

Acts 26; “Defending the Faith” 2/23/2025

Review & Intro:

Paul is standing before Festus, the governor and King Agrippa about to go to **Rome**. This is the third of the three trials recorded in Acts and is Paul’s most lengthy monologue. He references his conversion event found in Acts 9 and appeals to both King Agrippa and to Festus to join him in his belief. His defense is not just a justification of himself but a call to believe the gospel.

I. **Defense (1-3)**

“Apologia” definition: means defense. It does not mean apology.

Presuppositional Apologetics (v3 “you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews...” and 26a “For the king knows”)

Presuppositional Apologetics is the method of defending the faith that argues for the truth of it based on superior assumptions. In other words, presupp believes that the best argument for the believability of Christianity is that Christianity has a better intellectual starting point than other alternatives. Another way of understanding presuppositional apologetics is in contrast to evidence based apologetics. Presupp guys will say that even if you give people evidence, they won’t believe it so don’t bother. Argue based on what you know that they know, namely that God has revealed Himself to their conscience via creation and the preached word. They are suppressing the truth (Rom 1) and just need to repent and believe. No amount of evidence is going to convince them. They will discount the evidence.

A great example of this was a podcast with Joe Rogan and Stephen Myer (not Stephen Myers who wrote the Covenant Theology book, but Stephen Myer, the geophysicist and president of the Discovery Institute.) Dr. Myer repeatedly gave example after example of the evidence for the existence of divine creation and Rogan, time and time again, would say, “well we don’t know that... yet.” He was given undeniable proof, yet he always dismisses the proof because he is blind and cannot see.

The presupp guy says, just preach the gospel and don’t even bother with the evidence because they won’t believe it anyway. This has been the major Reformed apologetic methodology for the better part of last century and was developed by Cornelius Van Til. Van Til studied under Charles Hodge and helped start Westminster Theological Seminary. If you are interested in

learning more, I highly recommend Greg Bahnens's work. His debate, which you can listen to on Youtube, with Gordon Stien is considered one of the best examples of this methodology.

What is Paul saying here? He is saying to King Agrippa, "you know about Jesus. You know and are familiar with everything I'm saying. I don't need to try and convince you that these things are true."

Evidential Apologetics (v26b "these things did not happen in a corner." While Paul does primarily employ the presuppositional method, he also reminds Agrippa that there is evidence and he ties that back to the fact that the king is accountable for that knowledge. "(T)hese things did not happen in a corner" is a way of saying that it is obvious and common knowledge that Jesus came and died and was resurrected. It is undeniable and Paul knows that Agrippa knows it. He is using the evidence the way that we should all use the evidence for the faith.

Christianity has more evidence for the truthfulness of the New Testament any other ancient work, secular or religious. The reliability of the NT is exponentially more valid than all of the other works of antiquity combined. There are multiple places to go if one wants to access this information: McDowell's Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Lee Strobel is another evidentialist, and Dr. Dan Wallace from Dallas Seminary has done excellent work recording and analyzing the earliest Greek manuscripts of the NT.

Bottom line: You can use evidence but you will always come back to presuppositions. Preach the gospel. Call people to repent and believe. So, we've seen Paul gives a defense both from evidence and presuppositional methodologies. What else does he say? He talks about the resurrection.

II. **Resurrection (v8 & 23)**

Pharisees & Sadducees

You remember that Paul split the Sanhedrin over this issue. They were the ruling court in Jerusalem comprised of both parties. The Sadducees were the more liberal religious sell outs. They did not believe in the supernatural but were materialists. They denied the possibility of a resurrection while the Pharisees did believe.

Central event in Christianity

We make much of the death of Christ on the cross, and rightly so. However, it is His resurrection that gives us hope. The resurrection is the means by which we are given grace, that adoption as sons. His death accomplishes mercy where the righteous requirements of the

law are executed on Jesus for our behalf. This saves us from hell. But his glorious resurrection accomplishes His victory over sin, death, and the devil. His resurrection and subsequent enthronement make it sure that not only was He who he claimed to be but that we also get to rule and reign with Him in glory. Easter, not Christmas is the most blessed holiday of the year. The resurrection is the central event in all of Christianity. It is the apex of history. Paul says as much...

1Cor 15:12-19:

¹² Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. ¹⁵ Moreover we are even found *to be* false witnesses of God, because we bore witness against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”

If there is no resurrection, then Christ is dead and our faith is useless and we are pitiful fools. However, the opposite is true. Christ is alive, our faith is powerful unto everlasting life, and the future resurrection is the hope that we all look forward to.

Future resurrection

All people to life or judgement (John 5:28-29; Rev 20:12-13; Acts 24:15). We will have physical bodies for all eternity. It will not be some bodiless, ghost-like existence. It will be more real than even what we know today. All of us will consciously face a judgement. For those who do not know Christ, they will be cast into the lake of fire. For those who know Him, we will enter into eternity with God. So, what should we do?

III. Repentance (18-20)

Spiritual component (see last week; v18 “darkness to light... Satan to God...”

Fake repentance (2Cor 7:10)

Just feeling bad about our situation is not repentance. Regret about the consequences of sin is not repentance. The guilt of getting caught or self-loathing about sin is not repentance. Disliking the negative repercussions of sin is not repentance. Feeling bad or guilty is not repentance. In fact, some people are actually in love with their sadness and stay depressed and are perpetually melancholy. This also is not repentance. This is, as Billy Corgan

said, intoxicated with their madness. They need to truly repent. Not be enveloped in never ending sadness.

Real repentance (v20; “practicing deeds appropriate to repentance”). Repentance is a turning away from one thing and a turning towards another. It is a grace gift that God gives to His elect. It is not something that we conjure up in ourselves, rather it is a reflection of a heart inclined towards God. Psalm 51 is a great example.

Conclusion:

If you are not a believer, God calls you to repent and believe the gospel, right now. Say “Jesus is Lord.” Confess him before men. Proclaim your faith in the one who died, rose again, and who is coming again. Be saved today. Do not leave this place without having that nailed down.

If you are a Christian...

Application:

1. Be able to present your **story** and **the gospel** (v12-20)
2. Rightly understand and believe the **resurrection**.
3. Be sure that your walk with God is **real**.

Closing Prayer:

Father, make us faithful followers of Christ and His kingdom. Make Yourself known in our area. May the Kingdom of God flourish in the Permian Basin. Use us for Your glory. And now, as we take the Lord’s supper, we trust that the Lord Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many and we get to experience Your grace in this meal. Let us commune with You as we take the elements. Thank you for the bread and the wine. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.