

Acts 26:14-29 (NIV)

¹⁴“We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ¹⁶‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁹“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. ²¹That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²²But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—²³that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

²⁵“I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

²⁸Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

²⁹Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

44-26-01-Christ’s Heart in Paul’s Voice

testimony, evangelism, the lost, incarnational faith

Acts 26:14-29

Christ indwells us to make *His* message incarnationally *our* message.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading, title & HOM.idea)

–[**E. Stanley Jones** points out in his book, *The Word Became Flesh*, that, with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, “*The Word became flesh, not only in ‘the body of Christ’—the church—but in the bodies of believers as individuals and persons. There was a collective manifestation of the Word become flesh in the new community and an individual manifestation in the new person.*”] This insight finds support in Paul’s witness to Festus and King Agrippa, telling them what Jesus said to him on his way to Damascus: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” *Jesus is not done yet: not done spreading the Good News, and not done being persecuted for doing so, as we see today throughout the world.*

–Jesus indwells us by the Holy Spirit, and because *He isn’t done yet*, we become *individual manifestations of God’s Word becoming flesh*:

I. Jesus Wants His Heart-Burden to Be in Us— v.16, ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.’

A. As Jesus was “*a servant and... witness of what*” He was shown from His Father, *His indwelling makes us servants & witnesses* of what we have seen from Him and what He will continue to show us. (This makes *listening for our Shepherd’s voice paramount in our lives.*)

B. *What is Christ’s Heart-Burden for the lost?* (We see it in v.18):

1. “*to open their eyes*” Why?– 2 Cor 4:4, The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (*This blindness is reversible!*)
2. “[*to*] *turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God*”– 2 Cor 4:6, For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (As “*light*” dispels “*darkness*,” so *truth* shines from God’s “glory... in... Christ” to defeat “*the power of Satan* [his lies]”)
3. “*that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*” [not just sins forgiven but a new family home where “*faith in*” Jesus brings growth in *incarnational holiness*].

TRANS: That kind of salvation is *Christ’s ongoing heart-burden for*

the lost! But Jesus is using *our voices* to share *His heart-burden*. **He indwells us to make *His* message incarnationally *our* message.**

II. Jesus Wants Our Authentic Obedience— v.19, “So then, King Agrippa,

I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.” - v.20, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.”

A. Authentic obedience to **Jesus *within*** won’t let us *alter* or *shape* **His message to conform to pressures without**. Examples:

1. Requiring “repentance” offends those who enjoy their “darkness.”
2. To “turn to God” is to submit to Him: *self-will* resists surrender.
3. The *self-righteous* refuse to “prove their repentance by their deeds.” (Those pressures may cause pain when we share the Gospel.)

B. **Jesus feels the suffering of those who embody His heart-burden**. (He died for telling the truth and still endures persecution in us, whenever we suffer for sharing the truth, as Paul did [who said in v.21, *That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.*

C. Following Jesus authentically means staying true to God’s Word— v.22b-23, “I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.” (Both O&NTs are God’s Word.)

TRANS: Some yield to *social pressures to conform* Scripture and the Gospel to fit *modern trends* and *popular opinions*. But more than ever, people desperately need the Christ who says, “I’m not done yet. I’m still seeking lost sheep, still saving and setting them free.” He does this by indwelling us to make His message incarnationally our message.

III. Jesus Wants Us Fully Assured of His Message

A. When Festus interrupted and shouted, “You are out of your mind, Paul!” the Apostle was *respectful* but *firmly* replied in v.25, “I am not insane, most excellent Festus... What I am saying is **true** and **reasonable**.”

1. Jesus knew *worldly wisdom* would consider His Gospel *foolish* and call believers “fools for Christ,” but— 1 Cor 1:21b, God was pleased through the **foolishness** of what was preached to save those who believe.
2. **But** we can *stand our ground* on the **truth** and **reasonableness** of God’s Word. [**Skeptics** once used *science* as an excuse for calling believers “superstitious.” But recent scientific discoveries (in *astronomy* and *molecular biology*) show many of their own past assumptions to be **the superstitions**.]

(Yet even “reasonable” facts can *fail* to turn some from *skepticism*.)

B. Paul appealed to King Agrippa’s knowledge of the events involved in the Gospel story, but in v.28 the king answered, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

1. [**Most modern versions** follow the NIV, making Agrippa’s words a question. Literally, his words say, “In a little you persuade to make me a Christian!” I think *The Message* paraphrase portrays it best as a kind of jesting: “Keep this up much longer and you’ll make a Christian out of me!” Paul didn’t laugh!]
2. Whether *question* or *jest*, Agrippa wasn’t ready “to repent” [*change his mind*] (But Paul remained true to the *heart-burden of Jesus*. Rather than argue further, he appealed to Christ’s desire for those who are lost, which had become Paul’s own desire— v.29, Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

CONCLUSION:

– We can convert no one! [**D. T. Niles**, a Ceylonese preacher, said, “Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find the bread.”] To an extent, that’s *true*, but there’s another way to look at it, and that’s from *our position in Christ* and *His position in us*. The **wealth** of Heaven *lives inside of us*, and we can share that divine treasure with those around us who are utterly impoverished by worldly *darkness* and sin’s *blindness*. That’s possible only because **Christ indwells us to make His message incarnationally our message**. Let’s let Jesus, our Lord and Savior, put into our voices... His heart-burden for the lost.