

University Heights Church
of Christ
445 Columbia Ave.,
Lexington, KY 40508
(859) 255-6257
www.uheightschurch.com

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday

Bible Study: 9:45 AM

Worship: 10:45 AM; 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 PM (This is
immediately followed by a
short worship period)

First Friday of Each Month

Singing: 7:30 PM

LEADERSHIP

Elders

David Collins

John Thompson

Troy Antle

Evangelist

Adam Litmer

Deacons

Richard Brundige

Matt Thompson

Adam Litmer

Bill Morelan

Jim Parsons

Pat Seabolt

Adam Daniels

Jamie Powell

NOTE

The college age/young adult class begins TODAY. We will be studying through John's epistles.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Rick Small, Mildred Collins, Luke Ramey, John Thompson, Declan Weatherholt, David Seabolt, Jeff Howerton, Rhonda Boyd (and her sister, Dorothy), Louis Harrod, Paul Atkisson, Ed Allison, The Bays and Robbins family, Sheila Lawson, Keia Burton, Robert Brundige, Susie Burton, Valerie and Barry Boyd, Janett's mother and stepfather, Sandy Driver, Erlene Young, Larry Sells, Evelyn Damron, Jennifer Dunbar, Jean Gartland, John Blessing, William Roberts, Paul Lyda, Pete Soro, The Smith family, our brethren in southern Philippines, our brethren in Zimbabwe, Jamie Powell's father, Bruce Feltner, Harleigh Spartman, Fay Thomas, Mattie Johnson

University Heights Messenger

Volume 9--Number 38

August 20, 2017

Become Such As I Am

Adam Litmer

Acts 26 describes a striking scene. The great men of the city of Caesarea, along with King Herod and his wife, gazed upon a man in chains. This man was the apostle Paul. He was prepared to make his own defense for none stood with him. When the king gave him permission to speak I doubt anyone present expected to hear what they heard. If he was ashamed of his predicament he did not show it. If he was awed by the fame and influence of the people before him it was not evident. In fact, if these people were expecting groveling along with desperate pleas for mercy, they were disappointed. What they heard was gospel preaching.

Due to Paul's words, manner, or both, governor Festus eventually cried out, *Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.* Paul was not acting the way a prisoner was supposed to act. He was addressing these lofty officials with uncanny boldness and confidence. His manner was respectful, yet bereft of the wheedling flattery and quaking fear such people were accustomed to. What's more, Paul was speaking of things carnal people simply cannot understand (1 Corinthians 2:13-16). To Festus, his words sounded insane. Perhaps he thought that his outburst would rattle the chained apostle and cause him to duck his head in shame. Rather than cowering in his chains at the governor's outburst, likely met with several murmurs of agreement from other officials in the room, Paul addressed him respectfully,

yet with his boldness intact. *I am not of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words.*

After having testified to the integrity of his words one might imagine Paul would have dropped his hand (Acts 26:1b) and stood in dignified silence. Instead, he turned his attention to the most powerful man in the room and addressed him directly. *For 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. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.* Make no mistake: this was an invitation for Agrippa to become a Christian. That's what this entire scene was about. Agrippa simply wanted to hear Paul's case out of curiosity (Acts 25:21-22); Paul had appealed to Caesar and to Caesar he had the right to go (Acts 25:12). Agrippa did not have the authority to prevent Paul traveling to Rome so he simply wanted to hear a case he found interesting. The result was that several of the highest dignitaries in the land heard the gospel preached.

Agrippa himself was taken aback by Paul and exclaimed, *In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?* It is difficult to determine whether Agrippa was sincere or mocking. Was he claiming that Paul nearly convinced him to become a Christian? Was he mocking Paul for the effort? Could the truth be somewhere in between? Regardless, there was nothing ambiguous in Paul's response to him. *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.* Paul wanted every person in that room to become what he was, only unchained.

What was Paul? He was a Christian, a saint washed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7). He understood the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:8) and thus could gaze upon all the pomp and pageantry in the room, all the

expensive clothes and signs of great wealth, all the fancy titles and honorifics, and count them as rubbish (Philippians 3:8). Paul's eyes were locked on their souls because he knew that at the foot of the cross all men stand on level ground. Whether king or servant, all need Christ equally.

To ask how Paul could have spoken as he did before such people is to ask the wrong question from the wrong perspective. The right question is how could he have spoken differently believing as he did (2 Corinthians 4:13)? Recall Peter's words and heed them. *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you...If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name* (1 Peter 4:14, 16).

In the days to come I believe Christians will be called before officials to answer for their faith more than has previously occurred in *this* country. As our nation moves further into its "post-Christian" era, Christians will be put on "trial" before friends, family, classmates, and coworkers like never before to explain their actions and beliefs. Let us use those times as Paul used them. His primary concern was not to appease the crowd so all the attention would turn from him, but to move all that attention to Jesus Christ by explaining the reason for the hope that was in him (1 Peter 3:14-15).

Be prepared for what's coming, brethren. Yet see in it the extraordinary opportunities to spread Christ's gospel among those who have never heard it. Let them see a Christian who is not rattled by false accusation or made to crumble at mocking. Let them see what a room full of powerful officials saw in Paul all those years ago.

