

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**A0940 – October 4, 2009 – Acts 24:1-27 – Paul Before Festus**

Question: In Acts 23:12-15, forty Jews plotted to kill Paul binding themselves by oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they killed Paul. Since they were unsuccessful what happened to them? That's a good question and I'm glad you asked it. Of course it would be pure irony if they actually kept the oath and died. But the answer is that the Mishnah made certain provisions for someone who made an oath when there were circumstances that made it impossible to fulfill the oath (Nedarim iii.1, 3.). So they were probably set free from the oath when it was shown that Paul had been taken by night to Caesarea under armed guard. We have further witness they were still alive in Acts 25:3 from one ancient manuscript called Harclean Syriac which adds to this verse, "those who had made a vow to get him into their hands," and therefore this manuscript ascribes the plot of chapter 25 to the same 40 men yet two years later.

I should tell you we don't go into everything we could go into in these passages. I always leave adequate room for questions but if you don't ask them I'm not going to answer them. And frankly, there's a lot more about these texts that I don't tell you because if I did we'd be here forever. So I give you what's crucial to the text and cut a lot out. So as we near the end of the Book of Acts I encourage you to start writing down your questions and turning them in because I'll be preparing to wrap up the book and right now it's fresh on my mind as I'm engaged first hand in the literature.

Today Acts 25. We're tracing the theme of Acts 23:11, Christ's words to Paul, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also." Today we get to the statement that inevitably takes Paul to Rome. We have Christ's sovereign declaration of his will for Paul's life and we're tracing how he got there. It's not a smooth road

but when God has a plan the bumps are part of the plan. So Paul began at Jerusalem in Acts 21, and by Acts 23 he was moved to Caesarea, which is at least the right direction. Caesarea is a port city, and he stayed there for two years under governor Felix. Today, we pick up in chapter 25 with a change in governor. Felix is out of office, now comes Festus. And once again watch for the principle of 1 Cor 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” Paul is under attack and Paul is once more going to have to find the way of escape. God provides, notice, the verse says God provides the temptation. He doesn’t just provide the way of escape. He provides the temptation in the sense that it had to come before His throne before it could happen. So if you are facing a temptation it’s because God thinks you’re up to it. That’s what He did with Job when Satan came with his great plans for Job, have you considered My servant Job? And we all get put in Job-like situations in that we don’t know why the suffering is in our life. We didn’t do anything wrong. But here I’ve been hit with a truck. What’s going on in a situation like that? God is working something out in history that we’re not privy to. But in the temptation He always provides a way out. So look for it with Paul and learn to handle the situations like Paul, trusting the Lord, taking courage and using what God has given you.

Last week we saw Paul before Felix, that’s Acts 24. The case against Paul was led by the lawyer Tertullus from one of the top firms. He presented the case but he didn’t present any evidence and so Paul easily found a way of escape through that one. But Felix kept him in custody anyway. Then, he and his little wife Drusilla, who was from the Herod family, got a fourth generation gospel presentation from Paul and it scared the be-geebers out of them because they were everything Paul described as being under the judgment of God and so that was the end of that days witnessing opportunity. But Paul got other opportunities with Felix. Felix never responded positively and so every time he heard the gospel and rejected it, his heart got harder and harder and harder till it was one big callous. Some people just rebel and rebel and rebel. So don’t be discouraged if you share the gospel with someone and they pull a Felix and change the subject. In that kind of situation you’ve said something that bothered them, their conscience has been pricked, and you may get another opportunity. You can’t force people to believe, Paul

didn't force Felix, he just kept at it. And so, after two years of this, Felix was deposed and he left Paul in prison. Why did he do that? V 27 tells you exactly why. He wished "to do the Jews a favor." We gather that the Jewish lobby was pretty powerful and so the political pressure was on every Roman that ruled over the Jews. And now we have a new Roman ruler in chapter 25, his name is Festus; he's the man that replaced Felix.

