

God-Shaped Glasses

A woman came into the NAPA auto parts store in Gap asking for a seven-ten cap. The man at the counter said, "Sorry, ma'm, what's a seven-ten cap?"

He said, "Ma'm, what's a 710 cap?"

"You know, right there on top of the engine. I lost mine."

"What kind of a car do you have?" he thought maybe an old Datsun 710.

"Buick."

"Well, how big was this cap?"

The woman went like this {make circle with hands}.

"Do you know what it does?" the parts man asked.

She shook her head, "No, but it's always been there." Not knowing what else to do, he gave her a pad of paper, "Could you draw it for me?"

She drew a circle about 2 inches in diameter and printed on it, "710."

Reading the "710" she wrote from the other side of the counter, the parts man began to chuckle. "I think you want an oil cap."

It's possible to look at the same thing differently isn't it? It's as if we all wear different kinds of glasses. At a lumber mill you see rough-sawn boards. Someone like Joel Bare sees a table, a corner cupboard, a bookcase. At a classroom at Paradise Elementary, I see 25 children. A parent sees a son, a daughter that they love, their hope for the future. When folks like us have computer problems we see frustration; people like Todd Harmon and Jason Waters see money! Perspective makes a difference doesn't it?

Our great challenge as Christians is to keep our human-shaped glasses off, and our God-shaped ones on. Paul was pretty good at that as we'll see in our text this morning. **PRAY.**

Story

Find Acts 25 awhile. As a defendant in the last several chapters of Acts, Paul has been examined by more people than a patient getting prepped for surgery: Commander Claudius Lysias, the Sanhedrin, Felix, and now, a few more: Porcius Festus, and King Agrippa. Festus replaced Felix as procurator after Paul had languished in custody for 2 years. Within days he looked into Paul's case, inviting Jewish leaders to make their case in Caesarea. However, they pressured Festus to have Paul tried before them Jerusalem, secretly planning another assassination attempt.

But Festus wouldn't budge so the Sanhedrin again pressed their charges in Caesarea, again offering no witnesses. Realizing the religious nature of some of the charges, Festus suggested to Paul that he *do* stand trial in Jerusalem before the Sanhedrin. Paul refused and exercised his right to an audience before the emperor. Since Nero—who became one of Rome's most brutal, bloody, and infamous emperors was Caesar at the time, Paul's request seems foolish. But in his early years, Nero was a good emperor thanks to the influence of 2 good counselors including the famous orator and philosopher Seneca.

But before Paul got his chance to appear before Nero, he had to tell one more ruler his story. King Agrippa II, a king of a small kingdom that included Galilee and Perea, visited Festus. Agrippa's great-great grandfather was the one who ordered the slaughter of Bethlehem's baby boys in hopes of getting Jesus. Since Agrippa was

widely known as an authority on Jewish matters, Festus asked him to evaluate Paul's case.

This is where we pick up the text. Because much of the final 5 chapters of Acts contain mostly repetitions of Paul's testimony, we're going to skip some today and pick up the story at 25:13. We'll still have a lot to read so as it is. READ Acts 25:13-26:32.

Different glasses than I'd have on. If I was being tried for what could turn out to be a capital crime, my glasses would see ways to save my life; defensive angles, favorable witnesses, forensic evidence; find a way out.

Not Paul. He sees something infinitely more important than his survival. He even says, "Look, if you find me guilty of something deserving death, I'll go willingly." *Mostly*, he's looking at his court appearance before all these Gentiles, through God-shaped glasses. Which tell him, "You've got an audience that needs to hear the good news."

And so he weaves it into his testimony. The first key thread surfaces in vv.6-8: he talks about the resurrection of the dead, and in v.23, specifically, *Jesus'* resurrection. Remember, the gospel is not the good news without the resurrection: Jesus Christ died and rose again to save sinners. *If Christ has not been raised,... your faith is useless.* (1 Cor.15:14)

We can see the second key thread in vv.18 & 20 as he describes what people must do to be saved. He uses key words and phrases: "turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, forgiveness of sins, faith in Christ, repent, by good deeds *prove* your repentance is real. You Agrippa, you Bernice, you too Festus, court advisors and courtiers, leaders of the city, yes, soldiers, you too: Repent, turn to God, prove your repentance is authentic by what you do.

And thirdly, in the exchange between Paul and Agrippa, the gospel offer is no longer subtle. Festus loses it, yells that Paul's insane. Paul insists he's not, that *Agrippa* knows what he's saying is true.

The king recognized Paul's glasses (v.28): *Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?* Paul replied, "Whether sooner or later, I pray that you and everyone here today will become Christians; become what I am minus the chains."

Paul was just a regular guy like us. He had his ups, he had his downs. Remember in Acts on two occasions Paul was so discouraged that God real sent the Son to him in visions at night. And remember in 2 Corinthians how Paul didn't think he could stand his physical infirmity anymore but God made it clear to him that he *could* with God's strength.

Like all of us, Paul sometimes saw life through human-shaped glasses. But before this gathered assembly of Roman dignitaries on trial for his life, he saw the people, he saw his circumstances through God-shaped glasses. Despite the fact that he was on trial for his life, what *really* mattered was this grand opportunity to present these sinners with the gospel.

What kind of glasses do you usually wear? Human-shaped, or God-shaped? Human-shaped come in hundreds of varieties. Insecure people love their admiration glasses through which they view people and circumstances as chances to make their standing rise in the eyes of others. It dictates the care they select, the clothes, sometimes the activities they have their kids participate in, or maybe they turn conversations back on themselves.

Some people wear financial glasses. For them people and circumstances are chances to upgrade their job, find a better investment, improve their financial stature. Choosing such glasses may be out of the hope never to have to not worry about money like their parents did. They never want to have to be dependent on anyone else—including God.

Still others human-centered frames are worry glasses. They look at circumstances and people as problems, or *potential* problems. Such lenses have upper horizontal blinders so they cannot see heaven or its purposes.

But God-shaped glasses look search to see what *God* might be up to. If He is sovereign, if His fingerprints are on everything, then there's a divine agenda in what's taking place, in what people are doing, and not just human effects.

Concl:

In 1912, historic Moody church in Chicago called a new pastor who was at the time ministering in London. A Scotsman, John Harper booked passage to New York for himself, his six year old daughter Nina, and his cousin Jessie who was serving as a nanny (his wife had died in childbirth). They boarded the brand new ocean liner in Southampton, certain the voyage would be a great adventure. You know otherwise. The ship was the *Titanic*.

When it began to sink Rev. Harper placed Nina with Jessie safely in a lifeboat, then ran throughout the ship yelling, "Women, children, and unsaved into the lifeboats!" Survivors report that he then began telling anyone who would listen the good news. After giving another man his lifejacket he jumped into the water, still preaching.

4 years later, a man at a meeting in Hamilton, Ontario told this story.

I am a survivor of the Titanic. When I was drifting alone on a spar that awful night, the tide brought Mr. Harper of Glasgow, also on a piece of wreck, near me. "Man," he said, "are you saved?" "No," I said, "I am not." He replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

The waves bore him away, but, strange to say, brought him back a little later, and he said, "Are you saved now?" "No," I said, "I cannot honestly say that I am." He said again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved," and shortly after he went down; and there, alone in the night, and with two miles of water under me, I believed. I am John Harper's last convert.