ACTS 26

Not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision

a prisoner in chains tells a king how the risen Jesus stopped him on the road and sent him to open blind eyes

> *"to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'"*
> ACTS 26:18

A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Luke has brought us

1. Acts 25 ended with Festus in a bind: he had a prisoner to send to the emperor and “nothing definite” to write about him (25:26).

2. This is the third telling.

3. Paul builds his defense on Israel’s hope.

ONE ROAD, THREE TELLINGS · ACTS 9 · 22 · 26

	ACTS 9	ACTS 22	ACTS 26
TOLD BY	Luke, narrating	Paul, to the temple crowd	Paul, to King Agrippa
LANGUAGE	—	Hebrew dialect (21:40)	Jesus spoke Hebrew (26:14)
THE LIGHT	“a light from heaven” (9:3)	“a very bright light” (22:6)	“brighter than the sun” (26:13)
ANANIAS	sent; eyes healed (9:17–18)	“a man who was devout” (22:12)	not mentioned
ONLY HERE	the word to Ananias (9:15)	“the Righteous One” (22:14)	goads; full commission (26:14–18)

The same event each time; Paul tells it to fit his hearers, and saves the fullest commission for a king.

The Hope of the Promise

A Pharisee's life, Israel's hope, and the question of resurrection

ACTS 26:6

"And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers;

DAVID GUZIK

Still a faithful Jew; faith in Jesus grew out of the promise.

MATTHEW HENRY

He lived a Pharisee; nothing incredible in God raising the dead.

ἐλπίς

ELPIS · "HOPE"

Not wishful thinking but confident expectation of what God has promised.

Saul, Saul

A furious persecutor, a light at midday, and the voice that said "I am Jesus"

ACTS 26:13

at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

DAVID GUZIK

An angry man; saw the light before he saw the light.

C.H. SPURGEON

The valuable ox, bought dearly; every doctrine a goad.

MATTHEW HENRY

Persecutors are mad men; his spirit rose, then he yielded.

ἐμμαίνομαι

EMMAINOMAI · "FURIOUSLY ENRAGED"

Verse 11: "being furiously enraged at them" — literally "raging madly against them," the only New Testament use, with the intensifier perissōs, "exceedingly" (KJV: "exceedingly mad").

From Darkness to Light

Get up — a minister and a witness, sent to open eyes

ACTS 26:18

to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

DAVID GUZIK

Serve the message; blind himself, sent to open eyes.

