not interested in such matters and therefore asked what he should say to Caesar when he sent Paul to Rome. Agrippa asked to hear Paul. Festus said, very well, you may hear him tomorrow.

BEFORE AGRIPPA

The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great dignity and pomp, and with them the chief captains and principal men of the city to the place appointed and Festus commanded that Paul should be brought. This was not a trial. Agrippa had no jurisdiction in Caesarea, moreover, Paul's appeal, which had been granted, had taken his case beyond the jurisdiction of all subordinate Roman officials. In introducing the case and presenting the prisoner to this august assembly, Festus made certain statements which must have been very interesting to Paul. He stated that, as far as he could see, Paul was innocent of any serious charge and it seemed to him unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to signify the charges laid against him.

CHARACTER OF THE AUDIENCE

Agrippa, who was the honored guest, told Paul that he now had the opportunity to present his case and to speak for himself. Would Paul not be frightened or abashed before such an assembly? There was Agrippa with his royal robes, his guards and attendants. There was Festus, the governor, who regarded not God or His covenant people. There was Bernice the sister of Agrippa seated beside him, exercising nothing but contemptible curiosity for this man who was a leader of the hated sect of the Nazarenes. But worst of all, beneath the dignity and display of Agrippa, there was a heart that was corrupt and a life that was immoral since he was living in incest with his sister Bernice at this time. This man, Agrippa the Second, was the last of the cruel Herods. His great-grandfather is remembered because he murdered the infant children in trying to kill Jesus. His grand-uncle had beheaded John the Baptist. This had come about because John had reproved Herod for his immoral relationship with Herodias, his brother's wife. His father, who was known as Agrippa I, had taken the life of James and attempted to kill Peter. He had been eaten of worms because he took to himself the honor which belongs to God. Each of the Herods which we have named died or was disgraced not long after the events just mentioned. The name of Jesus had lived and his following had enlarged, but the glory of the Herods had almost departed. However cruel the Herods had been to the Christians in the past Paul would not cower before them. The faith of Paul could rise above all human handicaps. He knew that the grace of God was sufficient to sustain him under all circumstances. He would speak with all the courtesy, earnestness and persuasion that he was able to use.

PAUL'S ADDRESS

Paul began by complimenting Agrippa upon his knowledge of the customs and laws of the Jews and asking for a fair hearing.

He said that he was raised a strict Jew and this was known to all in Jerusalem. He declared that he was now tried because of the promise that was made to the fathers. The tribes had all looked for a Messiah. The Messiah had come. He himself had not believed on him at first but had severely persecuted all who believed. He gave his vote (voice) against them when they were put to death (Acts 26:10). This, however, does not necessarily mean that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrim. It may have meant simply his assent or his vote in another assembly than the Sanhedrim. As he was going out beyond Jerusalem to put down this sect, as he neared Damascus, the Lord Jesus appeared to him. His glory and power were irresistible. He told him that He was going to send him as a witness to the Gentiles to tell them that the Messiah had come; that they should open their eyes, turn from darkness, be forgiven and be made holy before God. Then Paul affirmed that he had not been disobedient to this vision and call, but had continued to bear witness since that time, first in Damascus, in Judaea, and then to the Gentiles throughout the world. He had been persecuted, as he himself had persecuted others, but that had not caused him to withdraw from the work. In his preaching he had taught nothing else than that which is taught in the law of Moses and in the prophets. They had foretold that Christ should suffer and die, and rise again from the dead, and that He should be a light to the Gentiles.

FESTUS INTERRUPTED

Paul was not able to complete his address because Festus interrupted him. He charged him with having allowed his study to unbalance his reason. The expression, “**much learning**” refers to the writing that Paul was engaged in. Something of Paul’s work in Herod’s Palace was known to Festus. Paul had evidently been busily employed in writing letters to the churches while he was held a prisoner. Paul promptly denied any mental affliction, but declared that he spoke with the utmost soberness. He said that Agrippa knew of these things, for they had not been done in a corner. Paul no doubt knew the history of the Herods and how their fate seemed to be wrapped up with their attitude toward Jesus. Agrippa must have known all this history.

