

# Acts 26:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

## Analysis

**And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice** (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, phōnē megalē)—The Roman procurator's explosive interruption came at the climax of Paul's testimony about Christ's resurrection and light to the Gentiles (v. 23). **Paul, thou art beside thyself** (μαίνῃ, Παῦλε, mainē, Paule)—The verb mainomai means 'to rave, be mad, be insane,' the same word used of the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:35) and the mocking crowd at Rhoda's announcement (Acts 12:15). Festus diagnoses Paul's passionate testimony as religious mania.

**Much learning doth make thee mad** (τὰ πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει, ta polla se grammata eis manian peritr epei)—Grammata refers to Paul's extensive learning in Scripture and rabbinic tradition. Festus, a pragmatic Roman administrator unfamiliar with Jewish messianic hope and resurrection theology, interpreted Paul's erudition as intellectual overload causing mental breakdown. To the natural mind, the gospel's central claims—a crucified Messiah rising from death to bring salvation to all nations—sound absurd (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23). Festus's outburst fulfills Christ's prediction that witnesses would be thought mad for His sake (John 10:20). Yet Paul's 'madness' was divine wisdom; Festus's 'sanity' was spiritual blindness.

## Historical Context

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This hearing occurred circa AD 59-60 in Caesarea Maritima, the Roman provincial capital. Porcius Festus had recently succeeded Felix as procurator of Judea (Acts 24:27). Festus arranged this consultation with King Agrippa II because he struggled to formulate coherent charges for Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:24-27). As a Roman official schooled in Stoic philosophy and pragmatic governance, Festus had little frame of reference for Jewish apocalyptic hope, resurrection doctrine, or messianic prophecy. Paul's sophisticated theological argument—tracing Christ's suffering, resurrection, and universal mission through Moses and the prophets—struck Festus as the ravings of an over-educated religious fanatic. This cultural disconnect between Jewish-Christian theology and Roman rationalism would characterize Christianity's encounter with Greco-Roman civilization for centuries.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does the world's dismissal of the gospel as 'foolishness' or 'madness' vindicate rather than undermine its truth (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)?
2. When has your testimony to Christ been dismissed as irrational enthusiasm, and how did you respond with Paul's calm reasonableness (v. 25)?

## Interlinear Text

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Ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπολογουμένου ὁ Φῆστος μεγάλῃ  
thus And as he spake for himself G3588 Festus with a loud  
G5023 G1161 G846 G626 G3588 G5347 G3173

τῇ φωνῇ ἔφη Μαίνη Παῦλε· τὰ πολλά σε  
G3588 voice said thou art beside thyself Paul G3588 much thee  
G5456 G5346 G3105 G3972 G4183 G4571

γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει  
learning mad doth make  
G1121 G1519 G3130 G4062

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Corinthians 4:10** (Parallel theme): We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

**1 Corinthians 1:23** (Parallel theme): But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

**Mark 3:21** (Parallel theme): And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

**2 Corinthians 5:13** (Parallel theme): For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

**Acts 26:11** (Parallel theme): And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

**Jeremiah 29:26** (Parallel theme): The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

**2 Kings 9:11** (Parallel theme): Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication.

**Acts 17:32** (Parallel theme): And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

**Hosea 9:7** (Parallel theme): The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

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