

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

PAUL'S APPEAL TO CAESAR, ACTS 25:1-22

- A. Festus takes charge (1-12)
1. The Jews' appeal to Festus (1-5)
 - a. Festus met with Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (1), *Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.*
 - 1) Porcius Festus became the Roman procurator of the province of Syria which included Judea (58-62 A.D.).
 - a) Josephus portrayed Festus as a more moderate and wise governor than Felix.
 - b) Kenneth Gangel, *He seems the perfect politician, quite willing to consult local authorities while trying not to offend anyone, an appropriate posture since his predecessor had just been summarily fired by Nero.*
 - 2) He went to Jerusalem after only being in Judea for three days.
 - a) He possibly heard of issues that needed to be addressed.
 - b) Jerusalem was the place in the province of Syria which demanded the most attention.
 - b. The Jewish leaders requested that Paul be returned to Jerusalem to stand trial (2-3), *And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.*
 - 1) Jewish leaders realized their case against Paul was too weak for the Roman courts.
 - 2) They asked Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem.
 - a) They planned to kill him by ambush while he was being transported from Caesarea.
 - b) In chapter 23 they had agreed to a murder plot by Asian Jews but now they designed their own plan to have Paul murdered.
 - 3) *chief priests*
 - a) Ishmael was the new High Priest.
 - b) The use of the plural may reflect the continuing influence of Ananias in the case against Paul.
 - c. Festus declared that the trial would take place in Caesarea (4-5), *Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. "So," said he, "let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him."*
 - 1) Festus declared that he was going to Caesarea and the Jewish leaders could join him there where they could bring charges against Paul.
 - 2) It is unknown how much Festus knew of this case but he chose to deal with the issue on his turf.
 2. Paul's hearing before Festus and the Jewish leaders (6-12)
 - a. Festus returned to Caesarea and ordered the trial to begin (6), *After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.*
 - 1) Festus spent a little more than a week in Jerusalem and then went to Caesarea.
 - 2) He ordered Paul to be brought before the *tribunal* which is the same word use for the judgment seat of Christ.
 - b. The Jewish leaders brought serious charges against Paul (7), *When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove.*
 - 1) Paul was brought before Festus and was surrounded by the Jewish leaders who brought serious charges against him which could not be proven.
 - 2) The charges were probably the same ones brought in previous trials.
 - a) Offending the law, Acts 21:28, *...This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.*
 - b) Defiling the temple, Acts 24:6, *He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.*
 - c) Planning treason against Rome, Acts 24:5, *For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.*
 - c. Paul proclaimed his innocence (8), *Paul argued in his defense, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense."*
 - 1) Paul defended himself by refuting the charges brought again by the Jews.
 - 2) He added that he had committed no offense against Caesar.

