

# Acts 25 Paul and Festus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Acts chapter 25, last week Paul had been before Felix and he had had the opportunity to give Felix his testimony and a little bit about his testimony but mostly the gospel. Talked to him about the resurrection and let him know why the Jews were so angry at him was basically because of his teaching of the resurrection of Christ. And remember Felix was in the same position Pilate was in just some years earlier and Paul has been charged with the exact same things Jesus was charged with. He's been charged with heresy. He spoke against the things the Jews were doing. He's been charged with sacrilege, desecrating the temple, just like Jesus was charged with. He's been charged with being an insurrectionist. Remember how they finally got Pilate to give Jesus over to be crucified? He said if you're a friend of his you're no friend of Caesar's. And so they put Jesus versus

Caesar and got Pilate to go along with their wishes. And so they're trying to do the same thing with Paul here. Their methods haven't changed. The people are, some of the people are still the same.

Some of the methods are still the same. They're thinking you know it worked for Jesus. We're going to try to get Paul the same way. And some of the same charges they used against Stephen. And so they're doing the same basic thing. And Paul has stated his defense before Felix. And so Felix is going to step away and Festus is going to come in in his place. And so Festus is going to take over. And just with anything when there's a change of leadership, you know you've heard the old saying, meet the new boss, same as the old boss. You wonder if that's how it's going to be. You wonder what changes they're going to make. What's their leadership style. If you're working for a company, if there's a new person in charge, you wonder how they're going to run things. If you're in education, if you're working for a new principal or something, you're always wondering how is this person, what's going to be their leadership style? How are they going to compare to the one before? Because that's human nature, right? You compare a new person to the last person that was just in that position. That's just the way we are wired as humans to do. We compare this person's leadership style to, well, the old person didn't do it this way. The new person is doing it differently. And so Festus is going to have some things that he does differently than Felix, but in some ways he's going to be the same. So what was the primary characteristic of Felix? He wanted Paul to give him money. He would have released Paul had Paul given him money, even though he knew Paul was innocent. He knew these charges weren't true. He knew that they were fabricated and false, but he didn't want to let him go because of fear of the Jews. He knew what was the right thing to do. He knew that Paul was innocent, but he was afraid of the Jews. So he let fear of people stop him from doing the right thing. And so since he knew that if

I do this, it's going to cause trouble, what did he do? He just put Paul kind of in custody for two years and just kind of kicked the problem down the road. That's some people's leadership style. You know, here's the problem. Here's how I could fix it, but you know, it's going to cause some trouble. So we'll just kind of boot it down the road a little bit. Festus, he comes on the scene.

He's more of a, well, here's the problem. Let's take care of it. And so that's what you're going to see. But at the same time, you're going to see it was the same problem and the same, same exact thing. Booting it down the road two years didn't change anything. Same issues, same problem, same everything was still, was still there. Here you've got a Roman citizen who's not been formally charged with anything and you've got him in custody. The Jews want to kill him for something he did to aggravate them. But here we are in a Roman situation where the Roman leaders can't do anything certain ways because they're dealing with a Roman citizen. And if you're going to send him to your superior, there needs to be a reason why you're sending him there. He's been charged with, but there's nothing after that with. He's been charged with, well, what has he been charged with?

[ 4 : 26 ] So it's the exact same problem that was there two years before. He's just been sitting in custody and not, and nothing has, nothing has changed. The Jews are still going to be aggravated. The Jews are still violent against him. So we'll see here that, that pushing a problem down the road doesn't fix it.

