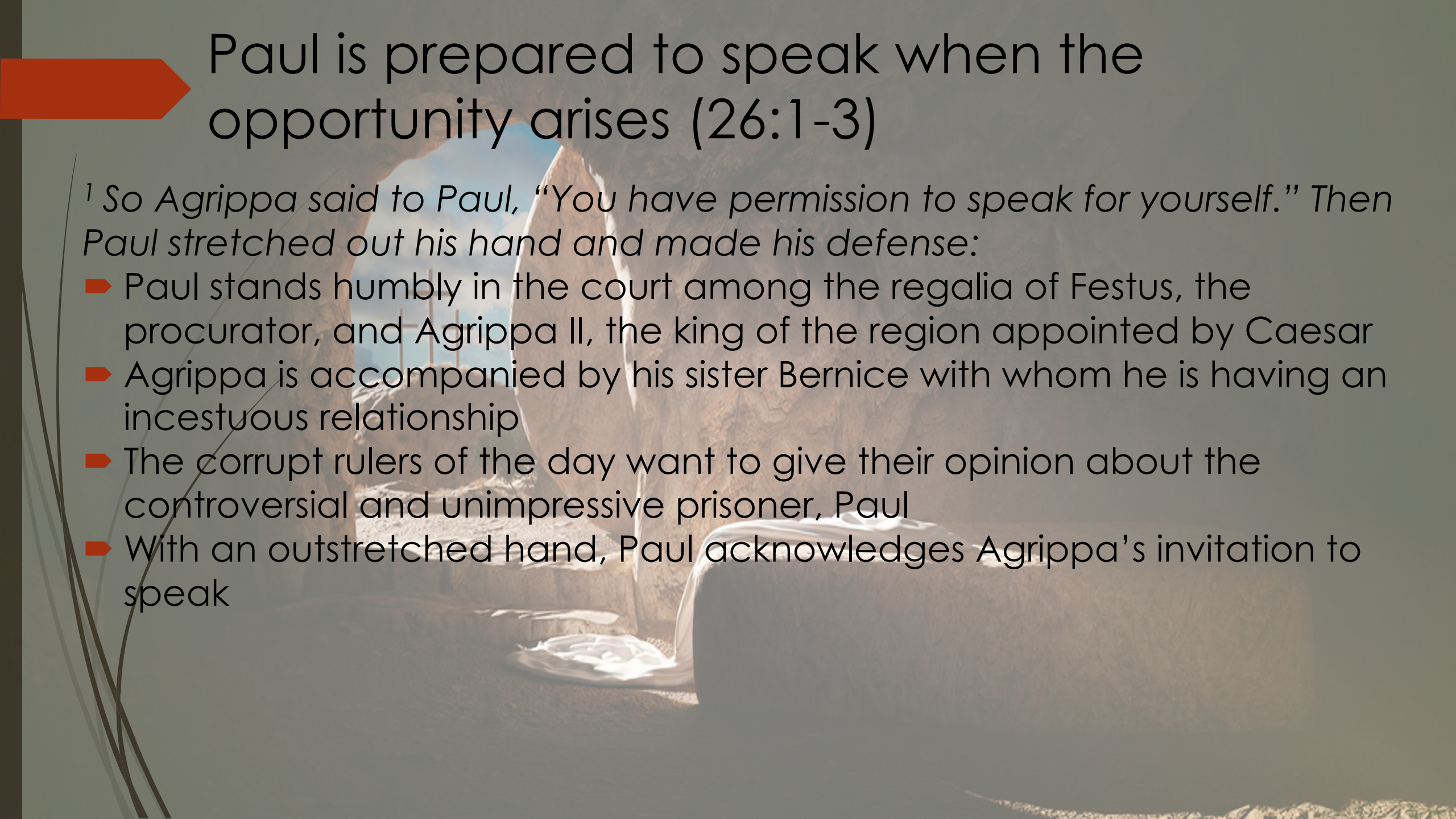




Acts 26:1-18

Sharing the gospel of the resurrection power of Jesus



Paul is prepared to speak when the opportunity arises (26:1-3)