APPEAL TO AGRIPPA

Paul then appealed directly to Agrippa, asking him if he believed the prophets and replying that he knew that he believed. Agrippa then said to Paul, as translated in the authorized version, “**Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian**” (Acts 26:28). As translated in the revised version it reads, “With but a little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian.” The authorized translation regards the statement of Agrippa as made in earnest, the revision as spoken with a sneer. There are various translations which have been given, but these two serve to represent them all. The difference arises partly on account of a difference in the Greek manuscripts, and partly on account of a difference in the view of interpreters. There is no Greek word for “fain,” which is introduced in the revision. Leaving out the word “fain,” the revision would read: “With but little persuasion thou wouldest make me a Christian.” This might be in scorn; it might be in earnest. I prefer the authorized translation for I believe that he spoke in earnest. This seems to me evident because of the manner in which Paul answers, and also because of the attitude of Agrippa towards Paul after he had gone out from his presence.

Paul took advantage of Agrippa's hesitation. He seized the opportunity and said that he would to God that not only he but all present were such as he was except his bonds. It would seem to be a very daring thing to say to this august assembly but Paul could say it with sincerity and with no feeling of boasting. He desired that Agrippa and the others might have the liberty in the sight of God that he had, but he would not have them bound in the sight of the law as he was. Festus and Agrippa were evidently not offended, rather further convinced of his innocence by his clear straight-forward statement. Agrippa said to Festus that Paul might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar. Agrippa, who was expert in the laws of the Jews, could find no fault in him in the sight of the law.

Some have felt disposed to criticize Paul for having made his appeal to Caesar when these men agreed that he might have been set at liberty. But if he had not appealed he would not have been granted this hearing. He was heard by Agrippa because he had appealed to Rome. If he had granted the hearing which the Jews wanted he would have been killed before he reached the place of trial. The only way to get away from the Jews was to take advantage of the Roman law and appeal to Caesar. Moreover, this appeal would take him to Rome. This had long been Paul's great desire. The Lord had promised that he should go to Rome. Was not this Providence opening the way?

From this very interesting and instructive story let us gather some lessons.

JUSTICE AN ESSENTIAL OF GOOD GOVERNMENT

Paul was held a prisoner because the men in power were corrupt and wanted to please the majority of the people. Neither Felix nor Festus could find any just charge against Paul, yet they held him a prisoner. In the case of Felix we are told plainly that it was money which he desired. He was not only looking for a bribe but constantly hinting that he wanted money. The corrupt government which will not deal justly with a prisoner because there is a popular sentiment against him needs radical reforming.

When money rules the courts of justice, or the administrative or legislative departments of government, that government is most reprehensible. Yet bribery is not such an ancient custom that it needs any explanation to the average citizen of today. The influence of money frequently reaches from the village to the federal officers. The cost of bribery varies from a single dollar to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

According to the standard set forth in the Bible, "**He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God**" (II Samuel 23:3). No government which is built upon injustice, oppression and greed can stand. The Roman government ruled the world in the days of Paul and it seemed that no power could dispute her rule. Even the Roman government, however, could not endure when it allowed injustice to prevail. The only way to eliminate injustice in government or trade is to build upon the principles of Christ; to take His standard of love and fairness. Christ and His followers love truth more than they love money and will always place it first in their public or private life.

FAITH GIVES COMPOSURE

Faith in God enables a man to remain composed under trial. This hearing before Agrippa was the sixth time that Paul had been called upon to defend himself since his arrest at Jerusalem, yet he did not yield to anger or abuse. He was courteous, brave, straight-forward, and faithful to the trust committed to him. When Festus interrupted Paul and declared that he was mad, he meant that he had no common sense. From the standpoint of the worldly man this appeared to be correct. He need not have gotten himself into all this trouble. All believers seem to be foolish in the sight of the unbeliever. The Gospel seemed to the Greeks to be foolishness.

