

Christ's resurrection proclaims Light to all*Acts 26:19-26*

Introduction: A couplet from one of my favorite songs is: 'Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings.' It is from a Christmas Carol, but it is more true at Easter on Resurrection Sunday! Jesus is THE Light of the world who brings life to all who walk with Him in humble, dependent obedient faith. *** Scripture tells us God lives in Light (*Psalm 104:2; 1 Timothy 6:16*). Yahweh is also Light and salvation (*Psalm 27:1*). The Word of God gives Light and IS Light (*Psalm 19:8; 119:105*). Salvation comes from the strength of God and The Light of His face because of His favor (*Psalm 44:3*). People are encouraged to pray for Light from Yahweh God (*Psalm 4:6; 43:3*). And, Yahweh is continuously fashioning Light as a potter fashions clay, and He is making Shalom-Peace (*Isaiah 45:7*). *** In our passage we heard that The Suffering Messiah is the first to rise from the dead to proclaim Light is coming to the Israelites and to all the nations. Jesus is The Light of the world (*John 8:12; 9:1-7*) who opens eyes and gives life. Jesus rose to proclaim Light and life to all people.

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Jesus has now ascended to The Throne of the universe, so He has delegated this task of proclamation about Him to all who are His disciples (*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8*). *** Let's look at Paul's testimony to King Agrippa and learn from it what we are called to do when we receive Light and new Life from Jesus:

I. Paul was always preaching to people to repent and practice worthy deeds, testifying to The Suffering Messiah whose resurrection proclaims Light. (*Verses 19-23*)

A. Paul was not disobedient to the vision from heaven, preaching everywhere to everyone to repent, to turn to God and practice deeds worthy of repentance. (*Verses 19-21*)

1. Consequently King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the from heaven vision. (*Verse 19*)

Context: Paul is testifying to a Rome appointed king over Palestine named Agrippa ('hero-like') in Caesarea (63 miles northwest of Jerusalem and 125 miles southwest of Damascus) at the request of the local governor Festus ('festival'). He has told of his extreme opposition to The Name of Jesus. As he was going to Damascus, he saw a light as bright as the sun and heard the voice of Jesus commanding him to tell the things he saw to the people of all nations. The purpose was for them to open their eyes to be turned from the power of the 'adversary' to God in order to receive forgiveness of sins and a share with those being made holy by the faith IN Him. (*Verses 9-18*)

2. But, first to those in Damascus, and then in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and to the nations also, I have been preaching to repent and to turn to God, deeds worthy of repentance always practicing. (*Verse 20*)

Jesus' last words: Paul started where he was, Damascus, north of Samaria. Then he went to Jerusalem and all Judea before going to all the nations. In this way he fulfilled Jesus' last command. (*Acts 1:8*)

Continuously: The verb Paul used indicates he did this continuously after Jesus encountered him.

Three things: All who become disciples of Jesus: change their heart and mind; turn to THE God; and then continuously practice deeds worthy of their changed heart and mind. They always climb God's spiral staircase of change while living in God's Kingdom on earth.

Disciples prove their repentance by deeds

3. Due to these things the Jews seized me in the Temple courts and have been attempting to kill me. (*Verse 21*)

Persecution to death: In his last letter written to Timothy, Paul said all desiring to live godly IN Messiah-Savior will be persecuted. (*2 Timothy 3:12*) After he wrote these words he was executed.

B. Having obtained God's help, he is testifying what the prophets and Moses said about Messiah, the first to rise from death to proclaim Light. (*Verses 22-23*)

1. Therefore, having obtained help from THE God until this day, I have stood testifying to both small and great, saying nothing beyond which both the prophets and Moses said was coming to be. (*Verse 22*)

God's help: To do God's work, His help is necessary. We can do nothing without God!

Still standing: Paul is still testifying, even as a prisoner of Rome. Jesus commanded the Twelve to testify to Him after The Spirit of Truth came upon them. (*John 15:26-27*) Just before Jesus returned to heaven He commanded His followers to be His witnesses in ever widening circles. (*Acts 1:8*)

Prophets and Moses: Paul works backwards from the first century to Messianic prophecies to what Moses said about a prophet Yahweh would raise up like him. (*Deuteronomy 18:15-19*)

2. That The Messiah (would) suffer, that first of the resurrection of the dead He will begin to proclaim Light to the (Israelite) people and to the nations. (*Verse 23*)

Suffering Messiah: The prophet Isaiah was given the longest paragraph about The Suffering Messiah. (*Isaiah 52:13-53:12*)

First to rise: By being the first to rise from the dead, He guarantees the resurrection of all who are IN Him when He returns. (*1 Corinthians 15:20-23*) And this is the fulfillment of a prophecy about death being swallowed up forever to give gladness and joy in salvation. (*Isaiah 25:6-9*)

Light: God's people had hoped for light, but received darkness due to their sin and idolatry. (*Isaiah 59:9; Jeremiah 13:16*) But, The Suffering Messiah Savior brought Light to both 'the people' (Israel) and all nations.