¹ So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

- Paul stands humbly in the court among the regalia of Festus, the procurator, and Agrippa II, the king of the region appointed by Caesar
- Agrippa is accompanied by his sister Bernice with whom he is having an incestuous relationship
- The corrupt rulers of the day want to give their opinion about the controversial and unimpressive prisoner, Paul
- With an outstretched hand, Paul acknowledges Agrippa's invitation to speak

Paul is prepared to speak when the opportunity arises (26:1-3)

² *"I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.*

- Paul considers himself blessed to be able to share his gospel story with King Agrippa
- Paul prays for opportunities like this one
 - Paul does not miss this opportunity because of discouragement or depression
 - Paul knows affliction and struggles will come and he's prepared for them
 - 1 Peter 3:13-15
- Paul encourages Christians in churches to pray for him when opportunities like this one come
 - Colossians 4:2-4
- Paul is not only speaking for the sake of Agrippa but for all who gather in the court to witness this event
- What Paul will share is critically important and he encourages Agrippa to listen closely

Paul shares his well-known religious history (26:4-5)

⁴ “My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵ They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

- Paul is not unfamiliar to his accusers
- Paul had been among them as one of their own
- His life as a Pharisee was something that brought him and other Pharisees great pride
 - Philippians 3:4–5
- He was an over-achiever with an impressive life
 - Philippians 3:7–11

Hope in the resurrection of Jesus is the reason Paul is held in custody (26:6-8)

⁶ And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! ⁸ Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

- Paul knows that the condemnation he receives from the Jews is not because he abandoned the faith
- The Scriptures he loved and knew from childhood point to God's saving grace and the gift of a Savior
- Paul was blessed to realize what Peter and the other disciples of Jesus realized prior to him
 - Acts 4:11–12
- The salvation Jesus brings is not the salvation most Jews desire
- The power of God over life and death is not something new
- The fact that God raises the dead is not incredible, but predictable if the people of God will think about it Scripturally

Condemning Jesus and His people was Paul's mission (26:9-11)

⁹ "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

- Paul didn't accept that Jesus was the Messiah initially
- Paul did many things to attack followers of Jesus to disparage His name
- He says he "locked up many of the saints in prison"
 - Paul did to them what is now done to him
 - Interestingly, Paul calls these imprisoned and murdered followers of Jesus "saints"
- When they were put on trial to determine whether they would live or die, Paul said he voted for their death
- Paul is very familiar with the raging fury that burns against him because, with rage and fury, Paul would hunt Jewish Christians down even when they fled to foreign cities
- Praise God for the resurrection of Jesus and its power to transform lives

The resurrected Jesus radically transforms Paul's life (26:12-18)

¹² *"In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.*

- It was on a "raging fury" trip that Paul went hunting for Christians in Damascus
- He went on this hunt with the blessing of the chief priests

¹³ *At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.*

- They were on the road during the brightest part of the day when they were encompassed by a light more intense than the light of the sun
- What Paul now knows it that this was the glory of God shining out from Jesus

The resurrected Jesus radically transforms Paul's life (26:12-18)

¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

- The voice asks him, *"why are you persecuting me?"*
 - Paul was on a journey of rage and fury against Christians
 - These words indicate how much Jesus identifies with His followers
- Jesus tells Paul, *"It is hard for you to kick against the goads"*
 - Goads are sharpened prods to persuade livestock to move in a direction they are not intent on going
 - Jesus is the goad persuading Paul to move in a different direction
 - This is repentance in action – a change of mind that leads to a change of direction

The resurrected Jesus radically transforms Paul's life (26:12-18)

¹⁵ And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'

- Paul is still unaware of who is confronting him, so he asks
- Jesus identifies Himself
- We can only imagine the thoughts that are flooding Paul's mind at this point

¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,

- Jesus is calling Paul to salvation in His name and to service for the cause of the gospel
- Paul is commissioned to tell other people about what happened to him on the road to Damascus and to share the instructions he will receive from the Lord Jesus


¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you

- Paul's life and ministry will be that of repeated deliverances from hostile Jews and hostile Gentiles
- Paul's ultimate commission is to take the gospel to Gentile nations