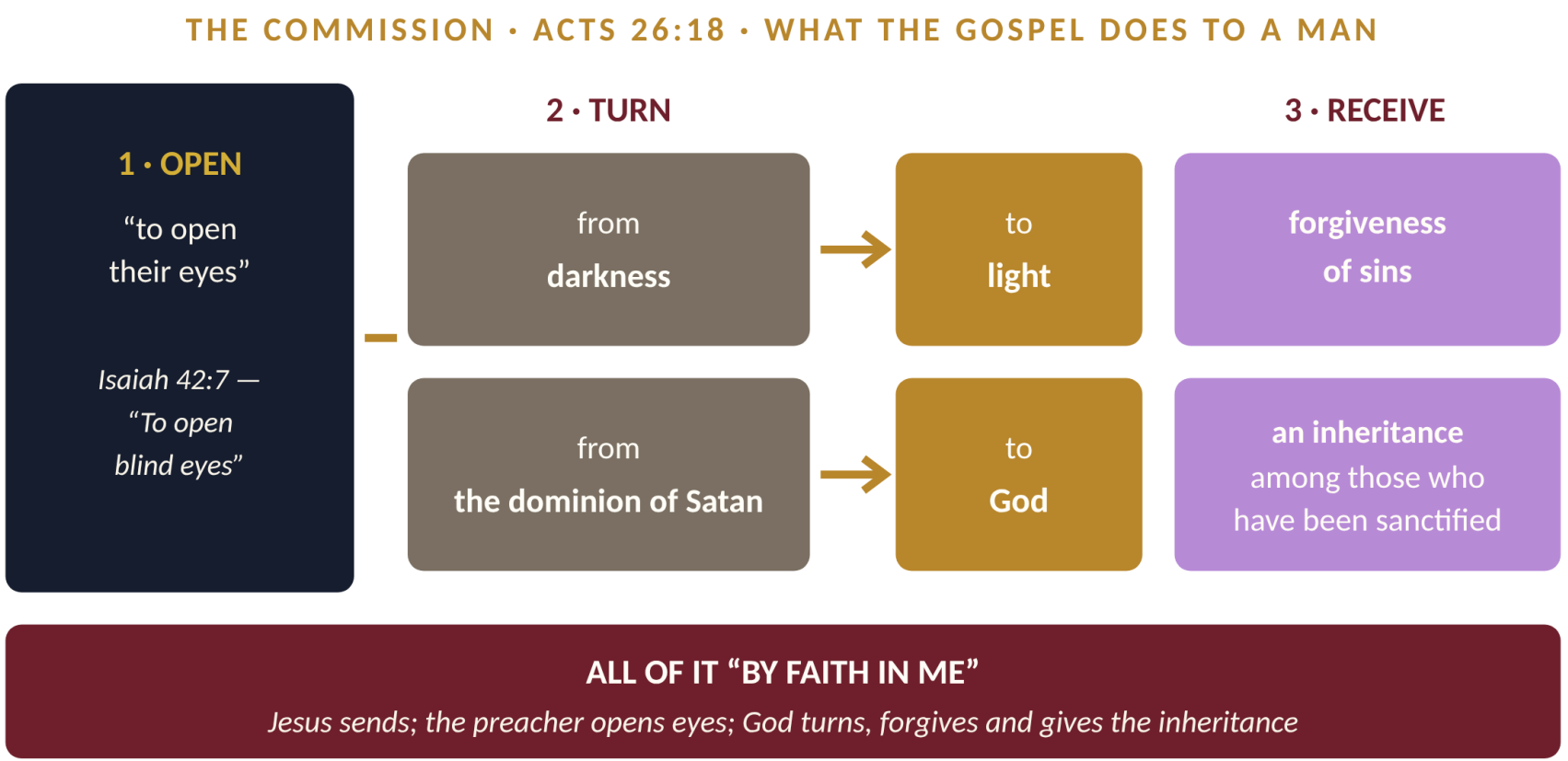
MATTHEW HENRY

Eyes opened first; grace turns from Satan's dominion to God.

ὑπηρέτης καὶ μάρτυς
HYPĒRETĒS KAI MARTYS · "MINISTER AND WITNESS"

Hypēretēs is an under-servant, an attendant who carries out orders (Luke uses it of "servants of the word," Luke 1:2).

The commission of 26:18



Read left to right: eyes opened, a man turned from darkness and Satan to light and God, and then forgiveness and an inheritance — all by faith in Christ.

Not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision

Repent, turn, and prove it — nothing but what Moses and the Prophets said

ACTS 26:19

"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,

DAVID GUZIK

No one should disobey such a God; Jesus over freedom.

R.C. SPROUL

Repentance is not justification by works — faith alone, then fruit.

MATTHEW HENRY

Heavenly visions command earthly counsels; works, not just words.

ὀπτασία
OPTASIA · "VISION"

A sight, an appearing — four New Testament uses (Luke 1:22; 24:23; Acts 26:19; 2 Corinthians 12:1).

Almost Persuaded

“You are out of your mind” — “not done in a corner” — “except for these chains”

ACTS 26:24

While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.”

DAVID GUZIK

Crazy to some, but truth and reason; close is not close enough.

R.C. SPROUL

Not a mystery religion; “almost, but not quite” — tragic words.

C.H. SPURGEON

Almost a Christian altogether; the flaw is in the hearer’s nature.

