

Series: Acts
Title: Politics vs. Power
Text: Acts 25-26
Date: August 5, 2010
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

The believer needs a high priest to make atonement in the presence of God (holy of holies), to purge the tabernacle (our conscious from dead works to serve the living God), and to be our altar upon whom our worship of God is cleansed by his blood so that we are holy and acceptable unto God. Christ is that High Priest. The believer is made a priest unto God, submitting to Christ through faith and accepted of God.

The believer needs a king who rules over all kings. One who has all power to order all things in heaven and earth to bring to pass his sovereign will. Christ Jesus is that King. Those whom Christ calls are his subjects, his servants. We are kings unto God under Christ our King, performing his will in this world.

The believer needs a prophet to teach us in the heart the truth of God. Christ is that Prophet. His preachers are under-shepherds through whom Christ teaches effectually in the heart of his children in the midst of his congregation through the Holy Spirit. Christ's preachers are in submission to Christ, preaching his word and waiting on the Lord to work obedience of faith in his people.

Those in whom Christ--the Prophet, Priest and King--reigns are no longer walking after the flesh, no longer depending upon the arm of the flesh, no longer depending upon the wisdom of the flesh but we are in submission to Christ. We know that he shall save his people from their sins and work all things together for our good according to his purpose.

In our text we will see men filling various earthly offices--some religious, some civic--but each are operating as if they are the prophet, priest and king. We will see Paul in their midst doing one thing--preaching to them the gospel of Christ, the Prophet, Priest and King. He has come, he has put away the sin of his people and he is risen and reigning in the midst of his people.

Acts 25: 1: Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2: Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3: And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

These religious men operate no different than the politician. Paul was not present. Still, they inform Festus against Paul, beseeching Festus to favor them, against Paul. They want Festus to bring him to Jerusalem so they could "lay wait in the way to kill him."

If what Paul said is so these religious men are out of office and out of power, all their will and works are vain. In protection of their own fleshly desires, these men want Paul silenced.

Application: Where Christ is not reigning in the heart, there is no submission. There is this striving as if all depends upon the arm of the flesh--to seek favor, to accuse, to seek vengeance, to have ones own way.

Acts 25: 4: But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. 5: Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. 6: And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. 7: And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. 8: While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet

against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. 9: But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10: Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11: For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. 12: Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go. 13: And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. 14: And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: 15: About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring to *have* judgment against him. 16: To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. 17: Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. 18: Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: 19: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive [The Jews accused, Paul affirmed. They defended the law, the temple, the city; Paul set forth a Person.] 20: And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. 21: But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. 22: Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. 23: And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. 24: And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25: But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26: Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. 27: For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

Acts 26: 1: Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 2: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3: Especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. 4: My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5: Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

Paul was brought up in a moral household. He was trained to be a Pharisee. But Christ Jesus called Paul out of that "straitest" sect, out of that manner of living which was at the first. In every way, Christ Jesus taketh away the first that HE might establish the second.

Matthew 5:20: For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Acts 26: 6: And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

The gospel has never changed

God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob righteousness, eternal life for an elect people from among all nations, in and by Christ. God promised resurrection of the dead in and by Christ. God promised that Christ would be the light and would teach his people to follow him.

Genesis 22: 18: And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

Isaiah 26: 19: Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Genesis 49: 10: The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Acts 26: 7: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Paul's Jewish countrymen after the flesh are called here the twelve tribes. Paul says, they are "instantly"--constantly, right now serving God day and night, hoping to come to this hope. But Paul's gospel is: the hope has come. Paul preached that Jesus of Nazareth is that Christ of God.

Righteousness and life are not by the will and work and service of man but by the will, work and service of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Romans 10: 1: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4: For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Hebrews 10: 9: Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10: By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. 11: And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Acts 27: 8: Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Some think that Paul said this because of the heathens and Sadducees present--who mocked the doctrine of the resurrection. I think Paul said it in reference to what he is about to declare about himself, that is, that he is living proof that Christ is risen, because Paul was dead in his religion and Christ raised him to newness of life.

Acts 27: 8: Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? 9: I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

First, notice where Paul did these things.

Acts 27: 10: Which thing I also did in Jerusalem:

Not out in heathen nations. Paul was not a dead dog Gentile. He was a Jew. He practiced this in the very capital of religion in Jerusalem.

Second, what did Paul do?

Acts 27: 10:...and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

Dead religion is nothing more than politics flying under a pretense of godliness. It is a religion of force and ingenuity of flesh.

Paul once followed the same hierarchy of religious politics just as his accusers were doing now. The Jews who were accusing Paul got their authority from the chief priests--Paul said I once had my authority from him. These Jews sought favor from the Roman governor against Paul--Paul said it was my job to give my voice against the saints. Once Paul got permission, he gave word to the officers who carried out the deaths.

From the chief to the least, dead religion is politics--climbing the ladder to be chief in the church, to be the authority, in hopes of being greatest in heaven. But it never saves. It only promotes punishment and blasphemy and persecution.

Acts 27: 11: And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Why did Paul not continue in that madness?

Acts 26: 12: Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, [Right in the midst of all his religion, all his fleshly power and politics, Paul was rudely interrupted.] **13: At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.**

Do you remember what the scriptures declared in Isaiah 30: 26 concerning Christ's power in this gospel age?