Paul had faith in the promise of Jesus that he need not worry about what he should say when brought before the magistrates, for it would be given him in that hour what he should speak. He had faith in the promise of the Lord, given to him at Jerusalem, that as he had testified at Jerusalem so he should testify at Rome. There was no doubt in his mind that he would go to Rome. There is nothing that will give a man composure in the hour of trial like faith in God. He remembers the promise, **“Lo, I am with you always,”** or that other promise, **“All things work together for good to them that love God.”**

When you see men becoming frustrated under a mental strain or argument and flying into a rage because they are questioned or hindered by others, you suppose that they do not have faith, and you know that they do not have strong faith. One need not have great learning and a gift of speech like Paul in order to remain composed under trials. Strong faith may reside in the heart of the unlettered and simple-minded child of God. This is illustrated in the conversation which took place between an old colored woman and a man at Vicksburg who was very ill of a fever and much depressed in spirit. “Massa, does yo’ see the bright side dis mornin’?” “No Nanny,” said I, “it isn’t as bright as I wish it.” “Well, massa, I allus see de bright side.” “You do,” said I; “maybe you haven’t had much trouble.” “Maybe not,” she said; and then went on to tell me in her simple broken way of her life in Virginia, of the selling of her children one by one, of the auction sale of her husband and then of herself. She was alone now in camp, without having heard from one of her kindred for years. “Maybe I ain’t seen no trouble, massa.” “But Nanny,” said I, “have you seen the bright side all the time?” “Allus, massa, allus.” “Well, how did you do it?” “Dis is the way, massa. When I see de brack cloud comin’ over” - and she waved her dark hand inside the tent, as though one might be settling down there - “an’ ‘peers like it’s comin’ crushin’ down on me, den I just whips aroun’ on de oder side, an’ I find de Lord Jesus dar, and den it’s bright and cl’ar. De bright side’s allus where Jesus is.”

THE RESURRECTION VITAL

Belief in the resurrection of the dead is vital to our faith. Festus had been a keen judge. He had concluded that the central point around which all the opposition of the Jews’ law, was that there was one Jesus who was dead whom Paul affirmed to be alive. This was the point which Paul deemed most vital. It was the fact which the Sadducees opposed most bitterly. When speaking before Agrippa Paul said: **“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”** (Acts 26:8).

A little later he declared that Christ had been the first who had risen from the dead. This should not be a new thought to any Hebrew, for it had been foretold in Moses and the prophets.

At another time Paul spoke in this way: **“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain”** (I Corinthians 15:12-14). Thus Paul makes the fact very clear that the resurrection is vital to our faith.

Paul gave his testimony to Agrippa, and he also gives it to us, that he had seen the risen Lord. He also tells us that the Lord had spoken to him, rebuked him, and had wrought miraculously with him in such a definite and personal way that he could never forget it. He assures us that through a heavenly vision he had been commanded to preach that Christ had risen from the dead. Paul could not doubt that which he had seen and heard. We who have Paul's testimony should also believe. If there is anything that Paul said which we may believe, we may believe this. If we should believe any of the messages of John and Peter and James, we should believe their testimony that Christ arose from the dead. The whole word of God falls to the ground - Moses and the prophets, the Gospels and the Epistles - if Christ has not risen from the dead. They all agree in testifying to this central great vital fact of history. It is the fact which proves the value of the Cross.

Moreover, if Christ be not risen, then we cannot believe our own eyes and our ears. The church of Christ, its existence and its power in the world at the present hour, and the marvelous change which has been wrought in the hearts of men who have believed in Christ, all testify to the fact that Christ is not dead but that He has risen and is working in the world today and ruling in the hearts of men.