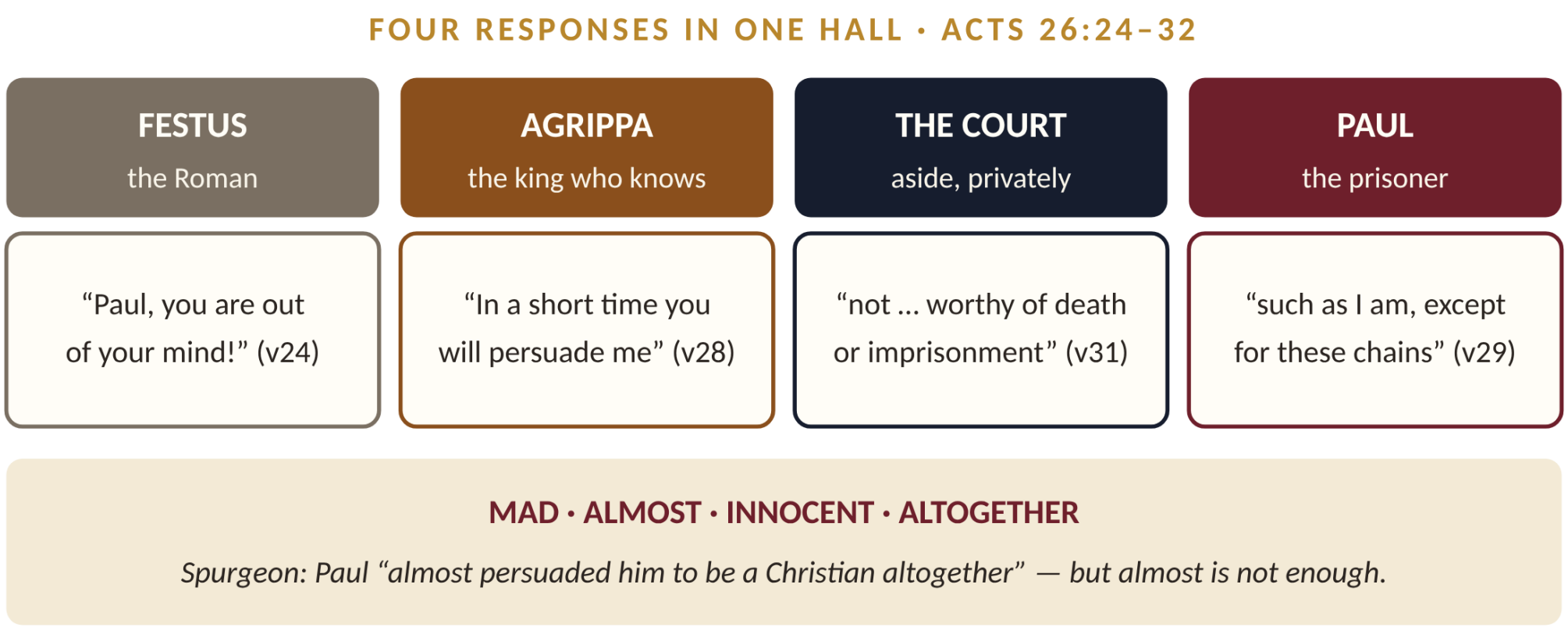
MATTHEW HENRY

Not done in a corner; almost proves no better than not at all.

μαίνομαι · σωφροσύνη
MAINOMAI · SŌPHROSYNĒ

Festus: “Mainē, Paul” — “you are raving” (v. 24).

Four responses in one hall



The same speech, four answers: the skeptic, the almost-believer, the private verdict, and the free man in chains.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Accused by Jews for the hope of the Jews.

Paul is on trial “for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers” (v6), the hope “our twelve tribes” still await (v7).

2

Not “can a man rise?” but “can God raise him?”

“Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?”

3

Who was really mad?

Saul was “furiously enraged” (emmainomai, v11); Festus says Paul is “out of your mind” (mainomai, v24).

4

The goad hurts the one who kicks.

Spurgeon: “The ox when wounded is so very foolish as to dash its foot against the goad.”

More to carry

5

To persecute the church is to persecute Christ.

"Why are you persecuting Me? … I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (vv14–15).

6

A blind man sent to open eyes.

Guzik: "His eyes were not yet opened physically, but Jesus sent him to open the eyes of others."

7

The whole gospel in one verse.

Open, turn, receive (v18): from darkness to light, from Satan's dominion to God, forgiveness and an inheritance — "by faith in Me."

8

Works show repentance; they do not buy it.

Sproul: "Paul understood that our works do nothing to make us right in the sight of God."

Talk it through

1. Before Christ, Saul was sincere, religious — and furious. Where has my religion or my zeal made me angry and hard rather than loving?

2. What “goads” has God used on me — people, consequences, His Word — and where am I still kicking?

3. Jesus said, “Get up and stand on your feet” — and gave Paul a job. What has He given me to do with my story?

4. Which part of verse 18 do I most need to remember about my own life: eyes opened, turned to God, forgiven, or given an inheritance?

5. What “deeds appropriate to repentance” would show the people around me that I have really turned?

CLOSING

Acts 26 is a prisoner's testimony to a king. Paul tells who he was, what he saw, and what Jesus sent him to do, and he ends with a wish no chain could stop: that everyone listening would become what he is. Festus called it madness; Agrippa called it almost. The risen Jesus still calls men from darkness to light — and almost is not enough.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Acts study page.