

Woodland Baptist Church
August 7, 2013 - Wednesday Night in the Word
Acts 25:1-27

1) OPENING REMARKS

- a) Following his three epic journeys Luke describes the five trials Paul had to endure.
 - i) Jewish crowd at the northwest corner of the temple area (22:1)
 - ii) Supreme Jewish Council in Jerusalem (23:1)
 - iii) Caesarea before Felix (24:1)
 - iv) Caesarea before Festus (25:1)
 - v) Caesarea before King Herod Agrippa (26:1)

- b) **Luke 21:13-15** - 12 But before all this [the very end] they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.

2) Transitions:

- a) **1-5** Festus the new governor that replaced Felix, goes to visit Jerusalem to introduce himself to the Jews and learns of Paul's imprisonment and invites the Jews to come to Caesarea to face Paul over the charges they claim.
- b) **6-12** Paul's trial before the Jews and Festus; Paul eventually requests an appeal to Caesar.
- c) **13-22** Festus has an un-expected guest, King Agrippa II and Bernice and he tells the King about Paul and seeks his advice.

3) READ ACTS 25:1-27

4) Verses 1 - The Plot to Kill Paul is REVIVED after two YEARS

- a) **Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. 2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, 3 asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. 4 Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. 5 "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.”

i) Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

(1) Portius Festus was a more moderate and wise governor than Felix.¹⁰²¹ We can see his wisdom in his decision to meet with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem soon after he took office. The province in view was Syria, which contained Judea. [constable]

ii) 2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, 3 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) These Jews realized that they did not have much hope of doing away with Paul through the Roman courts. Ishmael had succeeded Ananias as high priest during the final days of Felix's governorship. The Jew's case against Paul was too weak. Consequently they urged the new governor to return Paul to Jerusalem so they could kill him on the way there (cf.23:12-15). [constable]

(2) During this time the high priest was Ishmael ben Phiabi and there was much infighting for power within the leadership during this period. [Bock]

iii) 4 Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. 5 “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 is not going to commit himself to anything until a trial is held; by requiring a trial in Caesarea, Festus unknowingly protect Paul. [Bock]

5) Verses 6-12 The Jews CHARGE Paul with the same ACCUSATIONS

a) 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. 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. 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." 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?" 10 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. 11 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." 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

(1) Why no fancy lawyer this time? Where is their next Tertullus??

ii) **Seat on the tribunal** - [bema] - judgment seat

iii) **Jews stood around him....bringing serious charges...they could not prove** - most likely the same as before in Acts 24:

- (1) Paul is a pest/plague
- (2) Stirs up riots among Jews all over the world
- (3) Ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes
- (4) Attempted to profane the temple

iv) **Paul's argumentation** - "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense."

v) **Festus' Jewish appeasement** - "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?"

- (1) As the new governor, Festus did not want to do anything that would turn the Jewish authorities against him, especially in view of Felix's record. He did not know how to proceed (v. 20), but he wanted to stay in the Jews' favor. Therefore he somewhat naively asked Paul if he was willing to move his trial to Jerusalem, the site of some of his alleged crimes. The fact that he asked Paul's permission indicates that Paul was not a common criminal but an un-convicted Roman citizen with rights that the governor had to respect.
- (2) According to his understanding, Festus' first response to Paul's opponents (25:3-5) is that of a political novice meeting with the high priests and their allies for the first time. He does not understand the hidden motive in their request, thinking that the main concern is to have the trial as soon as possible. Thus he suggests that the accusers accompany him to Caesarea and hold the trial there. As a quick student of political power, however, he

soon learns of the importance of the high priests to Rome and sees the advantage of granting their request to have Paul put on trial in Jerusalem (25:9)—with the chance of him being turned over to a Jewish court. [Faw]

vi) **Paul's rebuttal** -

- (1) This is the proper venue - **I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried**
- (2) The Jew's have no case against me - **To the Jews I have done nothing wrong, you know this**
- (3) If I am guilty of a capital offense, I'm ready - **If I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.**
- (4) If the Jews charges are empty, release me from them - **If there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them.**
- (5) At this point, I wish to appeal - **I appeal to Caesar**

(a) The appeal to Caesar guarantees a trip to where? ROME!

