

# The Trustworthiness of Paul's Gospel

Acts 26:19-32

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## **Introduction:**

Last time in our study of Acts, we read about how a certain Jew named Paul was given a message directly from God to proclaim to the nations!

- He is explaining this to an assembly of important Roman officials in Judea because his preaching has caused a great stir among the Jews...
  - Such a stir that they desperately wanted to kill him—whether by lawful or unlawful means...
  - And the Roman authorities had taken him into custody to quell the disturbance and to give him a proper trial.
    - They were especially disposed to do this because though a Jew, he had the extraordinary distinction of being a Roman citizen.
- Because the opposition to him by the Jews has been puzzling to the Romans,
  - the newly appointed governor of Judea, Festus, has requested that King Agrippa II, an expert on all things Jewish, help him sort out the matter.
  - Paul is delighted to give them a full account of his ministry.

And in doing so, he has told them that he himself is a devout Jew who continues to hold to the faith of his fathers...especially to the hope of the resurrection...

- He explains that like many of his fellow Jews, he did not at first recognize the Messiah that had been promised to his people through the ages.
  - In fact, he was so convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was an imposter that he had led the way in opposing His followers.
  - He was very zealous about this and had overseen the arrest, imprisonment, and execution of many.
- But even as he was going about this wretched business, he had been confronted by the risen Lord Jesus Himself.
  - And Paul claimed that the Lord Jesus had commanded him to go to the Gentiles and to establish them in God's kingdom of righteousness!
    - Israel had long held the distinction of being God's people and the heirs of His kingdom—
      - but now Paul is given the specific task of establishing the nations outside of Israel in God's kingdom.
      - Now that Jesus the Messiah has come, Paul is to declare to the nations that they may enter the kingdom without circumcision and without keeping the law—but through faith in Jesus Christ alone.
  - It was this message that had so infuriated the Jews.
    - It was bad enough to say that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah—
      - This man who had been rejected by the Jewish authorities!
      - This man who had been crucified showing that He was cursed of God!
      - This man who had done nothing to deliver Israel from the Roman rule that was oppressing them.
    - But it was even more offensive for Paul to teach that Gentiles—
      - Gentiles who had always been excluded from God's kingdom...

- could enter into it through mere faith in Jesus!
  - That they could have an inheritance in God's kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Moses and David and Elijah—with all the faithful through the ages!
- Because Paul was, more than any of the other apostles,
  - the one who was given the task of incorporating the Gentiles into the kingdom of God,
  - He was the one who was the most hated of them all!
- In Acts 26:16-18, Paul showed that this incorporating of the Gentiles was indeed what the Lord had expressly sent him to do...
  - The risen Lord Jesus had said to Paul—Acts 26:16-18:
    - **Acts 26:16-18: I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.**
      - He was to proclaim that he himself had seen the risen Christ and to speak the things that Christ would directly reveal to him...
        - Verse 17 continues...
      - **I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,**
        - Jesus was, in particular, sending Paul to them...with this purpose:
      - **to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light,**
        - They had been in the darkness, not having God's oracles as the Jews did and so they did not know God...
          - Jesus continues:
      - **to turn them...from the power of Satan to God,**
        - They had been in bondage to sin, but now with the coming of Christ, they would be enabled to serve God by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit whom Christ would give to them...
          - but that is not all...
            - Jesus explains that they would be turned to God in order,
      - **that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.**
        - Jesus, by His suffering and death, bore the curse of God in behalf of all the true members of His kingdom...
          - So that whoever enters the kingdom by faith in Him can be sure that they receive full forgiveness and an everlasting inheritance in God's house.
        - Through faith in Him, the Gentiles would become heirs with all those who are sanctified as the sons of God!

Paul claimed that the risen Lord Jesus had appeared to him and commanded him to preach this wonderful news to the nations!

- This message had powerful implications for these Roman officials to whom Paul was speaking...
- But do not miss the application of this to you...
  - It also has powerful implications for all of you who are listening to this sermon!
  - If this message is true (and it is true), it means that Gentiles as well as Jews can obtain an inheritance in God's righteous kingdom...
    - that glorious kingdom in which sins are completely forgiven and in which all are empowered to serve God—to live for Him forever in His house with Jesus Christ His only Son!

But how can you know that this is for real?

