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Acts 26

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Acts 26.

Topics.

- Paul makes his defense to King Agrippa.
- Paul's persecutions against those who confessed Christ.
- The enormous, terror, danger and destructive power of wrong belief.
- Paul's calling and the Good News of the Gospel.
- Moses and the prophets wrote that Christ must suffer.
- Christ must be the first to rise from the dead.
- The prophets knew of the resurrection.
- Festus tells Paul he is out of his mind.
- Paul could have been set free.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter the entire Jewish nation was shouting to King Festus to have Paul put to death, but Festus could not find any criminal charge to accuse Paul of. Paul appealed to Festus to be sent to Rome. The chapter ended with King Agrippa, Bernice (his sister), military representatives and well-known leading men gathered together in a hall at Caesarea waiting to hear Paul speak and Festus hoping they would find some unlawful activity to lay against Paul since he thought it unreasonable to send Paul to Caesar without being able to state in a letter some wrong doing against Paul that is deserving of imprisonment or death.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

ACTS 26:1-8

Paul makes His Defense to King Agrippa.

- **Acts 26:1-8:** So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defence: ²"I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defence today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. ⁴"My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵They 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. ⁶And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷to 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! ⁸Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

Aggrippa; is known in history as King Herod Agrippa 11 and in the NT, where he is mentioned only in (Acts 25 and 26), as Agrippa. He was placed over the kingdom of Chalcis and had the right to appoint the high priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. In A.D. 53 he was transferred to the tetrarchies formerly held by Philip (Iturea and Trachonitis) and Lysanias (Abilene) and given the title, king.

When Festus became procurator of Judea, Agrippa, accompanied by his sister and (consort) Bernice, went to Caesarea to pay his respects. It was at this time that Paul appeared before him as recorded in (Acts 25:23-26:32).

INTRODUCTION TO PAUL'S TESTIMONY

NOTE: as Paul is brought in to make his defence he is in chains (v29). King Agrippa, Bernice (his sister), military representatives and well-known leading men are gathered together in a hall at Caesarea waiting to hear Paul. Festus (the governor of Judea) is hoping that as they listen to Paul they will find some unlawful activity to lay against him since he cannot find anything illegal to charge Paul with and considers it unreasonable to send Paul to Caesar without being able to state in a letter something wrong done against Paul.

Paul gives his testimony: Paul begins his speech as every wise speaker does and compliments Agrippa to gain his interest and hopefully his favour. He tells his audience he was a member of the strictest party of the Jewish religion (the Pharisees) prior to his encounter with Christ.

The Pharisees (means the separated ones).

The Pharisees were rulers of the Jews and the most-strict and by far the most influential sect of the three prominent societies of Judaism that were around at the time of Christ (the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes). Pharisees loved to wear distinguishing garb so as to be easily recognised and were found everywhere in Palestine not only in Jerusalem. They made three contributions to Jewish faith i.e., legalism, formalised religion and the organisation of the Jewish faith so that ultimately Pharisaism and Judaism became almost synonymous. They pledged themselves to obey all facets of the traditions to minutest detail and were sticklers to ceremonial purity. This developed into a feeling of superiority over other nations and people. From this superior feeling as well as religious emotion, pride found its most extreme expression.

The Pharisees were haughty and arrogant because they believed they were the only interpreters of God and His Word. They made life difficult for themselves and bitter for others, and despised those whom they did not consider their equals. Their teaching that salvation came by maintaining tradition and keeping the law had such a strong influence on the minds of their followers that God's grace was thought to come from self-effort rather than grace so it was only natural that such a religion would ultimately become a matter of externals and not a faith of the heart.

The Promise God made to Israel's Fathers: Paul says:

- I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers (Acts 26:6).

This statement refers to the following promise: the LORD promised Abraham he would make of him a great nation and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. God swore He would make Abraham's name great, bless him, nations, and kings would come from him and He would give to him and to his offspring after him all the land of Canaan/Israel for an everlasting possession. The LORD promised Abraham that his offspring would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven so that they cannot be numbered and God will be their God. The LORD confirmed this promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their offspring after them throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant promising Abraham that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

(Gen. 12:1-3) (Gen. 13:14-17) (Gen. 15:4-7) (Gen. 17:1-8)
(Gen. 22:15-18) (Deut. 9:5).

Now the majestic wonder and beauty of God's promise is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes that the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith that is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all Abrahams offspring—not only to the adherents of the law (referring to the Jews) but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham (referring to the Gentiles), who is the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles), as it is written:

- I have made you (Abraham) the father of many nations—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist (creation and the resurrection).