And so chapter 25, now when Festus was come into the province, after three days, he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Now keep in mind geography here. Caesarea is northwest of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem's on a higher elevation on a hill. And so to get from anywhere from Jerusalem, you got to go downhill. And so if you're going anywhere to Jerusalem, you're going uphill. And so that's why he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul and besought him. So already you see Festus, he comes into the province. Three days later, he goes to Jerusalem because part of his job was to keep the Jews under control. The Jews had been permitted to practice their religion. They had been given freedom to do so. In fact, they could carry out a lot of their laws. For example, we talked a few weeks ago about the law where a Gentile could only go so far into the temple court area. They'd come to a place where they couldn't go any farther. And if a Gentile was caught beyond that point, they could be put to death. Even if it was a Roman citizen, they were allowed to carry out that punishment. So the Jews had some liberties given to them from the Romans. And the deal was just stay out of our way, stay under control. We don't want riots. We don't want disturbances. We don't want public upheavals because that gets the people higher than us mad and then our jobs in danger. And so keep the Jews kind of happy is the deal. And so the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul and besought him and desired favor against him that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying weight in the way to kill him. So, you know, Paul, he's in custody, bring him to Jerusalem for the trial. All the time they know we're going to kill him before he gets here. Remember, these are some of those same people that said they wouldn't eat or drink or do anything until Paul was dead.

It's been two years. I think they probably went back on their oath by now. But these were some of those same people that said, you know, we're not going to eat. We're not going to drink. Paul's got to be done away with. And so these are probably some of those same people. And they want Paul to be brought to Jerusalem. They're going to set up a place and kill him along the way before he gets there. But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself would depart shortly thither. So already we see Festus is a man of action. He's like, Paul's in Caesarea. He should stay there. I'll just go to him. 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. In Roman law, if you went to court and your accuser didn't show up, then the trial was thrown out because there was no one there to accuse you. And so Festus is making these people do the work. He's like, you know, you want to go accuse this man? Well, I'm going to Caesarea. Let him therefore said he, which among you are able, go down with me and accuse this man if there be any wickedness in him. And when he had tarried among them more than 10 days, he went down unto Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, commanded Paul to be brought. And interesting, the word judgment seat there is the word where we get bima. It's the word bima, which is judgment seat. It's used, same word used in 2 Corinthians. We must all appear before the bima, the judgment seat of Christ. And so here he is commanded Paul to be brought before him. And when he was come, the Jews, which came down from Jerusalem, stood round about and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul. Notice the next phrase, which they could not prove. So they're just falsely accusing. They're just, they're just giving accusations. He has so offended them that they are falsely accusing him, even wanting to kill him.

Now keep in mind, these are the Jewish people that's supposed to be upholding their law. They are willing to violate this, their law that they're supposed to be upholding and living by.

They're willing to violate their own law to falsely accuse this man, have him killed by a bunch of mercenary type people just to get him out of their hair. So he has so offended these Orthodox Jewish people. They're willing to lay aside what their law says just to get rid of him. That's been done before, right? Same thing they did against Jesus. And so here they are trying to, trying to kill him and falsely accuse him. And so they are, they are coming up again with these accusations that they, they could not prove. And so, and these are religious people. These are people, no doubt you'd see them when they're supposed to go to the temple to offer a sacrifice, they'd be there. When they're supposed to celebrate some holy day or some feast day, they would be doing what they were supposed to do.

[ 9 : 41 ] These are very religious people. James Boyce in his commentary writes, the Jews illustrate the corrupting effects of religion when it is not actually in contact with God. Think about that.

I'll read that again. The Jews illustrate the corrupting effects of religion when it is not actually in contact with God. Religion apart from God is destructive. If you have a belief system that leaves God out or ignores what God says or goes away from the truth of God, it becomes destructive.

Not just to you, but to people, people around you. He goes on to say, if the life of God is not actually present in the worshiper, then his or her religion becomes more of a veneer, hypocrisy, and can be used as an excuse for doing what is obviously evil. History teaches us that some of the worst things that have ever been done have been done by people who claim to be doing the will of God.

