

Story of Paul the persecutor of Christians

Introduction

Here is a story worth telling. There was a man by the name Saul in Jewish or Paul in Greek who lived in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus and the early period of the Church. He was a Jew, a Pharisee who had a strange encounter with Jesus and became a staunch believer and an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Listen to his story as he makes his defense before King Agrippa.

Apostle Paul's defense

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself. "

"So, Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to hear me patiently."

Paul's Early Life

Acts 26:4-11, "The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was

possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them."

Paul's Encounter with Jesus and his Conversion

Acts 26:12-18, "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'"

Paul's Post-Conversion Life

Acts 26:19-23, "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in

Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

Agrippa's Conclusion

Acts 26:29-32, "Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

"The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment."

"Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Paul shares his Testimony with the Philippians Church

Philippians 3:7-11, "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of

sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

He shares his testimony to Timothy, His disciple

1 Timothy 1:15-17 says, "How true it is, and how I long that everyone should know it, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners—and I was the greatest of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as an example to show how patient he is with even the worst sinners, so that others will realize that they too, can have everlasting life. Glory and honour to God forever and ever. He is the king of the ages, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God, and full of wisdom, Amen."

Now what about you dear friend?

You just read the conclusion Paul the skeptic made about Jesus before King Agrippa. After his personal encounter with Jesus his how his attitude toward Him was totally changed from one of hostility to a life of love and obedience to Him. He was even willing to give his life preaching the gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles alike risking his very own life. He discovered from his encounter with Jesus that Jesus is not an ordinary man but He is really the Son of God who loved him and came to die for him.

Dear friend, Jesus did not come to condemn us or destroy us but came to die in our place to pay the penalty for our sins and to give us eternal life.

John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends".

Again in 1 John 3:16, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us".

There are three kinds of love.

1. "If you love me I love you. If you don't love me I don't love you." This is human love.

2. "Even if you love me, I hate you." This is animal love, like tigers, lions and snakes. If you try to feed them, they will try to eat you up.

3. "Even if you hate me, I will still love you," This is godly love or agape love, the kind of love Jesus demonstrated toward us. Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us".

Would you please love Him and be thankful to Him for dying in your place for you because of His unconditional love?

You may be saying, "Now I understand that Jesus is a good person and He is the Son of God as He claimed to be. He really came to love and to die for me. I am sorry for neglecting Him in my ignorance. I want to love Him and receive Him as my Saviour and Lord."

If that is your conclusion and desire, here is how you could receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

For more information please SMS or call,
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Email nedungat@gmail.com or
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