

Fearless Testimony

Key Verse: “*And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.*”
—Acts 26:6

Selected Scripture:
Acts 26:1-23

this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.”—Acts 26:2,3

He realized that Agrippa, although not a Jew himself, was a descendant of the Herod family. For several generations the Herodian dynasty claimed belief in the Jewish religion, though they were not particularly devout. Paul continued by recounting his way of life as a Pharisee, the strictest sect of his religion. “My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”—vss. 4,5

In our Key Verse, Paul declared he was being condemned for expressing his hope in the promise God made to Abraham that through his seed, all the families

of the earth would be blessed. It was abundantly clear that this hope included the resurrection of the dead. Paul had been an ardent Pharisee prior to his conversion, and he and others of this religious sect were convinced as to the reality of this glorious doctrine. Now, however, the Pharisees' animosity toward Paul was aroused by this very teaching—that the God of Israel had raised Jesus from the dead. They hated Jesus because the common people received his teachings gladly.—Mark 12:37

Additionally, when Peter preached his sermon on “restitution” and declared that it had been foretold by all God’s holy prophets since the world began, the religious rulers of the Jews were grieved that he “preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”—Acts 3:15–4:2

Paul related to Agrippa how, as a Pharisee, he had persecuted the disciples of Jesus. He said, “Being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” (Acts 26:9-11) Here we are reminded of the possibility of being wrong, yet sincere. Just being a Pharisee did not make one insincere, as for instance Nicodemus, who also was a Pharisee.—John 3:1-10

At the conclusion of Paul’s statements, King Agrippa was moved to say, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” However, Agrippa reminded Festus, the Roman governor of the region, “This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.” (Acts 26:24-32) This was, of course, because of divine providence since it was God’s design for Paul to go to Rome, and give his final witness in that city.

Paul wrote to Timothy: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:3) This surely would result in suffering, and thus call for endurance. May each of us diligently persevere so that we can receive the blessings promised through Paul’s encouraging words. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, ... unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:8 ■