The Jews were supposed to be upholders of the law. They were not wanting Paul to have due process of law. So think about these people were very religious, but yet their religion was apart from the true worship of God and it had become destructive. It had become to the point where they were doing things that were evil in the name of God, in the name of their religion, in the name of their law that they were rejecting to try to bring this man to their kind of justice. And so religion without God becomes destructive. And so here's the Jewish people accusing Paul. And now he says, while he answered for himself, neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all. Remember when they brought Paul in, they had got him in the temple and he was there going through the days of purification with four other people that were completing a vow. He wasn't doing anything wrong in the temple. He didn't bring a Gentile into the temple like they said he did. He was just there fulfilling the days of purification at the end of a Nazarite vow, just like some other men. He was doing things that were proper and appropriate in the

Jewish temple. But here he's falsely accused. And he hasn't been, he wasn't trying to be an insurrectionist. He had only been in Jerusalem 12 days. That's not much time to stir up an insurrection.

[ 12 : 07 ] Remember he didn't communicate by email and cell phone in those days. So you couldn't get word out as fast then as you can now. And so 12 days, that's not a lot to accomplish anything with those styles of communication they would have had. And so here's Paul proving, showing that he's not done anything wrong. But notice Festus, verse 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?

And so Paul knows he's not, he's not going to be given a fair trial in Jerusalem. Think about Jesus was tried in Jerusalem. And you see that that was not, they had to break their own laws to make that happen.

They tried him at night, which was never done under Jewish law. And then there were other things that happened that you see in the trial of Jesus that violated Jewish law, but yet their anger and their hatred of him compelled them to do things that was even against their law. And Paul knows this.

Paul knows, remember Paul was one of them at one point. Paul knows exactly what's going on in their head. And Paul knows exactly what's going to happen if he follows along with this plan to go to Jerusalem. He was one of them. Remember the death of Stephen? Remember who was holding their clothes, conceding to the death of Stephen? It was Paul, Saul of Tarsus. So Paul knows exactly what's happening here. He knows exactly what's going to happen to him if he goes to Jerusalem.

And so notice what Paul says, In other words, if I've done something worthy of death, I'll accept the death penalty.

[ 13 : 54 ] But if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them, I appeal unto Caesar. He said, I'm not guilty of anything they're accusing me of, so I'm not going to go be tried by them. I appeal to Caesar, which was his right as a Roman citizen, which was probably the last thing Festus was expecting him to do. And so he says, Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed to Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go.

So you think, in Festus' mind, think about what's going on here. Here we have this Roman citizen who's now appealed to Caesar, which was the supreme authority in Roman world.

And so now Festus is going to send this Roman citizen who's been held prisoner without being formally charged, he's going to send them to Caesar without formal charges, and he has to write a, give basically a written report of, we're sending him to you, and here's why.

So you've got a Roman citizen that's been held in custody for two years, that has not been formally charged with anything, and now you've got to send him to the emperor. So Festus is not in an easy position here, because any time an underling sent to their superior a prisoner, they needed to know what has this prisoner done, what has he been charged with, what have you done to handle this situation before sending him to your superior.

All that stuff needed to be detailed. And here's Festus with, he's not done anything wrong, but he's appealed to Caesar. We've got to send him to Caesar, but what are we going to say when we send him there? What has he been charged with?

[ 15 : 40 ] So then after certain days, King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. Now Agrippa here, this is going to be Herod Agrippa II. We've heard about his father before. His father was Agrippa in Acts chapter 12. Remember in Acts chapter 12, James, the brother of John, was put to death, and then Herod Agrippa I later in chapter 12 died kind of a very violent horrible death. This would be his son, Herod Agrippa II. This would be the grandson of Herod the Great, Matthew chapter 2, the one that had all the kids two and under put to death in the time of the birth of Jesus.

And so this is Herod Agrippa II, and Bernice was actually his sister. And so there's a lot of rumors that were floating around the ancient world at this time that there was an incestuous relationship between them two, because where you saw one, you always saw the other.

So this was not a good man. And so Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus, 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, about whom when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priest 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 license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

Therefore, when they came, come hither without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded this man to be brought forth. Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed.

[ 17 : 28 ] But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he should go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

But when Paul had appealed to be reserved under the hearing of Augustus, 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.

Tomorrow said he, thou shalt hear him. And so now, think about back in Jesus' trial. You know, Pilate couldn't find anything wrong with him. He said, I find no fault in him.