In hope Abraham believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." Paul tells us that "The twelve tribes of Israel earnestly worshipped night and day hoping to attain to this promise (Acts 26:7). And then gloriously points out that the Scripture does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. Some may think the promises made to Abraham was for the Jews only, but Paul magnificently explains in the book of Galatians that the promises of God have been extended to all nations through being baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ and clearly shows that the promises made to Abraham and to his offspring the Lord Jesus Christ are not limited to the Jews only but embraces whoever will come to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Rom. 4:13) (Rom. 4:16-18) (Gal. 3:16) (Gal. 3:27).

For further information see the title:

- The Commonwealth of Israel (at the end of this chapter).

I stand on trial because of the promise made by God to our fathers: Paul's words, "I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers," (v6) refer to a previous event recorded in chapter twenty-three. Paul was being tried at Jerusalem by the high priest Ananias and the Jewish council. Paul perceiving that there were Sadducees and Pharisees cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial." Immediately he said this; an uproar of shouting arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees because the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, but the Pharisees acknowledge there is. The opposition became so violent, the tribune Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26), afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks. (Acts 23:6-10) thus the reason Paul is now standing on trial before Festus the Roman governor and Agrippa the king.

Why is it thought Incredible that God raises the dead? Paul almost seems astounded that it is so difficult for people to believe that God can raise the dead. It is stunning that many who believe God created all things have difficulty to believe He can raise the dead, especially when reason and logic says raising the dead has to be a lessor task than creating an entire universe that mankind cannot find an end to and which is filled such a multitude of extremely different life forms they cannot be numbered.

God's mind super computers and the resurrection: ponder for a Moment, today; we have super computers that can literally store billions of bits of information and send and receive them at a speed that is almost beyond human belief (certainly would have been a few short years ago), added to this any single item no matter how small amongst the billions of subjects and topics stored in the computer's memory can at the click of a key be brought to life on a screen for everyone to see. Then at the click of another key completely vanish descending into the computer's memory until someone wants to resurrect that information again. Now with this in

mind consider the eternal and awesome memory of God which unquestionably dwarfs any super computer His creation can build. Thus it is certainly not a difficult task for God to keep every detail of us all in His eternal memory and at the right time resurrect those He chooses to eternal glory and everlasting life simply by speaking the word and bringing at the speed of light all those He has kept in His majestic and eternal mind to life.

ACTS 26:9-11

Paul's Persecution's against those who Confessed Christ.

- **Acts 26:9-11:** "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Paul tells Festus, Agrippa and those in the meeting hall that he believed he was doing God's will when he was opposing Christ and those who believed in him.

Nazareth: Joseph and Mary dwelt at Nazareth it is a small insignificant town in Palestine in lower Galilee where Gabriel appeared to Mary. Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus was born and later after fleeing into Egypt, they returned to Nazareth with Jesus to live. Jesus eventually left the city for a wider ministry. The title Nazarene when used by Jesus friends had a friendly meaning, but when used by his enemies it was a title of scorn.

The power of wrong belief: Luke in Acts eight tells us that, "Saul ravaged the church and entered house after house dragging men and women out and committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3). Ravaged carries the idea that he not only spoke evil of those who confessed the Lord Jesus Christ but also aggressively set about assaulting and abusing whoever believed in the Lord violently doing whatever he could to destroy and break up the church. Then in the next chapter Luke writes, "Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2). Saul wanted the High priest to give him letters that when he presented them to the priests at Damascus they would give him permission to drag men and women confessing Christ out of the their synagogues so that he could take them captive to Jerusalem to be punished and even put to death (Acts 22:5) (Acts 26:10).

Paul's power and authority: since there was no-one in the Jewish priesthood higher in authority than the high priest Paul's authority and power was enormous. To be given letters from the high priest (Acts 9:1-2) that allowed him to destroy whoever was opposed to the Jewish teaching gave him legal authority to use not only Jewish, but also Roman officers and soldiers throughout the land of Israel to do whatever Paul instructed them to do to destroy the opposing faith. This is exactly what Paul was doing until the Lord miraculously turned his life around. We know Paul was causing wide spread chaos and mayhem throughout the region because Luke tells us when Paul left Jerusalem for Tarsus:

- The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied (Acts 9:31).

Clearly showing the widespread havoc and destruction Paul was causing to the Church prior to his conversion.

