

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 26

Ver. 1. *Then Agrippa said unto Paul*, etc.] After Festus had made the above speech to him, and to all present, and had introduced the affair of Paul, who now stood before them:

thou art permitted to speak for thyself; which a prisoner might not do, until he had leave; and this leave was granted by Festus the Roman governor, who was properly the judge, and not Agrippa, though the permission might be by both; and so the Arabic and Ethiopic versions read, “we have ordered”, or “permitted thee”, etc.

Then Paul stretched forth the hand; as orators used to do, when they were about to speak; or else to require silence; or it may be to show the freedom of his mind, and how ready he was to embrace the opportunity of pleading his own cause; being conscious to himself of his innocence, and relying on the ingenuity and integrity of his judge; and especially of the king, before whom he stood:

and answered for himself; or made an apology, or spoke in vindication of himself, in order to remove the charges brought against him.

Ver. 2. *I think myself happy, King Agrippa*, etc.] This was an handsome and artificial way of introducing his defense, and of gaining the affection and attention of the king, and yet was not a mere compliment; for it had been his unhappiness hitherto, that his case was not understood; neither Lysias the chief captain, nor the governors Felix and Festus, knew anything of the rites and customs of the Jews, and could not tell what to make of the questions of their law, of which Paul was accused: but it was otherwise with Agrippa, he was master of them, and this the apostle looked upon as a circumstance in his own favour:

because I shall answer for myself this day before thee; not before him as a judge, for Festus was judge, but in his presence; and he being versed in things of this kind, was capable of informing, counselling, directing, and assisting the judge, in what was proper to be done; wherefore it was an

advantage to the apostle to plead his own cause, and vindicate himself before such a person from the charges exhibited against him:

touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews; such as violation of the law, profanation of the temple, contempt of the people of the Jews and their customs, and of blasphemy, and sedition; all which he was able to clear himself from, and doubted not but he should do it to the entire satisfaction of the king.

Ver. 3. *Especially, because I know thee to be expert in all customs*, etc.] Rites and ceremonies of the Jews, whether enjoined by the law of Moses, or by the elders, fathers, and wise men:

and questions which are among the Jews; concerning angels, spirits, and the resurrection of the dead; which were moved and agitated between the Sadducees and Pharisees; and a multitude of others, which were disputed between the schools of Hillell and Shammai, of which their Misna and Talmud are full, and with these Agrippa was well acquainted; and to their rites and customs he conformed, of which we have some instances recorded in their writings: when they went with their firstfruits to Jerusalem^{f1220},

“a pipe sounded before them till they came to the mountain of the house, and when they came to the mountain of the house (the temple), even King Agrippa carried the basket upon his shoulder, and went in till he came to the court.”

So concerning the reading of the law by a king, they give this following account^{f1221}:

“a king stands and takes (the book of the law), and reads sitting; King Agrippa stood and took it, and read standing, and the wise men praised him; and when he came to that passage, (⁴⁵⁷⁵Deuteronomy 17:15) “Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee”, his eyes flowed with tears; they said unto him, fear not, Agrippa, thou art our brother.”

Some of their writers say^{f1222}, this was a piece of flattery in them: they also elsewhere commend him for his modesty and humility^{f1223};

“according to the tradition of the doctors, when persons attending a funeral met a bride (with her retinue), the former gave way, and

both to a king of Israel, when they met him; but they say concerning King Agrippa, that he met a bride, and gave way, and they praised him.”

And whereas it was forbidden to eat on the eve of the passover, before the Minchah, though ever so little, that they might eat the unleavened bread with appetite ^{f1224}; it is observed, that even King Agrippa, who was used to eat at the ninth hour, that day did not eat till it was dark ^{f1225}: so that from hence it appears, that King Agrippa was famous for his exact knowledge and observance of the customs and manners of the Jews, and which was well known, and was by the apostle:

wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently; since he was charged with a breach of the laws and customs of the Jews; and his defence would proceed upon things which Agrippa was not altogether ignorant of.

Ver. 4. *My manner of life, from my youth*, etc.] That is, his conduct and deportment, his behaviour among men, from the time that he was capable of performing religious exercises, and of knowing the difference between one sect and another, and of being observed and taken notice of by men:

which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem; for though he was born in Tarsus in Cilicia, he was very early brought, or sent by his parents to Jerusalem, where he had his education under Gamaliel; so that the first part of his life was spent in Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, and among the Jews there; the more learned and knowing part of them, Gamaliel’s pupils, and the wise men and their disciples: and his course of life must be well known to them, as he says,

this know all the Jews; that had any knowledge of him, and conversation with him.

Ver. 5. *Which knew me from the beginning*, etc.] From his youth, from his first coming to Jerusalem:

if they would testify; what they know, and speak out the truth of things, they must say,

that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee; there were three sects of religion among the Jews, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes; the first of these was the most exact, and came nearest to the truth of doctrine, and was the strictest as to outward holiness of life and

conversation, and of this sect the apostle was; and according to it he lived, and that in such a manner, as not to be charged with any notorious crime; and indeed in his own, and very likely in the opinion of others, he was then blameless. (See Gill on “^{<418E>}Matthew 3:7”).

(Essenes: A Jewish sect, who, according to the description of Josephus, combine the ascetic virtues of the Pythagoreans and the Stoics with a spiritual knowledge of the divine law. It seems probable that the same name signifies “seer”, or “the silent, the mysterious”. As a sect the Essenes were distinguished by an aspiration after the ideal purity rather than by any special code of doctrines. There were isolated communities of the Essenes, which were regulated by strict rules, and analogous to those of the monastic institutions of a later date. All things were held in common, without distinction of property; and special provision was made for the relief of the poor. Self-denial, temperance and labour — especially agricultural — were the marks of the outward life of the Essenes; purity and divine communication the objects of aspiration. Slavery, war and commerce were alike forbidden. Their best known settlements were on the north west shore of the Dead Sea. J.B. Smith one volume Bible Dictionary.)