He hears that Herod is in town, and so he sends Jesus to Herod. So basically, same thing going on here. King Agrippa is going to be in town, and Festus says, we'll get the king to settle this matter.

And so he's going to basically pass him off onto Agrippa. And notice what he said. He said, against whom, when the accuser 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.

[ 18 : 43 ] So he's verifying there. He says, this is not a political matter. This is strictly religious. This is strictly a Jewish matter. He's offended them some way in accordance with their law, but he's not done anything to violate Roman law.

So over and over again, we see amongst the leadership of the Romans, there is this knowledge that Paul is innocent. Paul shouldn't be here. And later on, Agrippa's going to say, you know, had you not appealed to Caesar, you'd be a free man.

And so here's Paul again, falsely accused. No formal, true formal charges are against him. One commentator has said, here's Paul.

He's a Jewish man. His countrymen want to kill him. He's a Roman citizen, and his governors don't know what to do with him. And so here's Paul kind of in limbo. But you've got to think about this.

Behind all of what looks like chaos, and where Paul is in front of this person, now he's been held captive for two years. Now he's in front of another person. The Jews want to kill him.

[ 19 : 43 ] He's been in front of the Sanhedrin. He's been in front of everybody. Remember, Jesus told him, you're going to testify of me before kings and rulers. And he's told Paul, you're going to testify of me in Rome.

So where it looks like things are falling apart, things are really falling in place in God's plan for Paul. So behind the scenes, God is moving things around, working things to where he wants Paul to be.

And so when it looks like utter chaos, Paul going one place to another, being held this place two years, going and just bouncing around everywhere, God's in control. God is behind the scenes directing where these events are happening.

In verse 21, the word Augustus there is not the proper name. It's actually a title. There was an Augustus Caesar. One of the early Caesars was named Augustus.

But after a certain point, Augustus, the word, the August one, basically Augustus, became part of their actual title. And so this is a title rather than a proper name.

[ 20 : 47 ] The emperor at this time was Nero. So Paul was saying, I appeal, I want to go stand in front of Nero. So that's a pretty significant statement to make.

Nero was not the most sane of people. And so Paul was going to go willingly. He's asked to be sent to Nero. So let that sink in.

So then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would hear also the man myself. Tomorrow said he, thou shalt hear him. And on the morrow when Agrippa was come and Bernice was great pomp and was entered into the palace of hearing with the chief captains and the principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment, Paul was brought forth.

Now get this picture. You got all these Jewish people. You got King Agrippa. You got his sister, wife, whatever she was. And then you've got Festus, the governor, in the same position Pilate would have been in when Jesus was being tried.

You got all this leadership. You got the chief men of the city. You got all these Jews. You got Paul about to give all these people the gospel. So think about it.

[ 21 : 53 ] In all these, look at all these gospel opportunities Paul has been getting. As he's bounced around from person to person, he's given them the gospel every time. That was the whole reason he was there was the resurrection.

He had talked about not just the resurrection of people in general, but he had talked about the resurrection of Jesus and that presented a big problem because if the Jews, to the Jews, if Jesus was truly risen from the dead, that means he was truly the Messiah, the one that they had put to death and they're in trouble.

Their system is no longer good. Their system is now obsolete and they have to pretty much put away all that and accept Jesus if what Paul is saying is true. So this has got them kind of agitated.

But to Paul, the resurrection, you think about what he said in 1 Corinthians 15, if Christ is not risen from the dead, then we're still in our sin. There's basically no hope for us.

And so Paul emphasized the resurrection because it's the gospel. It's an important part of the gospel. And Paul was going to emphasize that again. And so it said, And so try to put yourself in the mind of this king.

[ 23 : 26 ] Here's Paul. History tells us he was a small man. In fact, his name means small. Paul is the Greek word meaning small or little. And so think about, here's Paul, this little guy.

History tells us his eyesight was not good. And he was, overall his health was probably not good. So here comes out this guy. And Festus said, King Agrippa and all men which are here present with us, you 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.