The enormous, terror, danger and destructive power of wrong belief: Paul states prior to his conversion he was advancing in Judaism beyond many his own age among the Jews and because he was so extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers he violently persecuted the church of God trying to destroy it (Gal 1:13-14) and pursued those who confessed Christ to death, binding and imprisoning both men and women (Acts 22:4) being convinced that he should do whatever he could to oppose the name of Jesus. After being given authority by the high priest he not only locked up many of the saints in prison at Jerusalem, but when they were put to death he cast his vote against them and punished them in all the synagogues trying to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them persecuted them even in foreign cities (Acts 26:10-11).

It was not that Paul was motivated by jealousy as many of the Jews were or from an evil heart. Rather Paul's motivation was from his zeal for God and what he believed was the right way to protect the laws and faith of the Nation of Israel. Paul had been taught by Gamaliel (a Pharisee and eminent doctor of the law) in the strictest laws of Moses (Acts 22:3) and was therefore so legalistic that he believed those who were confessing Christ were blasphemers to the laws and customs God had given to Moses and to the Covenant the LORD had establish with Israel. Thus, the power and horror of wrong belief especially when it is infused with a legalistic heart that lacks, mercy, grace and compassion which in Paul's case had been generated by attending a religious school that gave him a wrong understanding of God, His laws and what is important to God's heart.

The worst sinners of all: throughout the years I have heard people state that they are the worst sinner of all and therefore believe God could not save them, all they have to do is look at the life of Paul prior to his conversion and ask themselves, "Have I broken up Christian families and put innocent men and women into prison and agreed to them being put to death simply because they were devoted to Christ as Paul did,? And then look at what God was able to do with Paul's life.

ACTS 26:12-18

Paul's Encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road.

- **Acts 26:12-18:** "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³At midday, O king (Agrippa) I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴And 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.' ¹⁵And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But 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, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles— to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to 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.'

NOTICE: the glory of Christ was brighter than the light of the sun and Jesus spoke to Paul in Hebrew.

Vision: can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind). A biblical vision is always under God's control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision

communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet who then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision

The apostle's generation was unique: though God never changes the way His Spirit moves on earth to achieve His eternal plan does. In the Old Testament God moved mightily through Moses and in a different way through David and Solomon then in a unique manner God's Spirit moved through the prophets. During the era of the apostles God's Spirit was moving on earth through the apostle's faith in Christ in a miraculous fashion and in a manner that God has not done with any previous or future generation. This was a unique time on earth as was the era of Moses, David, Solomon and the prophets. Christ was the sower of the gospel seed, now God through the apostles and Paul is multiplying the seed Christ has sown.

It is hard for you to kick against the goads: Jesus words to Paul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads," means it is hard to go against what he feels in his conscience and his spirit. Paul was being motivated by a mistaken intellectual belief that those proclaiming Christ were the enemy of God and was therefore doing whatever he could to destroy them to protect the laws and customs of Moses, but it is certain when he watched Stephen being stoned, and the men and woman he put in prison being punished and put to death he felt emotionally convicted not only by their suffering but by their enormous courage and tremendous faith in the face of prison and even death.

Paul's calling and the Good News of the Gospel: Jesus appeared to Paul to send him to Gentiles to open their eyes to the Good News of the Gospel, so that they may turn from darkness (spiritual blindness) to light (spiritual enlightenment) and from the power of Satan (self, pride ego and the influence of the world) to God (through Christ) that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified (purified and approved of) by faith in Christ. This is the majestic Good News of the Gospel, whoever comes to God through repentance and faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ is not only approved of and accepted by God the Father but all their sins are forgiven, not because they are deserving of it, by any self-effort or religious good works, but because through faith in Christ righteousness is imputed from God to them as a pure and free gift, but this is not the end of the Good News since God's promises also state that the faithful in Christ will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life. Can there be any better news than this? Thus, the reason it is called the Good News. For further detail on Paul's encounter with Christ see:

- Acts 9:2-19.
- In, Commentary NT (ON WESITE MENU).

ACTS 26:19-23

Paul was obedient to the Heavenly Vision.

- **Acts 26:19-23:** "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,²⁰ 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.²¹ For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.²² 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: 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."

Vision: see the notes following (Acts 26:12-18).