Now we don't know much about Festus. Festus didn't exactly make the Roman headlines. He was only in office for two years. The only reason he made the biblical headlines is because he had contact with Paul. So most of what we know about Festus we gather from this chapter. The first thing we know is that Festus was a very efficient ruler. He's a man who likes to get things done. Notice verse 1, **Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.** So he arrives at Caesarea, he's only there **three days** and already he's going up to **Jerusalem**, the center of his district. Why? Because this is a man who hits the ground running, he wants to get his administration up to speed with what's going on, he wants to meet with the local leaders of the Jewish people, the Sanhedrin, and he's sizing up his territory. Then v 6, **After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal.** So it's not been much more than a week and he's already hearing his first case. It happens to be Paul's case because Paul, in his opinion, is a left over from the previous administration. He's trying to wrap up unfinished business so he can move on with his own business. Festus is a man who is very efficient ruler. The second thing about Festus is, like most politicians, he's a compromiser. And this is where he gets himself in trouble. V 9, **But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor**, ah, and there it is, why I'm going to do the Jews a favor and get my administration off on the right foot. Here's another Felix, he's got political pressure from the Jewish lobby and like so many politicians he caves under the pressure. And it's the same way today with politicians. They go into office saying I'm never going to compromise, I'm never going to violate my standards and then two or three years later you say, who is this guy? That's not the guy I voted into office. And it's because in the game of politics there's pressure, pressure to give up something here so you can get something over there. And this is the game of politics. It's a game that destroys most people that play it because they violate their conscience and violate their conscience and before long they're doing things

they said they'd never do. Why? Because they've changed, they've shifted and the people they went into office to fight against are the very people they've become. So, if you hold some office or you're preparing to go into politics settle beforehand not to violate your conscience. You won't be popular with some people because you don't play the game the way they play the game. But the only other option is to destroy yourself. Know that once you start down that path of violating your conscience you're not just hurting your constituents, you're hurting yourself. So Festus is that kind of a man and just days after he's arrived he's already under pressure from the Jewish lobby and he's going to do them a favor and this is going to get him in a heap of trouble as compromise usually does.

So let's read verse 1, **Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.** <sup>2</sup>**And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him,** imperfect tense, over and over and over they said, now Festus, we've got a problem with Paul and if you want to get in good with the powers that be over in Jerusalem then you'll take care of it and so over and over and over they were urging him and this is the political pressure we were talking about.

Now, to understand the strategy, think back to what Christ told Paul in Acts 23:11. I will get you to Rome, Paul. Now when that revelation came into history Satan was activated to counter the revelation. So what's the strategy here with this early political pressure? Paul's been in prison two years, now there's pressure to re-open the case. Why? Because Satan says aha, here comes Festus, and Festus is the new guy in office and Festus doesn't have any experience so this is an opportunity to kill Paul and destroy Acts 23:11.

Now there is at least the principle here that bringing in inexperience can be a dangerous time because there are those who've just been waiting in the wings to get their agenda accomplished and they'll go right at the new guy. Be aware if you're the new guy that all the heavy hitters are going to hit you up and if I were you I'd play it cool, I'd play it safe and I'd just sit back and gather intel for awhile before making any sudden moves. But Festus doesn't do that. And so immediately when Festus goes up they bring **charges against Paul and they were urging him, requesting a concession against Paul that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (at the**

**same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way).** And that tells you what they were really interested in. They were not interested in re-opening the case. They were interested in killing Paul. Now think of this, it's been two years. You'd think after two years their jets would have cooled. But they haven't. There's something strangely reminiscent of Paul's hatred for Christians in Acts 7, 8 and 9. That was when Paul wrote the manual on how to persecute Christians. Now they're using that very manual against him. So after two years they are still breathing hatred and with Festus' inexperience it's a perfect opportunity to kill Paul.

Verse 4, **Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly.**

**<sup>5</sup>“Therefore,” he said, “let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man,** first class condition, assuming there is something wrong, **let them prosecute him.”** So he doesn't give them what they want but there is an opportunity to re-open the case against Paul.

Verse 6, **After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. <sup>7</sup>After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove** - this is an attack. They surround Paul like a pack of wolves and start charging him, they're trying to unnerve him and confuse him, another strategy of Satan because they don't have a case. He's greatly outnumbered and they're attacking, **bringing many and serious charges,** they were many charges and they were serious charges. Probably similar to the charges two years earlier in the case before Felix, but they may have been greatly expanded.

