

Acts 26:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

Analysis

I am not mad, most noble Festus (Οὐ μαίνομαι, κράτιστε Φῆστε)—Paul's dignified response to Festus's outburst models Christian apologetics: calm, respectful (using the honorific 'kratiste'), yet unyielding. The Greek 'mainomai' (to rave, be insane) was Festus's diagnosis for Paul's resurrection preaching and prophetic fulfillment claims. **Words of truth and soberness** (ἀληθείας καὶ σωφροσύνης ῥήματα)—Paul contrasts divine revelation with madness. 'Aletheia' (truth) emphasizes objective reality, while 'sophrosyne' (soundness of mind, self-control) was a prized Greco-Roman virtue. Paul claims the gospel is both factually true and rationally coherent, challenging the Roman intellectual's assumption that religious fervor equals irrationality. This defense before power demonstrates that Christian witness need not choose between passion and reason—resurrection truth produces both zeal and mental clarity.

Historical Context

Paul spoke these words circa AD 59-60 while imprisoned in Caesarea, defending himself before Governor Festus and King Agrippa II. Festus had interrupted Paul's account of his Damascus road conversion with a loud exclamation that 'much learning' had made Paul mad (v. 24). Roman officials often viewed Jewish messianic claims and resurrection belief as fanatical superstition unworthy of educated minds.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How can you respond to accusations that Christian faith is irrational without compromising passion for the gospel?
2. What does Paul's respectful yet firm response teach about engaging hostile audiences in witness?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	Οὐ	μαίνομαι	φησὶν	κράτιστε	Φῆστε	ἀλλ'
G3588	But	not	I am	he said	most noble	Festus	but
	G1161	G3756	G3105	G5346	G2903	G5347	G235
ἀληθείας	καὶ	σωφροσύνης	ῥήματα	ἀποφθέγγομαι			
of truth	and	soberness	the words	speak forth			
G225	G2532	G4997	G4487	G669			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 23:26 (Parallel theme): Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.