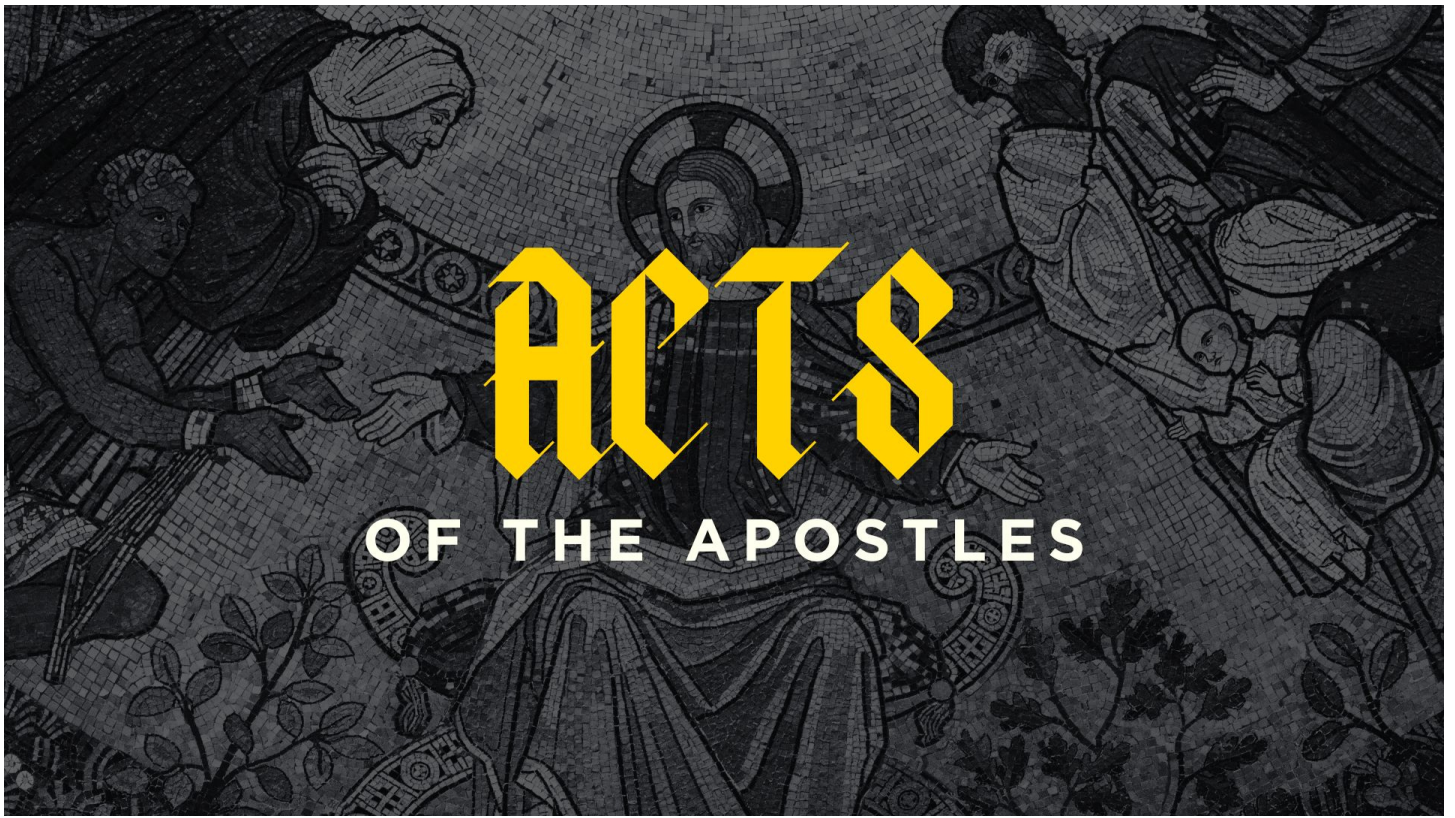




August 31, Acts Series

Acts 26: Persuaded

Acts 26:19–32 (ESV) 19 “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. 21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: 23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” 24 And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” 25 But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. 26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” 28 And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” 29 And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.” 30 Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. 31 And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.” 32 And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

If you could persuade one person of anything in the world, who would it be, and of what?