Notice again, **charges which they could not prove,** imperfect tense, they repeated and repeated and repeated the charges trying to sway the court, but repeating charges doesn't win cases, proving charges does. So they went on and on charging Paul with all kinds of things but they didn't bring an ounce of proof.

So Paul gets his chance in v 8, **while Paul said in his own defense**, remember, Paul doesn't have a lawyer, he has to give his own defense and Paul is excellent, Paul is under control, His trust is in the Lord, so he is able to relax and take courage. **"I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."** So he denies the charges. They relate to three areas. One, Jewish Law, I haven't broken the Law. And apparently they were accusing him of capital crimes. Two, the Temple, I didn't take the Gentile Trophimus into the Temple, nobody saw me do that. Josephus says it was a capital offense and that the Jews could execute the offender even if it was a Roman citizen. So, if this was proven Paul would have to be turned over to the Jews. Three, Roman Law, and this is the most serious charge to Festus' ear, raising an insurrection against the Roman Empire to overthrow Caesar. It is also a capital offense but this one punishable by Rome. And by the way, the words **no offense** are hamartano in the Greek, it's the word to sin, to miss and so Paul's saying I didn't miss, I was right on target.

**<sup>9</sup>But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, - ah, see? He's caving in to the Jewish lobby, so he answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?"** Now, this is where we see that Festus is a compromiser. He knows Paul is innocent. Paul hasn't done a thing. As a Roman ruler he should set Paul free. But if he sets Paul free he won't get political points with the Jews. So he acts in self-interest here and this is going to get him in a jam because Paul is sharp, Paul sees what's going on and Paul's going to call him on it. What's going on here is political gimmicks; he tries to sweet talk Paul, when you go to Jerusalem to stand trial you'll stand before me, I'll be your judge so don't worry Paul. Ha, ha, ha, Paul isn't buying it, with all the Jews present if anything they'll put more pressure on you Festus and I won't get a fair hearing at all. And besides, the trip from Caesarea to Jerusalem is 65 miles. Who knows what these guys have up their sleeves? What Festus really had in mind was to use Paul. Everything here is carefully calculated and if I can get Paul to say yes, I'm willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial, then by Paul's own choice he goes and on the way these Jews can assassinate him and that will be the end of Paul and the Jews will love me. That's the kind of thing going on in v 9.

Now, at this point we think Paul's had enough. I've had to stand trial before Felix. Felix found me innocent, I've been in jail for two years, and now I stand before Festus. Festus finds me innocent and still they're trying to find a way to get me. So he's had it and that brings us to v 10 and here we see Paul's counter. This counter by Paul carries us to the end of the Book of Acts. Verse 10 sets Paul on a course that inevitably takes him to Rome.

**<sup>10</sup>But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to *the* Jews, as you also very well know. <sup>11</sup>"If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."**

Now here's the second time you watch Paul using his right of citizenship. Jesus Christ didn't have this right. For all the parallels between Christ's trial and Paul's trial the issue of Roman citizenship is not one of them. Paul is going to exercise legal rights as a Roman citizen that Jesus Christ did not have. Now fellow Christians, we cannot be like some Christians say we should be; put on a testimony for Jesus by letting every Tom, Dick and Harry humanist roll over us. That's not a testimony for Jesus, that's a testimony of idiocy. Now if you just let bad people get away with stuff in the name of Jesus all you're saying is law and order doesn't matter, you're part of the problem, not the solution. There is no reason not to exercise your legal rights. God gave human government as the fourth divine institution for you to use. And at times in the past, we have been timid about exercising our legal rights. We should know our legal rights and use them, don't be intimidated by the system. Paul insists upon his rights, he demands them. As a Roman citizen he has two rights, he has a right to fair trial and he has a right to appeal to Caesar. And he's using both of these in the Book of Acts.