Ver. 6. *And now I stand, and am judged*, etc.] Before the Roman governor, and in the presence of Agrippa:

for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; either for the hope of righteousness, life, and salvation, by the Messiah; who was promised to the Jewish fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others; (see ^{<4228>}Genesis 22:18, 49:10) or for the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life; of which there are various testimonies in the writings of the Old Testament, committed to the people of the Jews. (^{<3826>}Job 19:26,27, ^{<2339>}Isaiah 26:19, ^{<2712>}Daniel 12:2) and others; and both these senses may be very well joined together, for it was for asserting that the promised Messiah was come, and that Jesus of Nazareth was he; that he was risen from the dead, and that all the dead will be raised by him; and that life and righteousness, salvation, and everlasting glory and happiness, are only by him; for asserting these things, I say, the apostle was now a prisoner, and stood at the bar of a Roman judge, being accused by the Jews.

Ver. 7. *Unto which promise*, etc.] Of the Messiah, and salvation by him; and of the resurrection of the dead and eternal glory, as following upon it:

our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night hope to come; and enjoy the Messiah, and all blessings along with him; and the happy state of the resurrection and eternal life: the people of Israel were distinguished into twelve tribes, according to the names of the twelve patriarchs, the sons of Jacob; and though ten of the tribes had been carried captive, and had not returned as tribes, yet there were many of the several tribes, who either were left in the land, or returned along with the two tribes, and were mixed with them: and this way of speaking here used by Paul, and also by James, (~~5000~~James 1:1) is justified by Jewish writers: the Misnic doctors say ^{f1226},

“the twelve tribes bring twelve heifers, and for idolatry they bring twelve heifers and twelve goats:”

compare with this (~~4567~~Ezra 6:17, 8:35), yea, they say ^{f1227} “twelve tribes” are called, **l hq**, “a congregation”, eleven tribes are not called a congregation.”

This suggests a reason of the apostle’s use of this phrase, for he here represents the Israelites as a worshipping assembly, serving God continually, night and day, as they were by their representatives, the priests and stationary men in the temple; and that with intensesness, ardour, and fervency, as the word rendered “instantly” signifies being in a longing and earnest expectation of the coming of the Messiah, and of his world to come, and of the resurrection of the dead, and a future state of happiness.

For which hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews: for preaching that the Messiah, the twelve tribes hope for, is already come and that there is salvation in him, and in no other, and that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both just and unjust; and that there is another world and state after this, in which men will be happy and miserable; and these were the charges and accusations, or the sum of what were exhibited against him.

Ver. 8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you*, etc.] You Heathens and Sadducees; for the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was thought an incredible doctrine by the Heathens in general, and therefore was laughed at by the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers at Athens, when preached by the apostle there; and by a particular sect among the Jews, the Sadducees; and the apostle may be thought either to address himself to Festus, the Roman governor, and to the chief captains, who were present, and, being Heathens, disbelieved this doctrine; or else to

King Agrippa, who might be a Sadducee, and to such of the Sadducees as were in court, and expostulate with them, why it should be looked upon as a thing by no means to be credited,

that God should raise the dead; which may be understood both of the particular resurrection of Christ from the dead, which was not believed, neither by the Romans nor by the Jews, and neither by Pharisees nor Sadducees; or of the general resurrection of the dead, which was judged from the nature of things to be impracticable, and impossible by the latter, as well as by the Heathens: but since God is omniscient and omnipotent, and just and true, knows where every particle of a dead body lies, and can gather all together, and inspire with life; which he can as easily do, as to form all things out of nothing, as he did; and his justice and veracity seem to require, that the same bodies which have been partners with their souls in sinning, or in sufferings should share with them in woe or in happiness; it can neither be absurd, unreasonable, nor incredible, to suppose that God will raise them from the dead.

Ver. 9. *I verily thought with myself*, etc.] This seems to be a correction of himself, why he should wonder at their ignorance and unbelief, particularly with respect to Jesus being the Messiah, and his resurrection from the dead, and expostulate with them about it; when this was once his own case, it was the real sentiments of his mind, what in his conscience he believed to be right and just; namely,

that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; to him himself, to his religion, to his Gospel, and ordinances, and people; by blaspheming his name, by denying him to be the Messiah, by condemning his religion as heresy, by disputing against his doctrines, and manner of worship, and by persecuting his followers.

Ver. 10. *Which thing I also did in Jerusalem*, etc.] The metropolis of Judea, where he had had his education, and was well known; here he consented to the death of Stephen, and held the clothes of the witnesses while they stoned him; and here he haled men and women out of their houses, and committed them to prison, and made havoc of the church of Christ, and destroyed the faith, and those that professed it, as much as in him lay.

And many of the saints I shut up in prison; at Jerusalem; (see ~~4HRB~~ Acts 8:3).

having received authority from the chief priests; to take them up, and imprison them.

And when they were put to death; for it seems there were more than Stephen put to death, though we have no account of them:

I gave my voice against them; not that he sat in council, or was a member of the Jewish sanhedrim, and voted for the execution of the Christians, but he was pleased with the sentence they passed, and approved of it; or he joined the zealots, who, without any form of law, seized on the Christians, and put them to death wherever they found them; and this he assented to, and encouraged: some render the words, “I carried the sentence”; as the Vulgate Latin version; that is, the sentence of condemnation, which the Jewish sanhedrim passed upon the disciples and followers of Christ: this Saul took, and carried, it may be, both to the Roman governor, to be signed by him, and to the officers to put it in execution; so industrious and forward was he in persecuting the saints.

