

Acts Chapter 25

James wrote:

James 1:2-3 “²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

- James wrote it, and here we see Paul living it out:

V: 1-5 It's been two years since Paul has been under house arrest in Caesarea, having been moved there by a large contingent of soldiers.

- Felix was holding out waiting for a bribe to release Paul, whom he knew to be innocent. In the interim Felix was sacked, removed from being governor and recalled back to Rome.
- Festus is now Felix's replacement. The new governor lands in Caesarea where he stays for 3 days, then moves on to Jerusalem.
- This was an act of political diplomacy on Festus' part, the first thing he did was to go up to Jerusalem and meet with the leaders of the Jews.
- This was a courteous act on Festus' part, whom history tells us was basically a good man. It doesn't come through so much in this chapter, but he only reigned for two years there in Caesarea before dying, but he was said to be a good governor during his short reign.
- The Jews immediately petition that Paul be brought to Jerusalem for trial, with their real intent being that of ambushing him along the way and killing him.
- Think what a provocation that would be for the new governor to acquiesce to their request, then for the Jews to attack a contingent of Roman soldiers and kill Paul who was under their protection. They were willing to go through the soldiers to accomplish this.
- This could only result in more hardship and malice from Rome upon the Jewish people, and all because of jealousy and empty religion, not to mention power and greed on the part of the High Priest and the council.

I don't think it's a coincidence that this was written to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 12:15 “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

- The Jews obviously have a root of bitterness towards Paul, and many are and have been defiled by it.

- In the changing of the guard it is probable that Felix briefed Festus on Paul's situation, being an issue of unfinished business. When the Jews sought to take advantage of Festus' in-experience as part of their plan to kill Paul, Festus wisely determines that Paul will be tried in Caesarea and that the Jews are welcome to come down and testify against him.
- Ananias the high priest had died and his successor, Johnathan made sure to continue their murderous hatred towards Paul.

V: 6-7 Festus is in Jerusalem for another 10 days then travels back down to Caesarea where the Jews once again make their allegations against Paul which they are not in any way able to prove.

- At this point, now with a 2nd judge, this case should be dismissed.

V: 8-11 Paul again answers the charges declaring that he hasn't done anything wrong; not against the Law, not against the Temple, nor against Caesar.

- But Festus, in seeking to "do the Jews a pleasure" transformed this from a judicial issue to a political issue - justice would no longer be served, but a political goal would be.
- This all sounds very dishonest and improper, yet...

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purposes."

- Just as God used wicked men to bring Jesus to the cross, he will use wicked men at times to accomplish his purposes. All of this seems pretty unreasonable, but God will use it to get Paul to Rome as we'll see in the next verse.
- Paul, seeing the futility of things and or the political shenanigans takes advantage of his Roman citizenship and makes his appeal to Caesar, going over Festus' head.

V: 12 Festus confers with his counsel and doesn't see a way out of it and declares that Paul will be sent to Caesar. Even though this doesn't really make sense, it's the result of what Jesus said would be:

Acts 23:11 "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

Paul had for a long time wanted to go to Rome:

Romans 1:9-11 “⁹For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; ¹⁰Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. ¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;”

V: 13 **Herod Agrippa II** was the last of the Herod's to rule in Israel and he was considered the “king of the Jews” in that Rome had given him legal jurisdiction over the Temple in Jerusalem, in part because he was an expert in Judaism.

- His great grandfather, **Herod the Great**, was the one who after the birth of Jesus ordered the death of all the male infants in the Bethlehem area, then he died shortly thereafter.
- Herod the great had two surviving sons, **Aristobulus**, who was the father of **Agrippa I**, and **Herod Antipas**, who ruled over the Galilee region upon his father's death.
- **Herod Antipas** married his brother's wife, whose name was **Herodias**. When John the Baptist spoke out against that relationship, it made **Herodias** angry and led to his arrest.
- Later, **Herodias** took advantage of a situation when her daughter **Salome** danced before **Herod Antipas** who then made a grand gesture to the girl that he would grant her request, even up to half his kingdom. After talking to her mother she demanded the head of John the Baptist on a charger.
- So it was **Herod Antipas**, the uncle of **Herod Agrippa II**, who had John the Baptist beheaded.
- The father of **Herod Agrippa II**, **Herod Agrippa I** was the one who beheaded James the brother of John, there is much more that could be said, but to say the least this was a bloody violent family.
- **Bernice** was Agrippa's 1/2 sister. They lived under the cloud and suspicion of having an incestuous relationship which made them detestable to the Jews. She was later known for being an immoral woman.
- Bernice was also Drusilla's sister who lived in open adultery with Felix, who'd been recalled back to Rome.
- Bernice would later leave Agrippa to become the mistress of Titus, the Roman general who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, he later became the Emperor

of Rome. When Titus's wife found out about it Bernice, she was sent back to Agrippa, whom many historians agreed that they deserved each other.