And so he goes to trial, he appeals, and when he makes the appeal notice what he says of Festus. He says, at the end of verse 10, **I have done no wrong, as you also very well know.** Now that's an accusation against Festus; that's an accusation that the whole trial is a mistrial. It's a very serious accusation because what it's saying is you guys haven't proved one indictment against me, not one, and you can't, so I'm going to go to Caesar and what the implication is, I'm going to go to Caesar and I'm going to tell Caesar how you're running his court down here. So Paul isn't just going to

Caesar to report on Paul; he's going to report on Festus. Now this immediately causes problems and that's why you notice at the beginning verse 12 Festus runs to his council. That's not the Sanhedrin, that's his own council because what he's trying to do is figure out a way he can stop Paul from getting to Rome legally. But since Paul is not an overt criminal way there is no legal way in the Roman system he can stop this hearing from going to Rome. You'll see how panicky he gets by the end of the chapter. Festus does not like this move because it exposes him and his weakness under Jewish pressure.

Another little observation in v 11, Paul says **If I have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die.** Paul didn't have a problem with capital punishment. Sometimes people say, well capital punishment was in the OT but it's not in the NT. Baloney! Here it is right here: Paul says exercise it, you are Rome and Rome has the sword and if I've violated Rome execute me. This is the fundamental right of a human government, the right to kill. If a government doesn't have that right it basically doesn't have any rights. The right to kill is fundamental to preserving law and order. When you see a police officer walking down Main Street he has a gun on his hip. And if you think that's there just for looks you're sadly mistaken. That is there to kill people and, by golly, I hope they do kill criminals. Criminals destroy society; they are ministers of God to preserve law and order so men can live in civility and if someone becomes a cancer to society then that cancer should be removed. So Paul says I have no problem with capital punishment if I've done anything wrong, However, if I've done nothing wrong then **no one can hand me over to them.** I exercise my legal rights. So now he's aggressively using the court system to maintain law and order. He's not being a jerk, he's just exercising his rights.

**I appeal to Caesar!** Now at this point Paul knows there's no other way. Festus' court is corrupt, they've found him innocent but they still won't let him go and he has no other option. And I'm going to go all the way to Caesar if necessary but I am going to get my day in court. Now there's the attitude, that's a real Christian attitude. If it isn't, we've got problems because it's the Apostle Paul that's teaching us how to be Christians and that's how Paul acts. He acts with his own initiative to defend himself. Now you'll notice what Festus tries to do at the end of verse 12. He doesn't like this very much and he doesn't care at all that Paul has made this advance in the court proceedings and he knows what's going to happen when the case gets to



Rome; he's going to be on the hot seat. So he has this little sly way of bullying Paul. Notice the language at the end of verse 12, **Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."** In other words, you want Caesar, fine. Caesar is going to eat you up. That kind of thing.

Now for those of you familiar with who was Caesar at the time you may be wondering why Paul would appeal to him. Nero was Caesar and Nero is known for his reign of terror over Christians and so it sounds strange that Paul would appeal to Nero. But Nero's first five years (AD54-59) of rule were carried out by an administration led by Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, and Afranius Burrus, the honest prefect of the praetorian guard. These years were looked upon as a miniature Golden Age. There was little going on in AD59 that gave warning of the events of AD64. It won't be until AD64 that Nero turns against Christianity, blaming them for burning Rome.

Now in v 13 we have the arrival of King Agrippa. King Agrippa is another Herod. Let's look at the family tree. King Agrippa is the brother of Drusilla who we met last week. She was a fourth generation Herod and so is King Agrippa. Let's review this family from the top. The Herod family was infamous for their dealings with the Jews, partly because they had some Jewish blood in the family. One of Herod the Great's wives was a Maccabaeen princess and by this he had influence among the Jews which made them a very important family for Rome. The dynasty begins with Herod the Great, here they call him Herod, the king. He was one nasty guy. He was classified as what we call today OCD, obsessive compulsive disorder. He always thought someone was trying to kill him and so he'd kill you first. So Caesar had a little saying about him, he said, it's better to be Herod's pig than Herod's son because you'd have a lot less chance of getting slaughtered. So when he heard that the king of the Jews had been born he sent a dispatch down to destroy all the baby boys near Bethlehem, that's Matt 2. Then you have in the gospels Herod Antipas, called the Fox, he's the one that had John the Baptist's head put on a silver platter for his daughter's birthday present. So as you can see this is a real nice family, this is great stuff. They followed all the ploys of ancient kings, just destroy anyone who's a threat and it happened to be all the Christians that were the threat. So don't be surprised if you're held to a double standard today. The same story continues. When it comes to the First Amendment everyone has that right, except Christians.