Ver. 11. *And I punished them oft in every synagogue*, etc.] In Jerusalem, where there were many; (see Gill on “^{<4412>}Acts 24:12”); by beating and scourging them there, as the manner was; (see ^{<4007>}Matthew 10:17).

and compelled them to blaspheme; the Lord Jesus Christ, both to deny him to be the Messiah, and to call him accursed; as the Jews and Heathens obliged some professors of Christianity to do, who were only nominal ones, and had not grace and strength to stand against their threatenings, and to endure their persecutions:

and being exceeding mad against them; full of malice, envy, and hatred:

I persecuted them even to strange cities; particularly Damascus; and of his journey thither, he gives an account in the following verse; or through the violence of his persecution he obliged them to fly to strange cities, where they were foreigners and strangers; though he himself might not follow them there, since we do not read of his going anywhere but to Damascus; whereas they that were scattered by the persecution, in which he was concerned, travelled as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, (^{<4419>}Acts 9:19). The phrase may be rendered, “even to cities without”; i.e. without the land of Israel: frequent mention is made in Jewish writings of such and such cities being **ḅal h̄xwj**, “without the land”.

Ver. 12. *Whereupon as I went to Damascus*, etc.] Being intent, upon the above said things, to punish the saints, compel them to blaspheme, imprison them, and even put them to death on account of these things; upon this errand and business he went to Damascus, the chief city of Syria, where he knew there were many that believed in Christ, who had removed from Jerusalem thither, on account of the persecution, or were settled there before:

with authority and commission from the chief priests; the Jewish sanhedrim, to bring those of them at Damascus bound to Jerusalem, in order to be punished, as in (^{<40B>}Acts 9:2, 22:5) and which the Ethiopic version adds here.

Ver. 13. *At midday, O king*, etc.] So in (^{<42B>}Acts 12:6). This circumstance is omitted in (^{<40B>}Acts 9:3). King Agrippa is called upon by the apostle, to excite his attention to what he was about to relate, it being very wonderful, and of great importance.

I saw in the way; that is, to Damascus, when near the city;

a light from heaven; which descended from thence:

above the brightness of the sun; it was a greater light than that, or otherwise it could not have been discerned at noon, or have had the effect it had upon Saul, and his company. This account of the greatness of the light, is not in the other places where this narrative is given:

shining round about me: so in (^{<40B>}Acts 9:3, 12:6)

and them which journeyed with me; this is not mentioned in the other accounts.

Ver. 14. *And when we were all fallen to the earth*, etc.] Saul, and the men that were with him, for fear of the divine Majesty, who by this extraordinary light was thought to be present: the other narratives only relate Saul's falling to the earth; how this is to be reconciled to their standing speechless, in (^{<40B>}Acts 9:7), (see Gill on "^{<40B>}Acts 9:7").

I heard a voice speaking unto me, etc. (see Gill on "^{<40B>}Acts 10:4"). (see Gill on "^{<40B>}Acts 10:5").

Ver. 15. *And I said, who art thou, Lord? and he said*, etc.] Or "the Lord said", as the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Syriac versions read,

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; the Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “Jesus of Nazareth”; (see Gill on “^{<4095>}Acts 9:5”).

Ver. 16. *But rise and stand upon thy feet*, etc.] This, and what follows in this and the two next verses, are not in any of the former accounts; and these words are used not only because Saul was fallen to the earth, and are an encouragement to rise up, and stand corporeally, but to take heart, and be of good cheer; for though he had acted so vile and cruel a part by Christ, and his people, yet he had designs of grace, and good will to him; and this appearance was not for his destruction, but for his honour, comfort, and usefulness:

for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose; not to take vengeance for past offences, but for the ends hereafter mentioned: and this appearance of Christ was real, corporeal, and personal, and not imaginary, or merely visionary and intellectual; and it was to this sight of Christ he more than once refers, partly in proof of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and partly to demonstrate the truth of his apostleship, (^{<4601>}1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:8).

to make thee a minister and a witness, both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; so that he was an apostle, not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, as he himself says, (^{<8001>}Galatians 1:1). He was a minister, not of man’s making, but of Christ’s; and they are the only true ministers of the Gospel, who are made by Christ, who have their mission and commission, their qualifications, gifts, and abilities, their doctrine, work, and wages from him: and the apostle’s work, as a minister, was to be a witness; it was to testify what he had seen of Christ corporeally; and what knowledge of his person, office, and grace was now communicated to him by the spirit of wisdom and revelation; and what should hereafter be made known to him, either mediately by Ananias, or immediately by Christ and his Spirit; for the apostle had after appearances, visions, and revelations; (see ^{<44217>}Acts 22:17,18, 23:11, ^{<47111>}2 Corinthians 12:1-4,7).

Ver. 17. *Delivering thee from the people*, etc.] That is, the people of the Jews, as they are distinguished from the Gentiles; and so the Syriac version, and two of Beza’s copies, and two of Stephens’s, read; for the Lord knew, that as soon as ever Saul was converted and professed his name, and preached his Gospel, the people of the Jews would immediately

become his implacable enemies, and seek to destroy him; wherefore he promises him before hand deliverance, and security from them:

and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to both Jews and Gentiles; to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles; which method the apostle observed, and which course he steered, until the Jews put away the Gospel from them; and then he turned to the Gentiles, to whom he chiefly preached, as their apostle, and was saved from many dangers among them, as is here promised.

Ver. 18. *To open their eyes,* etc.] The eyes of their understanding, which were shut, and darkened, and blind: one copy reads, “the eyes of the blind”; and the Ethiopic version renders it, “the eyes of their heart”; and to have them opened, is to have them enlightened, to see their lost state and condition by nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the plague of their own hearts, the impurity of nature, the impotence of man to that which is spiritually good, the imperfection of obedience, and the insufficiency of a man’s righteousness to justify him before God; and to see where help is laid, and where salvation is; to behold Christ as the only able, willing, complete, and suitable Saviour; to see that there is life and righteousness, peace, pardon, grace, and glory in him; and to have an insight into the doctrines of the Gospel, and a glimpse of the invisible things of another world. Now though this is all the work of the Spirit, by whom only the eyes of the understanding are enlightened; yet this is ascribed to the apostle, not as the efficient cause, but as the instrument and means through preaching of the Gospel, which the Spirit of God would, and did make use of:

and to turn them from darkness to light; or “that they might be turned”, as the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions render it: by “darkness” is meant, the darkness of nature, the darkness of sin, of ignorance, and unbelief, in which all men by nature are; who are in the dark about, and are ignorant of God, and the perfections of his nature; and about sin, and the evil there is in it, and that comes by it; and the way of peace, righteousness, and salvation by Christ; and the work of the spirit in regeneration and sanctification upon the heart; and about the Scriptures of truth, and the doctrines of the Gospel, and what will be their state and portion in another world; they do not know where they are, what they are, nor where they are going: and in the effectual calling this darkness is in a great measure removed, and they are turned to light; to God, who is light itself, and to

