



Paul and King Agrippa

Acts 25:23-27; 26:1-32

Commander Cosmos sat in his command chair leafing through a stack of letters from the new friends they had made on Planet Ephesus. The Ephesian people were so excited to hear them share. He had never seen so many people give their hearts to Jesus. The king of Planet Ephesus had even thrown a big feast to celebrate. The commander truly hated to leave. Reaching into his uniform pocket, he pulled out a letter, unfolded it, and read, "Dear Skylab Crew, thanks for teaching us about Jesus. We love you! The Ephesians."

"Visitor arriving in 5-4-3-2-1," the computer announced.

Commander Cosmos looked up just in time to see Captain Yago shimmer into view inside the teleport tube. "Captain Yago, what a surprise!" he greeted. "You have a habit of dropping in unannounced."

Yago nodded and then marched past him to the engine room hatch. "I wanted to check on the thruster engines. Make sure all of the systems are operating properly," he explained.

"So far, it's running great," Commander Cosmos informed him as he peered into the hole.

"Let me be the judge of that." Yago set his workbag on the floor and opened a cover on the front of the engine. "So, I see you are still flying all over the galaxy preaching your message."

Commander Cosmos nodded. "That's our calling."

"Ah yes, your 'calling,'" Yago scowled. "I don't see why your God makes you travel all over the place talking about Him."

"You make it sound like a punishment. It's actually a great privilege," Commander Cosmos replied with a smile.

"Oh yes, like your great Apostle Paul who had the 'privilege' of being beaten and thrown in jail."

"That's true. Paul did suffer for his faith, but God did lead him to many places and used him in powerful ways. Let me get the Bible and tell you all about it." Commander Cosmos disappeared. Returning a minute later, he climbed down into the engine room. "At this time the Apostle Paul was on trial in Caesarea."

"Again? That Paul is such a jailbird!" Yago snorted.

"But God gave Paul the honor of speaking about his trial to a king!" the Commander said.

Yago gave Commander Cosmos a puzzled look. "A king? What king?"

"King Agrippa," Commander Cosmos answered. "His friend Festus was the governor of Judea when the Jews insisted Paul be arrested."

"For what? What did Paul do?" Yago demanded.

"All he did was talk about Jesus," Commander Cosmos explained.

"That is ridiculous!" Yago stomped his foot. "A man should not be arrested for speaking what is in his heart."

"True," Commander Cosmos nodded, "but the Jews thought Paul was wrong about Jesus."

"Still, a man should be accused of a proper crime before being sent to jail!" Yago insisted.

"Exactly! That is what Festus thought! So he asked his friend King Agrippa to help him decide which crime to charge Paul with. Paul was brought in chains to explain everything to them."

"What did he say?" Yago asked, folding his arms across his chest.

"He told his whole life story," Commander Cosmos answered with a laugh.

"You mean how he had been raised as a devoted Jew and became a Jewish leader himself?"

"Yes, you've been paying attention," Commander Cosmos praised.

"Did he also tell them how badly he had treated the Christians?" Yago asked.

"He did, then he told them how the bright light blinded him on the road to Damascus."

Yago unfolded his arms. "Ah yes, and Jesus spoke to him."

"Yes, Paul became a Christian and God sent him to spread the good news that Jesus is the Lord," Commander Cosmos continued.

"In Jerusalem and Judea and to the Gentiles...we know this. This is why Paul was arrested in the first place," Yago mused.

"That's what Festus said," Commander Cosmos explained. "He thought Paul was crazy to keep preaching God's Word even when it got him thrown in prison. But, Paul spoke to King Agrippa because he knew the king understood the Jewish law."

Yago snapped his fingers together. "That is crazy! Did he think that in such a short time he could convince this king to believe in Jesus?"

"Do you know that the king asked that same question?" Commander Cosmos laughed and opened the Bible to Acts 26. He read, "Paul replied, 'Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.'"

"Sometimes this Paul impresses me," Yago said. "I like that he was bold enough to tell a room full of important people that he would pray for them no matter how long it took."

"He was simply fulfilling the mission God had given him," Commander Cosmos said.

Yago looked at Commander Cosmos. "Mission? What mission?"

"The 'calling,' the same mission we all have, even to this day. The calling to tell everyone Jesus died to take our sins away, to pray they believe in Him, and to ask Him to come into their hearts so they can follow Him forever," Commander Cosmos explained.

Yago looked Commander Cosmos straight in the eyes and responded coolly, "Okay."

Commander Cosmos stared at him. "Okay?"

Yago nodded. "Okay, I believe."

Commander Cosmos rubbed his ears. "You believe?"

"Yes, you have convinced me," Yago answered sincerely. "I believe this Jesus is the Lord who died to take away my sins. I want to follow Him."

Commander Cosmos put one hand on his forehead. "You do?"

"I do!" Yago replied. "At first, I thought Lieutenant Ruby only followed Jesus because she was used to following orders, and Nofutu, well, he is simple and easy to convince."

"But you took a long time," Commander Cosmos noted.

"I am a Captain," Yago pointed to the insignia on his uniform. "I am not used to following orders from any man, even God's Son. Like this King Agrippa, I wanted to hear your whole story and make sure this Jesus is for real."

"And now?" Commander Cosmos asked.

"You and your crew and everyone who follows Jesus all seem to change. Now I believe what you always say; Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever!" Yago exclaimed.

Commander Cosmos breathed out as if he had been holding his breath for a long time. A huge grin spread across his face. "Yago, this is excellent news, my friend! I'll pray with you right now."

"Thank you, Commander," Yago answered. With that, the powerful space leaders immediately knelt and began to pray right there in the Skylab Omega engine room.