That's no accident. That is carefully designed and it's been that way since the first century so don't be surprised, it's just the way Satan plays the game. He loads the dice against your favor. All these guys persecute Christians and fortunately all these guys die horrible deaths. God has a way of dealing with the most evil people, He'll just have them die a horrible death and when you see that in Scripture just remember what God's saying, He's saying, I give you a foreview of the fact that I do judge evil. I know sometimes it doesn't appear that I do, but here are some cases just so you don't forget that I am just and I will judge evil. So you find people like Jezebel in the OT, an absolute apostate, almost wrecked the entire northern kingdom with her Baal cult, and she's thrown out the window and eaten by dogs. Then we read of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ and his body was hung on a tree and then fell over the wall of Jerusalem and when it hit the ground his bowels burst forth all over the place, it's a lovely site. Well, all the Herod's had similar deaths. Then you had Herod Agrippa I, he's the one in Acts 12 who had James the apostle beheaded. And hopefully you remember his death. He was the one who put on his royal apparel and went out to sit on the judgment seat and Josephus says he was shining like silver and he started to talk and the people said the voice of a god and not a man and he didn't stop them from worshipping him so God struck him and he was eaten with worms and died. Well, he had a little son at the time named Herod Agrippa II, he was just seventeen years old at the time his daddy died. And he started out ruling a two-bit nothing up around the Sea of Galilee but gradually he acquired more and more until he was over all Jerusalem and became King Agrippa II. And he was the one who built a palace way up high so he could see all of Jerusalem and from there he had a birds eye view of the inner court of the Temple and the Jews got mad about that and built a wall so he couldn't see. That's the man that comes in v 13, and he comes with his sister Bernice. And he and Bernice had an incestuous relationship. She was a nasty, nasty woman. She'd been married to her uncle at one point, he died, she married a king named Polemo and divorced him and now it was her brother she was making it with. Even the Romans cringed at her conduct. So she was a real piece of work.

Now they've come down to Caesarea to greet Felix, the new **procurator**. And you can imagine this is a real bonus for Festus because he's stalling with Paul. Paul's appealed to Caesar but he doesn't know what to write to Caesar, so he's looking for someone that can help him write something against Paul

so he doesn't look inept before Caesar. And so here comes King Agrippa II and he knows all about the Jews. He is a Jew; he's had years of dealings with them so he can help Festus.

All these men had face to face contact with some of the greatest believers in their generation and they slaughtered them. So this little boy that's about to go to this trial in the rest of Acts 25 is a kid who's heard the gospel before. He's in a family that's been evangelized before. So with that in the background, let's start in verse 13.

**<sup>13</sup>Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus. <sup>14</sup>While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix; now Festus is worried, he's worried about what his name is going to look like when this case gets before Caesar. So he describes in verses 15ff the whole thing that we've been through twice now so we'll just read it. <sup>15</sup>and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. <sup>16</sup>"I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges. <sup>17</sup>"So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me. <sup>18</sup>"When the accusers stood up, they *began* bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting, <sup>19</sup>but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. <sup>20</sup>"Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters. <sup>21</sup>"But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, that should read *Augustus'* decision, not the Emperor's. The Latin behind this is Augustus, which means Revered One and the reason this title is being used of Caesar is because of the transition to Emperor worship and Augustus is a word of worship. Caesar is not the bad name of Caesar; the bad name for the Christian was Augustus because Augustus is a title that eventually became God; it's the trend here of deification of the Caesars. So he's appealed to Augustus, **I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar.**" <sup>22</sup>Then Agrippa *said***

to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.” And so he gets his wish, “**Tomorrow,**” he said, “**you shall hear him.**” And so Herod Agrippa II who was always interested in Jewish affairs is going to get his shot at hearing Paul’s gospel, which turns out to be Paul’s most complete gospel defense. But let’s finish vv 23-27.

