

February 12, 2023 by Steve Brandon



A Testimony to the Resurrection

Acts 26

1. **"I was raised to believe in the resurrection" (verses 4-8).**
2. **"I didn't believe in the resurrection" (verses 9-11).**
3. **"I became a witness to the risen Christ" (verses 12-18).**
4. **"I was obedient to the risen Christ" (verses 19-23).**

I love Christian testimonies of saving faith. They can be very powerful in the lives of those who hear them.

I want to share with you the testimony that Salomon Correa gave last summer at a Boys' Camp in Mexico. Salomon was one of the five young people who died in the car crash in Wyoming a few weeks ago (April 13, 2023). He was only 22 years-old. So, this testimony was given less than a year before he died. I want to read this testimony before you all this morning. You may have already read it in the email, but it would do you good to hear it this morning. What is especially helpful about this testimony is how often he speaks of the shortness of life, little knowing that his own life would be short. Salomon wrote the following:

Good morning, my name is Salomon. Today I want to share with you some of my testimony, which in reality is the testimony that Jesus Christ has done in my life and about how sweet it is to trust in Jesus. But I'd like to start out telling you a little bit of what it was like where I grew up and how it was that I heard the gospel.

My dad killed someone in self-defense when he was 16, if I'm not mistaken. And he fled to the United States for one year. Then he came back to Mexico. The day he came back, they caught him and he was incarcerated for 10 years. He got out when he was around 27 years old. A few months after he got out, he met my mom, a young girl of 17, and they were married a few months later. So, they decided to immigrate to the United States, both of them. And it was through that that I had the blessing of being born in the States.

But when I was a few months old they brought me back to Mexico, and I grew up in a village called Arumbaro. I was raised there for 16 years, helping my dad in the fields, raising livestock and things like that. You might say I grew up in a Catholic home; my dad would say he's Catholic. I don't even remember if my mom would accompany us to the Catholic church or not, but what I do remember are the two people who came to knock on the door of my house one day, Ivan and Leslie. They shared the gospel with my mom. At the time my dad was in the States. My mom showed interest, so they started giving her a Bible study. Eventually the whole Ted Clark family started coming, and my mom decided to accept Jesus into her heart. At that time, I was around 6 or 7 years old. I loved the Clarks to come to our house because they would give us things and I liked that. But something I didn't like one little bit was that my mom started spanking us. I was rebellious, very rebellious. So, my mom had to spank me several times a day. I still remember that I would always watch for the boxes that Priscilla would bring down because I knew there could be spanking sticks in those boxes. And I remember I would take them and hide them. My mom caught me doing that several times and things always went really bad after that.

My rebellion was so great I didn't want to accept discipline in my life. But as time went on, my mom would always make us read our Bible and watch the movie Left Behind, where the rapture would happen. I knew it was real because the Bible talked about it. But I didn't want to make a change in my life. I didn't want to say goodbye to my friends or goodbye to my Catholic relatives. I wanted to please them. But my need became so great for a Savior, I finally said, "I can't keep on anymore." I went to my house and I was sincere with my mom and told her, "I can't keep on living this way, knowing that I'm going to be left behind and not knowing what's going to happen if I die today. I don't know what's going to happen to me." My mom told me I could have an assurance of my salvation through Jesus Christ. That He had already paid for my sins on the cross and that it was a gift of God. All I had to do was simply receive it, to believe in Him and through faith I would be saved. I remember telling her, "I don't know how to do that." So, she helped me, and I remember that that night I was crying so much from joy and excitement over knowing that I no longer had to worry about whether I was going to be left behind or what would happen to me. I knew that I was a child of God through Jesus Christ, and that now I didn't have to worry about that.

The thing that made me wonder about what would happen when I died, was something that happened a few months before with my dad. He was drunk, and was at a little store not far from our house. Around midnight my mom called me and said, "We need to go and find your dad and see why he hasn't gotten back yet." We sent, and he was drinking and told me, "I'll give you a beer." I said, "No, I'm not going to drink." And my mom told him, "You're not going to make him drink if he doesn't want to." Dad got so mad he went ahead of us. As we arrived at our house, there was my dad in front with a rifle saying, "You're not coming in here." So, we went for some family members and they calmed him down. But I asked myself the question, "What if I had died at that instant? What if my dad, not being in his right mind had fired, and ended my life?" I didn't have my confidence in Jesus. We don't know the day we're going to die, but one thing I know now, is that I know where I'm going the day I die."