Possibly the reason that many men do not want to believe in the resurrection of the dead is similar to that of the old African chief who heard Mr. Moffat preach upon that subject. Mecaba, a notorious chief cried out, “What are these words about the dead? - the dead arise?” “Yes,” said the missionary: “all the dead shall arise.” “Will my father arise?” “Yes,” answered the missionary. “Will all the slain in battle arise?” “Yes,” answered the missionary. “Will all that have been killed and eaten by lions, tigers, and crocodiles, arise?” “Yes,” and come to judgment.” “Hark!” shouted the chief, turning to the warriors. “Ye wise men, did your ears ever hear such strange and unheard of news as this?” He directed his question to an old man, the wise man of his tribe. “Never,” answered the old man. The chief then turned to the missionary and said, “Father, I love you much; but the words of a resurrection are too great for me. I do not wish to hear about the dead rising again. The dead cannot rise: the dead shall not rise!” “Tell me, my friend, why not,” said the missionary. “I have slain my thousands: shall they arise?”

That is what makes the resurrection solemn! That is what makes many fear the resurrection! That is what makes many deny that there will be a resurrection! Because with it there will be a judgment. Then, my friends, live so that the men of your generation will not rise to condemn you at that great day when all shall be called to give an account of the deeds done in the flesh. The resurrection will be a day of exceeding joy to those who have died in faith in Christ and have been cleansed of their sins by His precious blood.

OBEDIENCE FOOLISH TO THE SKEPTIC

To the skeptic obedience to God's call seems to be foolish. Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. It is true it brought Paul into a great deal of trouble: but it brought him more than enough joy to offset all of his sorrow. The only thing that Festus could see was Paul's outward condition. He thought Paul foolish for standing for these theories, when, if he were to dismiss them, he might not be troubled by the Jews or kept in prison.

The Psalmist was one day troubled with similar thoughts. He saw the wicked, who went on in sin, prospering. He saw the righteous in poverty and he was greatly troubled about it. He was wholly unable to understand it until he went to God's house. There he found the revelation which made the whole matter clear. He saw their end. He came to have the assurance that God would give him by His counsel and afterward receive him to glory (Psalm 73).

There are still men who are skeptical, even in this enlightened land. There are still men who think that one is foolish who yields in obedience to the call of God. There are still men who do not want to be approached by those who would remind them of their need of a Saviour. Listen to the conversation of a devoted child of God in a train in London. We give it as the person who was there related it. "I went into an underground train in London the other day and had hardly seated myself when a woman opposite me leaned forward, and said:

"May I ask if you are on the Lord's side?" "Yes," I answered, "I thank God that I am." "Is it long since you were first able to say that," she continued? "Yes," I replied, "many years. And I find Him more and more precious daily." . . . She said: "I have, alas, met many, many people who do not want Christ, and will not have anything to say to those who love Him," . . . Presently the train stopped at a station, and two ladies and two men came in. My friend lost no time in giving her message to each newcomer. "Madam, do you know what it is to have Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Sir, are you on the Lord's side?" And then she went on to say a few words on the importance of having this matter settled. Those to whom she spoke offered no reply. One lady turned her back on her and looked out of the window, and a gentleman read his newspaper steadily, giving no answer.

"At length the woman reached her destination, and, as she alighted, one of the ladies said: "That's all right; if she had not got out here I was going to change my carriage. I could not stand that sort of a creature. Poor lunatic! - (does not that sound like Festus) - said the second lady, "she ought to be locked up." "Such a ranting old woman should be buried alive," said a young man, sneeringly.

"How strange!" I said to myself, as I left the carriage and went on my way. Society must be on a very wrong basis. One may talk about anything and everything except about Jesus Christ. The latest murder trial may be discussed in public, and one may speak of the greatest blackguards that ever lived with impunity; but if any one ventures to speak about the God who made us and the Saviour who died for us, one is shunned or laughed at, or at least considered "very peculiar, not quite right, you know."

THE PROPHETS AND CHRIST LINKED TOGETHER

Belief in the prophets and in Christ are inseparably linked together. Paul declared that he believed in the promise which was made to the fathers centuries before. The twelve tribes had believed it and longed for the day when it would be fulfilled in the coming of the MESSIAH. He affirmed that the basis of the message which he preached was found in Moses and the prophets. He issued the challenge to Agrippa that if he believed the prophets he must believe the Gospel.