Paul tells Agrippa and those gathered in the meeting hall that he obeyed Christ and firstly declared the Good News of the Gospel in the Synagogues in Damascus and the surrounding region in public and from house to house and then in Jerusalem and Judea to both Jews and Gentiles, but while in Jerusalem the Jews being offended at his teaching and falsely assuming he had defiled the Temple by taking Trophimus a Greek into it, plotted to murder him (Acts 21:27-29) and that is now why he is standing before Festus, (the governor of Judea). Agrippa the king and the dignitaries gathered in the hall and giving his testimony to them. Paul tells Festus, (the governor of Judea), Agrippa the king and the dignitaries gathered in the hall that is standing before them (in chains) (v29) giving his testimony because he obeyed Christ and firstly declared the Good News of the Gospel in the Synagogues in Damascus and the surrounding region in public and from house to house and then in Jerusalem and Judea to both Jews and Gentiles, but while in Jerusalem the Jews being offended at his teaching and falsely assuming he had defiled the Temple by taking Trophimus a Greek into it, plotted to murder him (Acts 21:27-29).

Moses and the prophets wrote that Christ must suffer: The words, "Moses and the Prophets said that Christ must suffer" (v23) are clearly evidenced in (Psalm 22) and (Isaiah 53) the following words of Isaiah and Zechariah are just a few of the many throughout the Old Testament that speak of Christ's suffering. Isaiah prophesied that:

- A virgin will conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel, (Isaiah 7:14) he will grow up before God like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground and have no form or majesty that we should look at him or beauty that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53:2) but the Spirit of the LORD GOD will be upon him because the LORD will anoint him to bring Good News to the poor; and to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; (Isaiah 61:1). At the end of his ministry he will give his back to those who strike, and his cheeks to those who pull out the beard; he will not hide his face from disgrace and spitting (Isaiah 50:6). (Isaiah is of course speaking of Christ).

Zechariah writes:

- If one asks him, 'What are these wounds on your back?' he will say, 'The wounds I received in the house of my friends.' (Zech. 13:6) and writes that "A man whose name is the Branch will extend out from his place, and build the Temple of the LORD (Zech. 6:12).

Zechariah also tells Jerusalem:

- To rejoice greatly because their King is coming to them; righteous and having salvation, he is humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zech 9:9). Later in his letter he pens the beautiful words, "The LORD will pour out on Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. (Zech. 12:9-10) (Zechariah clearly writes of Christ).

Christ must be the first to rise from the dead: the words, "Christ must be the first to rise from the dead" (v23) obviously does not mean he was the first person ever to be raised from the dead since Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite and a dead man who was put into the sepulchre of the Prophet Elisha, was restored to life as soon as he touched the prophet's bones. Christ himself had raised the widow's son at Nain, Lazarus and several others, but all these were raised to mortal life to died again whereas Christ was raised from the dead to eternal life and can die no more, which means he was the first to rise again from the dead to return no more into the empire of death.

These facts shine a light on the truth that Christ was the first that rose from the dead to an immortal life, and so in this sense is the firstborn to be raised from the dead and the firstfruits of those that are asleep in Christ. The resurrection of Christ to eternal life is proof of the resurrection of the human body to return no more under the empire of death it is in this sense that Jesus is said, "To be the first that rose again from the dead." The term, "Those sleeping in Christ," refers to those who have died

while having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are referred to as being asleep in Christ because their death is only temporary as they will be raised again to eternal life and everlasting glory.

NOTICE: the words, "Christ would be the first to rise from the dead (v23) clearly shows us that no-one ascended to heaven prior to Christ's death. For further information concerning this, see the title:

- Heaven (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The prophets knew of the resurrection: the following few verses show the prophets knew of the resurrection. The Lord said to Abraham:

- Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me (Gen. 22:12).

Then in book of Hebrews we read:

- Abraham considered that God was able even to raise his son from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back (Heb. 11:19).

David says:

- The LORD will not abandon his soul to Sheol (the grave) or let your holy one (the Lord Jesus Christ) see corruption (Psalm 16:10),

These verses clearly show that certain Old Testament prophets understood the resurrection of their Messiah and King and that they themselves would be resurrected to eternal life. Nevertheless, as one reads through the Old Testament it becomes clear that the primary focus of the majority of the Jewish people was that the promise of God would come through their natural offspring and not the Son of God who would lay down his life to his enemies. Not even the apostles fully understood what Christ meant when he said, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise" (Mark 9:31) until he appeared to them after his resurrection.

The following few verses show Moses wrote of Jesus: because the Jews held Moses in high esteem, they should have recognised Christ when he came, especially since Moses wrote the following amazing verse that states:

- God would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the serpent's seed and the woman's Seed and that the seed of the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's Seed, but the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent's seed. (Gen 3:15).