Christ, the light of the world, and to the light of the word, and to a participation of the light of grace here, in which they see light, and behold the above things, and of the light of glory hereafter. This is a phrase used by the Jews, at the time of the passover, when they praise the Lord, and give thanks unto him for the wonders he wrought for their fathers and for them, as that he had brought them out of bondage to liberty, and from sorrow to joy, and **l wdg rwal hl pam**, “from darkness to a great light”

^{f1228}. Conversion is the end of the Gospel ministry, and illumination is necessary to it; yea, it lies in a turn from darkness to light, as is here expressed: and this conversion is not a mere external one, or a reformation of manners; this is indeed sometimes called a conversion, and is a man’s turning from the evil of his ways, from a vicious life and conversation, to a sober way of living, and is often brought about through the ministry of the word; but then this may be where true conversion is not, and where there is no special illumination of the Spirit, nor any true spiritual light; and there may be a turning again to the former course of life; besides, this external conversion, when it is right and genuine, is the fruit and effect of inward conversion, or true grace, and is at most but the evidence of it: nor is it a conversion to a doctrine in a professional way; men may be converted in this sense, and remain wicked; they may have the form, but not the power of godliness; know the doctrine and profess it, and yet be strangers to the experience of it: nor does it design a restoration after backslidings; which sometimes goes by the name of conversion, such as was Peter’s after his fall; but the first work of conversion is here meant, which is internal, and is a turn of the hearts of men; and is not the work of man, but of God, who has the hearts of all in his hands, and can turn them as he pleases; and is what man is passive in, he does not turn himself, but is turned by the Lord; though ministers may be, and are instruments in it. It follows,

and from the power of Satan unto God: this power of Satan regards not his power over the rest of the devils, whose prince and head he is; hence he is called the prince of devils, and the prince of the power of the air; but his power over the world of men, which he has by usurpation, and therefore is called the prince of the world; but not his power over the bodies of men, by possessing them, inflicting diseases, and death itself upon them, nor over their estates; all which is only by permission of God, whenever he exercises it; but over the souls of men, in whom he rules as in his own kingdom: he is the strong man armed, and the hearts of men are his palaces, which are guarded with devils and unclean lusts; when all the goods are kept in peace

by him, there is no concern about sin, no inquiry after salvation, no dread of the curses of the law, nor fear of hell and damnation, but all in the utmost security: and he not only dwells in the hearts of unregenerate persons, but he works effectually there; by stirring up their corruptions, putting ill things into their minds, and instigating them against true spiritual and powerful religion, and the professors of it: he has power over the minds of them that believe not, to blind them, by keeping them in blindness, and increasing it; which he does by diverting their minds from hearing the Gospel; and whilst hearing it, by filling them with enmity against it. Moreover, they are led by him as captives at his will; they are in his power, as the bird is in the snare of the fowler, and as a prisoner in the hands of a jailer; and are entirely at his beck and command, and do his lusts, and obey his will: and this also may have a particular respect to the power and authority which he exercised over the Heathens, before the Gospel came among them; Satan usurped a power over the Gentile world, and took upon him to be the god of it; and for many hundred of years was worshipped in their idols; and he held them fast bound unto him in the fetters of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry; but now the Gospel was sent among them to free them from this power and tyranny of his; and it was made effectual to the turning of multitudes of them from him, and subjection to him, which is done in the effectual calling of every person; not that Satan then has no more power over them to tempt and distress them, but not to rule over them, and lead them about at pleasure, and much less to devour and destroy them: and then also are they turned to God, to have true knowledge of him, and an hearty desire after him, which they had not before; and to a love of him, whose hearts before were enmity to him; and to believe in him, and trust in him as the God of providence, and of grace; and to have communion with him; and to be subject to his government, and yield a cheerful obedience to him, both externally and internally.

That they may receive forgiveness of sins: as an act of God's free grace, through the blood of Christ, which was shed for it; and which free and full forgiveness of sins is published in the Gospel, that whoever believes in Christ, may by faith receive it. This is what every enlightened soul sees it needs, and is desirous of; it is the first thing it wants, and asks at the hands of God; and nothing can be more suitable to its case, and welcome to it; and this is the good news which is declared in the ministry of the Gospel: and it is had in a way of receiving; for it is not purchased with money, nor

procured by the merits of men; but is a gift of God, which is received by the hand of faith into the conscience of the enlightened sinner; the consequences of which are peace, joy, and comfort.

And inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in one: by the “inheritance” is meant, either something enjoyed now, as God himself, who is the portion of his people, and the lot of their inheritance; or a part and interest in Christ, who is that good part and portion, and which shall never be taken away; and the blessings of grace in him, which, besides forgiveness of sins, are peace with God, a justifying righteousness, and adopting grace: or rather eternal glory and happiness hereafter is here designed, which is called an “inheritance” or “lot”, in allusion to the land of Canaan, which was distributed by lot; not that heaven is a casual thing; but it signifies that every Israelite indeed will have their share and portion in it. There are many things which show an agreement between heaven, and the land of Canaan; that was a goodly land, and ready prepared for the Israelites; and so heaven is the better country, and the city and kingdom God has prepared for his people from the foundation of the world: a wilderness was passed through first, and many battles fought before it was possessed; the people of God pass through the wilderness of this world, and fight the good fight of faith, and then enter into rest: the Israelites were introduced into it, not by Moses, but by Joshua; and saints get to heaven, not by the works of the law, but by Christ the Saviour, another Jesus or Joshua: and lastly, Canaan was a place of rest; and so is heaven. Moreover, it may be so called, in allusion to inheritances among men, though it vastly exceeds all earthly ones, being incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens; yet it bears some likeness to them; it is what is bequeathed to the children of God by their heavenly Father, and comes to them through the death of Christ the testator, and is for ever: it is neither purchased nor acquired, but is freely given; belongs only to the children of God, and is their Father’s free gift unto them, and is only enjoyed by such who are “sanctified”; and it lies among them, and will be jointly and equally possessed by them. The heirs of salvation are said to be sanctified in different senses; they are sanctified by God the Father in eternal election, being separated from others, and chosen through sanctification to it; and they are sanctified “in” and “by” the Lord Jesus Christ: they are sanctified in him representatively, he being the covenant head of his people, has all grace, and so all holiness in him for them, which is perfect and complete; and this is the source of all that holiness that is in

them, and which they have communicated to them by virtue of their union to him; and also they are sanctified “in” him through the imputation of the holiness of his human nature to them, which is a branch of their justification before God; and they are sanctified by him meritoriously, or by his blood, through which their sins are expiated, and fully atoned for; and so in this sense they are sanctified by it: and they are sanctified internally by the Spirit of God, who in regeneration produces principles of grace and holiness in them, which were not there before; man was originally possessed of a perfect moral holiness, but through sin is become an unholy creature; and in the same state and condition are the children of God by nature, as others, and need the sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit to make them meet for the undefiled inheritance: and this inheritance these sanctified ones receive by faith now, as they do the forgiveness of their sins; that is, they now receive by faith the promise of the inheritance, and the earnest and pledge of it, and their right unto it, and claim upon it: for the phrase,

by faith that is in me, is not to be connected with the word “sanctified”, but with the word “receive”, in the preceding clause; and has respect to both benefits, which it receives from Christ, the object of it here expressed; for it is not any faith, but faith which is in Christ, by which these blessings of grace are received and enjoyed: and the whole of this shows the great ends and usefulness of the Gospel ministry.

Ver. 19. *Whereupon, O King Agrippa*, etc.] Having been favoured with this illustrious appearance of the Lord and with this declaration and commission from him:

I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; to Christ himself, who appeared from heaven in so much light and glory, and spoke unto him, and appointed him what he should be, and do, and declared what use he should be of: he did not disbelieve what Christ said, nor was he disobedient to the orders he gave, but immediately set about the work he called him to, without consulting flesh and blood; (see ^{<4016>}Galatians 1:16).

Ver. 20. *But showed first unto them of Damascus*, etc.] The Jews at Damascus to whom the apostle first preached; (see ^{<4020>}Acts 9:20,22).

and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea; observing the order of his mission, (^{<4027>}Acts 26:17) though it was not until after he had been in Arabia, and had returned to Damascus, that he went to Jerusalem,

and preached there; (see ~~4017~~ Galatians 1:17,18) compared with (~~4028~~ Acts 9:28).

and [then] to the Gentiles; as at Antioch in Pisidia, at Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra in Lycaonia; and at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea in Macedonia; and in many places in Greece and Asia, as at Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and others, as this history shows; and indeed he preached the Gospel from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum;

that they should repent; that is, that they should repent of their sins; of sin in general, as it is committed against God, is a transgression of his law, and as it is in itself exceeding sinful, and in its effects dreadful; and of particular sins, such as men have been more especially addicted to, and of which the Jews and Gentiles, the apostle was sent unto, and to whom he preached, had been guilty: as the former of their will worship, and following the commandments and traditions of men, thereby making void the law of God; of their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah; of their persecution of his apostles, ministers, and people; and of their trust in, and dependence upon, their own righteousness for justification: and the latter of their immoralities, superstition, and idolatry; and both not of the outward gross actions of life only, but of inward sins and lusts: and repentance of each of these lies in a different sentiment of them; in a detestation and abhorrence of them; in shame and confusion on account of them; in self-reflections upon them, and humiliation for them; in an ingenuous acknowledgment of them, and turning from them: and this is not a national repentance which the ministers of the Gospel are to show to men the necessity of; though this is not unworthy of them, when there is a call in Providence to it, and the state of things require it; much less a legal one, but an evangelical repentance; which has along with it faith in Christ Jesus, dealing with his blood and righteousness for the remission of their sins, and their justification before God; and which springs from, and is encouraged and heightened by, a sense of the love of God: and now this being a part of the Gospel ministry, does not suppose it to be in the power of men to repent of themselves, since no man, whilst he remains insensible of the evil nature of sin, and the hardness of his heart continues, which none but God can remove, can repent; and when he becomes truly sensible, he then prays to God to give him repentance, and to turn him: nor does it at all contradict its being a blessing of the covenant, a gift of Christ, and a grace of the Spirit of God; nor does it suggest, that the preaching of the word is sufficient of itself to produce it; the contrary of which the ministry of John

the Baptist, of Christ, and of his apostles, declares; but the design of its being insisted on in the Gospel ministry, is to show that men are sinners, and in such a state and condition, that they are in need of repentance, and that without it they must perish; and the rather this is to be quietly inculcated, since true repentance is unto life, is the beginning and evidence of spiritual life, and issues in eternal life; and since there is a close connection between that and salvation, and that without it there is no salvation. It follows,

and turn to God; this is to be understood, not of the first work of conversion, which is God's work, and not man's act, and in which man is passive, and which is before repentance, whereas this follows upon it; though the ministers of the word have a concern with this; to bring about this is the design and use of their ministrations; their business is to show the nature of conversion, what it is, and wherein it lies; to rectify mistakes about it, and to observe the necessity of it: but here is designed a turning to God, in consequence of the grace of first conversion; by an acknowledgment and confession of sin to God, by an application to him for pardoning grace and mercy, by a trust and dependence on him for righteousness, life, and salvation, and by obedience to his commands and ordinances. It intends a turning of the Jews from their evil principles and practices, from the traditions of their elders to the law of God, the Gospel of Christ, and the ordinances of it, and of the Gentiles, from their idols to the worship of the true and living God:

and do works meet for repentance the same with "fruits meet for repentance", (⁴⁰⁰⁸Matthew 3:8). And such as are particularly mentioned in (⁴⁰¹¹2 Corinthians 7:11) they are they which are the reverse of the evil actions they have been guilty of, and which are properly good works. And they are they which are done according to the will of God declared in his word, this is a requisite of a good work; what is not according to the word of God is not a good work, nor can it be any evidence of repentance; and they are also such as spring from love to God, for if they are done through fear of punishment, or for sinister and selfish ends, they show repentance to be a mere legal one: and they are such as are done in faith, in the name and strength of Christ, and to the glory of God by him. All external good works are designed, which show that the inward repentance professed, and that the outward change made in religion and worship, are genuine and sincere: the doctrines of internal repentance and outward worship, and all good

works, are parts of the Gospel ministry, and to be insisted on in their proper places.

Ver. 21. *For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple*, etc.] He means the Asiatic Jews, who finding him in the temple, laid hold on him, and dragged him out of it: and, as he says, went about to kill me; for no other reason, but for preaching to the Gentiles, and for preaching the above doctrines to them: what he refers to is in (~~407~~ Acts 21:27-31).

Ver. 22. *Having therefore obtained help of God*, etc.] Both to preach the Gospel, and escape danger; for he had delivered him many a time both from Jews and Gentiles, according to his promise, (~~407~~ Acts 26:17) and particularly from the Asiatic Jews, when they were about to kill him, by the means of Lysias the chief captain, who rescued him out of their hands; and also from the lying in wait of the Jews to take away his life, and the various methods they used both with Felix and Festus to get him into their power: but the Lord appeared for him, and saved him from all their pernicious designs against him; and therefore he could say as follows,

I continue unto this day: in the land of the living, though in bonds:

witnessing both to small and great; to kings and subjects, as now to Agrippa, Festus, the chief captains and principal inhabitants of Caesarea, and to the common people assembled; to high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, young and old; to persons of every state, age, and sex:

saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. This he mentions in opposition to the charge against him, as that he spoke against the law of Moses, as well as against the temple, and the people of the Jews; whereas his doctrine was perfectly agreeable to the writings of Moses, and the prophets, concerning the Messiah, they speak of in many places, and the Jews expected. There is an entire harmony and agreement between the writings of Moses, and the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New, in all the doctrines of the Gospel revelation; in the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence, and of the proper deity of each person; in the doctrines respecting the person, offices, and work of Christ; that he is the Son of God, God and man in one person, and the only Mediator between God and man; and that he is prophet, priest, and King; and that the great work he was appointed to, undertook, and came about, and has fulfilled, is the redemption of his

people; and in the several doctrines of grace concerning the choice of men to salvation, the covenant made with Christ on account of them, their redemption, justification, and pardon, their repentance and good works, the resurrection of the dead, and a future state: the particular things instanced in, the apostle preached, and Moses and the prophets said should be, and in which they agreed, are as follow.

Ver. 23. *That Christ should suffer*, etc.] Great afflictions in soul and body, and death itself; this is recorded by Moses, (^{<0085>}Genesis 3:15) and is the sense of many of the types, as of the passover, brazen serpent, etc. and of all the sacrifices which from God were appointed by him, and is the constant account of all the prophets from the beginning to the end; (see ^{<0271>}Psalm 22:1,2,6,7,11-21, ^{<2552>}Isaiah 53:2-12) (^{<7086>}Daniel 9:26, ^{<3009>}Zechariah 9:9, 12:10, 13:6,7). The sufferer is Christ, or the Messiah, not the Father, nor the Spirit, but the Word, or Son of God, and not in his divine nature, which was incapable of suffering, but in his human nature; though sufferings may be ascribed to his whole person, both natures being united in him: and hence they became efficacious to answer the purposes for which they were endured; and which he endured, not for himself, nor for angels, but for chosen men, sinners, and ungodly persons; in order to make peace and reconciliation for them, procure the pardon of their sins, obtain eternal redemption for them, deliver them from all evil, and from all enemies, and bring them nigh to God: and what he suffered were no other than what had been foretold in the writings of the Old Testament, which all along represent the Messiah as a suffering one; and in particular that he should suffer in his character, be reproached, and accounted a worm, and no man, (^{<2553>}Isaiah 53:3, ^{<0276>}Psalm 22:6, 59:9) and in his soul and body, and be put to death and buried, as the above prophecies referred to show; the several circumstances leading on to, or attending his sufferings and death, are distinctly expressed; as the betraying him by one of his disciples, selling him for thirty pieces of silver, his being forsaken by all his disciples, his crucifixion between two thieves, the parting of his garments, giving him gall and vinegar to drink, and the piercing his side with a spear, (^{<0489>}Psalm 41:9, ^{<3012>}Zechariah 11:12,13) (^{<3037>}Zechariah 13:7, ^{<2552>}Isaiah 53:12, ^{<0278>}Psalm 22:18, 69:21 ^{<3020>}Zechariah 12:10). And to this agreed the doctrine of the apostle, who taught that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ that was to come, and that he had suffered all that Moses and the prophets did say should come upon him: but these were not the present sentiments

of the Jews, who expected the Messiah to be a temporal Prince and Saviour, and to live in great outward prosperity, and for ever.

And that he should be the first that should rise from the dead: by his own power, and to an immortal life, as Jesus did; and so is the firstborn from the dead, and the first fruits of them that slept: a type of this, in the deliverance of Isaac, is recorded by Moses in (^{<0121>}Genesis 22:12-14) compared with (^{<3119>}Hebrews 11:19) and the thing itself is foretold by many of the prophets, (^{<0160>}Psalms 16:10, ^{<2339>}Isaiah 26:19, ^{<2862>}Hosea 6:2).

and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles: in his own person to the people of the Jews, and by his apostles to the Gentiles. In the writings of Moses he is spoken of as the great prophet God would raise up in Israel, to whom they should hearken; and as the Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people should be, (^{<0575>}Deuteronomy 17:15, ^{<0490>}Genesis 49:10) and that he should be a light to both Jews and Gentiles, through the ministration of the Gospel, is said by the prophets, (^{<2392>}Isaiah 9:2, 42:6, 49:6) and these were the things which the apostle asserted in his ministry, in perfect agreement with those writings.

Ver. 24. *And as he thus spake for himself,* etc.] Asserting the integrity and innocence of his past life and conversation, in proof of which he appealed to the Jews themselves; setting forth the prejudices to the Christian religion he had been under; declaring the heavenly vision that had appeared to him, and the divine orders he had received; alleging, that in his ministry there was an entire harmony between him, and the writings of Moses, and the prophets, for which the Jews professed a veneration; as he was thus vindicating himself, ere he had well finished his apology,

Festus said with a loud voice; that all might hear, and being moved with resentment at what he had heard; and it may be, he was displeas'd with Paul that he took so much notice of Agrippa, and so often address'd him, and appeal'd to him, when he scarce ever turn'd to, or look'd at him:

Paul, thou art beside thyself; not in thy senses, or right mind, to talk of such an appearance and vision, and especially of the resurrection of a person from the dead. This is no unusual thing for the ministers of the Gospel to be reckon'd madmen, and the doctrines they preach madness and folly: our Lord himself was said to be beside himself, and to have a devil, and be mad; and so were his apostles, (^{<4102>}Mark 3:21, ^{<4800>}John 10:20 ^{<4013>}2 Corinthians 5:13) and it is not to be wonder'd at that natural men

should entertain such an opinion of them, since what they deliver is quite out of their sphere and reach: Festus added,

much learning doth make thee mad; the apostle was a man of much learning, both Jewish, Greek, and Roman; and Festus perceived him to be of great reading by his making mention of Moses, and the prophets, writings which he knew nothing at all of. And as this sometimes is the case, that much reading, and hard study, do cause men to be beside themselves, he thought it was Paul's case: so the philosopher^{f1229} suggests, that men of great wit and learning, and who are closely engaged in study, whether in philosophy, or politics, or poetry, or in technical affairs, are inclined to be melancholy, and phrenetic.

Ver. 25. *But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus*, etc.] That is, Paul said, as the Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read: he replied to Festus, to whom he gives his title of honour, not out of fear, nor flattery, but according to custom; and though he used him in such a reproachful manner, as if he was not himself, which he denies; nor did what he had said show anything of that kind, but the reverse, to which he appeals;

but speak forth the words of truth and soberness; which are true in themselves, being perfectly agreeable to the Scriptures of truth; and are what Christ, who is truth itself, had spoken, and of which he is the subject; and which the spirit of truth leads into, and owns and blesses: the Gospel in general, and all the doctrines of it, are words of truth; they are true, in opposition to that which is false, there is nothing of falsehood in them, no lie is of the truth; and to that which is fictitious, as the counterfeit Gospel of false teachers, which looks like the Gospel, and has the appearance of truth, but in reality is not; and to that which is but shadow, the Gospel, and the truths of it, are solid and substantial ones; hence the law and truth are opposed to each other, (~~4117~~ John 1:17) and there are particular doctrines of the Gospel, and such as the apostle had been speaking of, or referred unto, which are called truth, words of truth, and faithful sayings; as that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that he is God manifest in the flesh, or is God and man in one person; that he came into the world to save the chief of sinners; that he suffered, died, and rose again from the dead; that justification is by his righteousness; and that as he is the first that rose from the dead, others will rise also; or that there will be a resurrection of the dead by him; (see ~~4121~~ 1 John 2:21,22, ~~5415~~ 1 Timothy 3:15,16) (~~5415~~ 1 Timothy 1:15 ~~4630~~ 1

Corinthians 15:1,3,4, ~~800~~Galatians 3:1 ~~802B~~2 Timothy 2:18). And these are “words of soberness” also; they are words of the highest wisdom, which contain the wisdom of God in a mystery, even hidden wisdom, the deep things of God, and such as could never have been found out by the wisdom of men; they are the means of bringing a man to himself, to his right mind, who before was not himself; of causing a man to think soberly of himself, and not more highly than he ought to think, even to think of himself, that he is the chief of sinners, and the least of saints; and of speaking soberly, wisely, and prudently; and of living soberly, righteously, and godly: they are doctrines, as delivered by the faithful ministers of them, which come from a sound and sober mind, and have a tendency to make wise and sober; and therefore should be spoken “forth”, openly and boldly, freely and faithfully, constantly and continually, as they were by the apostle, whatever reproaches, calumnies, and reflections may be cast upon them for so doing, even though they may be called fools and madmen.

Ver. 26. *For the king knoweth of these things*, etc.] Something of them, of the sufferings and resurrection of the Messiah, and of his showing light to Jews and Gentiles, as they are spoken of by Moses and the prophets, whose writings Agrippa was conversant with, and of these things as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; at least he had heard the report of them, how that they were said to be accomplished in him.

Before whom also I speak freely; because of the knowledge he had of these things:

for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; as that Moses and the prophets have foretold then, and that they have had their fulfilment in Jesus;

for this thing was not done in a corner: the ministry of Jesus was, public, his miracles were done openly, his suffering the death of the cross under Pontius Pilate was generally known, and his resurrection from the dead was a well attested fact, and the ministration of his Gospel to Jews and Gentiles was notorious. The Arabic and Ethiopic versions refer this to Paul’s words and actions, that what he had said and done were not private but public, and of which Agrippa had had, by one means or another, a full account; but the other sense is best.

Ver. 27. *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?* etc.] What they have said concerning the person, office, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, and that what they have said is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth?

I know that thou believest; that what the prophets said were true, and are accomplished.

