

Explore the Bible: November 17

Respond • Acts 26:19-29

By Becky Brown



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Our lesson title is “Respond.” Through the life of Paul, God was providing a way for the whole Jewish nation to join Paul, their countryman, in coming to Christ. With their continued rejection of Jesus as Messiah, Paul fulfilled his unique calling to then offer the good news of the gospel to the Gentiles. God was reaching out through this ministry to offer grace to ALL hearers of Paul’s message. God was waiting (as He is today!) for each hearer to make a personal response. Then as now, some would accept while others would reject. Paul kept on sharing. Today, God wants to use us!

Last week in Acts 22, we left Paul in the hands of the people of Jerusalem. He was “rescued” from their not-so-tender hands by Roman soldiers. Just as he was about to be scourged, Paul revealed his Roman citizenship and was spared such treatment. In Acts 23, Paul is placed before the Jewish Council called the Sanhedrin. Paul had been a member of this group prior to his salvation experience. The meeting did not go well. Once again, the Roman soldiers rescued Paul by arresting him.

Acts 23:11 provides us with Paul’s upcoming travel itinerary. His travel agent had nail-scarred hands and feet. “Take

courage, for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also." Paul's nephew would catch wind of a conspiracy to murder Paul. The Roman commander made sure Paul was protected by transferring him from Jerusalem to Caesarea under the cover of darkness. He would face the court of Felix, the Roman governor in Caesarea.

Acts 24 describes the court scene. Paul is confronted by the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem. Paul gives his testimony there. Continuing their rejection of Paul and his Jesus, the Jews accused Paul of being a "pest" and a leader of "The Nazarenes." Felix was married to a Jewish woman named Drusilla. He and wife both heard the gospel from Paul. Several visits were exchanged between them but the response of Felix was rejection. He kept Paul in prison in Caesarea for two full years.

Acts 25 shows Felix to be replaced by Festus. Of course, I think of Festus Haggan on Gunsmoke. Actually, Paul was still a smoking gun to the Jews. They hated him and rejected his Jesus. Festus would hear Paul say as a Roman citizen that he wanted to appeal his case before Caesar in Rome. Festus agreed to this. His response was to do whatever made the Jews happy. In that response, Festus also rejected Jesus. Acts 25:19 quotes Festus, "...Paul is talking about some dead man named Jesus and Paul says He is alive." Paul continued to share his testimony faithfully.

King Agrippa and his wife Bernice arrived in Caesarea to greet Festus, the new leader. Agrippa was a king in the line of Herod the Great. Paul has an opportunity to share his Damascus road salvation experience in its entirety. Paul states that he is standing trial for the hope of the fulfillment of the promise made by God to our fathers, the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain. This hope is resurrection hope. This hope was found only in the Christ foretold by Moses and the prophets.

Agrippa listened to Paul. He renders one of the saddest responses ever made to the presentation of the gospel. In the King James Version, Agrippa answers, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Songs have been written with this somber message. Other versions of scripture imply that in such a short visit, Paul certainly grabbed his spiritual attention. Basically, Agrippa declared that he would pass on the offer.

Felix said, "Nope."

Festus said, "Resurrection? You've got to be kidding."

Agrippa said, "Great story, but...bye. Go tell it to Caesar."

Response is...well...everything.

Brown leads LittleBrownLight Ministries.