- Quick recap to bring us up to Chapter 26. (24:27-25:1) Paul is in prison for two years under a Governor named Felix. Felix is deposed at the end of those two years and a new Governor named Porcius Festus takes over.
- Festus is made aware of Paul's case. He does a fact finding trip to Jerusalem, and sees how angry the authorities in Jerusalem are at Paul, and he fast tracks Paul's case.
- The end of the initial hearing is that there's nothing to charge Paul for. But Paul appeals to Rome. (25:11-12)
- Festus doesn't know how to explain Paul's case for the Emperor's court. He gets help. The King of Judea, King Herod Agrippa.
- Festus arranges a court date for Paul to stand before the King.
- The end of chapter 25 (vs23) tells us of all the pomp and circumstance that went into this day. Everyone in the room wore their finest and most decorated uniforms.
- Paul is brought in, in very plain and very prison stained garb. He is bound at the wrists by chains. He stands before the champagne sipping elite of Caesarea.

Paul is about to persuade King Agrippa that Christianity is true. How's he going to do that? He gives three arguments. Let's just do one today.

He says that Christianity is **rational**.

- Chapter 26: Paul gives his story. (This is now the third time that Luke records Paul's story for us in the book).
- 26:24: Festus is an outsider. He's unfamiliar with the Hebrew Scriptures.
- He had figured out that Paul was a man of great learning and well educated. And yet, he's never heard anything like this before. *People living after they die?*
- Festus breaks in. The Greek says that he yelled at the top of his voice, an embarrassing thing to do. It's in all caps here: "*Paul you are out of your mind! All your smarts are actually driving you mad!*" Translation: "*Paul, you're nuts.*"
- Notice what Paul says. Vs 25. No, I am not out of my mind, Festus, but I'm speaking true and rational words. The word Paul uses here means to have sound judgement and good sense.
- Note that Paul does not say, "*Well it's what I've experienced and it's what I feel is true. I've felt it in my heart and I just know it's true.*" Paul doesn't point to his feelings.
- Vs 26. He turns from Festus to Agrippa. And he says, "The king knows about these things, they were public, out in the open, and not done in some corner somewhere."
- What does Paul point to? He points to **evidence that is publicly available**.
- He adds: ***I am persuaded*** that none of this has escaped the king's notice.
- Paul says to Festus here: You don't know about all these things. But Agrippa has lived here his whole life.

- Paul is persuaded. He's looking at Agrippa and knows beyond doubt that anyone who's lived in and around Jerusalem in the last couple of decades could never object like Festus has...***because there's too much evidence for it.***

What kind of evidence was Paul pointing to?

Jesus' miracles.

- How many miracles did Jesus do? Likely there were hundreds and hundreds of miracles.
- In this moment before Agrippa, probably thousands of people are still alive who saw Jesus perform those miracles.
- That's why Paul can say to Festus, "You're not from here. If you were you wouldn't laugh this off."

The empty tomb.

- There were hundreds and hundreds of people who claimed they'd seen Jesus alive after he died and was taken down from a cross and buried in a tomb.
- Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15 that 500 people, at least, saw a risen Jesus.
- Paul in this text is 20 or 25 years removed from Jesus walking out of the tomb, and yet he's still able to say with confidence: these things happened out loud and thousands saw them.

The scriptures.

- vs27. He asks Agrippa, "Do you believe in the Prophets? I know you do."
- Paul is hinting that the Bible only makes sense when you know the story of Jesus.
- The scriptures come alive when you know that all the prophets are actually pointing to Jesus.

Does Agrippa say, along with Festus, Paul...you're mad?

- Not even a little bit. Verse 28: "*Paul, in a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?*" What is that? That's an acceptance of Paul's point.
- Paul's real goal here is to persuade the king. He wants Agrippa to acknowledge Jesus with his life. And Agrippa knows it.
- He dodges Paul's question. "Oh...I see Paul. In just a few words here you want me to become a Christian?"
- Paul picks up on Agrippa's clever dodge, and turns it around neatly and send it back with a joke. He says, Yes, Agrippa. I do want to persuade you to be a Christian. Would to God that you...and everyone here for that matter...be just like me...except for these chains.
- And the proceeding was over. The rumor among those that mattered...was that Paul wasn't deserving of death, or even imprisonment.

Paul's persuasive technique was just this: **Become like me.**

- Is that something you could say to that person you want to persuade? *Become like me.*
- It's different than, *Accept Jesus! Turn to Jesus! You need Jesus! Only Jesus!*
- The technique is different. More persuasive: *Find what I've found. See what I see. Have what I have. Become like me.*

A good test to know the extent to which we've been freed by the gospel of Jesus: How much do I say to myself: *I wish they would become like me...a child of grace because of Jesus?*

- Have you found so much in Jesus, that you wish everyone knew what you know?

Father, meet us in your Word today. Persuade those of us who already believe, more deeply about the truth of the gospel. Help us to have spirit Paul had, of greatness and courage. And we pray that anyone hearing these words will be like Paul, and embrace the gospel, and be persuaded of its truth. Whether short or long, we pray that everyone here might believe the gospel and become what we are. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.