

"The Road to Rome"

Part 8

Acts 22-28

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we looked started into Acts 25 where we seen that Paul was kept in prison at Caesarea for two years. During this time there was a change of power as Felix was out and Festus was now in authority. It was after certain days that king Agrippa came to meet with Festus.

Notice Acts 25:13

Last week we touched briefly on king Agrippa and tonight I want to share a little more history about the king and Bernice.

Agrippa was only seventeen when his father died the horrible death of being eaten by worms after putting James to death (Acts 12:1-23). He should have reigned, but Emperor Claudius thought him too young so placed his kingdom under the Roman governor until he came of age. After the death of Claudius, the Emperor Nero gave him a large domain. Agrippa was a Jew who was reared in Rome and was strongly attached to the Romans. So loyal to the Romans was Agrippa II, that in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., he turned his troops on his own countrymen, uniting with the Romans in the destruction of this great city. History tells us that he was a very capable ruler and he died in 90 A.D. in Rome at the age of seventy. Bernice was a very beautiful woman and was the blood sister to Agrippa II and to Drucilla, wife of Felix. Bernice made a fetish of incestuous relationships. She had been married to her uncle, Herod, King of Chalcis, but when he died she chose to live with her brother, committing the worst kind of incest. Later on, to avoid the scandal with Agrippa, Bernice left Agrippa and married Polemon, King of Pomins. She stayed married for only a brief time, and she divorced her husband. She then went back to Agrippa and together they went to Rome. Bernice then became the mistress to two successive Roman emperors, Vespasian and Titus, who were father and son.

After Festus told Agrippa about Paul, he decided that he wanted to hear Paul.

Notice Acts 25:22

This now sets the stage for a spectacular scene.

➤ Paul before Festus and Agrippa
➤ Part 2

Notice Acts 25:23

The king and Bernice came with GREAT pomp. This means they were dressed in all their royal apparel. There were with them the chief captains and principal men of the city along with Festus. This scene is amazing. Here are all these people in their GREAT pomp and then there is Paul the prisoner, standing before them. What an opportunity for Paul as he stands before all of these elite people.

Notice Acts 25:24-27

These verses are very important for us. Here we see that Paul is not on trial before Agrippa it is that Festus needs to have Agrippa hear Paul so that when Paul is sent to Ceasar that they can name what it is that he has done wrong.

Notice Acts 26:1-2

We need to notice closely that in verse 2 Paul declares himself to be happy.

Notice Acts 26:29

Here we see that Paul was in chains as he stood before all of these elites. But as we can almost hear the chains rattle and we see him lift his hand to speak we hear him say that he is happy. How can he be happy in this situation? He is happy because he has a great opportunity to share the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Application:

As believers this should be our testimony in the trials of life. We should be happy because the trials give to us opportunities to manifest Jesus Christ. When our lives are all about Jesus then we can rejoice in the trials because it is an opportunity for others to see Jesus in us.

John 9:1-3

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

² *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

³ *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

John 11:1-4

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

² *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*

³ *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

⁴ *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

Let's get back to Paul. Here was a man who was happy to have people constantly examining his life. Why? Because his life was all about Jesus Christ and he lived to make Jesus known.

Philippians 1:12-16, 20-21

¹² *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;*

¹³ *So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;*

¹⁴ *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

¹⁵ *Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:*

¹⁶ *The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:*

²⁰ *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

²¹ *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Our trials may be platforms for us to manifest our Lord and Savior, to make Him known to those who are watching.

Notice Acts 26:3-8

Paul explained that he was being judged because he believed in the hope of God promised unto the fathers. It was a promise made to the 12 tribes. What was the promise? It was the promise of salvation through a Redeemer. This was a promise that all Pharisees should have believed. What Paul believed was not something that was contrary to Judaism but it was a promise that was the fulfillment of Judaism. He was saying that he believed that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead to be the King of the Jews and these religious leaders were declaring that he was wrong for believing what they should have believed themselves. The doctrine of the resurrection was not new to these religious leaders for it was foretold in the Old Testament.

Daniel 12:1-2

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

² And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Paul spoke of this hope everywhere he went.

Acts 13:32-33

³² *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,*

³³ *God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

Notice Acts 26:9-11

Here Paul looks back to his past. It is interesting to notice that the very people he sentenced to death he now calls SAINTS. This is how a relationship with Jesus Christ changes lives.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Notice Acts 26:11 again.

Here we see that when Paul captured the saints, he compelled them to blaspheme God. This means that he did his best to trick them with his words so that he could find them guilty of blasphemy. Why?

Leviticus 24:15-16

¹⁵ And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

¹⁶ And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.

Notice Acts 26:12-14

I want to consider what Jesus said to Paul. "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*" What does Jesus mean when he tells Paul it was hard to kick against the pricks? This is a reference to a cattle goad. It was a pointed stick used to get cattle to move forward when pulling a plow or getting them to go into a stall. Sometimes they would not move and the pointy stick was used against their hind leg. If they were stubborn the leg would become raw and very sensitive from the many pricks. When this happened, it did not take much to get them to move. The Lord had been prodding Paul as he hunted down believers. Paul was under conviction but he was trying his best to suppress the convictions/kick against the pricks. Therefore, the Lord came to him on the Damascus Road and the bright light from heaven put Paul right down in the dirt where he could do nothing but look up.

Application:

Every time I read of Paul's conversion, I am reminded that people around Paul had no idea of the "pricks" that he was experiencing. The believers who stood and died for the Lord had no idea what he was experiencing. He was under conviction but only he and the Lord knew. We must understand that when we speak the Word of God into the lives of people

they may appear to be unaffected but God will use His Word in their hearts to do His work,

Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁰ *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:*

¹¹ *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Notice Acts 26:15-18

Paul learned that it was not profitable to fight against the Lord. The Lord had a plan and Paul would have no peace until he submitted to God's will.

Conclusion/Application:

Our trials may be designed for us to be a testimony for the Lord. Maybe you are in a trial now but you are fighting. He may have you there to magnify Him to those around you but you have not submitted. You just want out. God has been prodding you but you have been pushing back and fighting the situation. Let us learn what Paul learned. There is a purpose for the trial and we will have no peace until we surrender to the will of God. Stop getting angry with God for the problems you face. Your trial has come because He has permitted it. We are to be a testimony especially in the trials.

Notice Acts 26:17-18 again.

Maybe this is why we are in a trial. So that someone will see Jesus and turn from darkness to the Light.