

**Text: Ac 26.19-20**

We are talking about Paul's speech to King Agrippa. I suppose we should call it a sermon.

The audience in the hall was the "crème de la crème" of the Judaeen region of the day. Porcius Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, the leading citizens of Caesarea, the tribunes ... this is the highest political level described in Acts to hear a gospel message.

Despite the size of the audience, Paul focuses on one man: Agrippa.

*So, King Agrippa*

The purpose of the meeting was so that Agrippa could supply to Festus some idea of what he should say to Caesar about this prisoner Festus would shortly send to him.

Agrippa is the most important man in the room, as far as Paul's future is concerned.

However, Paul doesn't approach like the other trials. He isn't arguing the legalities as he did before Felix. Instead, he is trying to fulfill the heavenly vision the Lord Jesus gave him on the road to Damascus:

... I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness ... rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, **to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins** and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

We've talked about King Agrippa and his privileged position in the Roman world. Consulting history, we find that Agrippa will become one of the praetors of Rome (special assistant to the emperor), living on into his nineties as a Roman statesman.

Agrippa is a man on whom much of Paul's political destiny depends. But Paul's interest in Agrippa seemingly has little concern for his own needs.

What did Agrippa need more than anything else in his life?

What does anyone need?

The issue of first importance for every life, even yours, is whether you have salvation through Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sins and a hope of heaven.

Read Ac 26.19-23

**Proposition:** The gospel message has a personal, direct, and compelling call: will you turn and receive?

## I. Every gospel message has a personal conclusion

### A. "So, King Agrippa..." vocative case

"The vocative is the case used for addressing someone or, on occasion, for uttering exclamations. It technically has no syntactical relation to the main clause."<sup>1</sup>

1. Used for emphasis
2. Used (often) to reveal deep emotion

### B. Sermons typically have a broad appeal and application

1. Yet the sermon isn't a sermon without some kind of appeal, a call for decision
2. Likewise, witnessing encounters need to make an appeal
3. We don't manipulate, but we should ask for a response

### C. Though sermons have broad appeal, the key to concluding is the personal, emotional appeal (whether "vocative" or not)

1. Here Paul appeals directly to one man (unusual for a sermon)
2. But the gospel appeal must go directly to individual hearts, no matter the status
  - a. Paul's preaching covers the empire
    - 1) First Damascus
    - 2) Jerusalem
    - 3) Throughout Judea and the Gentiles (*i.e.* everywhere)
  - b. The implication is the message is for everyone

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 65.

- c. In obedience to the heavenly vision (appearance of Jesus, see preceding vv.)

When we come to the conclusion of the gospel message, it goes direct to individual hearts.

We aren't right at the conclusion yet, but Paul is winding it up, especially for Agrippa.

## II. Every gospel message requires a definite decision

A. Repentance: to change the mind

B. Conversion: to turn around

Ac 3:19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Act 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

C. Confusion about repentance, but conversion clarifies

1. Repent from ? what?

2. Turn to... God

Man's problem is dependence on self: the religion of works is a dependence on self

- Inner virtue: "I'm a good guy"
- Outer behaviour: "I do good things ... ["good guy" things; "good religion" things]"

All of this is a dependence on my own virtues, those I have, and those I earn.

"Repenting (metanoein) and turning (epistrephein) to God are variant expressions of the same act, for true repentance is a complete change of mind, an about-face from sin and self to God."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 505.

## D. An illustration from Harry Ironside

“What is repentance? It is a complete change of attitude. It is a right-about-face. Here is a man who is going on living in open, flagrant sin, and he does not care anything about the things of God and is totally indifferent to the claims of righteousness. But laid hold of by the Spirit of God, that man suddenly comes face to face with his sins in the presence of God, and he turns right-about-face and comes to the God he has been spurning and to the Christ he has been rejecting and he confesses his sins and puts his trust in the Saviour. All this is involved in repentance.

“Here is another man. He was not living in open sin, but he has been living a very religious life. He has been very self-righteous. He has been thoroughly satisfied that because of his own goodness and because of his punctilious attention to his religious duties, God will accept him and eventually take him to be with Himself. But suddenly he is brought to realize that all his own righteousnesses are but as filthy rags, that nothing he can do will make him fit for God’s presence, and he faces this honestly before God. For him too there is a change of attitude. He turns away from all confidence in self, the flesh, his religion, and cries: “In my hand no price I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.” This is repentance. It is a right-about-face.”<sup>3</sup>

## E. What Agrippa needs

1. He needs to repent of his reliance on his position and status in life
2. He needs to humble himself and call out to God for salvation

The same message to the philosophers of Athens:

Ac 17.30-31 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,<sup>31</sup> because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

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<sup>3</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Acts* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1943), 613–14.

### III. Every gospel message will produce a converted lifestyle

A. The last phrase of our text causes some to worry:

performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

KJV: that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

1. Wait, isn't salvation by faith alone?
2. Do I have to commit to holiness in order to receive salvation?

B. Key understanding

1. "Repent" and "turn" are active infinitives, revealing the content of the message ... "kept declaring"
2. "Performing deeds" is a participle, something that happens "alongside" the actions that bring about salvation

"This is not a third responsibility, since the term *πράσσοντας* (*prassontas*, performing) is a present participle, making the performing of deeds something that happens alongside, and simultaneously with, the other elements, in dependence upon repenting and turning (Luke 3:8; Eph. 2:8–10; Titus 2:14; 3:8; Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Cor. 13:5–7)."<sup>4</sup>

3. Other translations:

- a. "performing deeds in keeping with their repentance." ESV
- b. "performing deeds consistent with repentance" NET
- c. "demonstrate their repentance by their deeds" NIV

C. The power for the new lifestyle comes through the faith of salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit

1. When I repent and turn, my spiritual orientation completely turns around

Wally Russell: "God turned me around 180°"

<sup>4</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 719.

## 2. When I believe [exercise faith] God gives me the Holy Spirit to enable me

Rm 8.11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

We have come to the very personal application: if you understand the gospel, it calls you to repent and turn, then live by faith in your walk with Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** The gospel message has a personal, direct, and compelling call: will you turn and receive?

Paul is getting ready to get real personal with Agrippa. That moment will come after Festus interrupts (v. 24), and Paul will ask Agrippa this question:

Ac 26.27 "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do."

With this question, all the weight and emotional impact of the message falls on King Agrippa. What will he do?

But now let's think about you. Where are you in this equation?

This message isn't just an interesting description of what happened to King Agrippa as he listened to the message.

This message is for you. The gospel is for you.

Have you believed?

How would you know?

Did you repent and turn to God? Did your repenting and turning produce the lifestyle of Christ in your life?

That's where this message comes right down to you, and touches you.