

Day 134, Acts 26

by David Servant

Paul's testimony of his divine encounter and change of heart is a powerful call to repentance and faith in Jesus.

Scripture: John 3:19, Acts 26:18-28

Topics: "Divine Encounter", "Repentance"

Description

David Servant preaches about Paul's defense before Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus, highlighting how Paul used the opportunity to proclaim the gospel rather than just prove his innocence. Paul's dramatic transformation from a persecutor to an ally of Christianity after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus demonstrates the power of a divine encounter. The responses of Festus and Agrippa reveal the resistance to the truth faced by unbelievers, as seen in their reluctance to accept Paul's compelling testimony. Paul's preaching emphasized the importance of repentance, turning to God, and living a life in accordance with faith in Jesus, rather than just accepting Him as a Savior.

Transcript

As he defended himself before Agrippa, Bernice and Festus, it is quite clear that Paul had a higher goal than just to prove his innocence of the charges that had been leveled against him by Jerusalem Jews. He seized the opportunity to proclaim the gospel, and his message was incredibly persuasive.

Paul began by recounting his own background, something which could be verified easily. He had previously been a very well-known Pharisee who was more devoted to destroying Christianity than any of his peers. This was an undeniable historic fact. Yet now the persecutor had become the persecuted. Christianity's greatest antagonist had become its greatest ally. And Paul's change was not gradual but almost instantaneous. Obviously, something had happened that moved him to promote what he had previously sought to crush. What could possibly have happened that effected such a dramatic change? The catalyst must have been equally dramatic. And of course, it was.

As Paul's audience heard him recount his experience on the road to Damascus, they had a choice. They could believe that he was lying or telling the truth. If Paul was lying, it would beg the question, "Why was he lying?" His lie had gained him nothing and cost him everything! It was the very reason he was in chains as he stood trial. So there was no logical reason to believe that he was lying. The only logical conclusion was that he had indeed had a divine encounter, and as a result, he was a changed man.

Festus' response, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad," reveals that it was Festus, not Paul, who was "out of his mind." Are people who are greatly educated, as was Paul, more likely to report being knocked down by God, blinded by a bright light, and hearing God's voice? Do people who are zealously opposed to others, believing they deserve death, generally join those whom they so passionately hate? So we see that in Festus, as is always the case with every unbeliever, that his unbelief was not the result of the lack of convincing proof, but the result of his resistance to the truth.

Agrippa was somewhat more honest than Festus, admitting that Paul's testimony was very compelling, saying, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian" (26:28). Obviously, if he were open to being persuaded, he would have asked Paul to continue so that he might learn more. But he didn't want to hear anything more, because what he had already heard was pulling him in a direction he did not want to go. The apostle John described both Festus' and Agrippa's attitudes when he wrote, "Men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Today we learn something that Jesus said to Paul during his Damascus Road experience that we did not previously know. Jesus told Paul that He was sending him to the Gentiles "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 [Him]" (26:18). It is those who turn from darkness and from Satan, and who turn to light and God, and only those, who receive forgiveness of sins. They are sanctified, that is, made holy, by faith in Jesus. Notice it is not faith in a doctrine about Jesus that makes one holy, but faith in the person of Jesus.

The devil believes every doctrine about Jesus. Faith in Jesus implies submission to Him, because He is Lord.

Because of those very things that Jesus said to Paul, he began preaching that people "should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (26:20). Poor Paul! Such a legalist! He didn't know any better than to tell unsaved people to start keeping God's commandments, when all they really needed to do was invite Jesus into their hearts or accept Him as their personal Savior!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-servant/day-134-acts-26/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net