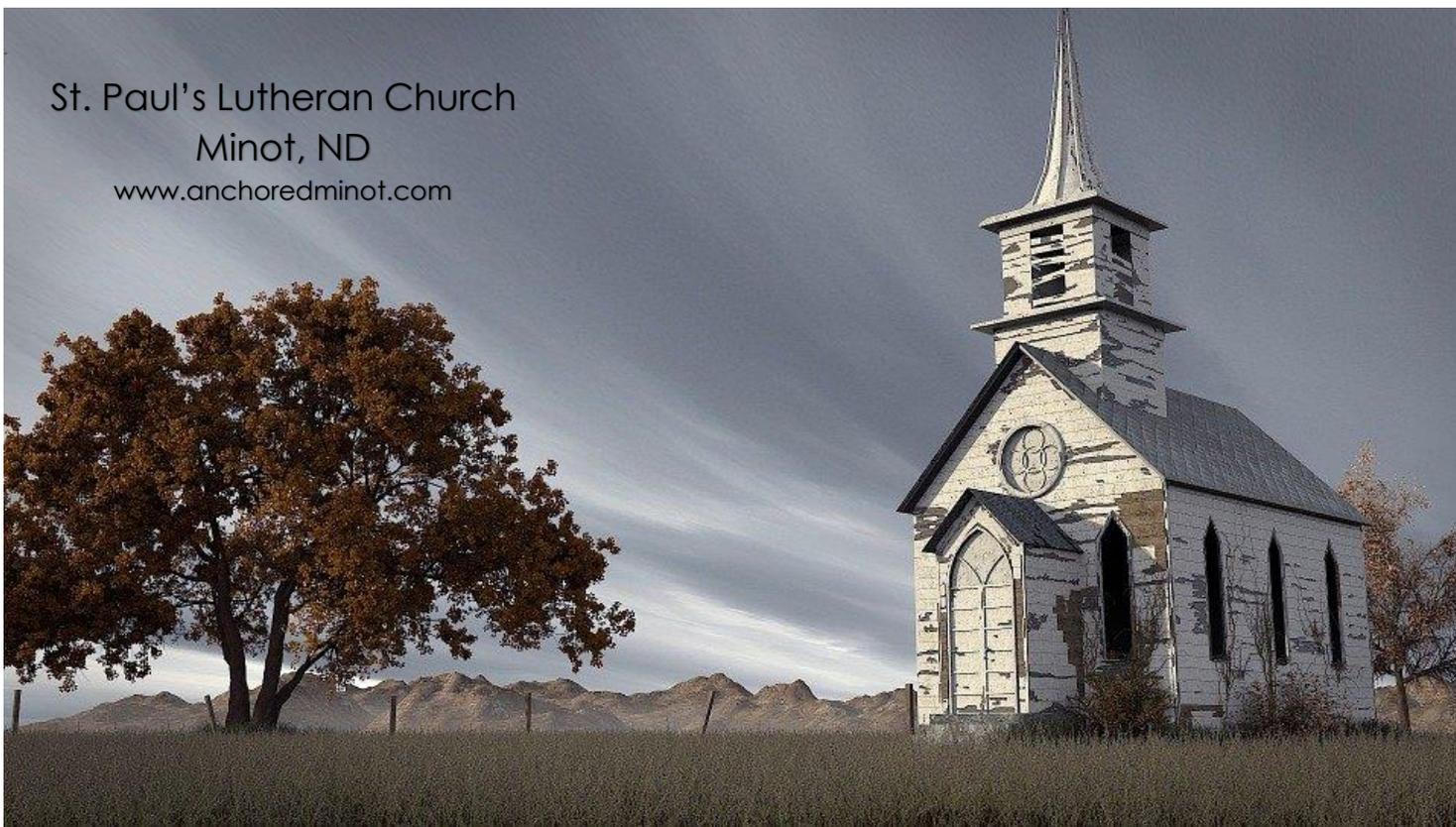


St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
www.anchoredminot.com



The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflicting World

Acts 26:1-32

It is encouraging to see the due process given to Paul – he was given the floor to speak in his own defense. But what did Paul say?

