

July 31–August 6. Acts 22–28: “A Minister and a Witness”

Paul Recounts His Vision and Conversion

In Acts 21 we learned how Paul was falsely accused by the Jews for polluting the temple by bringing in Gentiles. A mob took him and was going to kill him but Roman guards interceded and took him to prison. On a landing of the prison stairs he asked the Chief Captain if he could address the mob.

This gives Paul an opportunity to testify to those gathered about what happened to him on the road to Damascus.

Acts 22:6-10

[6] And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

[7] And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

[8] And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

[9] And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

[10] And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

This is the second account of Paul's visitation. The first is Acts 9:3-7 and there is a third account later in this lesson (Acts 26:19-23) when he address King Agrippa

It differs for the first account by stating that those who traveled with him saw a light but heard no voice: whereas the first account states that they heard a voice saw nothing:

Acts 9:7

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

We know this second account is the correct one because the JST changes the first account to read:

JST Acts 9:7

And they who were journeying with him saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him who spake to him

Also the third account states that his companions saw a light.

Acts 22:11-16

[11] And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

[12] And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

[13] Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

[14] And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

[15] For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

[16] And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

According to Ananias, what was the reason Christ appeared to Paul?

(For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard)

Spencer W. Kimball

“On the road to Damascus, a company of men traveled together. A spectacular event came from the heavens, but only one man was in tune to receive it. That which was but static to all the other ears was an awesome call to duty to Saul of Tarsus, and changed his life, and contributed toward the transformation of millions of lives, but he was the only one who was attuned.” (CR, April 1970)

Paul recounts a vision while he was in the temple

Acts 22:17-22

[17] And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

[18] And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

[19] And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

[20] And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

[21] And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

[22] And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

What message does Paul say he received from God while he was in the temple?

(get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me
I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles)

Why do you think that this message made the mob even more determined to

him?

(get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me
I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles)

Hugh Nibley

"When [Stephen] had the effrontery to say, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him' (Acts 7:56-58)... Those fatal words, 'I see,' were his death warrant. And what did Paul say to make the Jews cry out in utter horror: 'Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.'... Paul could have won his audience over by speaking as a scholar, but when he bore witness to what he had seen and heard, he was asking for trouble." ("The World and the Prophets", pg. 14-15)

Paul Imprisoned In Jerusalem

The Chief Captain couldn't understand what Paul had done to incite a riot so he was going to be whipped til he confessed. Paul told the Chief Captain that he was a Roman citizen so they did not whip him, but put him in prison instead

That night Christ again appears to Paul.

Acts 23:11-14

[11] And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

[12] And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

[13] And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

[14] And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

What does Christ tell Paul that gives him peace and comfort?

(as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome)

Paul had stated a couple times (Acts 19:21, Romans 15:24) he wanted to teach in Rome. This arrest would give Paul the opportunity to do just that. He would get that chance despite (or maybe because of) the fact that 40 Jews had sworn an oath to kill him.

In Acts 24 & 25

Because of the conflict caused by the Jews wanting to kill Paul, and the fact that he was a Roman citizen, Paul was imprisoned in Jerusalem for two years.

During that time he had the opportunity to teach and testify to Felix, Rome's procurator over Judea. And Paul also had the chance to testify to Felix's successor, Festus

When King Agrippa visits Caesarea Paul was brought before him. Paul used this opportunity to testify the King Agrippa

He relates to King Agrippa the account of his vision and conversion. This is the third account of Christ appearing to Paul.

Acts 26:13-18

[13] At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

[14] And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

[15] And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

[16] But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for his purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

[17] Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.

[18] To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

According to the Lord, what was His purpose in visiting Saul?

(to make thee a minister and a witness
the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee
verse 18)

Paul tells king Agrippa that he has been true to his calling

Acts 26:19-23

[19] Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

[20] But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

[21] For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

[22] Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

[23] That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from

the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

According to Paul, what was the reason the Jews want him killed?

(shewed... they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance)

Did Paul's imprisonment stoped him from teaching and testifying?

(I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great)

He still has the opportunity to fulfill his greatest desire

The "great" would include the Rome protectorates Felix and Festus, and the Roman king Agrippa

Acts 26:24-29

[24] And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

[25] But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

[26] For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

[27] King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

[28] Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

[29] And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

What insight does Paul have about king Agrippa?

(verse 26,27)

What can we learn from king Agrippa's comment, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"?

Harold B. Lee

"We were back East a short time ago, and a good bishop made an interesting comment about what he called the saddest words that he knows of a man in high station. He read from the words in the days of the Apostle Paul when Paul before King Agrippa had borne his powerful testimony of his conversion. King Agrippa's reply was, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Then the bishop said, 'The king knew the truth but he lacked the courage to do that which would be required.'" (CR, April 1964)

Joseph Smith uses this story to explain his need to testify of what he had seen and heard

JS-H 1:24

However, it was nevertheless a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

Acts 26:30-32

[30] And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

[31] And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

[32] Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Because he appealed to Caesar (even though it is clear that Paul committed no crimes) Paul is sent as a prisoner to Rome to face trial.

On the journey his ship is blown of course and wrecks on the island of Melita. But even this is an opportunity. It gives Paul 6 months to teach and administer to the 300 on the ship and the inhabitants of the island of Melita.

Paul Imprisoned In Rome

Eventually he arrives in Rome where he remained in captivity. It sounds like something similar to what we might refer to as house-arrest.

He has the opportunity to teach the local Jewish leaders

Acts 28:16-17, 21-23

[16] And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

[17] And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

[21] And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

[22] But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

[23] And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

What was it that sparked enough interest in the local Jewish leaders to want to hear Paul's message?

(we know that every where it is spoken against)

What lesson can we take for this example of being “spoken against”?

It seems that when the Church has negative things written or spoken about it, it may cause the honest in heart to investigate for themselves

Also, the world has always fought against the gospel of Christ

George Q. Cannon

"Despite [slanderous] sayings, the work of God still goes on and is making rapid strides towards the fulfillment of that high destiny which its Author has predicted concerning it. When you compare this [latter-day] work with the work that was done by Christ and His apostles you will find a great analogy between the two. If we are everywhere spoken against and our names cast out as evil, they were served the same way....

"In former times, men have been hated and despised... for no other cause than for preaching the truth in its purity and standing up in defense of holy and pure principles revealed from heaven. In fact the persecutions..., instead of being an evidence against, are an evidence in favor of the truth of the work they are engaged in. Jesus says, 'Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you' (Luke 6:26). He warned His disciples of danger when their names here honored and when all men spoke well of them." (JD, 12:362)

Paul realized his hope and was able to teach in Rome for two years

Acts 28: 29-31

[29] And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

[30] And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

[31] Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

There is no doubt that this imprisonment was very hard for Paul, but look at all the good he was able to do.

He bore witness of his conversion to the Jewish mob in Jerusalem.

He bore witness in the courts of Felix, Festus and Agrippa.

He bore witness to many of the 300 passengers on the ship.

He taught and administered to the inhabitants of Melita.

He was able to teach to the Jewish leaders in Rome.

He taught in Rome for 2 years to all who visited him.