

Acts: *The Spirit, the Church and the Spread of God's Word*

Making Sense of Christianity

Acts 26:13-30

Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, Aug. 16, 2020

I. You Can Point People to Credible Evidence for the Claims of Christianity

Acts 26:25-26 “But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶For 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.’”

He doesn't start with emotion. He goes to the public, available evidence.

Paul says that King Agrippa knows about these things because he's been part of a dynasty that's been ruling Judea for decades.

Paul knows that anyone living in Jerusalem in the last 20 years could not laugh off what he's saying because of all the witnesses, sightings, the empty tomb, and the body that was never produced or recovered by anyone.

II. You Can Talk about Personal Evidence in the Way Jesus Has Changed Your Own Life

Don't ever discount the power of a personal testimony! Paul never got tired of telling how Jesus had radically changed him.

Before Jesus changed Paul, Paul raged against Christianity, breathed threats, and tried to kill anyone that persisted in promoting the Good News of the Gospel! He had no peace, joy, or security in what he was trusting in.

Philippians 3:8-9 (NLT) “Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ ⁹and become one with Him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith.”

III. You Can Point to the Biblical Record of Who Jesus Is and What He's Done

Acts 26:22-23 “...so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that 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 26:27 “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”

Paul is driving home the fact that the Bible comes alive when you read it as a book that's all about Jesus!

The authority and power for what we believe and why we believe it ultimately rests on the Scriptures and not our own feelings or thoughts.

There's one thing we cannot do that Paul also could not do:

IV. You Cannot Make Someone Believe or Receive This Free Gift!

No matter how passionate, articulate, or effective you might think you are in explaining the Gospel or helping people make sense of Christianity, they still might walk away.

Only God can take out a heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh!

Agrippa dodges and sidesteps the question when Paul asks him in v. 27 "...do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

Acts 26:28 "And Agrippa said to Paul, 'In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?'"

He's not answering the question because he doesn't want to admit that he does believe the Scriptures. He knows the Scriptures testify about Jesus! He just doesn't want to *become* a Christian.

Acts 26:31 "...This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment."

So many times, what people pretend are intellectual objections to Christianity are actually no more than a smoke-screen and excuse to keep living the way they want and doing whatever they want.

Romans 1:28 "...they did not see fit to acknowledge God..."

Our biggest problem so often is not an ignorance problem that can be solved by additional information and rational evidence. It's a resistance problem that's rooted in a preference to be autonomous and live as if there is no God!

The Gospel is only Good News after you're willing to humble yourself and acknowledge your desperate need for it!

You have to receive it because you will never achieve it on your own. Jesus had to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Acts 26:18 "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."

Reason or intellect can bring you to a place of probability, but only commitment can bring you to the place of certainty.