The woman's seed in this verse refers to Christ. For greater detail of this incredible and fantastic prophetic verse see:

- Genesis 3:15 in, Commentary Old Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Moses also wrote:

- The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—And I the LORD will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him, it is to him you shall listen." (Deut. 18:15-19).

The prophet like Moses is Christ then in the New Testament Philip said to Nathanael:

- We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45) and Paul said, "He testifies both to the small and the great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass (Acts 26:22).

The following few verses show the prophets wrote of Jesus.

Isaiah prophesied, saying:

- There will come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge with equity for the meek of the earth (Isaiah 11:1-4) (the shoot that came forth from Jesse refers to Christ).

Jeremiah said:

- The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness (Jer. 23:5-6) (the righteous Branch is Christ).

Daniel wrote:

- I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came One like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom one that shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14) (the came one like a Son of man refers to Christ).

Hosea prophesied of Christ calling Israel to:

- Return to the LORD their God that He may heal them; Hosea proclaims in his prophetic message, "After two days the LORD will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. (Hosea 6:1-3) (His going out is echoing Christ's death and as the dawn he will come is echoing his return).

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Micah prophesied:

- Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days (Micah 5:2) (the one to come forth is Christ).

Malachi prophesied:

- The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his Temple; behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts, but who can endure the day of his coming, he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and refine the sons of Levi like gold (Malachi 3:1-3) (It is Christ who will suddenly come to his temple).

Paul when speaking of Jesus says:

- The religious rulers of Israel did not recognize Christ nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him (Acts 13:27).

Naturally there are many more Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Lord. Jesus himself said:

- I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book (Heb 10:7) (The scroll of the book refers to the Old Testament writings).

And he said to the Jews:

- You search the Scriptures (Old Testament) because they think that in them they have eternal life; but it is they that bear witness about me. (John 5:39).

It is very clear that the religious rulers of Israel should have recognised their Messiah when he came especially since he was performing supernatural miracles that could only be done by a man who God's power was flowing through in such a majestic and awesome manner.

NOTE: these most celebrated and famous prophecies that the faithful prophets of old spoke thousands of years before Christ appeared stunningly show that the Bible is the inspired word of God for the following three reasons:

1. Who from their own mind could ever imagine that God's own Son the promised Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of the world would ever have to suffer such a humiliating brutal, bloody and cruel death?
2. Who could imagine from their own mind that a man born of a woman would be raised from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory? Certainly, generations of old believed in life after death, but it was in the form of a conscious spirit being, not a human raised from the grave to immortality and eternal life.
3. Many Old Testament Scriptures give exact details of Christ's birth, his life and his suffering long before he appeared.

Paul's message: Paul's message was "Repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance (v20)." This statement of Paul's shows that there should be outward evidence that testifies to a person's repentance and inward faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The balance to grace and law: those who are faithful to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because they are saved. They understand that righteousness is a gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort. They know that the law is splendid as a guide to an understanding of God's will, but as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure nevertheless both law and grace go together, the law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy, but the gospel without law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment, the law is not the Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless. (Rom. 3:19-20) (Eph. 2:13-22). The spirit behind the law is love, because each law protects a human being from harm. In the book of Romans Paul states:

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans. 13:10).

The spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from physical, financial, sexual, emotional and spiritual harm, thus those who know God aim to keep the Law because it is the right and loving thing to do. It fulfils the Ten Commandments regarding man, and the Royal Law "Love thy neighbour as thyself." It pleases God and brings a good testimony to His name and the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.

The things that delight the heart of the Lord: Micah says, what the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God. Isaiah tells us the LORD loves justice and hates robbery and wrong doing and Jeremiah says, those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights (Micah 6:5-10) (Isaiah 61:8) (Jer. 9:24). The people God loves are those who acknowledge Him and uphold justice and make choices that lead to peace. They are people who do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right and show respect and give help to others when able.

These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour. The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus does this by focusing on what a Christian's attitude should be toward others. He calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. It is about doing all you can do to protect people from physical, financial, sexual, emotional or spiritual harm and being dominated by the thought "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this

person." It is all about doing right to others, thus the reason it is referred to as the famous Sermon because the principals if followed not only by Christians but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5).

ACTS 26:24-32

Festus tells Paul he is out of his Mind.