(b) The Caesar here is Nero, who early reign, advised by Seneca and Afranius Burrus, enjoyed a relatively tranquil period before, however, attaining a different kind of infamous notoriety. [Bock]

vii) Paul seems to have made use of an ancient right of Roman citizens that goes back to at least the fifth century b.c. Known as *provocatio*, it gave a citizen the right to appeal a magistrate's verdict to a jury of fellow citizens.³⁶ Under the empire the emperor himself became the court of appeal, replacing the former jury of peers. Although governors seem to have had the right to pass capital sentences and even to deny appeal in instances involving established laws, in cases not involving well-established precedent (*extra ordinem*) such as Paul's, the right of appeal seems to have been absolute; a procurator such as Festus would not have been in the position to deny it.⁷ Though appeal was generally made only after a verdict had been reached, Paul's appeal before condemnation seems to have been in order. [Polhill]

- b) The governor is in for a surprise as the apostle refuses to budge (25:10–11). On one hand Paul knows by now that he will receive no justice at the hands of Festus. Even more important in his mind, the divine directive is for him to witness for his Lord in Rome (23:11). So he stands on his dignity as a Roman citizen and, with considerable boldness, tells the governor that he has done no wrong to the Jews as you very well know (25:10). He is willing to suffer death if he has committed a capital offense, but there is nothing in the charges against

him. Moreover, he says, no one can turn me over to my enemies, using a verb from the root word for favor (24:27 and 25:2), an expression repeated by Festus in 25:16. [Faw]

i) **Festus' affirmation** - "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

(1) Paul's appeal got Festus off the hook with the Jews, so the governor willingly granted it. He could have released Paul because he was innocent (cf. 26:32), but the charges against him were political sedition and profaning the temple, both of which were capital offenses.

(2) Even though Festus senses Paul's innocence, he cannot release him because of Paul's appeal to Caesar. But he also is not sure what to write to Caesar, given the circumstances. [Bock]

6) **Verses 13-22** Festus get ADVICE from King Agrippa about DEALING with Paul

a) **13** Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. **14** And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix, **15** 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. **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. **17** 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. **18** When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. **19** 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. **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. **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." **22** Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," said he, "you will hear him."

i) Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea - Who are these people?

(1) This King Agrippa was Marcus Julius Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I (12:1-11), the grandson of Aristobulus, and the great grandson of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:1). Herod the Great had tried to destroy the infant Jesus. One of his sons, Antipas, Agrippa II's great uncle, beheaded

John the Baptist and tried our Lord. Agrippa II's father, Agrippa I, executed James, the son of Zebedee and the brother of John. He also imprisoned Peter and died in Caesarea (ch. 12). His son, Agrippa II, is the man Paul now faced. He had grown up in Rome and was a favorite of Emperor Claudius. He was the last in the Herodian dynasty and was the best of the Herods. At the time he visited Festus, Agrippa was the king whom Rome had appointed over the territory northeast of the Judean province. He lived in Caesarea Philippi (Dan of the Old Testament) that he renamed Neronias in honor of Nero. Agrippa was about 30 years old at this time, and his sister, Bernice (Lat. Veronica), was one year younger. He ruled this region from A.D. 50 to 70. Drusilla, Felix's wife, was Agrippa and Bernice's younger sister. Agrippa and Bernice evidently visited Festus on this occasion to pay their respects to the new governor of their neighboring province. Agrippa and Bernice were essentially favorable to the Jews. They both tried to avert the Roman massacre of the Jews in A.D. 66-70.

ii) Festus tells Agrippa about the case with Paul

- (1) There is a man in prison, left by Felix - **v. 14**
- (2) The chief priests and the elders of the Jews stated their case against him, seeking his condemnation, while I was in Jerusalem - **v. 15**
- (3) I told them Paul would remain in custody until they met with him face to face to make their accusations known and for him to have a chance to defend himself - **v. 16**
- (4) When we got back here, we gathered together and brought Paul forward - **v. 17**
- (5) The Jews charged him, but their charges lacked the evils I suspected - **v. 18**
 - (a) 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 v. 19 - Festus finds himself dealing with religious accusations and disputes, not matters of civil law...so Paul is being charged with believing in the resurrection, something that Rome cannot judge and that is not a civil matter anyway. [Bock]
- (6) Being completely at a loss of how to investigate these questions, I offered a change of venue to Jerusalem for trial for Paul - **v. 20**
 - (a) Paul made appeal to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar - **v. 21**

iii) Agrippa decides that he would like to hear from Paul first hand...Festus agrees - v. 22

(1) Like Herod Antipas with Jesus (Luke 23:6-12), Agrippa wants to hear about the movement.

7) CLOSE

- a) "The narrator shows unusual interest in Felix and Festus. They are complex characters with conflicting tendencies. Felix is attracted to Paul and his message, yet seeks a bribe and leaves Paul in prison to appease Paul's enemies. Festus presents a favorable image of himself to the public, but his handling of Paul's case is tainted with favoritism. Neither one is willing to offend the high priests and elders by releasing Paul. The narrator's characterization of the Roman governors contributes to a portrait of Paul as one caught in a web of self-interested maneuvers by people who vie for support within the political jungle. However, Paul is not just a helpless victim. As opportunity comes, he continues to bear witness to his Lord. Although Paul continues to be denied justice and freedom, the saving purpose of God still has use for this resourceful and faithful prisoner."
- b) **Philippians 1:12-14** - I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
- i) Most likely, this written from prison in Rome, not Caesarea, but there is no doubt that Paul was using his imprisonment to spread the gospel.