- How can you know that Paul truly was given this message?
  - Luke wants you to know this—for he has recorded Paul’s testimony three times in the book of Acts...
    - He has done this because it is essential—if we would be saved and enjoy this inheritance—that we know and be assured that Paul was called of God and that his message is from God.
  - He is the one, more than any other apostle, who was charged by God with the task of incorporating the Gentiles into God’s kingdom.
    - He led the way, under the direct instruction of Jesus, in bringing this about.
    - And whenever the nations have departed from his instruction—which is the instruction of Jesus given to him to give to us—
      - they have lost their way and been cut off...
      - they have done what Jesus warned them not to do and sought to enter the kingdom by another way—
        - by rituals, by joining the church, or by good works—
          - something other than faith in Jesus.
      - We lament that in our day, there are many baptised in the churches who have taken these other ways...
        - And it is for this reason that I want to urge upon you the fact that Paul’s message truly is from God.

This is what is brought forth in our text today in Acts 26:19-32 as Paul continues giving an account of his ministry.

- Please give careful attention now as I read to you from God’s Word—for these words are given to us by the power of the Holy Spirit and are God’s Word.

Acts 26:19-23: “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup> but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. <sup>21</sup> For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*. <sup>22</sup> Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come— <sup>23</sup> that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.” <sup>24</sup> Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” <sup>25</sup> But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the

words of truth and reason. <sup>26</sup> For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.” <sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” <sup>29</sup> 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.” <sup>30</sup> When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; <sup>31</sup> and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.” <sup>32</sup> Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

- May the Lord bless the hearing of His holy Word.
- My friends, in this passage, Paul gives us four reasons why the good news he preached to the Gentiles is trustworthy.
- The nations of the world are called to entrust their eternal destiny to this message.

- The Lord calls every one of you to do that too.
- It is essential for each of you to know that the Lord really does invite us to enter into His righteous kingdom by faith in Jesus to obtain light, liberty, forgiveness, and an everlasting inheritance in His house!
- So let's look at the four arguments that Paul gives us to assure us that his gospel is trustworthy.

**I. Paul's gospel is trustworthy because it is the very message that was delivered to him by the Lord Himself.**

A. Paul makes this clear when he says, in verse 19,

- **Acts 26:19: Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,**

A.1. The heavenly vision, of course, was the vision of Christ on the Damascus road that he has just described in which Jesus had said to him...

- **Acts 26:16: I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.**

A.1.a. It was part of Paul's mandate to proclaim what he had seen in that vision...

- that he had seen the risen Christ and been commanded by Him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles...

A.1.b. And it was also Paul's mandate to proclaim what Christ would yet reveal to him.

- We know from what Paul explains elsewhere that the mystery of the Gentiles inclusion with the Jews was something that had been expressly and directly revealed to him.
- Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 3, starting in verse 3 where he says:
  - **Eph 3:3: By revelation he made known unto me the mystery... vs 5: Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:**
  - It was revealed to Paul directly by Jesus Christ how the Gentiles were to be included in His kingdom.

A.2. In verse 20, he goes on to explain how he faithfully conveyed this message that Christ had given him to both Jew and Gentile:

- **Acts 26:20: but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**
- We have seen in Acts how diligent Paul was to obey this calling!
  - Paul could honestly say that he had been faithful to the task that God had given to him.
    - I wonder how many of us can honestly say that?
    - It is a good thing that we do not rest in our own righteousness for our acceptance with God,
      - but on the righteousness that Jesus has procured for His kingdom by His obedience and suffering...
      - We stand in His righteousness—not our own.

