

Paul's Testimony to Agrippa

In Acts 26, Paul is giving his testimony to king Agrippa and Bernice, beginning with his early persecution of the new believers, and his conversion on the road to Damascus. In verses 17-23 we see the major elements of the gospel. Jesus appeared and told Paul that he would be made a minister and a witness of the gospel,

Acts 26:17-18 – “Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

Acts 26:20 – “But shewed first unto them ... and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”

Acts 26:22-23 – “... saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.”

Christ is the Light of the World

- He came to shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles (v. 23)

Isa. 9:1-2 (quoted in Mt. 4:14-16) – “... The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

Isa. 60:1-3 – “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

Jn. 1:4-9 – John bore witness of the true Light, that lights every man. Jesus' life was the light of men.

Ac. 13:47 – “... I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” (Isa. 42:6)

- To open their eyes (v. 18, 23)

We know Christ opened the eyes of the blind (Isa. 35:5-6), but Acts 26:18 is referring to the spiritual enlightenment of opening sin-darkened eyes to see truth and to be able to respond to the truth.

Jn. 8:12 – “... I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Only those who follow Christ have the light, but it is Christ who lets them see.

2 Cor. 4:4, 6 – “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them. ... For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Christ's Suffering and Resurrection

- That Christ should suffer (v. 23)

Ps. 22 contains a description of the actual torments of his crucifixion

Isa. 50:6 – he gave his back to the smiters, and cheeks to them that plucked off the hairs, hid not his face from shame and spitting

Isa. 53 – despised and rejected of men; wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; his soul made an offering for sin

Mk. 8:31 – “... the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

Ac. 3:18 – “But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.”

1 P. 3:18 – “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

- That he should be the first that should rise from the dead (v. 23)

The resurrection of Christ is one of the constants seen throughout Acts and the rest of the NT (other constants are the name of Christ, and the kingdom of God).

1 Cor. 15:20 – “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

Repentance

- To turn them from darkness to light (v. 18)

The first step of repentance is when God “turns the lights on” and allows sinners to truly see who he is, and who they are.

- To turn them from the power of Satan unto God (v. 18)

We used to be doing the works of the devil without even knowing it. But when a person truly turns from their sins they renounce the hidden works of darkness.

Ac. 19:19 is an example. They burned their occult books worth 50,000 pieces of silver.

- That they should repent and turn to God (v. 20)

To repent means to turn, to turn away from the way we were going, and then go the other way. We were fleeing from God, hiding from him, loving the darkness because we didn’t want our sins to be revealed. But now we confess them to God, are sorry for them, and renounce them. We turn to God and away from the old life of sin.

The Immediate Effects of Receiving the Truth

- That they may receive forgiveness of sins (v. 18)

Ac. 5:31 – “... for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

Ac. 13:38 – “... that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”

Eph. 1:7 – “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:”

- That they would be sanctified by faith that is in me (v. 18)

To be sanctified is to be set apart to God, to be made holy. It is why we are called saints in the NT.

- That they would do works meet for repentance (v. 20)

Here Paul corrects those who would corrupt his teaching of justification by faith alone by saying that since we cannot be saved by our works, works do not matter. Doing works “meet for repentance” means to live a life that corresponds with that repentance, that matches, or agrees with it. If we continue to live in sin, then we have not really repented. I do not mean an occasional lapse which we then repent of, and ask God’s forgiveness, but a life that is characterized by unrepentant and unashamed sinning. James plainly teaches this other side, that “faith without works is dead”. That is, if it is real faith, then good works will follow as the fruit of that faith.

The Ultimate Effect of Receiving the Truth

- Inheritance (v. 18)

1 P. 1:3-4 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”