

Acts 25:1-27

“Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3 and desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. 4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. 5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. 6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. 7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. 8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. 9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou very well Knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them, I appeal unto Caesar. 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go. 13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. 14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul’s cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: 15 about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring to *have* judgment against him. 16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. 17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment

seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. 18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: 19 but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him*, whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. 22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. 23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. 24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him."

Introduction

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"We are in the beginning of chapter 25, seeing a change in the governorship of Judea, southern Syria, Jerusalem. Felix has been recalled to Rome because of his cruelty, only his brother Paulus has influence there, causes his life to be spared, he's banished from there. And then tradition says he committed suicide. And a new man, Porcius Festus has come on the scene. History tells us he was a gracious man, that Felix was removed because of his cruelty

to the Jews and the people and to the people of the Middle East, and that as Festus came, he tried as hard as he could to be gracious, he tried to curry the favour of the Jews, and some of that becomes a problem as he has Paul the apostle on his hands. It says in **verse 27 of chapter 24, “But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix’ room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.”** “shew the Jews a favour” hoping that would be favourable to him when he got back to Rome, Felix left Paul bound. **“Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.” (verse 1)** which is from sea level to 2,500 feet above sea level, he’s only three days there and has to go to Jerusalem, to make his face known, let the population know there there’s a new Procurator, ah, Jerusalem and Israel [Judea] being not the best duty in the Roman world, a troubled spot, and he goes up then to pay an official visit to Jerusalem, to become acquainted, to acquaint them with himself. At that time it says **“Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.” (verses 2-3)** they’re reforming this plot, so this plot is growing. They realize Festus doesn’t know anything of local culture and so forth, so they say **‘Would you please, if you want our favour, bring this prisoner, Paul the apostle back here to Jerusalem so that we might try him here?’** and it says they kept asking him that as long as he was in Jerusalem. Now, no doubt Satan working behind the scenes, his number one nemesis as it were was Paul the apostle, he would love to have closed his mouth at this point in time. And the plot, again, that had been formed before, seems to be renewed and growing, that there would be those waiting to kill Paul as he’s brought from Caesarea back to Jerusalem. **“But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.” (verse 4)** and he said **“Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.” (verse 5)** So, **‘bring witnesses down to Caesarea and let me hear the case.’** **“And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. And while he answered for himself,”** Paul now then gets to defend

himself, he says **“Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.”** (verses 6-8) Paul said **‘I haven’t done a single thing against the Jews, the temple, or Caesar.’** **“But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?”** (verse 9) Now Paul is the one who had written in Romans 13, verses 1 to 4 to submit to the powers that be, because the powers that be are ordained of God. Rome and Roman law at this point favourable towards Paul in regards to God’s design and providence, to be moving him not back to Jerusalem, but to Rome, and a Roman judge could not move an accused man to another court without the permission of the person that was accused. So it was illegal for Festus to move Paul back to Jerusalem to be tried, unless Paul agreed to that. And he said **‘Will you go back? wanting to do a favour for the Jews.’** **“Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.”** (verse 10) *Caesarium Appolum*, he said **‘I appeal to Caesar,’** and as a Roman citizen that was his right, and it sets the stage for the rest of the Book, it will put Paul face to face with Nero, who at this point now has come to the throne, it sets the tone for the rest of our journey through the Book of Acts, he says **‘I appeal to Caesar’s judgment seat,’** **“where I ought to be judged: to the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.”** (verses 10b-11) **“Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.”** (verse 12) puts him face to face, God’s man, world’s man, God’s great man of that day now will end up face to face with the world’s man. **‘You’ve made that appeal to Caesar and you will go.’**

*King Agrippa II & Bernice Come To Visit Procurator Festus
In Caesarea*

And it says **“After certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.”** (verse 13) Now this is Agrippa