Beginning in verse 23 to the end of the chapter you’ve got irony. Here we have to kind of back off and appreciate Luke. He does this all with tongue in cheek and you just kind of have to read it and get a feel for what he’s doing, he’s laughing at them. Luke is laughing at these people. Watch how he writes it up. Acts 25:23, **So, on the next day when Agrippa came with Bernice** (see him stick **Bernice** in there?), now that doesn’t mean anything to us without the historical background, but in first generation, everybody in the Mediterranean world knew of the affair between Agrippa and Bernice, so here he’s got this spectacle of brother and sister holding hands coming in, in **amid great pomp**, which is the word for fantasy, this is all a big fantasy, just watch, here they are **amid great pomp and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.** So it’s this great spectacle. Everyone that’s anyone is invited and the incestuous couple is royally honored and then read the end of the verse, **Paul was brought in**, and so here comes Paul in chains, the only guy that has integrity and Luke says look at the contrast. It’s pure irony for all the pomp around these immoral kings and little Paul down here chained in the court. The irony of history is, unless you’re a specialist student of history and you specialize in this area you never read anything about Festus; who’s Festus? Some Roman bureaucrat somewhere, that’s all, he’s a nobody. The only place you read about Festus and Agrippa and Bernice today is in the book about Paul. So the scene of great pomp and circumstance of the rulers of this world and the little lowly apostle Paul is completely turned around by Luke. From Luke’s perspective the great pomp and the circumstance, whatever there is that’s left, is just a sidelight in the biography of Paul which we know as the Book of Acts. See how God works in history? He just destroys from historical memory the clods and the great people, the really great people are the only ones who are left.

So Paul answers and stands before them. Festus, however, before the Pauline address, and next week we’ll get to what he said, in Acts 25:24-27 you have

the pathetic close to the affair. Just pathetic, look at it. Here's Festus, the panicky bureaucrat who can't get an indictment on Paul, look at what he's saying. Verse 24, **Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.** Literally screaming, yelling out. When you don't have an argument what do you do? You increase the volume. It's a tactic of argument. So just know when someone gets loud it's because they don't know what they're talking about. <sup>25</sup>**"But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.** <sup>26</sup>**"Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you *all* and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.** <sup>27</sup>**"For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."**

Now isn't that the grand climax of the affair? Would you please help me get an indictment against this guy, you know, he's a prisoner? Why is he a prisoner? Well, I don't know why he's a prisoner; everybody says he ought to be a prisoner. Well, you know how that's going to set with Caesar. And so Festus is scared he's going to look like a fool so he's got to get something against Paul. So we come full circle at this point for our encouragement as Christians.

What have we seen again that we have seen at least a dozen times in the last several months in the Acts series? The parallel between how the world handled Christ and how the world handled the apostles. Remember Christ's trial; could they ever get an indictment that would hold against Christ? No. They can't get an indictment to hold against Paul either. Because the world hates the Christians and it doesn't have a just cause but it must exterminate them. So the hope that we have from Acts is God is controlling history. Paul will get to Rome and Paul will witness to Caesar himself, the most powerful man in his day will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and be given an invitation to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Turn to Acts 9:15, the Damascus Road for the conclusion. "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;" here's the first king right here, King Agrippa, very soon he'll stand before the second king, Caesar. This was all forecast way back on the

Damascus Road. Now we don't know what Paul thought when he heard this. Wow, I'm going to be a great Christian, my ministry is going to outshine everybody else, who knows, but the next verse says, yeah, you're going to be a great Christian but you're going to face great sufferings. Don't think that you're just going to stand up there and everybody's going to chant your name. No, you're going to learn what it's like to be Christ-like. You're going to have to go through tremendous suffering, Paul. You're not going to be invited to dinner at Caesar's house, you're going to go in chains. But even in chains the word of God will go forth and not return void, and men will come to Christ. So successful will Paul be as notes have it in the last of Acts, that the very household of Caesar becomes filled with believers in Christ.

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