But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, there again, Paul's innocent, 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.

I have no charge. Remember, if he's going to send him to Caesar, he's got to write what he's charged with. He says, I have nothing, of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my Lord.

Wherefore, I have brought him before you, and especially before thee, O King Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. In other words, I can't find anything wrong with him, so I'm giving him over to you.

[ 24 : 42 ] Maybe you can help here. No pressure. But we've got to send him to Caesar. We don't have anything to tell Caesar. So, you know, he's yours. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not with all to signify the crimes laid against him.

In other words, here's what he said. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not with all to signify the crimes laid against him. That's what he said. What he meant was, we're going to be in big trouble when we send this man to Caesar.

He finds out we've had him in custody for two years, and we've not officially charged him with anything, and he's a Roman citizen. That's what he meant when he said that. But he said, For it seemeth me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not with all signify the crimes laid against him.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth his hand, and answering for himself, I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I will answer for myself this day before thee touching all things whereof I am accused of the Jews, especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews.

Wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. So Paul is appealing to his knowledge. Agrippa was a knowledgeable man. He was over the region of the country that housed the temple.

[ 25 : 59 ] So he was very well aware of what went on there. And so he said, My manner of life for my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning.

If they would testify that after the most straightest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. And so Paul is going back to give his testimony. He's like, I was just like one of them.

I was of the strictest religious sect of the Pharisees. Remember in another place Paul said, I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was very, meaning he was respected.

He was revered by other Pharisees. A Pharisee would point to a new person coming in and say, see Saul of Tarsus over there, see Paul, that's who you want to be like.

He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was a leader among the Pharisees. And he's now being judged by the Jews. And now I stand and I'm judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God, day and night, hope to come.

[ 27 : 02 ] For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. So Paul's basically saying I'm being accused because I'm given the same message of hope that was given to the fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob.

Remember the promise God made to Abraham. We read over it a little bit too fast, but when we get to where Abraham is about to offer Isaac, and Isaac says, here's the wood, here's the fire, where's the lamb?

And what's Abraham's response? God will provide, he doesn't say God will provide for himself. God said, Abraham says, God will provide himself a lamb.

And so that was the promise given to Abraham 2,000 years before, and Paul is just saying, I'm just a messenger of that same hope. That lamb has come, that lamb has been crucified, he's our Passover sacrifice, and he's been raised from the dead.

And so that's what got, that's what's gotten Paul in trouble. So next week we'll see Paul's concluding remarks to Agrippa and see his, his response. Agrippa's response is very famous.

[ 28 : 12 ] In fact, songs have been written about Agrippa's response that he gave to Paul. It's a very famous response, but it's a very dangerous response, and we'll see that next week.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for how that even in times of difficulty and in times of false accusations and in times of all the things that were happening to Paul, you were still in control.

You had promised Paul that he was going to go to Rome and testify on your behalf and the rest of the book will show us that you get him there. It wasn't in, I'm sure if we could have talked to Paul, it wouldn't have been in the way he thought it was going to happen.

He's been in front of different people. He's been in jail for two years for no reason. He's going to be eventually on a ship that's going to be in pieces floating around in the sea.

So it's going to be a tough journey to get to Rome, but you're going to get him there just as you promised. So help us to take comfort in the fact that when we look at our life and we look at the world around us and it seems like things are falling apart in the mind of God and in the plan of God things are just falling into place because you have a plan and you have a time and you have a plan that will be brought to pass.

[ 29 : 28 ] And we can take comfort in that knowing that no matter who's in the White House, no matter who's in charge in state and local governments, that ultimately you're in control and your plan will be accomplished.

So we thank you for the comfort we can take in that. We pray if there's anyone here today that does not know you as Savior, we pray that today they would trust you and receive that free gift of eternal life before it's too late.

We pray for the service, we pray for all that are involved, we pray that you bless them and I pray that you be with our pastors as he opens the word, may we be doers of the word, not just hearers only, in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen.