

Acts 25 – Paul proclaims the resurrection in chains

THEME: Paul before Festus.

Paul had been unjustly kept in prison for two years. Festus is the new governor who followed Felix. Now Paul will appear before this new governor.

We have seen Paul before the mob on the steps of the castle in Jerusalem. We have seen him before the Sanhedrin. We have seen him before Felix and then in private interview with Felix and his wife Drusilla. Apparently, there were other meetings. Now he will appear before Festus. Later he will appear before Agrippa. Paul appeared before all these rulers and it must have been a tedious time for Paul, something to try his patience. However, I'm sure that he rejoiced in the opportunity given him to testify before the high political figures of the Roman Empire. Remember that when the Lord Jesus had apprehended Paul on the Damascus Road, He had said, "... he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Act_9:15). Paul is moving according to God's plan and program.

Each time Paul talks about what the Lord Jesus had done for him, and he tells it with a great deal of conviction and enthusiasm. Paul witnesses a good confession of Jesus Christ. Although Felix trembled as he listened, the rascality and cupidity and covetousness of this man triumphed. He had his chance. He sent for Paul many times, but he wanted a bribe, not salvation.

Those two years that Paul languished in prison are silent years in the life of Paul. Perhaps he chafed under it all. We don't know. We do know that the hand of God was manifested in all this, and His purposes were carried out. How comforting this can be for us when our activity seemingly comes to a standstill. - McGee

Paul Appeals to Caesar

Act 25:1 Now, when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Porcius Festus was appointed Roman governor of Judea by the Emperor Nero in the autumn of A.D. 60. Caesarea was the political center for the Roman province of Syria, of which Judea was a part. After three days Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, the religious capital of his jurisdiction. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Act 25:2-3 Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

Although it was now two years since Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, the Jews had not forgotten him, neither had their murderous hatred subsided. Thinking that they might be able to obtain a political favor from the new governor, the high priest and principal men of the Jews filled his ear with charges against Paul and asked for him to be sent to Jerusalem for trial. Probably they meant that he should be tried before the Sanhedrin, but their real plan was to waylay him on the journey and kill him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

(1) The national importance which the Sanhedrin attached to Paul. More than two years had passed since they raised the mob against him. One might have thought that the changes which two years made in thought and feeling had almost affected his very name from their memory. Had it been merely

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personal enmity it would undoubtedly have been so. But it was the religious influence of this man, working mightily before their eyes, and sapping the very foundation of their religious system, prestige, and power.

(2) The servility and hypocrisy of religious bigotry. The arguments they employed are not given. No doubt they bowed before Festus as cringing sycophants, urging every consideration that bigotry could suggest. They pleaded for justice but meant murder. – Biblical Illustrator

Without forgiveness, anger and resentment becomes your prison and cause a root of bitterness to overtake you.

Hebrews 12:12-15 (NKJV) Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

Proverbs 17:22(Amplified) A happy heart is good medicine, and a joyful mind causes healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

Act 25:4-5 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly. "Therefore," he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."

But Festus had doubtless been informed of their previous plan to kill Paul, and of the elaborate preparations taken by the commander in Jerusalem to spirit him away to Caesarea. He therefore refused their request but promised them that he would permit them an opportunity to state their case against Paul if they could come to Caesarea. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Why do we worry so much? Notice: How God uses Roman to protect Paul from his enemies murderous plots. If we truly believe that God's is in control and has a future for us to prosper us and not harm us, then why do we not act that way?

Act 25:6-8 And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all."

After a stay of more than ten days in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea and convened the court the next day. The Jews hastened to the attack, bringing many serious charges against Paul, but failing to prove any of them. Sensing the poverty of their case, the apostle contented himself with a simple denial of any crime against the law, against the temple, or Caesar.

Are you able to stand confidently in front of your accusers? We as believers are in the process of being conformed to His image. What are the implications for us as His disciples?

Romans 8:29 (AMPC) For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the

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image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren.

Act 25:9-10 *But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?" So, Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.*

There are some people who think that Paul made a mistake here, that he should never have appealed to Caesar. They think he should simply have let his case rest with Festus. Friend, don't you see that Festus was going to use Paul for his own political ends? Festus was going to take Paul back to Jerusalem. Perhaps Festus was receiving bribes from the Jews who had come from Jerusalem. I am reluctant to criticize Paul. I don't think that he made a mistake here. Paul was a Roman citizen, and he exercised his rights as a citizen, which was the normal and the right thing for him to do. Going back to Jerusalem would have surely meant death for him. He doesn't purposely make himself a martyr. In fact, he did what he could to avoid martyrdom.

Friend, there are a people today who wear a hair shirt—and God didn't give it to them. In other words, they like to take the position of a martyr. I've had a number of people who have told me that I should rejoice that I have a cancer because now I can suffer for Christ and maybe die for Christ. Well, I can tell you, I don't feel that way about it. I want to get rid of the cancer. I want to live. I think a person is depressed spiritually and mentally if he wants to put on a hair shirt and lie on a cold slab. Martin Luther tried that, and he found it didn't accomplish anything.

You will remember that two years before this the Lord had appeared to Paul and had promised him a trip to Rome (Act_23:11). That's what is taking place. He went to Rome by the will of God. He was in chains—but the Lord hadn't told him how he would get to Rome. This was God's method for him. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he told them that he was praying to be able to come to Rome and he asked them to pray that he might be able to come (Rom_1:9-10; Rom_15:3-32). I believe he went to Rome by the will of God. – McGee

Note: In our day we may not be a Roman Citizen, but we can stand and know our *Bill of Rights in the united States Constitution*. God gives us a sound mind, we need to use it acting in faith, not fear, as Paul does here.