- **Acts 26:24-32:** And as he was saying these things in his defence, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind." ²⁵But 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. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." ²⁸And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" ²⁹And 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." ³⁰Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. ³¹And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." ³²And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Festus: was the Roman governor who succeeded Felix in the province of Judea (Acts 24:27). The date of his accession is uncertain. Of the life of Festus before his appointment of Nero as procurator of Judea almost nothing is known, and he appears in the Bible (Acts 24:27 – 26:32) principally in his relationship with his prisoner, the apostle Paul.

Bernice: was King Agrippa's sister and consort.

Paul testimony appears outlandish and foolish: it is interesting to notice; Paul's testimony seemed so outlandish and off the wall that Festus thought all Paul's learning had driving him out of his mind. One of the greatest hindrances for a Christian to testify of the Bible and of Christ is the mental fear of being considered intellectually childish or of being old fashioned in knowledge and stuck in the past because of the tremendous advances the world has made in knowledge today. The messages of the Bible and many of the Bibles stories to those who do not understand the moral or spiritual teaching in the story sound very childlike and to many who do not believe in the God of Israel, of Christianity and of all creation, our testimony like Paul's did to Festus can sound like foolishness and pride self and ego do not like to appear foolish to anyone, this is one of the the reasons sharing the Bible and its stories is enormously difficult especially in our modern world, but it also shows that we lack faith in the Holy Spirit when sharing the Good News of the Gospel to convict the heart of those who God maybe calling into His Kingdom. Paul did not worry about his reputation or how foolish giving his testimony made him appear to others, he simply shared what he knew and trusted God's Holy Spirit for the outcome which sometimes was good, but at others not so good as it often resulted in him being put in prison or beaten, nevertheless Paul stated:

- I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Philip. 4:13)

Meaning he can endure all things, we know that this is what the statement, "I can do all things" means in this context because in the previous verses Paul says:

- I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need (Philip. 4:11-12).

King Agrippa words; "Do you think you can convert me to Christianity in such a short time?" appears to be a sarcastic reply to Paul's question, "Does the king believe the words of the prophets?" Paul words; "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” (v29) means that he wishes everyone would know the love of God as he does and be saved to eternal life and glory, but without being in chains and treated as a criminal and prisoner as he is.

NOTE: today there is a hollow Gospel floating around the churches that proclaims God is like a big sugar daddy or some type of Father Christmas who will always bless those who believe in His Son and give them a prosperous and charmed life, but this is not how the Bible presents the life of those who faithfully follow him. If there is doubt about this consider the life of Paul, Peter and James etc. Paul worked to support himself and suffered enormously and many of God’s faithful endure horrific persecutions. In the Bible’s famous chapter often called by many the Hall of Fame we read of many of the faithful in God achieving great things, but also many who suffered enormous terrors and horrors. The author of Hebrews says:

- Time would fail him to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight and women received back their dead by resurrection BUT some were tortured, others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment they were stoned, sawn in two, killed with the sword went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth of who the writer of Hebrews says the world was not worthy BUT of who God says they are commended for their enduring faith and will be made perfect (in the resurrection to eternal glory and everlasting life) (Heb 11:32-40).

These verses clearly show that in God’s Kingdom there are those who will have phenomenal success in life and there are those who will live a life full of troubles, but neither a life of success nor of troubles is what determines whether God will count a person worthy of His favour rather it is a person’s faith despite their success or their troubles. The majestic reward for both groups is resurrection from the grave to eternal life and everlasting glory. Sadly, in some Christian circles the lost are being told they can have this life now in this mortal and decaying world all they have to do is come to Christ and God will bless them with a stressed free charmed life. Though for a short moment this message may drive some to seek the Lord sadly when a crisis in life or troubles come it often ends in many falling away in despair from the Lord altogether because they are disillusionment and confused since it is contrary to what they have been taught by their very popular and often famous teachers.

Paul could have been set free: after the meeting Festus, Agrippa, Bernice his sister and those sitting with them all agreed that Paul has nothing deserving death or imprisonment. King Agrippa’s words to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.” Imply had Paul not appealed to Caesar Festus, Agrippa and those with them would have set Paul free.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ: it is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). The apostle Paul said:

- **Ephesians: 2:11-22:** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the COMMONWEALTH of ISRAEL and STRANGERS to the

COVENANTS of PROMISE, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both ONE and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself ONE NEW MAN (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in ONE BODY through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in ONE SPIRIT to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are NO LONGER strangers and aliens, but you are FELLOW CITIZENS with the SAINTS (the Jews) and members of the HOUSEHOLD of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the WHOLE STRUCTURE being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a DWELLING PLACE for GOD by the Spirit.

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world. The practical application of what this means to you, if you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to you. The book of Revelation states:

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- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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