

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2018: *The Book of Acts*

Lesson 12 “Confinement in Caesarea”

Read for this week’s study

Acts 24; Acts 25; Acts 26; 1 Corinthians 1:23.

Memory Text

“Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am—except for these chains’ ” (Acts 26:29, NRSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Before Felix
- III. Before Festus
- IV. Before Agrippa
- V. Paul’s Defense
- VI. Paul Before the Leaders
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. What do you think is the purpose of this narrative (Acts 24-26) in the larger scheme of Scripture? (Sabbath afternoon)?
2. Read Acts 24:1-21. How did the accusers of Paul open their case? How did Paul answer their charges? Re-read verse 16. What did Paul mean when he said that he strove always to have a conscience “void of offense toward God and toward man?” What in your life would you need to change in order to say the same thing? Read Acts 24:22-27. What does this passage reveal about the character of Felix? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Acts 25:1-5. How does this passage reveal the hatred that the truth can precipitate in those who don’t want to believe it? Read Acts 25:6-12. When Paul sensed that Festus was going to use his case for political reasons, how did he react? (Monday’s lesson)
4. What was Luke doing while Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea (read Luke 1:1-4 for a major clue)? Read Acts 25:13-22. What did Festus tell Agrippa about Paul, and how did the king respond? Read Acts 25:23-27. How does Luke describe the ceremony in which Paul appeared before Agrippa? What does this whole story teach us about the deceptiveness of outward appearances? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read Acts 26:1-26. What was Paul trying to accomplish in his speech before King Agrippa? According to verse 18, what happens in the lives of those who have salvation in Christ? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Acts 26:27-29. What was Agrippa's response to Paul's pressing question? Was he becoming favorable or being sarcastic? Read Acts 26:30-32. How did Agrippa express his conviction of Paul's innocence? Was Paul's appeal to Caesar a good idea? (Thursday's lesson)
7. To what extent can we legitimately make strategic decisions to protect ourselves instead of relying entirely on God's care? (Friday's lesson)
8. Paul seems to be telling King Agrippa to take his time in consideration of the gospel. What does this tell us about his missionary strategy? What does it tell us about God? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

One view sees the plan of salvation and God's gracious provisions, such as the death of Christ on the cross, as being primarily offered to adjust our legal standing in the sight of God, because as sinners, we are guilty. And guilty as we are, justice and law demand that we be executed. And the only way to avoid being executed—and there are many, various explanations of execution; these are the various views of hell. We all have views of hell, the longer view, the medium view and the shorter view; there are many views of hell. But if God is the executioner, then we do well to be preoccupied with our legal standing. And unless we be forgiven, he will go ahead and do this to us; he must. Law and justice require it. And if he doesn't go through with this, the universe will conclude he is unjust. And if he's unjust, you wouldn't trust him, and now you're getting over into the other view, which always amuses me, that if you pursue even the legal view logically to its conclusions you wind up with the other one.

But now in the larger view, which uses all sixty-six books and has no problems with Ellen White at all, it sees sin not as a legal problem. It sees sin as a very real problem that has had devastating consequences on us physically, mentally, spiritually, socially. Sin is a breach of trust, as Romans 14 says. Sin is treachery. Sin is what Lucifer did in the beginning, for which you could not have called him in before church counsel. I mean, what had he done? Nothing! Except the most devastating thing that can ever be done. Nearly destroyed the universe, that's what he did.

That's how bad it was. And because of this distrust, and the consequential unwillingness to listen and allow God to look after us and heal the damage done, enormous damage has been done to sinners. **We're not in legal trouble, we're in trouble. We're not in danger of being executed, we're dying. That's the difference.** And I believe it makes all the difference in the world. I would not go to a doctor who would kill his patients for not cooperating. But if I'm

dying, I need a doctor. And if I go and don't cooperate, I still may die. But my understanding is, that in this larger view, this great controversy view, this sixty-six book view, we're all dying. And if God were to leave us alone, that's it.

But he hasn't. He's pursued us through the years, trying to win us back to trust. And of course, you don't expect people to trust without evidence. You don't make claims, you offer demonstrations. That's the content of the sixty-six books, God's demonstration of the kind of person he is. And the way he's handled this emergency is the greatest demonstration of all. As to, not how he treats his friends, but how he treats his enemies. How he treats the sick and the dying; how does he seek to win them back to trust? And some of us find that very wonderful.

So the purpose of the plan of salvation is not to adjust our legal standing, but the purpose of the plan of salvation is to win us back to trust so he can heal us, which he can readily do, and it is to confirm the trust of the onlooking universe. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People Are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April, 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links: <http://pkp.cc/1MMQUESTP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMQUESTP> (Part 2)*

It is most significant to know that the word salvation means, essentially, healing. To be saved is to be healed. In one very legal understanding of the plan of salvation, to be saved is more to be forgiven; almost to have your fire insurance paid up, so you can be admitted.

In the trust-healing model, salvation means healing the damage done. This is made plain in many places in Scripture. Look at the next two examples on the list, of Luke 18:42, in two different versions. Jesus said to the blind man: "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee." That's the *King James Version*. But the *New International Version*, right underneath: "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will, and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not *desire* to be set free, if we *will* not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8) {HP 346.5}

But God is ever seeking to impress our hearts by His Holy Spirit, that we shall be convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. We may place our will on the side of God's will, and in His strength and grace resist the temptations of the enemy. {OHC 153.4}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

Through belief in Satan's misrepresentation of God, man's character and destiny were changed, but if men will believe in the Word of God, they will be transformed in mind and character, and fitted for eternal life. To believe that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16), will change the heart, and reproduce in man the image of God. {1SM 346.1}

It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, which Jesus said He would send into the world, that changes our character into the image of Christ; and when this is accomplished, we reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. That is, the character of the one who thus beholds Christ is so like His that one looking at him sees Christ's own character shining out as from a mirror. Imperceptibly to ourselves, we are changed day by day from our ways and will into the ways and will of Christ, into the loveliness of His character. Thus we grow up into Christ, and unconsciously reflect His image. . . . {HP 337.3}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. "Acquaint now thyself with Him" (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind. {AA 126.1}