Why then do not the Jews who read the prophets today believe on Christ? Because their eyes are blinded and their ears are closed, as they were in the days of Jesus and the apostles. They were the most bitter opponents of Paul and they are still bitter opponents of the Gospel which Paul preached.

The existence of the Jews scattered through every nation is a testimony to the truth of the Bible. And when we accept the Bible, the Old Testament proves the record of the New, because it foretold the facts related in it so many centuries before. No one but God could have led men so to write. God who was able to teach men thus was necessarily divine; He knew the end from the beginning. The Christ whom He points out as His Son is also divine, and one on whom we must believe as surely as on God the Father. You cannot deny the Son without, at the same time, denying the Father. Abraham said to the rich man, concerning Moses and the prophets, that if his brethren would not hear them, they would not believe though one rose from the dead.

THE SKEPTIC REJECTS THE BEST EVIDENCE

A man who will not believe on Christ rejects the best of evidence. The testimony of the Old Testament concerning Christ is corroborated by the most convincing evidence in contemporary history as found in the monuments and in various historical records. The contemporary history supports the record of Christ and the apostles. The history itself has within it remarkable evidence in that the various writers, writing at different times and places, agree together. The existence of the church from that day to this and the careful transmission of the records through all the ages, is an evidence of their authenticity. I believe it was the Hon. Wm. E. Gladstone who said that there was no fact in all history more fully established than the fact of the resurrection of Christ. And in this record Paul makes that fact the center and proof of his faith and of ours.

In addition, one may have the evidence in his own heart that Christ lives and is his Saviour. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. Paul regarded his best evidence his own experience when Christ appeared to him. This is evident from the fact that he often related the story, and particularly when he was talking with men who were hard to convince. Many a man has been convinced by the personal evidence of some godly person, when other good evidence has failed to move him.

Since the evidence is so strong, the greater sin follows when men will not believe today. They have evidence which would be accepted in any court, and which they would accept concerning any other fact. Why will they not believe? What excuse will they have to present to their Lord when He comes to judge?

A brilliant young lawyer in New York City, some time ago, spoke to a prominent minister of that city, asking him if he really believed that Christ arose from the dead. The minister replied that he did, and asked the privilege of presenting the proof to the lawyer. The lawyer took the material offered in proof and studied it. He returned to the minister and said: "I am convinced that Jesus did rise from the dead. But," he added, "I am no nearer being a Christian than I was before. I thought the difficulty was with my head. I find it is really with my heart."

Dr. D.J. Burrell, in "*The Laughter of God*," tells of two infidels who sat in a railway car discussing Christ's wonderful life. One of them said, "I think an interesting romance could be written about him." The other replied, "And you are just the man to write it. Set forth the correct view of his life and character. Tear down the prevailing sentiment as to his divineness and paint him as he was - a man among men." The suggestion was acted upon and the romance was written. The man who made the suggestion was Colonel Ingersoll; the author was General Lew Wallace; and the book was *Ben-Hur*. In the process of constructing it he found himself facing the unaccountable Man. The more he studied His life and character, the more profoundly he was convinced that He was more than a man. Like the centurion under the Cross, he was constrained to cry: "**Truly this was the Son of God.**"

NOT PERSUADED ETERNALLY DISTANT

One who is not fully persuaded to be a Christian is still at an eternal distance from Christ. Our belief is that Agrippa was almost persuaded. Corrupt Felix had been terrified during the sermon of Paul, and dissolute Agrippa was almost persuaded. He was scarcely able to resist the forceful appeal which Paul had directed toward him. His head was convinced, but his heart was still hard. Perhaps, like Felix, he would not yield because it would necessarily expose his corrupt and immoral life, and his pride would suffer a terrible blow. He was not yet ready to repent.

A man whose head is almost persuaded but whose heart is still hard continues to remain at an infinite distance from Christ. No half-way measures will do. "**He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.**" If Agrippa had been willing to look back over his family history and read it as we can read it today he would have seen how Christ had triumphed over all their opposition. One wonders why he did not think of his own father who, sixteen years before, had blasphemed the name of God and had died an horrible death. Eternal life or death was in the balance for Agrippa. Would he not, by faith in Christ, become a Christian? No, he turned away from the apostle and went out with his immoral sister. He rejected the invitation and opportunity which was offered by Paul. That he did it politely does not change the fact. The man who politely turns away from Christ is just as far away from Him as the man who bitterly rejects Him.

Vain-confidence, whom Bunyan pictures walking so fast and confidently in By-path-meadow, went on so fast that Christian and Hopeful lost sight of him. But as he hastened on in the darkness he fell into a deep pit which the prince of those grounds had placed there to catch vain-glorious fools. He was dashed to pieces by the fall. Like him, we may have confidence in ourselves and no fear of eternal death, but that does not protect or save us.

If we are not united to Christ we are entirely separated from Him and are without God and without hope in the world.

Rufus W. Clark was once called to see a young man who was said to be sick and wished to see him. As Dr. Clark approached his bed he remarked that he did not look as though he were ill. The young man replied that he was not sick in body but in soul. "I am in deep distress," he said. Dr. Clark asked him the cause of his distress. He replied: "During the revival in our church, I have not only resisted its influence, but I have made sport of the young converts. I have ridiculed those who were seeking the salvation of their souls, and I feel that I have committed an unpardonable sin, and there is no hope for me." Dr. Clark said: "Your sins are indeed fearfully great; but if you sincerely repent, and will now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will pardon you." Everything that Dr. Clark could say was of no avail, though he quoted Scripture and spoke of the thief on the cross. He insisted that there was no hope for him. Dr. Clark prayed with him and called the next day but there was no change. The third day he found him in a raging fever. His mental agony had taken effect upon his body. Still he would not yield to the minister's pleading that he receive the Saviour. He had evidently quenched the Spirit. The next day his reason was dethroned and he was beyond the reach of any human pleas. The night following his soul passed out into eternity.

If there are any to whom this message comes who have not yielded to the call of Christ and have not accepted Him as their Saviour, I plead with you, do not delay. Do not think that you can live far away from Christ, and yet can reach out and take hold of Him in the moment of trouble. You can receive Him now while the opportunity is before you. To live a moral life will not save you; to walk in good society will not save you; to associate with Christian people will not save you; to hold Christ merely in respect will not save you. You may do all these and still be in darkness, lost and apart from Christ, and at an eternal distance from Him. Oh friend! will you not lay hold of Him in faith? Will you not take Him as your only Saviour? Holy Spirit, wilt not Thou unite us to Christ that we may be united to Him as the branch to the vine? Lord, wilt not Thou grant that never, in time or in eternity, may there be a separation between us and our Saviour!

QUESTIONS **(Acts 25, 26)**

1. How did Festus compare with Felix?
2. Name those before whom Paul was tried or heard after his arrest before he was sent to Rome.
3. Why was Paul not willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried?
4. Was Paul justified in appealing to Caesar?
5. Why was he given a hearing before Agrippa?
6. What was Festus' conclusion as to the point of difference between Paul and the Jews?
7. Tell briefly of the history and atrocities committed by the Herod family.
8. What were the character of Agrippa and Bernice?
9. What were two of the proofs which Paul gave to Agrippa that Jesus was the MESSIAH?
10. How did Festus testify to Paul's diligence while held a prisoner?
11. What evidences are there that Agrippa was in earnest when he spoke of being almost persuaded?
12. What sustained Paul during all of these trials?

13. Why does the man who suffers for his religion seem to the skeptic to have lost his reason?
14. How do you know a nation cannot stand which does not administer justice?
15. What place does belief in the resurrection of Christ have in the faith of the Christian?
16. How did Paul know Christ had risen from the dead?
17. Why do many men not want to believe in the resurrection?
18. How does the proof of the resurrection of Christ compare with the proof of other historical facts?
19. Of what value is it to be almost persuaded to be a Christian?
20. Are you fully persuaded that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

~ end of chapter 41 ~

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