- d. Festus asked Paul if he would be willing to be tried in Jerusalem (9), *But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?"*
- 1) Festus' greatest concern was not justice but pleasing the Jews.
 - 2) He asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried before Festus on the charges presented.
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The fact that he asked Paul's permission indicates that Paul was not a common criminal but an unconvicted Roman citizen with rights that the governor had to respect.*
 - b) Festus' request was a compromise since he was willing to change the venue but he would be in charge, not the Jews.
- e. Paul appealed to Caesar (10-11), *But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar."*
- 1) Paul responded by requesting to be tried by Caesar, W. Barclay, *Only Roman citizens who were murderers, pirates, or bandits caught in the act could not make this appeal.*
 - 2) Paul's reasons for making that request.
 - a) He declared that Festus knew he had done no wrong to the Jews.
 - b) He was not trying to escape severe punishment if he were guilty of such wrongdoing.
 - c) He should not be given over to the Jews if their charges had no merit.
 - d) He placed himself at the mercy of Caesar who was Nero, well respected at the time but turned rogue within several years.
 - 3) Some believe Paul was wrong to not follow the example of Jesus who refused to defend Himself while on trial.
 - a) I believe this was God's will for Paul and His means for accomplishing His purposes.
 - b) God does not work the same way in the lives of every Christian but He does work all things together for good according to His sovereign control.
- f. Festus accepted Paul's appeal (12), *Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."*
- 1) Festus conferred with his council concerning Paul's request.
 - 2) The decision was made to grant Paul's request.
 - 3) Kenneth Gangel, *Paul had effectively designed an end-run around Festus' authority, whether in Jerusalem or Caesarea, and whatever further delays might come in his path, he was underway for Rome.*
- B. The arrival of Herod Agrippa II (13-22)
1. King Agrippa and his sister Bernice arrived in Caesarea (13), *Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus.*
 - a. Notes on Agrippa
 - 1) He was Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I who executed James, the brother of John (note Acts 12:1-11) and great-grandson of Herod the Great, who tried to kill the infant Jesus (note Matthew 2:1).
 - 2) He was about 30 years of age at this time and was ruler of territories northeast of the Judean province.
 - 3) He was a friend of the Roman imperial family and had been given the privilege of appointing the Jewish high priest and was made custodian of the temple treasury.
 - b. Notes on Bernice
 - 1) She was the sister of Agrippa.
 - 2) It was believed that she had an incestuous relationship with Agrippa, her brother.
 - c. Felix's wife was the younger sister of Agrippa and Bernice.
 - d. According to Josephus, Agrippa and Bernice were favorable to the Jews and tried to avert the Roman massacre of the Jews in 66-70 A.D.
 2. Festus informed them of Paul (14-21)
 - a. Jewish leaders asked that he be condemned (14-15), *And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix, and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him."*
 - 1) Festus informed Agrippa of Paul's case.
 - a) It is believed that Festus hoped that Agrippa could help him clarify the charges against Paul.
 - b) Agrippa was considered an expert in Jewish matters.
 - 2) He told them of the Jewish leaders' request that he be executed.

- b. Festus stated that it was unlawful to condemn Paul without a trial before his accusers (16), *I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him.*
 - 1) Festus told Agrippa that he would not transfer Paul to Jewish custody.
 - 2) Festus gave two reasons.
 - a) The accused must be present when accusations are made by the accusers.
 - b) The accused must have the opportunity to defend himself against the charges.
 - c. Charges were brought against Paul concerning religious issues (17-19), *So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.*
 - 1) Festus told Agrippa that he was surprised by the charges brought against Paul by the Jewish leaders.
 - 2) The charges concerned points of dispute concerning their religion and Jesus who was dead but Paul declared to be alive.
 - a) This is the first time that Luke recorded that Paul had spoken to Festus of the resurrection of Jesus.
 - b) I. Howard Marshall, *It is interesting that by this stage the question of Paul's alleged desecration of the temple has quite disappeared from sight, and the topic of the resurrection (23:6; 24:21) has replaced it. Festus talks about it as something that he fails to comprehend, and indeed it is difficult to see how it could have become a point on which to hang a criminal charge. But this is precisely the point. The real ground of dispute is that Paul preaches the resurrection of Jesus, something which the Sadducees refused to believe on principle and which the Pharisees likewise refused to believe although they admitted the fact of a final resurrection of all men.*
 - d. Festus asked Paul if he would be willing to be tried in Jerusalem on the religious charges (20), *Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them.*
 - 1) Festus did not know how to handle such charges.
 - 2) The attempt by the Jewish leaders to get Paul convicted of sedition had failed due to lack of evidence.
 - 3) Their true reason for hating Paul was his proclamation of Jesus as Messiah, the fulfillment of Judaism.
 - e. Paul appealed to Caesar and was held until he could be sent to Rome (21), *But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.*
 - 1) Paul appealed to the emperor.
 - a) *Emperor* appears twice in this chapter.
 - b) Surprisingly, these instances are the only times the emperor is mentioned in the New Testament.
 - c) The emperor had great human authority which paled in comparison to the King of Kings.
 - 2) Festus informed Agrippa that he ordered Paul to be held until he could be sent to Caesar.
3. Agrippa asked to hear Paul in person (22), *Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," said he, "you will hear him."*
- a. Agrippa was intrigued by Festus' introduction of Paul and wanted to hear him in person.
 - b. Festus said it would take place the next day, possibly hoping Agrippa could help him prepare a report for the emperor.
 - c. Paul's opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ before a king had come.

CONCLUSION

- A. Our lives are tapestries woven by a sovereign and loving God.
- B. Important people of this world have little lasting impact compared to seemingly unimportant people who trust God and obey Him.
- C. People are intrigued by the faith of those who live what they believe.