

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Classes.....9 A.M.
Worship 10:00 A.M.
Worship/Bible Study..5 P.M.

Wednesday:

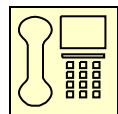
Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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Weekly Bulletin December 11, 2022

Standing Tall Like Paul

by Bob Hutto

“In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”
—Herod Agrippa II.

Agrippa was the last of the Herods, that ignoble family responsible for so much evil in New Testament times. They were ambitious, corrupt, incestuous, calculating, violent, and political (in the worse sense of the word). Agrippa was no exception. For example, the reader might assume that the Bernice who accompanied Agrippa on this occasion (Acts 25:13-26: 32) was his wife. She was actually his sister, and rumor had it that the two were involved in a salacious affair.

The Herods were Idumeans, descendants of the ancient Edomites. Idumea's relationship with Israel was fraught with conflict. The Herods themselves were not especially fond of the Jews, but Agrippa took an interest in their religion. Paul calls him an “expert in all customs and questions among the Jews” (26:3). This situation presented Paul with the opportunity to argue his case before a knowledgeable official who could

advise Festus free from pressure to appease those Jews who brought charges against him.

Wisdom and Opportunity: By this time Paul had already written, “Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due, custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor” (Rom. 13:7). As immoral as Agrippa was, as antagonistic to the gospel as his family had been, Paul speaks to him with respect, addressing him as “King Agrippa” (Acts 26:2,3). There are times when a more caustic approach is called for (Acts 13:8-12), but Paul handles this case quite deftly. No doubt he had been praying for wisdom so that he might know how to speak in various situations, and God provided him with it.

In addition to Agrippa and Festus, prominent men from the city were also at the hearing. Would the apostle allow this opportunity to pass without preaching the gospel? No. So Paul uses this less as an opportunity to free himself and more as an opportunity to proclaim the risen Christ. His message is familiar.

Jesus, though crucified, was raised from the dead. Paul knows this is true because Jesus appeared to him. The Prophets also had predicted these things (26:22). Paul is merely fulfilling his commission to be a minister and witness of these things (26:12-23). Paul sees every opportunity as an opportunity to teach the gospel, whether to great or small. Do we?

Three Responses to the Resurrection: Finally, think about the responses to the gospel of the three men highlighted in this passage. When Paul clearly affirms the resurrection of Jesus (26:23), Festus cries out, “Paul, you are out of your mind!” Bodily resurrection of the dead was foolishness to him, as to many today. The seed was sown, but it did not penetrate Festus' hard heart.

Paul is the exact opposite. When he is confronted with the resurrection of Christ, he accepts it and all its implications. He makes a full commitment to Jesus as both Lord and Christ. His life is completely transformed; we might even say “cruciformed.” The persecutor becomes the persecuted, but this is not a detriment. It is a privilege to share in the sufferings of Christ. Furthermore, his new life is proof that Jesus has been raised. What but the power of the resurrection could have produced such a change in Saul of Tarsus? May we have hearts as open to the power of the resurrection (Philippians 3:10).

Agrippa is between Festus and Paul. He knows that God could raise the dead, that Paul's story is not incredible, and that Paul's message is consistent with the Prophets. His eyes have been opened (26:18), and Paul knows it (26:26-27). Paul presses the issue, but Agrippa is unwilling to make a commitment. How could he publicly accept what others rejected and considered madness? He diplomatically rebuffs Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Agrippa may have saved face with his diplomatic answer, but he lost his soul. Countless others have done the same.

Three Lessons to Learn: This episode is enlightening. **1)** It teaches us to treat people with respect as we preach the gospel. **2)** It reminds us to take advantage of our opportunities to evangelize and that everyone is a prospect. **3)** It illustrates how people respond to the truth. Some scoff, some diplomatically reject it. But some **will** believe and give themselves wholly to the Lord.

May we be like Paul and continue our efforts to turn the lost from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God (Acts 26:18).