As a way to summarize, Paul first establishes his history and credentials to show that he is not crazy or a part of a nutty sect. Secondly, Paul lays out a confession of his past mistakes. This confession not only shows forth a layer of humility but also shows Paul's history of being on the opposing side. Thirdly, Paul speaks of his conversion from the opposing side to the truth of Christ. And finally, Paul offers a conclusion to his predicament.

Now, what can we specifically glean from Paul's defense? Though verse 25 is spoken by Paul in response to an attack by Festus, nonetheless, it seems to capture the disposition of Paul throughout this whole chapter. In other words, Paul spoke true and reasonable words. Paul spoke 'truth.' He did not speak lies, and he did so reasonable – soberly.

Considering 'truth,' it is important to understand that

when a person speaks truth, they are testifying to reality – the way things are or are not. They are stating 'what is' and 'what is not,' not what they 'want' and 'don't want.' And so, truth is not burdened with various rhetorical devices. Truth does not need voice inflection. It does not need stimulation or affection, or persuasion. Truth is free from needing all of these things.

It has been said before that lying is more mentally difficult than telling the truth. The reason why? Lying demands the brain to not only adjust words towards the lie, but lying also pushes the brain to consider things such as intonation, body language, emotions, etc. For example, if something happened that is sad and a person is going to lie and communicate that something happened that is good, then they will have to change their intonation, body language, and words to be happy – not sad. And so, all of this takes a considerable amount of effort. Furthermore, once a person lies, they have to fill in all the other cracks in the story to make the narrative 'work.' That is to say; if a person lies about a portion of a story, it will affect other portions of the story (produce cracks in the narrative). With each lie, consequently, there will be multiple cracks

in the narrative that will need to be filled in with additional lies. As a result, the more lies a person tells, not only will they become exponentially exhausted, but they will often compensate with various techniques to strengthen the so-called validity of their lie (*i.e., change in speech patterns, conflicting body language, rise or fall in voice tone, shifting eyes, etc.*). With respect to Paul, though, he simply spoke the truth – what was and what was not. And in so doing, his demeanor was sober, self-controlled, calm, and sane. He had nothing to cover up, twist, or manipulate.

Keep in mind that while there are definite times to use rhetoric and other techniques regarding the defense of the Christian faith, when push comes to shove the Christian faith is based upon reality. This reality (*i.e., truth*) can and should be said with sober reasonableness – Christ lived, died, and rose. In the case of Paul, Festus conducted an Ad Hominem attack upon Paul accusing him of being insane and out of his mind (*i.e., an Ad Hominem attack is attacking the person's character or motivation rather than the message, argument, or logic. Festus attacked Paul's character and not Paul's message*). And so, instead of elaborating on his own character, Paul directed Festus back to the message saying, *"I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth."* In other words, Paul did not attack back and he did exhaustively defend his character but went back to the validity and truth of his message.

Alas, too often, we Christians get sucked into the weeds by defending our own character. While there are certainly times when our character needs to be defended, responding to an Ad Hominem attack by defending our character gives 'into' the goal of the Ad Hominem attack. Keep in mind that people will often attack the messenger because they do not have the ammunition or ability to attack the message. And when messengers defend their character, they are allowing the tactics of the Ad Hominem attack to work. They are allowing the conversation to shift away from the message, argument, and logic to the person.

In the end, what we see is an innocent man being put on trial for death because he would not bend to the sentiments of the crowd. Bluntly stated, the Church of Cain will always attack the Church of Abel, it is never content but thirsts for blood because it lives off works-righteousness. To deny, snub, and/or not affirm the works-righteousness of the Church of Cain is to invite certain persecution and possibly death.

