

## Speaking to the King

### Acts 26:1-29

Last week we looked at the call, the cost and the purpose of God in evangelism. Today we're going to see how Paul speaks to those in power.

#### **The Problem of Power**

Power has the ability to intimidate; to silence you when you should speak out; to make you compromise on things you shouldn't. When it comes to matters of justice, integrity, or righteousness in the work place, we can be tempted to stay quiet, because we want to stay on the right side of those in power. We can be reticent to share the gospel because we don't want to offend those over us.

Paul stands before all these powerful people. But he does not try to win their approval, or flatter them. Instead, he sees behind all the pomp to the individuals underneath, and to what they really needed to hear.

#### **Speaking Truth to Power**

Paul uses his trial, not to win their approval but to win them to Christ. Paul puts his own interests second to their need to hear the truth. He does it by both drawing Agrippa in – showing him the common ground they have, and by challenging him.

To speak like that to power, you need not just courage but also humility. Without humility you just come across as self-righteous. So we need a power at work in us that both emboldens and humbles us, if we are to speak truth to power. Paul had that. The question is, where did he get it?

#### **The Power You need**

What gave Paul the courage and the humility to do it was the gospel. The gospel has this power for three reasons:

**1. It's biblical:** Three times Paul makes the point that the life, death and resurrection of Christ was the ultimate fulfilment of the Old Testament. The gospel is not something that someone has dreamed up. It is God's word to the world. When you know that then you have confidence and courage in the message. But also, knowing it's rooted in Scripture humbles you. This is not you making God in your image (which always makes you proud). This comes from an authority outside yourself. You need its message as much as anyone.

**2. It's true:** Paul is insulted by Festus, but he responds with grace. He knows that the gospel is true, so it doesn't matter if people in power mock him. But how does Paul know the gospel's true? Because it was not done in a corner: the evidence of Christ's life, death and resurrection is there to be investigated, and Paul and Agrippa know it. And the truth of Christ's resurrection gives us the courage to speak truth to power, because it means that ultimately no one can harm you. And Christ is the only King whose opinion really matters.

**3. It's life-transforming.** Paul's life was transformed by his encounter with Christ. He realised he was more wrong than he could imagine, but more loved than he could hope. When you experience that it is deeply humbling. But it also conquers your fear, and the need for the approval of others, so you can speak truth to power.