

## Acts 26:12–18 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>"In this connection, I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

<sup>13</sup>At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.

<sup>14</sup> And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

<sup>15</sup> And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'

<sup>16</sup> But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,

<sup>17</sup>delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you

<sup>18</sup>to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

## INTRODUCTION

Acts 26:14 references "goads" which is defined as a stick (can be spiked) used to direct an animal.

The Greek idiom, "kicking against the goads," meant "to hurt oneself by reacting against authority in such a way as to cause harm or suffering to oneself."<sup>1</sup> It was a well-known Greek phrase used by Greek writers Euripides, Pindar, and Terence between 450 – 160 BC.

The Resurrected and Ascended Jesus used this phrase when He spoke to Paul from the throne room of heaven!

Paraphrasing, Jesus stated, "If you fight against me, you will not win. It is impossible to oppose me. You will not succeed. And it will be excruciating for you to try."<sup>2</sup>

This is what Paul found out on the Damascus Road! He was blinded and then given his purpose to "open their eyes to God's truth!"

What did he reveal to King Agrippa II and Queen Bernice that we need to know?



Paul gives his defense before King Agrippa.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. OPEN YOUR EYES - Jesus is the Resurrected Lord!

Paul was eager and happy to give this defense. Why? (verse 16-18) Paul was fulfilling his purpose.

"I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently." Acts 26:2–3

Paul speaks of himself as a Pharisee who believed and studied the revealed hope of the Old Testament Scriptures. That hope

was the Resurrection! Even though Paul held conviction that God would raise the dead, he testified that he did everything in his power “to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” **Acts 26:9-10** This encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road revealed his ruinous Resistance.

**Because of Paul’s encounter with the risen and ascended Lord Jesus**, he argued that Jesus’ resurrection proved His claims to be God the Son and Jesus’ claim that He was the Messiah Redeemer was proved!

"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: 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." **Acts 26:22–23**

Paul argued that salvation is MORE than just recognizing who Jesus is and believing His claims.

## 2. **OPEN YOUR EYES – Respond to the Resurrected Lord!**

Paul preached that all should “repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.” **Acts 26:20**

*Repentance* means a willingness to turn from what you have been doing that is not pleasing to God and follow Him as He reveals His will to you in His Word.<sup>4</sup>

*“Turn to God”* is a transfer of trust from anything you try to do yourself to gain the hope of eternal life to trust instead what Jesus Christ has done.



“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth, one confesses and is saved.”

**Romans 10:9,10**

When you repent and turn to God, He takes your sin and you receive His righteousness. Paul wrote extensively about “righteousness outside ourselves acquired by faith alone in Jesus Christ.” This wonderful truth moved Martin Luther to write and nail his 95 Theses to the door at Wittenberg Castle Church in 1517. Luther captured his understanding and experience of salvation with this wonderful Latin phrase:

*“Simul Justus et Peccator”*

This little formula summarizes and captures the essence of the Reformation view. *Simul* is the word from which we get the English word simultaneously and it means 'at the same time.' *Justus* is the Latin word for 'just or righteous'. *Et*, you will remember a dying Caesar uttering after he's been stabbed by Brutus, "*Et tu, Brute?*" (And you too, Brutus?) It simply means 'and.' *Peccator* means 'sinner.'

With this formula Luther was saying, in our justification we are one and the same time righteous or just and sinners. Now, if he would say that we are at the same time and in the same relationship, just and sinners, that would be a contradiction in terms. But that's not what he was saying. He was saying from one perspective, in one sense, we are just. In another sense, from a different perspective, we are sinners; and how he defines that is simple. In and of ourselves, under the analysis of God's scrutiny, we still have sin; we're still sinners. But, by imputation and by faith in Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is now transferred to our account, then we are considered just or righteous. This is the very heart of the gospel.

Will I be judged in order to get into heaven by my righteousness or by the righteousness of Christ? If I had to trust in my righteousness to get into heaven, I would completely and utterly despair of any possibility of ever being redeemed. But when we see that the righteousness that is ours by faith is the perfect righteousness of Christ, then we see how glorious is the good news of the gospel. The good news is simply this; I can be reconciled to God; I can be justified by God not on the basis of what I did but on the basis of what's been accomplished for me by Christ.

But at the heart of the gospel is a double-imputation. My sin is imputed to Jesus. His righteousness is imputed to me. And in this two-fold transaction, we see that God, Who does not negotiate sin, Who doesn't compromise His own integrity with our salvation, but rather punishes sin fully and really after it has been imputed to Jesus, retains His own righteousness. So He is both just and the justifier, as the apostle tells us here. So my sin goes to Jesus, His righteousness comes to me in the sight of God.<sup>5</sup> R.C. Sproul.