- Indeed, even Paul, as faithful as he was, did not dare to stand in his own righteousness before God.
  - But he could honestly say that he had obeyed the call of Christ that he had been given.
- B. But as an apostle, we can fully trust the message that he preached as well as the epistles that he wrote because the message was given to him directly by Jesus!
- B.1.** That is the reason that we can stake our eternal destiny on it.
- Paul, and all the prophets and apostles who wrote the Bible for that matter,
    - are totally trustworthy because they did not speak according to their own wisdom.
  - When they had a vision, they did not attempt to interpret it themselves, but they were given the right interpretation by the Lord.
    - Peter speaks of the Old Testament prophets in this way in 2 Pet. 1:19:
      - **2 Peter 1:19-21: And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**
    - In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter shows that he recognises Paul's writings as among the Holy Scriptures that come from God and that are to be fully trusted in.
      - Already, at this early stage in history, Peter sees Paul's writings as on par with the writings of God's other prophets.
      - This makes it clear that the church had already recognised the God-given writings long before a list was drawn up to specify which books were recognised in the canon.
- B.2.** All through the ages, the Lord has been very careful to make His word sure to us...
- to make it certain that we know which individuals are His prophets and apostles who have accurately spoken His word to us.
- B.2.a.** When He sent Moses, he gave him signs to do to show that he was speaking for God—
- just simple little signs at first—like turning his staff into a serpent...
  - But then as Moses' ministry continued, there were the ten plagues upon Egypt, each of which Moses announced beforehand...
    - And there was the parting of the Red Sea,
      - and the provision of manna and of water from the rock in the wilderness,
      - and the judgement upon Korah
      - and even the forty years in the wilderness judgement.
    - Over and over again, the Lord showed that Moses spoke for Him.
      - As God's prophet, Moses' words were not his own words—they were the words of God.
- B.2.b.** Under Moses, the Lord established the standard that anyone who claimed to speak His word must never speak what was not fulfilled.
- If they did, they were to immediately be stoned to death as a false prophet.
  - The standard is very high for God's prophets because again, He calls us to venture our eternal status on what they say!
    - The Lord wants us to know that it is His word.

- That is why all of the prophets were given signs and wonders to verify that their message was truly from the Lord.
- God also enabled the church through the ages to recognise His prophets and to include their writings among the Holy Scriptures.
- This was all guided by the Lord so that His word would be sure to us.

**B.2.c.** He also gave many extremely long range prophecies...

- For example,

B.2.c.1) Moses wrote about how Israel would conquer Canaan,

- how they would establish a king,
- how they would disobey God and be cast out of the land as a consequence but then restored...

B.2.c.2) And at the time of the exile, the prophets of God not only announced, but also foretold how God would bring the people back to the land—when that did not at all look like what would happen...

- And how after their restoration, the time would come when the Lord would make a new covenant with them!

B.2.c.3) Moses and the other prophets also wrote that when Christ came, the Gentiles would then turn to God!

- How could they have possibly foretold such a thing centuries before it happened apart from divine revelation?
- There was no indication from circumstances that such a thing would happen when they wrote it—but now it has happened!

**B.3.** Paul was very conscious of the fact that, as one who was called to receive and disseminate God's word, his words were the very Word of God.

**B.3.a.** He shows this in what he says to the Thessalonians when he commends them for the way they had received his words:

- **1Th 2:13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**
- If Paul did not believe his words to be God breathed, he never would have said such a thing.

**B.3.b.** We have seen how Paul was also given the ability to work miracles and signs to prove his apostleship...

- Paul spoke of such signs as proving this in 2 Cor 12:12.
- And we have seen how he was given prophecies such as the one we are now seeing fulfilled that he would be brought safely to Rome even though many were trying to kill him.

- TRANS> And this introduces us to the next reason that we can stake our eternal destiny on the gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles...

## **II. Paul's gospel is trustworthy because it is the message he preached in the face of much opposition.**

A. In verse 21-22, he speaks about the opposition...

**A.1.** First in verse 21 he speaks of the opposition he received from the Jews:

- **Acts 26:21: For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.**
- For what reasons?

- Because the Jews were offended that Paul was calling the Gentiles to repent and enter into God's kingdom of righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ.
- They were highly offended that he should preach that *Gentiles* could be admitted into God's kingdom on that basis!

➤ And having spoken of the opposition,

**A.2.** Paul then goes on to explain how the Lord preserved him because he had appointed him to testify...

- Verse 22 says:
  - **Acts 26:22: Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great...**
- The Lord's preservation of his life when so many people were trying to kill him was a verification that he was faithfully preaching His message...
  - For the Lord had told him, as Paul conveyed in verse 17,
    - that He would deliver him from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles.
  - If Paul had not been speaking the Word of God,
    - the Lord would not have miraculously preserved him.

➤ And not only was this deliverance a verification that he was speaking the word of God...but...

**A.3.** Even the opposition itself was proof that he spoke the word of God!

**A.3.a.** Virtually all of God's true prophets were opposed for speaking the truth and this opposition became a badge of verification!

- Jesus Himself was despised and rejected, just as Isaiah had foretold, and he told His apostles that they would be hated by all men for His sake if they followed Him.
- He told them to be glad and rejoice when they were persecuted because so they persecuted the prophets who came before...
  - It is the mark of one who speaks for God that he will be opposed.