Proverbs 11:9 (NIV) *With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors, but through knowledge the righteous escape.*

2 Timothy 1:7 (Amplified) *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind, and self-control].*

Act 25:11-12 *For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"*

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The resultant circumstances (verse 12). In this “Unto Caesar shalt thou go,” we may see—

1. The triumph of justice over policy. Festus, in desiring him to go to Jerusalem, thought it a stroke of policy, but Paul’s appeal to Caesar forced him to abandon the purpose.

2. The triumph of generosity over selfishness. A generosity inspired by the gospel of Christ had awakened in Paul a strong desire to go to Rome (Act_19:21; Rom_1:11; Rom_15:23-24). This was strengthened by the years. But how had selfishness, working in the Jews, wrought to thwart it! Here, however, in the fiat, “Unto Caesar shalt thou go,” the door of Rome is thrown open to him: his way is made safe and sure and cheap.

3. The triumph of the Divine over the human. God had purposed that Paul should go to Rome (Act_23:11). The purpose of the Jews was to kill him at Jerusalem. The Lord reigns, and so controls the opposing and conflicting passions of the world ultimately to realize His own decree. As we believe, amid the darkness and desolations of the severest winter, that summer is on its march, and will cover the world with life and beauty, so let us believe, amongst all the workings of human depravity, that God’s great purpose to redeem the world to holiness and bliss is marching on in stately certainty. (D. Thomas, D. D.) - Biblical Illustrator

Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice

Act 25:13 And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

Sometime after this, King Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice came to Caesarea to congratulate Festus on his new appointment. Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa I, who murdered James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12). His sister was a woman of unusual beauty. While historians ascribe an unsavory reputation to her, including her relations with her brother, the NT is silent as to her personal character. – Believers’ Bible Commentary

Act 25:14-15 When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.

Festus had just come into office as the new governor; so, the king comes over for a visit. I have a notion these politicians work together. They all belong to the same party.

Agrippa and Bernice stayed there quite a long time. Dr. Luke calls it “many days.” Finally, they ran out of conversation. Even a king and a governor finally run out of things to talk about. When there was a lull in the conversation, Festus said, “Oh, by the way, I should tell you about a prisoner that we have here. It’s a rather odd, unusual case. His name is Paul, and he was arrested and brought down here by Felix. Felix left him for me. I’d like you to hear him.” - McGee

Act 25:16 To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.'

I’d like to call your attention to this. We sometimes think that Roman law was not just because we have seen how it went awry in the case of the Lord Jesus and also in the case of the apostle Paul. However, this was not because of the law but because of the crooked politicians. We still operate under the

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principle of Roman law that no man is to be sentenced until he has been brought into the presence of his accusers and his crime established.

Note: Romans primarily operated under Common Law, which was intended to be the basis for the We the people to operate under. Essentially, no harm, no foul, jury of your peers, and the right to face your accusers. We now operate under Commercial Code and Administrative courts – not as the founders designed.

Act 25:17-19 *Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*

The issue is always the same: it is the Resurrection. We see from this that Paul had witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ so that Festus knew about it. – McGee

Note: 2000 years later, the issue remains the Resurrection. The enemy goes all out to distract us from this fact of the Resurrection power of Jesus that defeated Satan and opened wide the door to the Kingdom. Word Study for Your reference (source Biblegateway.com NIV translation)

	Old Testament	New Testament	Total
Kingdom of God	28	77	105
Kingdom of Heaven	13	34	47
Salvation	122	44	166
Hell	19	16	35
Heaven	405	287	692

Act 25:20-22 *And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."*

Actually, Festus was in a sort of hot seat here. The charge against Paul was sedition and for that he should die, but he had committed no crimes. Now Paul has appealed to Caesar. What are you going to do with a prisoner like that? So, he asked Agrippa to help him out.

I'm of the opinion that Agrippa had previously heard about Paul and was actually anxious to hear him. He wanted to know more about the charges, and he wanted to hear what Paul would have to say. So, they arranged a meeting.

It is interesting to see how this meeting was arranged by a king and a governor. Yet all the while they were actually fulfilling prophecy even though they were unaware of this. Paul is to appear before kings, as the Lord had said. - McGee

Act 25:23 *So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.*

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What a scene this was! Wherever did a preacher have a greater audience than this man? The setting is dramatic with great pomp and ceremony. Paul appears in chains before this august company of rulers and kings. Festus is asking Agrippa to help him frame a charge against Paul to send him to Caesar. - McGee

Act 25:24-27 And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore, I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place, I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

Once again, Festus set forth the history of the case—the insistent demands of the Jews for Paul's death, the inability of Festus to find the apostle guilty of any crime deserving of death, and then Paul's appeal to Caesar. Festus' dilemma, of course, was this: he was forced by Paul's appeal to send him to Nero, yet there was no adequate legal basis for a trial. Festus plainly stated that he hoped Agrippa would be able to help him; after all, it did seem rather unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him. These proceedings were more in the nature of a hearing than a trial. The Jews were not present to accuse the apostle, and Agrippa was not expected to render a binding decision. – Believers' Bible Commentary