Ver. 28. *Then Agrippa said unto Paul,* etc.] Either seriously or ironically; rather the former, arising from the convictions of his mind, which he could not stifle nor conceal:

almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian; to profess faith in Jesus as the Messiah, to embrace his doctrine, and submit to his ordinances, which is to be a Christian, at least externally: and when he says “almost”, or “in a little”, his meaning is, that within a little, or very near, he was of being persuaded to embrace Christianity; or in a little matter, and in some respects; or rather in a few words, and in a small space of time, Paul had strangely wrought upon him to incline to the Christian religion; though the first sense, that he was almost, or within a little of being a Christian, seems to be the best, as appears by the apostle’s reply to it: what it is to be a real Christian, (see Gill on “⁴¹¹²⁵Acts 11:26”). An almost Christian is one that has much light and knowledge, but no grace; he may know something of himself and of sin, of its being a violation of the law of God, and of the bad consequences of it, but has not true repentance for it; he may know much of Christ in a speculative way, concerning his person and offices, as the devils themselves do, and of the good things which come by him, as peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation; but has no application of these things to himself; he may have a large notional knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, but has no experience of the power, sweetness, and comfort of them in his own soul; all his knowledge is unsanctified, and without practice: he is one that has a taste of divine things, but has not the truth of them; he may taste of the heavenly gift, of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come; yet it is but a taste, a superficial one, which he has; he does not savour and relish these things, nor is he nourished by them: he has a great deal of faith in the historical way, and sometimes a bold confidence and assurance of everlasting happiness; but has not faith of the right kind, which is spiritual and special, which is the faith of God’s elect, the gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit; by which the soul beholds the glory, fulness, and suitableness of Christ, under a sense of need, and goes forth to him, renouncing everything of self, and

lays hold upon him, and trusts in him for salvation; and which works by love to Christ and his people, and has with it the fruits of righteousness: he may express a great deal of flashy affectation to the word, and the ministers of it, for a while, but has nothing solid and substantial in him; he may partake of the Holy Ghost, of his gifts largely, but not of special and internal grace; and indeed he can only be an almost Christian, that becomes one merely through the persuasion of men: it is one part of the Gospel ministry to persuade men, but this of itself is ineffectual; a real Christian is made so by the power of divine grace. Agrippa was only persuaded, and but almost persuaded by the apostle to be a Christian, but not by the Lord, nor altogether, who persuades Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem.

Ver. 29. *And Paul said, I would to God,* etc.] This prayer of the apostle's shows his affection for the souls of men, and his great desire for their conversion, and also his sense of the power and grace of God, as necessary to it:

that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am; that is, his wish was that not only Agrippa, but that all that were present, were not only within a little, or in some low degree, but entirely, in the highest and fullest sense, Christians, as he was; that they knew as much of Christ, and had as much faith in him, and love to him, as he had, and were as ready to serve and obey him: he does not wish that Agrippa and the rest that heard him were as he had been, a bigot for traditions and ceremonies, that trusted in his own righteousness, did many things contrary to the name of Jesus, was a blasphemer of him, a persecutor of his saints, and an injurious person; but as he now was, not meaning with respect to his civil circumstances, as a mean poor man, and a tent maker, or with respect to his single state of life, which he elsewhere advises to, (~~405~~ 1 Corinthians 9:5) or with respect to his ministerial capacity, as an apostle of Christ, and a preacher of the Gospel; but as a Christian, and in a private capacity: his sense is, he wished that they were as he, regenerated by the Spirit of God, new creatures in Christ, called by the grace of God with an holy calling, believers in Christ, lovers of him, pardoned by his blood, justified by his righteousness, sanctified by his grace, children of God, and heirs of eternal life: and all this he wishes for of God, saying, “would to God”, etc. knowing that the whole of this is not of men, but of God; all grace, and every blessing of it, which make or show a man to be a Christian indeed, are from him. And this wish is expressive of true grace, which desires the good of others, and also of a spirit truly

generous, that is not selfish and monopolizing; and which is concerned for the glory of God, the interest of Christ, and the weakening of Satan's kingdom: and from the whole of this it appears, that a person may arrive to true satisfaction of his own state; and that it is an evidence of grace, when the heart is drawn out in desires, after the salvation of others; and that altogether Christians are the only desirable ones; and that to be made a real Christian is the work of God, and to be ascribed to him. This the apostle wished for, for Agrippa and all that heard him; as does every Gospel minister for their hearers, the hearing of the word being the ordinary means of believing; and the rather it is desired by them, because the condemnation of those that hear the word is otherwise thereby aggravated: the apostle adds,

except these bonds; which were both troublesome and reproachful: not but that he cheerfully endured them himself, and thought it the duty of Christians to bear them patiently, when called to it, but then they were not things to be desired and wished for; the exception is not only Christian like, but humane and genteel.

Ver. 30. *And when he had thus spoken*, etc.] These words are omitted in the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions:

the king rose up; from the judgment seat; that is, King Agrippa:

and the governor; the Roman governor, Festus:

and Bernice: the sister of King Agrippa:

and they that sat with them; either in council, or to hear; the chief captains, and principal inhabitants of Caesarea.

Ver. 31. *And when they were gone aside*, etc.] Into some apartment adjoining to the judgment hall:

they talked between themselves; that the common people might not hear their debates, and the result of them, and what were their sentiments concerning Paul and his case:

saying, this man doth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds; according to the Roman laws; for as yet there were no laws among the Romans against the Christians as such, or against their professing and preaching Christ.

Ver. 32. *Then said Agrippa unto Festus*, etc.] As declaring his sense, and by way of advice and counsel; but not as determining anything himself, for that lay in the breast of Festus, the Roman governor and judge:

this man might have been set at liberty; from his bonds and imprisonment; for ought that appears against him, or any law to the contrary:

if he had not appealed unto Caesar; wherefore an inferior judge could not release him; but so it was ordered in divine Providence, that he should appeal to Caesar, that he might go to Rome, and there bear a testimony for Christ; however, this declaration of Agrippa, and what he and the governor and the rest said among themselves, are a considerable proof of the innocence of the apostle.