**A.3.b.** And I want you to see that even the duly ordained leaders of God's people—the scribes, the Sanhedrin, the priests—

- even the high priest himself were often the leaders of the opposition!
- So it was with Christ and the apostles!

**A.3.c.** It is for this reason that we can confidently reject the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that the truth is found in the magisterium of their church.

- The magisterium includes the pope and his bishops—whose offices were not even appointed by the Lord to start with...
  - At least the high priest could show that his office was established by the Lord...and so could the elders...the Sanhedrin...
    - but the pope cannot show from scripture that his office was appointed by God.
- Here is the important point:
  - The truth is not found among the Lord's officers in the church—
    - It is found in His true prophets who spoke the word of God.
  - That is why the reformers, when they saw how the pope and his legates were living and teaching in contradiction to the prophetic Word of the Holy Scriptures, boldly opposed them.

- They knew that God’s prophetic message, as well as those who proclaimed it, had again and again been opposed by the ordained leaders of the church.
- This does not mean that they had no regard for church councils and for the fathers in the faith who faithfully preached the word of the apostles...
  - The reformers, in fact, were zealous to show not only that their teaching conformed to scripture, but also that it conformed to the teaching of the fathers who had gone before.
  - The Pope and his officers not only contradicted the scriptures, but also the teaching of the fathers.
    - And like Paul and all the righteous who had gone before, the reformers were opposed by the official leaders of the church.
  - Some of you have also been opposed by ordained men when you have submitted to scripture...
    - Ordination is important—ordained men are to be respected because God has established them in their office...
      - but if they speak not according the word they are to be rejected— there is no light in them.
- TRANS> In our next point, we shall see that Paul did indeed speak according the word...
- but first, I need to say something else about how opposition helped to show that his word was trustworthy...namely that...

B. Paul’s willingness to suffer opposition also confirms the truth of his words.

**B.1.** Just think about this!

- Paul claimed that Jesus had stopped him on the Damascus Road as he was persecuting Christians.
- If Paul had not really seen the risen Christ, what possible reason would he have had for saying that he did?
- He truly believed he was serving God by opposing the Christians...
  - He was not riddled with guilt for it.
  - He felt pleased with himself and he received honour from the Jewish leaders.
  - He was a wealthy man with a comfortable position.

**B.2.** By following Christ, he exchanged all that for a life that was for many years very mundane and uncertain...

- The Christians did not at first trust him.
  - The Jews saw him as a wicked turncoat.
  - His friends and family rejected him.
  - He was very much alone at first...
- And then when he began to minister to the Gentiles,
  - He was again and again brought into difficulties...
    - He was beaten, he was stoned, he was insulted, but not once did he deny the fact that he had seen the risen Lord.
  - Why should he hold on to this if it was a lie?
    - If he did not believe he was to obtain an eternal reward, what did he possibly hope to gain by it?



**B.3.** The only other possibility was that he was deluded—

- That he somehow imagined that he saw the risen Christ and heard His voice...
  - And not once, but many times as Christ continued to give him revelation.
- But Paul's ministry does not have the marks of a deluded man, nor is his character that of a man who was prone to such delusion.
  - And what of all the miracles that he worked?
  - And what of all the Gentiles who believed his message and who did indeed enter the kingdom of God...and whose lives were transformed?
- TRANS> The opposition that the Apostle faced is itself an evidence that his message was true—and so it was all the prophets and apostles.
- But I said a moment ago that any teacher,
  - whether he claims to be a prophet or just an ordinary expounder of the scriptures that are written by the prophets...
    - must speak in accordance with what the prophets before him have written.
- That is the next verification of Paul's ministry that he mentions...

### **III. Paul's gospel is trustworthy because it is in full agreement with the prophets of God who spoke before him.**

- Paul makes this claim in verse 22 and 23.
  - **Acts 26:22-23: Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—**

A. Conformity with scriptures is a test that every servant of the Lord must pass ever since the time of Moses!

**A.1.** Moses was given many miracles to validate the word that he preached, (as are all others who spoke God's Word)...