Proclaim: The universal announcement of The Light of Life IN Messiah because of His resurrection is truly 'Good News' for everyone.

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II. Festus calls Paul an insane maniac, but he says his words are of a sound mind. (Verses 24-26)

A. Festus said in a loud voice Paul is out of his mind, his learning is turning him into a maniac. (Verse 24)

1. But he speaking this in defense, Festus said with a great voice, 'You are out of your mind, Paul!' (Verses 24a-b)

Apologetics: The word translated 'defense' is the root of the English word 'apologetics' – the practice of arguing in defense of The Christian faith.

Great voice: Festus is finding Paul's presentation of The Gospel of Jesus, especially His resurrection bringing Light and life to all people to be 'highly illogical'.

2. 'Your great learning is turning you insane'. (Verse 24c)

Great learning: When he was arrested in Jerusalem, Paul said he was brought up in Jerusalem under the great Pharisee teacher Gamaliel and was fully taught the Torah. (Acts 21:26-22:3)

Maniac: The word Festus uses for 'insane' is the root of the English word 'maniac'!

B. Paul said his words are true, and king Agrippa knowing these things, I am speaking freely. (Verses 25-26)

1. But Paul said, 'I am not becoming a maniac most excellent Festus'. (Verse 25a)

NO: Using the same verb as Festus, Paul says NO most excellent Festus, you are wrong. Truth IS truth. Degraded human nature wants to make right and wrong relative to the speaker. But God has determined what is right and what is wrong. We can know His standard of right and wrong because He has written it in His Word for us to read it, meditate on it, to know it and to do it.

2. 'But I am uttering specific words of truth and of a sound mind'. (Verse 25b)

Truth: Jesus IS The Truth. (John 14:1-6) And He is the answer to Pilate's question on Good Friday, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38)

Sound mind: This means to have good sense, always being rational and reasonable, sober and discrete.

3. Because the king knows of these, I also speak to him freely in bold confidence. (Verse 26a)

King Agrippa: Agrippa was the great grandson of Herod the Great who ruled when Jesus was born. He became king after his father was struck down by an angel in 44 AD (Acts 12:1-24).

Freely speak: Paul was a different person after he encountered Jesus on his way to Damascus. With the help of Ananias ('Yahweh's gracious gift') and the filling of The Holy Spirit, Paul immediately began to preach with power, proving Jesus IS The Messiah. (Acts 9:10-22) May we all receive sound minds from The Messiah to freely proclaim the truth of His Gospel, and not be deterred when others perceive us to be insane maniacs.

4. Because I am persuaded not any of this has escaped him, not anything; because not in a corner was this having been practiced. (Verse 26b)

Been persuaded: This is the persuasion Paul had when he said absolutely nothing in creation could separate those Jesus is making holy from The LOVE of God IN Messiah Savior. (Romans 8:37-39)

Not practiced in a corner: The word 'practiced' in a corner, referring to the miracles God is doing in those who have surrendered their lives to His Son, is the same word used of the 'practice' of good deeds worthy of repentance people do after turning to God after hearing The Gospel ('Good News') of the Savior who died on The Cross so their sins could be forgiven; and, who rose from the dead to give them eternal, abundant and purposeful Life IN Him. (Verse 20; John 3; 10; 15) It was done in the open for all the people of all the world.

Bottom line: We must all know The Savior Messiah suffered for us and was the first to rise from the dead so we will turn to God. Then we can be changed to practice worthy deeds and join with the resurrected Savior Messiah in proclaiming His Light so all people may have His Life.

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Conclusion: The apostle Paul was always preaching so people would turn from themselves to God to always practice worthy deeds by testifying to the suffering Messiah whose resurrection proclaims Light. When Festus interrupted Paul to say he was out of his mind, Paul said his words about The Messiah are true and of a sound mind: Messiah has brought The Light of Life to all people.

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