the 2nd, he is the son of Agrippa the 1st who put James to death. Now he has jurisdiction over Jerusalem, Festus' jurisdiction is over the entire area, and this is an official visit to the new Procurator from the man who has jurisdiction over Jerusalem, he comes now to Caesarea, Agrippa II, and it says he comes with Bernice. He is an Idumean, he has the title of the appointer of the high priest, the guardian of the Temple, all of these titles fell to him. He was friends with the Imperial family and had great favour, and he has Bernice with him. Now Bernice was a beautiful woman. Problem was, that Bernice lived a life jealous of her sister Drusilla who had been there with Felix, whom Josephus said that she excelled all women in beauty, that there was no woman as beautiful as Drusilla. Bernice, jealous of that, but Bernice is quite a gal, as we study her. Bernice was first married to a prince named Markus at 13 years of age. And then she married her uncle, Herod king of Calchus, she left him for her brother, Agrippa II, who she's with in this scene, and lived in incest, no incest, no she probably did that too, incest, which infuriated the Jews. She left him for king Polemo of Cilicia, left him and went back to Agrippa II, and in our chronology is where we have her at this point in time, living in incest with her brother. She left him and went to Vespasian and became his paramour, his mistress for a time, and left Vespasian and went to Tacitus, became his wife, and then left Tacitus for Titus his son. So she's been around the block. There was a support group in the Roman Empire for past husbands of Bernice, with Post-Traumatic-Bernice-Disorder. So, you have Festus there, and then Agrippa and Bernice come to visit him, **"And when they had been there many days"** so they're spending time there, **"Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:" (verse 14)** Paul's literally in shackles now, no doubt to a Roman guard, though he had certain freedoms, we know. He's been left in shackles by Felix. He, Festus, says **"About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him." (verses 15-16)** and this is all new to Festus, this area of the world. He says to the Jews, in Rome we don't do things like this, when someone's going to face the death sentence they have the right under Roman law to face their accusers to see how the whole thing plays out. Festus then says, **"Therefore, when they**

were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” (verses 17-19) So you can tell, he doesn’t know anything about this. It’s a superstition to him, and here’s this guy named Jesus, and they have accusations related to that, and Paul keeps affirming, **‘yes he died, but he’s alive,’** and this is all news to Festus, he’s trying to figure out what to do with this. And he says **“And because I doubted of such manner” ‘I was not informed, instructed,’** **“I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.”** (verses 20-21) King James says “of Augustus,” the Caesars kept that name, Augustus is like the gods, “to the August ones” is the idea, he appealed to go to Caesar, the August one, who is Caesar Nero at this point in time. **“I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.”** (verses 21b-22) Festus says **‘Alright, we’ll do this tomorrow.’** **“On the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus’ commandment Paul was brought forth.”** (verse 23) Notice this “with the chief captains,” this is not the Centurions, it’s the Tribunes, the Chiliarch’s, now this is probably, if you’ve been to Israel with us, in Caesarea, the Amphitheater that has been unearthed there, just in the last 50 years, remarkable site, becoming visible because of the Aswan Dam and the silt dying back, a horseshoe shape appeared in view from helicopter, they found Caesarea, they found there a plaque that says Pontius Pilatus, the Procurator, because up until the time they found that plaque, Bible critics had mocked the Bible saying *‘There’s not even any record of Pontius Pilate.’* The Bible always wins, if you wait long enough, and they found a plaque there in Caesarea, this is not Caesarea Philippi that’s in the mountains, this is Caesarea on the coast, which was where the Roman Procurators ruled from, they would come to Jerusalem during the Feasts to keep down trouble, but they found there at Caesarea a plaque with his name, and you can see it when

you're there. The one they have there is a duplicate, the original is in the Museum in Jerusalem. They're probably in that amphitheater, it's very remarkable, you can stand down in the center, it seats about 2,500 and you can drop a dime and you can hear it anywhere in the place. That's what some of these Jews were there for, to drop a dime on Paul, by the way. So they gathered with Bernice and great pomp, and the Tribunes, plural, were there, each one of them has over a thousand men under him, **“and the principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.”** So there's quite a crowd there. **“And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.”** (verse 24) *‘he should be put to death.’* **“But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him before you, specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.”** (verses 25-26) He says *‘My problem is, I can't send this prisoner to Caesar without charge, I've listened to all this stuff and I don't see the problem, I don't know what the accusation should be, I have no lawful charge,’* **“Wherefore I have brought him before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.”** (verses 26-27) You don't send a guy to Caesar saying *‘Here's a bad guy,’* you know, Nero's not the kind of guy that likes that kind of stuff. Now, chapter 26 will take us to Paul's defense. This is the longest address we have from the apostle Paul in the Book of Acts, the longest continuous speech recorded from the lips of Paul. [transcript of a connective expository sermon on Acts 25:1-27, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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