- But after his writings had once been given,
  - every prophet and every minister that followed was to be evaluated by whether or not he spoke what is in agreement with Moses and whatever prophets of the Lord have gone before that minister.
- Isaiah says,
  - **Isa 8:20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**

**A.2.** You are to test those who preach today by this standard.

- What is taught in each generation must be tested by its agreement with the Holy Scriptures.
  - Let no one boast of his ordination if his doctrine is not in accord with scripture.
    - The true church is the church that conforms to scripture...to what Moses and the prophets taught.

B. And what did Moses and the prophets teach?

- You see what Paul says in verse 23:
  - **Acts 26:23: that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.**
  - The whole Old Testament pointed to these things...

**A.1.** You have the entire system of sacrifices that God revealed from the time of the fall in which it was held forth that remission of sins would come by the death of a substitute offered by a priest of God.

- Only the Messiah could be both that sacrifice and that faithful priest (the priests under the law had to be sanctified by all sorts of sacrifices because of their own sins).
- And of course Jesus' own sufferings were expressly set forth in places like Psalm 22 or in Isaiah 53:10,
  - where it says that it pleased the Lord to make His soul an offering for sin, thus tying Him together with all the sacrifices.

**A.2.** And the resurrection is set forth by God's constantly bringing forth His people from death, as it were...

- Joseph was brought up from the prison to reign...
- Israel was brought up from Egypt to serve God in Canaan...
- Again and again they were raised up from bondage to their enemies when they had sinned and at last even from the exile.
- But again, it is specifically set forth of Christ that He would conquer death itself...
  - For example, in Psalm 16, it says that the Lord will not allow his holy one to see corruption...
  - or in Psalm 118 where it says that the stone which the builders rejected has been made the chief cornerstone.

**A.3.** And you have the calling of the Gentiles which I mentioned before.

- In the Psalms and in Isaiah and many other places we are told that the Gentiles would be gathered in to the Messiah when He came...
  - In Genesis 12, Abraham was told 2000 years before the fact that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed—
    - they would obtain the blessing of Abraham just as Paul was preaching, through faith in Christ!
  - In Psalm 22, David wrote 1000 years before the fact of how Christ would gather people from all nations to become God's worshippers after the Father had accepted His suffering on the cross for their sins.
  - In Isaiah 11, Isaiah prophetically wrote how Christ would be lifted up so that all the Gentiles would come to Him...and now they are!
- TRANS> The more time I spend in God's word, the more amazed I am at the agreement there is between all of the prophets and apostles—
- even though they were separated by so many centuries from one another.
  - Paul's message is trustworthy because it is in full harmony with the scriptures that were written before.
    - We are not left to rely upon one man's testimony, but on the united testimony of all the prophets and apostles together.
- But of course Paul and the other apostles and prophets of the New Testament were writing of things that had recently taken place...
  - Though they had been foretold, they had only been fulfilled in their own generation.
  - And that brings us to the fourth and final reason that we can trust in Paul's message.

#### **IV. Paul's gospel is trustworthy because it is based on historical facts and reason.**

A. Festus, being a Roman, charges Paul with madness.

- Like Felix, it seems that he has had too much of Paul's message, so he cries out—as verse 24 tells us:
  - **Acts 26:24: Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!”**
- Foolish men speak this way about things that go beyond their capacity to understand...
  - As a Roman, he had no use for resurrections—what good was that for establishing the glorious city of Rome!
    - That was just a fairy tale, he supposed...
  - And so he accuses Paul of philosophising himself out into unreality—into a dream world...
    - He is like the mystery religions—who had secret truths that were wild and were never brought before the public to be scrutinized.

B. But Paul completely dismisses the charge...

- **Acts 26:25-27: But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.”**
  - You see here that Paul refers to both the *truthfulness* and the *reasonableness* of his message as grounds for rejecting that it is but the ravings of a mad man—
    - or of an esoteric man who is out of touch with the real world.

**B.1.** By claiming that he speaks words of truth, he means here that he speaks concerning what has actually happened in recent history.

- He appeals to King Agrippa who knew about the resurrection of Jesus.
  - It was not done in secret...in a corner...Paul says.
  - Jesus was openly crucified and openly raised again in public...
    - More than 500 had seen Him at once after His resurrection and could testify.
- It was a very well attested fact for anyone who wanted to check it out.
  - Paul could not have made this assertion if the resurrection were not, in fact, a well attested fact when he said it...
    - If it were not, Agrippa would have surely denied it!
- And it is still a well attested fact that can be verified by anyone that wants to check it out...
  - For starters, there is the fact I spoke about before that Paul and the other Apostles who claimed to see the risen Christ were all willing to die for this claim.
    - If they had made it up, their lives of suffering make no sense at all—it was a claim they were willing to die for!
      - And a claim of such a nature that if it were not true, would have brought them condemnation before God.
    - What's more, the resurrection is proven to us by the fact that lives continue to be transformed by those who receive this truth...
      - Recently a pair of atheists who had done extensive work in Africa wrote of how the gospel was the only thing that had really helped the Africans to escape their lethargy and resultant poverty.
  - Paul was speaking of real events that had happened in history—words of truth!