The resurrected Jesus radically transforms Paul's life (26:12-18)

¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

- Paul now defines what Jesus says his mission will entail
- This is the work Jesus says He will do through Paul
- *"open their eyes"*
 - Those separated from the life of Jesus Christ are spiritually blind
 - They are in the grip and under the blinding power of Satan
 - 2 Corinthians 4:1-4
- *"so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God"*
 - The resurrection power of Jesus brings those God saves from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the power of God
 - John 3:19-21
 - 1 John 5:19
 - The gospel provides the power to transfer those under the rule and reign of Satan to the rule and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ

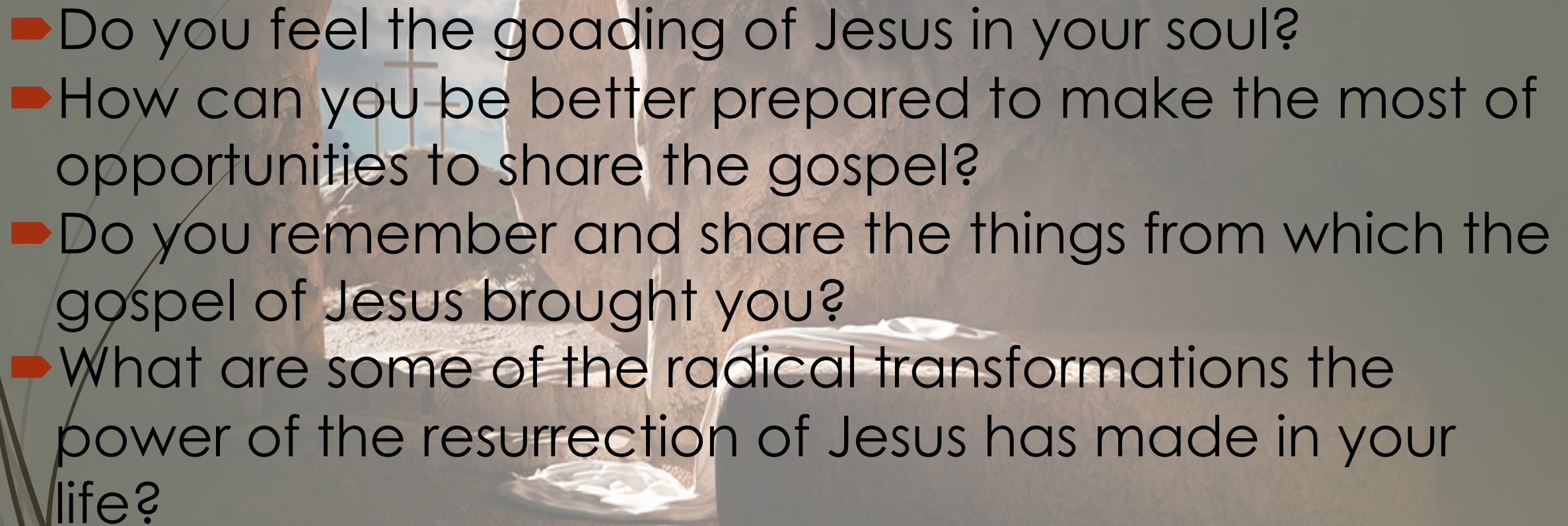


The resurrected Jesus radically transforms Paul's life (26:12-18)

- *“that they may receive forgiveness of sins”*
 - The gospel means that our sins are no longer held against us
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21
- *“and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me”*
 - Salvation is not the result of obeying the Law
 - Salvation is by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone
 - Ephesians 2:8–10
- This is the gospel mission given to Paul
- This is the gospel mission given to you and I
- We are to be sharing the gospel of the resurrection power of Jesus Christ



Questions to Consider

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- Do you feel the goading of Jesus in your soul?
 - How can you be better prepared to make the most of opportunities to share the gospel?
 - Do you remember and share the things from which the gospel of Jesus brought you?
 - What are some of the radical transformations the power of the resurrection of Jesus has made in your life?



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