Jesus made this wonderful promise to those who repent and turn to God, “that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” **Acts 26:18**

Think about all that God forgave Paul and ponder how valuable God's forgiveness was to him. The experience of being forgiven compels a person to live a changed life.

**Ruinous Resistance in our lives is turning away from God's truth that Jesus is our Creator, Redeemer, Lord, and Friend. But the Lord God stands with open arms to make you whole and clean!**

### 3. **OPEN YOUR EYES - Satan blinds to God's Truth.**

**God the Son** blames Satan as the power that keeps people blinded to the light of the gospel and the light of God's truth in every area of life. Acts 26:18

This blame teaches us that **every unbeliever is blind to reality**. Every unbeliever suppresses the truth and believes in a lie. The lie is that we can arguably put the world together without putting Jesus in His proper place as Creator, Lord, and Redeemer. In short, people need the Lord!

**Satan desires to bring ruinous Resistance to this world by rejecting God's truth.**

"In their case, the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." **2 Corinthians 4:4**

In our Acts 26 text, Paul implied, "King Agrippa, Governor Festus, Bernice, high ranking officials, you yourselves are blind and in darkness."

**Satan will use the pride of Position to blind you to the truth.**

**Acts 25:23** tells us Agrippa and Bernice entered with great "pomp." The Greek word, fantasia, is used. It is our word "fantasy."

King Agrippa and Queen Bernice presented themselves to this audience with great fantasy, a non-reality. This Roman fantasy (self-deception) was that they viewed themselves as the high(est) authority. This fantasy brought God's judgment upon Agrippa II's father, **Acts 12:19-23**. History records it. *Josephus Antiquities 19 Chapter 8 Paragraph 2<sup>5</sup>*

- How dangerous was this fantasy to Agrippa?
- How dangerous was this fantasy to the high-ranking officials?
- How dangerous was this fantasy to those who were under the governance of Agrippa at large?
- How does God address this fantasy in Psalm 2?

This self-deception kept King Agrippa from repentance.

Paul pointed out early his familiarity with the Old Testament and Jewish customs and controversies and, in his personal appeal, reminded King Agrippa that he believed in the prophets. But King Agrippa, before his peers, said in essence, "not today."

"Do you think that in such a short time, you can persuade me to be a Christian?" **Acts 26:28**

Paul expressed his burden in his response. "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." **Acts 26:29**

How then should we pray for our government leaders?

**Satan will use the feel-good of Religion to keep us from Christ.**

Paul's testimony before Agrippa spoke of how the enemy used religion to keep him blind to the gospel.

Here is his testimony of turning from trusting his religious performance to trusting in Jesus Christ.

*"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord...and put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."* (Philippians 3:1–11)

The Gospel is not Jesus PLUS, Jesus OR, it is JESUS.

### **CONCLUSION**

How compassionate and caring was Jesus Christ to seek out Paul on the road to Damascus?

God cares the same way for you!

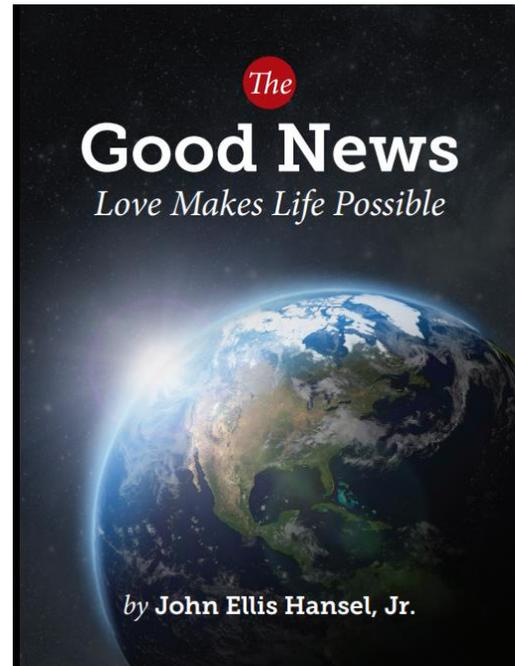
"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Further questions about Jesus, how to be forgiven by God or knowing with certainty you will spend eternity in heaven with God?

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**END NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged One Volume (p. 427). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans

<sup>2</sup> P.G. Matthew, Paul's Trial Before Agrippa, 2000  
<https://gracevalley.org/sermon/pauls-trial-before-king-agrippa/>

<sup>3</sup> Public Domain File: Nikolai Bodarevsky 001.jpg Created: 1875 date QS: P571,+1875-00-00T00:00:00Z/9

<sup>4</sup> R.C. Sproul <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/simul-justus-et-peccator> (accessed 7/12/22)

<sup>5</sup> <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-19.html> (Accessed 7/12/22)

All Scripture quotations from ESV, English Standard Version.

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