**B.2.** But he also claimed to speak words of *reason*...

**B.2.a.** By this, he means that he is speaking of things that make sense—that hang together for a thinking person—things that are coherent.

- This is very true of the gospel.
- Certainly you can find some loonies who claim to believe it—but the gospel itself is in full accord with reason.
- Those who claim that it is unreasonable usually do so on the basis of their preconceived ideas—
  - such as the rejection of anything supernatural...

**B.2.b.** But if any one brings God in the equation...God who made heaven and earth,

- It should not be at all difficult to believe that He can raise the dead!
- And when we look at the world and we see sin and the evidence of God's curse...
  - And when God has sent prophets who work miracles and who explain how God has brought death into the world because of sin...
    - and who told us for years that God was going to send His Son to redeem a people out of the world to Himself...
  - And when we see that One did come into the world who claimed to be the Son of God...
    - And that He was crucified in order to redeem us—being cursed for His people so that they could be pardoned...
      - And when we see that God raised Him from the dead to show that His sacrifice was accepted for His peoples' sins...
  - And that He sent out prophets who saw Him resurrected and whose message transforms peoples' lives and makes them true worshippers of God...
    - It is all just so very reasonable and there is no reason to doubt it!
    - No reason except that men have hard hearts that keep them from accepting the truth because they do not want to yield to God.
      - That is why the scriptures teach that no one believes apart from the working of the Holy Spirit.
    - Paul himself taught that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God.
      - He won't because his stubborn heart won't allow him to accept it...not until he is made honest by the Holy Spirit.

**Conclusion:** But the message itself, my friends,

- the message that Paul preached,
  - is a message that ought to be believed!

A. You see how Paul appeals to Agrippa in verse 27...

**A.1.** This man knows the scriptures and he knows what has been reported recently concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ—so Paul says to him...

- **Acts 26:27: King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.**
- Paul is indicating here to Agrippa that,
  - “As one who knows the scriptures, there is no way for you to escape the trustworthiness of what I have been saying.”

**A.2.** But Agrippa does what so many others have foolishly done—he doesn't yield to the persuasive power of the truth.

- His words are variously translated and there is also variation in the manuscripts, but the overall idea is clear enough...
- Agrippa is letting Paul know that he is not ready to yield to the truth.
- He is resisting. He is not ready to embrace the truth.

**A.3.** He tries to disarm Paul by charging him with trying to persuade him to become a Christian.

- He is sort of saying in a cheerful way—
  - “I know what you are doing Paul! You are trying to persuade me—but don't think I will fall for it so easily.”
- But Paul will not be disarmed by such words!
  - Instead he gladly admits that he is indeed trying to persuade him as well as everyone else in the room!
  - Paul boldly says,
    - **Acts 26:29: 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.**
- Paul has nothing to hide!
  - If you had a message like this that could change someone's eternal destiny, wouldn't you try to persuade people to believe whenever you got a chance?
    - Well—would you?
      - Do you?

**B.** You **have** such a message, you know, and it is a very trustworthy message.

**B.1.** I would desire to persuade all of you to believe it...

- How could I have such a gospel and not try to persuade you?
  - It's the best news in the world—
    - Of course I want you to have your eyes opened, to be delivered from the power of Satan to the power of God, to receive the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.
  - How could I have something so excellent and not want you to have it?

**B.2.** And the bigger question—how could it be that you could have such good news—so near to you—so accessible to you—and not receive it?

- Are **you** mad?
  - How is it that your rebellion could keep you from something so excellent, so beneficial, so persuasive?

**B.3.** And you who do believe...

- Isn't the gospel marvellous?
- Just think where you would be without it!
  - What if God had left us Gentiles without this salvation?
    - He might justly have done so—but in His great mercy, He did not!

- And just think of what a rich inheritance you have with it... and inheritance with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of glory!