V: 14-21 Festus explains his dilemma to Agrippa, pointing out that a Roman citizen accused of a capital crime had the right to face their accusers, and to testify on their own behalf.

- Festus thought there would be a more serious charge brought against Paul.

V: 19 Festus refers to the Jews religion as a "superstition" which is interesting coming from a Roman who's nation worshipped innumerable gods.

- The second issue he refers to is worth further discussion: "... and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."
- This gets to the real heart of the matter, Paul has insisted that Jesus is alive, which is the heart of the Gospel.
- If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then the cross has no power or meaning.

1 Corinthians 15:14, 19 ¹⁴"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." - ¹⁹"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

- With all the other issues circling about - the real issue here is that Paul is preaching Christ and Him crucified, and resurrected, nobody would care otherwise.

V: 20 He explains that because he doubted the charges he sought to move the trial to Jerusalem. Not true, he was doing it to please the Jews and gain favor with them.

V: 21 But Paul puts a kabosh on all of that by appealing to Caesar and taking the case out of his hands.

V: 22-23 Agrippa knew the Jewish Scriptures, he was familiar with those who spoke of the Messiah to come, and had no doubt heard the stories and accounts of Jesus and the miracles he had performed, along with his death and resurrection.

- Since Paul was claiming that Jesus was alive, Agrippa was probably curious to meet Paul and here it all for himself.
- All of this happened amidst great pomp and ceremony, no doubt Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice all decked out in their royal robes and crowns, all the dignitaries and leaders of the city being present.

- This is also a partial fulfillment of Paul's original commission:

Paul had been blinded, Jesus sent Ananias to pray for him, describing:

Acts 9:15 "But the Lord said unto him, go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

- All of this was a more a show and display of power than it was a real trial, but it was also a presentation of the Gospel for which they would all be accountable

V: 24-25 Paul was probably very glad to get to once again plead his case and or use it as an opportunity to share the Gospel with these powerful government officials, people that he would not ordinarily have access to.

2 Corinthians 10 Paul describes himself as a weak and gentle man, a base man empowered by the love of Christ. Yet here we see him with this incredible opportunity to address kings.

LBPB testimony - supervisors / command staff meeting.

Matthew 10:18-20 "18And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

- Festus realizes that Paul is innocent, there is no real reason to keep him.
- Paul has appealed to Caesar, and Festus now has no choice but to send him.
- Octavius who preceded Julius Caesar, was the first Roman ruler to use the name "Caesar Augustus," or "august one." "Augustus" was a title of strength and authority, so every Caesar who followed Octavius chose to use the title "Augustus." The Augustus spoken of here was Caesar Nero.

V: 26-27 Festus describes Augustus, or Caesar Nero as his "lord" which when you see that word in the lower case you'd assume was the word "adonai", like teacher, or master / boss - a title of respect and honor.

- But that is not what this is. The word used here is "kurios" which is the NT equivalent to the OT "Jehovah" - or "LORD". Nero was the first emperor who claimed deity - and this is how Festus refers to him. (1st)
- Festus is in a tight spot. Paul has been held a prisoner now for two years with no real or substantiated charges. Roman justice required a speedy trial which he'd obviously been denied. Add to that they don't have any real charges to levy against Paul.

- If Festus sends Paul to Rome with the flimsy charges from the Sanhedrin, Festus is going to look foolish, so they've got to come up with something better.
- Festus is more worried about looking bad in Caesar's sight, than he is in doing justice unto Paul.

Proverbs 29:25 "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

Galatians 1:10 "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

- As this "trial" proceeds into the next chapter, the roles are reversed. Paul in laying out the Gospel in very clear terms becomes the prosecutor and Felix, Agrippa, and Bernice the defendants. The Gospel unchained!