I would also like to tell you a little bit about how my life was afterwards and where the Lord has me now. It was definitely not easy; friends always influence you very much. I wanted to be a testimony to them, but many times I discovered that it's necessary to separate ourselves from them if they are going to influence us more than we will influence them. It's the same with family members; many of them would criticize me. When you place your faith in Christ you're encouraged, but then discouragements and temptations come. I grew more focused on work than anything else. When I was 15 years old, I had two jobs, cutting tomatoes and cucumbers, so I was always carrying heavy crates. That only lasted a few months, I got a hernia and had to have an emergency operation. I went through several months where I couldn't do anything. After that my dad told me, "You can't stay here, you have to go to the States to study or do something. The work here is too hard for you."

So, he sent me to California to live with one of my uncles who was Catholic. I remember when I got there, I told my uncle about my faith. He rejected it immediately and told me, "While you're under my roof you're not allowed to go to church." The first year, however, was an encouragement because I was so lonely I would seek the Lord's company, and my uncle wouldn't allow me to be with bad influences.

The second year changed though, because my uncle went to jail, and I had more freedom. I began to drive and make friends, and things were going well for me at my job. Before I had wanted to go back to Mexico, but now I thought, "No, this is where my life is, my job, my school." Then the Lord used my dad to tell me, "You have to come back to Mexico, or if you want to finish high school, you have to go to Arkansas to live with the Perssons." My answer at that moment was, "No! I'm fine here with my job, my school, and I don't want to go." My dad said, "okay" that day but the next day he bought my ticket and told me, "Your flight back to Mexico is in 2 weeks. Take it or leave it." It made me think a lot. I knew my relationship with the Lord was not doing well because I knew I was being pulled more by my friends than I was pulling them. I knew I needed to attend church so I said "OK, I'll obey you." I came back to Mexico for 2 or 3 days before driving with the Perssons to Arkansas. I didn't know them or English very well, but my mom had known them for years. I knew they had the fear of the Lord. That decision, taken by my dad which afterwards became my own decision, has been one of the biggest decisions full of blessings in my life after having trusted in Christ.

For those of you who don't know the Persson family, it is amazing really how the Lord has used them in my life. It's amazing how close I am to them now. When I need to make a decision in life, I will ask Nate and Lisa for their counsel, because I know the wisdom they have and I know they love me as a son. Literally they treat me without distinction as a son. But if you ask Gracie, she'll say they treat me better than they treat their own children. But that's not true. But it has been amazing how they have influenced me to take a year to go to Jackson Hole for Bible college which definitely changed my life. Something that I'm so grateful for is Nate's example in work. His focus is to work so that he can serve others and be a blessing to others, not to get rich. So, the Lord has blessed me hugely with great examples, not only like him, but also in his brothers. I know it was nothing I deserved, nor was salvation anything I deserved, nor being in their lives. But the Lord has been totally good through Jesus Christ. I have become His child and He has never let me go.

Now just to end I want to encourage those who already know Jesus to seek those examples to follow. We know that Jesus should be our primary example, He should always be our focus. But I think there are also mature people in church who will help us grow spiritually and give us good counsel. For those who have not trusted in Christ, I ask, "What is detaining you? What is it that's keeping you from giving your life to the Lord? He promises to open the door to everyone who calls and He will give living water of eternal life. That would be the best decision you could make in your life. He calls us today; don't leave it for tomorrow, because we don't know if we'll be here."^[1]

Salomon died some eight months after giving these words to those boys at the camp. These words couldn't have been more timely. The emphasis of his entire testimony was on the uncertainty of tomorrow. He said, "We don't know the day we're doing to die, but one thing I know now, is that I know where I'm going the day I die." He also said, "[God] calls us today; don't leave it for tomorrow, because we don't know if we'll be here." He could have given no greater testimony than this, especially in light of his untimely death.

We would do well to heed his exhortation. We don't know if we will be here tomorrow. Are you prepared for eternity? Are you trusting in Jesus? Is your soul safe in Jesus?

Well, this morning, as we turn our attention to the Scriptures, we are we are going to hear another testimony. This time, it is from the apostle Paul. In his testimony, he's not going to emphasize the uncertainty of our lives. Rather, he is going to testify to the certainty of the resurrection. The certainty that Jesus Christ was dead, and buried, but rose from the dead, and appeared alive to his disciples!

The resurrection gives us all hope beyond the grave! That we, too, by trusting in Jesus, will rise again to eternal life with Jesus! This is central to the gospel that we preach! As Paul said to those in Corinth: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). It's faith in this risen Christ that gives us all hope beyond the grave.

The title of my message this morning is, "A Testimony to the Resurrection." Because, that's exactly what we see Paul doing in Acts, chapter 26. Let's begin with some context.

For the past several weeks, we have been tracking the apostle Paul through the Roman court system. The reason why Paul was thrust into the court system is seen in chapter 21. In that chapter, Paul came to Jerusalem and brought a purification offering into the temple and was falsely accused by the mob of Jews who were there.

The Roman authorities were confused as to exactly why Paul was causing such a stir and a commotion. So they detained him in a jail in Jerusalem. But when a plot against his life was made known to the Romans, Paul was transferred to custody in Caesarea. Once in Caesarea, Paul gave his defense before Felix, the governor. Upon hearing Paul's defense, Felix didn't do anything. Felix didn't say that Paul

was innocent. Felix didn't say that Paul was guilty. Rather, he let him sit in prison, for two years he sat in prison. until Felix was removed from office, and replaced by Festus.

Within a week of Festus taking office, he heard about Paul's case. Within another week, Paul was standing before Festus, giving his defense (Acts 25:8) against the Jews who falsely accused him of being a disturber of the peace, a leader of a false religion, and a profaner of the temple. Of course, none of these things were true. Paul denied them all. But when Festus offered to deliver him over to the Jews to be tried in Jerusalem, Paul appealed his case to the Roman Emperor. He said, "I appeal to Caesar" (Acts 25:11).

After a bit of legal counsel, Festus said, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go" (Acts 25:12). There was only one problem. Festus saw no wrong in what Paul had done. So, delivering him over to Caesar without a formal charge was unreasonable. So Festus was in a predicament. Fortunately for him, Agrippa the king happened to be in town (Acts 25:13). When Festus told Agrippa about the case of Paul, Agrippa said, "I would like to hear the man myself."

So, the following day, a trial was set up. It was really a public occasion, with Agrippa and his sister, Bernice. with the military and prominent men of the city. So picture the scene: Agrippa in the middle, Bernice on the right and Festus on the left. Picture them surrounded by the military and prominent men of the city.

The proceedings began with Paul being brought in to the hall. Then Festus gave his speech:

Acts 25:24-27

"King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

Then, in chapter 26, we begin our text. Rather than reading the entire chapter right now, I want to let it unfold for us, just like it did for those who were gathered in the room that day. Our text begins with Agrippa's invitation for Paul to speak.

Acts 26:1

So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

Now, remember, Paul had been in prison for two years under trumped up charges. In verses 2 and 3, we see Paul's introductory remarks. He begins with a kind greeting to Agrippa.

Acts 26:2-3

"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.

That's sort of a slam on Felix and Festus, who weren't really familiar with the ways of the Jews, being Romans. But Agrippa, being a Jewish man, himself, would have first-hand knowledge of the customs of the Jews.

Then Paul continues to give his testimony, focusing upon the resurrection. In fact, we see Paul making four statements about the resurrection. These statements will form our outline this morning.

1. "I was raised to believe in the resurrection" (verses 4-8).

Acts 26:4-5

My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

Paul says that he was raised a Jew from his youth (verse 4). Further, Paul says that he lived as a strict Pharisee (verse 5). that is, following in all of the ways of the Old Testament. Then Paul's key statement comes in verses 6 and 7.

Acts 26:6-7

And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

There is some drama here, Paul didn't immediately raise the issue of the resurrection, but he raised the issue of what the resurrection means. it means hope! it means that we have hope of life after the grave! Then, in verse 8, Paul brings the issue to the forefront. He looks around to everyone in the room, Agrippa, Bernice, Festus, the military commanders, the prominent men of the city and And he says,

Acts 26:8

Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

The logic goes like this: If God created the world and life and Adam from the dust of the ground, is not God powerful enough to raise people from the grave? Paul's reasoning goes like this:

"This is why I'm standing before you here this day! I'm standing here because I believe that God raises people from the dead! I believe in the power of God, who is able to do this. I believe in the prophets, who prophesied of the resurrection! And you don't believe in the resurrection? But is it so impossible? Why don't you believe?"

In his testimony, Paul continues on to tell his audience of how he once didn't believe in the resurrection. This is my second point:

2. "I didn't believe in the resurrection" (verses 9-11).

Acts 26:9-11

I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blasphemers, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

With these words, Paul speaks of his own wickedness. Paul was opposed to Christianity. He was hostile to Christians! He arrested Christians. He locked them up in prison! He even cast his vote against them to put them to death (perhaps a reference to Stephen in Acts 7).

If you catch the flow of Paul's argument in his testimony, you see that it is precisely because he didn't believe that the Christians were saying the truth that he was persecuting them. They were following the Messiah, risen from the dead! But Paul didn't believe in this Messiah.