Isaiah 30: 26: Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

Like every child of God, when Christ is revealed in them, Paul experienced this personally.

Paul was like the moon--no light in him. But now his light "shall be as the light of the sun", Christ shall be his light now. "And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days"--Paul says, "I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun". This is the Power and Wisdom of God which always triumphs over man's politics.

2 Cor 4:6: For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Acts 26: 14: And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15: And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16: But rise, and stand upon thy feet:

Amazing grace! I am Jesus whom thou persecutest

- Whom you have sinned against
- Whose word you have trodden under foot

- Whose holy name you have blasphemed and compelled others to blaspheme
- Who you have crucified afresh in all your vain religion...
- **Acts 26: 16: But rise, and stand upon thy feet:**

Amazing grace!
How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see

Lazarus, come forth!
Zacchius, come down!

But rise, and stand upon thy feet:

Acts 26: 16:...for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Let's not lose sight of what Paul is declaring here.

At the first--I lived the life of a Pharisee, the straightest sect of the Jews religion. At the first--I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did at Jerusalem (as these Jews are doing now.) At the first--I was under their rule--got my authority from the chief priests. Then Christ the Light outshined all and called me by his grace and Paul came under the Authority of Christ Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords

Acts 26: 16:...I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17: Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

The Lord told Paul from the beginning of his ministry that spiritually dead religious men and women--Jew or Gentile--would treat him just as Paul had treated the saints before he knew Christ. Why? Because now Paul is sanctified by faith in Christ. By what Christ did for him and in him, Paul is no longer like those whom he once served:

Paul no longer submits to their fleshly dominion, he submits to Christ. Paul no longer walks after their fleshly way, he is led of the Spirit of Christ. Paul no longer served in carnal ordinances; Paul now serves Christ, in spirit and in truth. Paul no longer gives glory to men but all the glory to Christ Jesus

But here is why Christ sent him and delivered Paul from those who desired to kill him:

Acts 26: 18: To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

This is the paramount importance of this gospel of Christ. Paul had no power to do these things for anyone. But through the gospel, Christ did for his elect among Jew and Gentile, just what he did for Paul.

- Opens the eyes--regenerates, give new eyes and ears
- Turns them from darkness to Christ the Light--from darkness of their will, darkness of their works, darkness of their service to Christ the Light
- Turns them from the power of Satan unto God--repentance and faith are by the power of God.

- Christ Jesus did all this for Paul for those he redeemed by his own blood and Christ promised Paul to do this for each of his redeemed children--**that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.**

Acts 26: 19: Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

And no child of God will be when Christ Jesus the Power and Wisdom of God does for them what he did for Paul.

Acts 26: 20: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Works meet for repentance is the life a believer lives which bears record that he indeed has repented and turned to God. It is the very works for which Paul is on trial.

- He came out from among his former religious comrades
- He was willing to bear the cross of persecution from his enemies
- Now when he talked about Jerusalem it was to say that being in that city did nothing to save him
- Now when he spoke of his former manner of life--being a strict Pharisee--he said it was dung
- Now when he spoke of his former service he declared it was under vain authorities
- He stopped binding men in prison and preached Christ, waiting on Christ to make them willing-bondservants
- He stopped using the law to judge if men were righteous and started using it lawful to declare all flesh is grass
- By God's grace, Paul stopped walking after the flesh and started walking after the Spirit

Acts 26: 21: For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

Without a doubt, we see Christ in Paul. In Paul we get a savor of Salt. We see Light that can not be hidden. Paul stands here doing a good work, glorifying God before these men--"For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me."

Matthew 5: 11: Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

By what power does Paul continue to stand and shine forth this light?

Acts 26: 22: Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

The prophets gospel, Moses gospel, Paul's gospel and my gospel is the same

Acts 26: 23: That Christ should suffer,

Isaiah said he is coming to bear the sins of many--all the sin of his people he bore in his own body on the tree, With his stripes we are healed. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. He accomplished this fulfilling all that was written of him in the scriptures

Acts 26: 23: and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead,

Christ Jesus is the First. He was the first slain for sin--the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He was the first to rise from the dead. The Firstfruit is Christ.

Romans 4: 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Christ resurrection testifies to those for whom he died that their sin is atoned for, and his everlasting righteousness is theirs. And his resurrection declares that Christ lives to apply his blood to all for whom it was shed

Acts 26: 23:...and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

- Christ Jesus is THE KING ordering all things in providence in heaven and earth to bring his people under the sound of the gospel--as he called Paul and sent him and brings all his children under the sound of the gospel.
- Christ Jesus is the PROPHET who declares his gospel to his people through his messengers--they shall all be taught of God.
- Christ Jesus is the HIGH PRIEST who, not only applies the blood in the holiest of holies before God, but who also purges the tabernacle--the consciences of his people--so that he turns us from darkness to walk in his Light.

Acts 26: 24: And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25: But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26: For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. 27: King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28: Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 29: And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. 30: And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31: And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32: Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Agrippa was almost persuaded but when on trusting in his politics and perished in unbelief.

Paul was persuaded by the Power and Wisdom of God.

I pray Christ Jesus arrests you this hour!

Amen!