Not only was Paul against this intellectually, but it was with a passion that he raged against the Christians. Look again in verse 11. Paul was "in raging fury against them." That is, Paul had an out-of-control anger against the Christians! But then something changed. He met Jesus!

This is the flow of all Christian testimonies. "I used to live like this, in sin and wickedness and rebellion against the Lord. But then, I met Jesus. and it all changed. I believed in him and trusted in him, and came to experience the forgiveness of sins! God has worked in my life since then, giving me desires for the Lord and for his people, giving me desires to walk righteously before him!"

Do you have such a testimony? Every believer in Christ has such a testimony! If you don't have such a testimony, it may just be that you haven't placed your trust in Jesus! I urge you today to do this. As Salomon Correa said in the testimony I included at the beginning of my message, "[God] calls us today; don't leave it for tomorrow, because we don't know if we'll be here." The Scripture says that our life is like a vapor, which vanishes away quickly. So, if you don't have this turn in your life, I urge you today to repent! turn from your sin and trust in Jesus.

Beginning in verse 12, Paul tells of how he met Jesus. He said, "I was raised to believe in the resurrection." (verses 4-8). But "I didn't believe in the resurrection." (verses 9-11). Then,

3. "I became a witness to the risen Christ" (verses 12-18).

In "raging fury," Paul persecuting Christians in cities all around Jerusalem. Then, he says,

Acts 26:12-18

In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 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. 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.' And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 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, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 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.'

With these words, Paul refers back to what happened in Acts, chapter 9, which records his encounter with the living Jesus on the road to Damascus! The details of what took place in Acts 9 are practically identical with the details here.

Paul was traveling to Damascus, with the authority and commission of the chief priests to search out followers of Jesus. and bring them male or female "bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:2), so that they might be tried as heretics, shamed, beaten, and perhaps killed for believing in Jesus.

But on that road, in the high of the afternoon, Paul and his companions encountered a bright light, "brighter than the sun" (verse 13). And all who were with Paul on the road fell down to the ground. Then Paul heard the words of Jesus, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (verse 14). The goads were sticks with sharp points, to prod and direct animals in the way that they should go. particularly, goads were used to prod the ox when they were plowing the fields. Today, we use cattle prods, which are long rods that provide an electric shock to animals to guide them in the work we want them to do. Jesus here say that Paul is resisting these cattle prods. It's hard and painful to do. Such was the state of Paul's heart.

But with the bright light, and with Paul's attention, Jesus reveals himself to Paul and commissions him. Essentially, Paul is commissions to be "a servant and a witness." Look again at verse 16, "I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness."

Paul's commission is our commission. Paul was told to be a witness (verse 16).

In preaching through Acts, how many times have you heard me repeat the call of Jesus upon all of us, to be witnesses of Jesus. Are you all

doing this? Are you being witnesses of Jesus?

I challenged you last week to ask someone what they know about Jesus. To gauge where people in this culture are. I asked this question to someone this week. I was in conversation with a non-church-goer. We were talking about a mutual friend, who was sick and in the hospital. My transition was somewhat related. I said, "I have a strange question for you. What do you know about Jesus." The guy said to me (I can't remember his exact words), but something like this, "Well, I know some, you know." I said, "Well, what exactly do you know?" He said, "I know enough. I don't go to church often, but I have heard and I know some." I said, "I'm interested in your church attendance. That's for sure. But right now, I'm not asking about that. I'm just curious what you know about Jesus." He said, "It's kind of like you know about someone you read about in a book. You read the book and you know a little bit about him. So I know some about him." That's about all the further that I got in our conversation. My friend didn't even say the name of "Jesus." I'm not sure he knows anything about Jesus. I'm hoping to follow up in coming days.

Listen, we have a world that knows nothing about Jesus. We need to be his witness, to tell others about Jesus! Jesus calls us to be his witnesses! When Jesus commissioned Paul on the road to Damascus, Jesus told him that he would go to the Gentiles, "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" (verse 18).

This is why Jesus calls us to be his witnesses. that their eyes may be opened! that they may turn from their sin, from darkness to life, that they may turn from the bondage of Satan to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. to receive "forgiveness of sins." This is our calling. We are to tell others about Jesus Christ, that they might repent and believe in him, and know and experience the forgiveness of sins!

Are you doing this? Who did you talk to this past week? I had several conversations with several this past week about Jesus. With one guy, I even shared Salomon's testimony. It was appropriate even to invite another guy to church. He said that he would come. I hope to see him here sometime soon.

Are you being obedient to the call of Jesus upon our life? I'm thankful that Paul was obedient. We see this in verse 19.

Acts 26:19-20

Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 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.

This is Paul's fourth statement.

4. "I was obedient to the risen Christ" (verses 19-23).

Paul said, "I went to the Gentiles, just like Jesus told me to do. I started right where I was, in Damascus. Then, I when to Jerusalem, where all of the apostles were. And I preached Jesus there. Then, I traveled all around, spreading the message of Jesus, risen from the dead!"

If we had time, we could review all of these things. Acts 9 records Paul preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem. Acts 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, all record Paul's missionary journeys to the Gentiles. During those journeys, Paul was calling people to 'repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.'" Because Jesus was alive and well!

Finally comes the heart of Paul's defense:

Acts 26:21

For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

Paul said, "The Jews hate the fact that I'm spreading the gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews hate the fact that I'm spreading the news of a risen Messiah! That's why they tried to kill me. They hated Jesus. They hate me. They want me dead." Then, in verses 22-23, he transitions by saying, "Yet, I'm doing only what is taught in the Bible!"

Acts 26:22-23

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."

This is our message: that Christ Jesus suffered on the cross, that he died and was buried. But Jesus rose from the dead! He shines the light of the truth for all of us to see! that we might turn to the light and be saved from our sin! that we might experience forgiveness of sins.

At this point in his defense, Paul was interrupted.

Acts 26:24

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."

Note that this is Festus, the Roman governor, who doesn't know the Scriptures, nor the power of God. He thinks that this message of a risen Savior is crazy talk, just like many of those in our culture today! We Americans think in our scientific minds, that dead people don't rise from the dead. We have never seen it with our eyes. Therefore, Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Any talk about Jesus, a man, rising from the dead, is fantasy. This is what Festus is telling Paul, "You are believing in fantasy."

Acts 26:25-27

But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. 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. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

It's right here that Paul discerned the difference between the Roman governor and the Jewish king. The governor attacked Paul and his character and his sanity. But anyone standing there on that day would have discerned that Paul was in his right mind. He simply appealed to recognize his sanity.

The king, however, knew the Scriptures, being Jewish he knew that they prophesied of a suffering servant, who would rise from the dead. He knew that Isaiah 53 and Psalm 16 tell of this suffering servant. Paul said to the king, "I know you believe the prophets. I know that you can attest to the truthfulness of all of these things. I know that you can argue on my behalf, that I'm not crazy! This is no secret. This is no mystery! I'm preaching the end to which the prophets pointed!"

Acts 26:28

And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"

I wish the Bible would come with tone. Did Agrippa say this with condescension? We he mocking Paul for thinking that he could persuade him in such a short time. Did Agrippa say this with hope? Hoping that in a short time, perhaps he would be a Christian? Either way, Paul finished with his hope.

Acts 26:29

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."

Don't forget that as Paul spoke these words, he spoke as a prisoner in chains. He had shackles around his waist and on his hands and feet. He's saying all of these words as a bound prisoner.

With these words, Paul's testimony before this gathering was finished.

Acts 26:30-32

Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

In their private quarters, the king, the governor and Bernice had their own little evaluation of Paul's testimony. They agreed with one another that Paul's actions weren't worthy of death. Yet, he had appealed to Caesar, so to Caesar he would go (25:15). We read about his travels to Rome in chapter 27.

I finish with one observation. Paul's evangelistic endeavor in the king's court came away with no converts. He didn't persuade Festus. He didn't persuade Agrippa. I doubt that Bernice was moved either. We know nothing about the crowds that heard him. Perhaps some came to faith, perhaps not. We have no assurance that anyone came to faith.

Realize that in your being a witness, there are many times that people won't believe. I think that my sharing with others falls on hard ground 99% of the time. That's how it is in America. Oh, people smile and are polite. But most people that I talk to are just like Festus. They are just like Agrippa. "Steve, you are out of your mind!"

That's the reality of evangelism. This is the reality of evangelism, it's a lot of sowing the word. Some will come to faith, but many will not. But if God delights to bring revival in our land, it will happen.

So don't be disheartened. Jesus calls us to be his witnesses. We don't have the power to change people's hearts, only God can. If Paul had the power to change lives, he could have worked his crowd to persuade them. If Paul had the wisdom capable of changing lives, he could have done so. But he didn't. This is God's work and not ours.

But we can do something. We can pray. We can pray to the Lord, that he would open eyes to see the glories of Jesus, and repent and believe. This is what he did with Paul in Acts 9. He was persecuting Christians at the very moment that God appeared to him! That's why we pray for unsaved friends and relatives. That's why we are bold to be a witness for Jesus.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 12, 2023 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Salomon Correa (April 13, 2001 - January 22, 2023). You can read his obituary here:
<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/salomon-correa-obituary?id=39328030>.