

ACTS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Acts chapter 24 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

In our last study we saw that the Jews in Jerusalem tried to kill Paul, but he was rescued by the Roman commander and his forces and brought into the Fortress of Antonia.

Things were so bad that over 40 Jews took an oath that they would not eat or drink until they killed Paul themselves!

To pull this off they got the religious leaders to conspire with them and their plot was to have the Roman commander bring Paul to them so they could ask him some more questions and then they would kill Paul.

But their plan was foiled as the commander is made aware of it and he sent Paul by stealth of night with 470 soldiers to Antipatris. And then, the next day 400 of the soldiers headed back home, having kept Paul safe during the most dangerous part of the journey to Caesarea.

And only the 70 horsemen, with Paul, continued on to Caesarea, the headquarters for the Governor of Judea, Felix.

As Paul arrives Felix reads the letter that Lysias the Roman commander sent with Paul explaining the situation, and they are waiting for Paul's accusers to arrive so they then can have the trial to see if Paul was guilty of breaking any law and to determine the fate of Paul.

Let me give you just a little insight into the Roman Law and how it was administered. We are told,

“Law was the most characteristic and lasting expression of the Roman Spirit,” wrote historian Will Durant in *Caesar and Christ*. “The first person in Roman law was the citizen.” In other words, it was the responsibility of the court to protect the citizen from the State, but too often various kinds of corruption infected the system and made justice difficult for the common man. Paul would soon discover how corrupt a Roman governor could be.

“The secret of Roman government was the principle of indirect rule,” wrote Arnold Toynbee. This meant that the real burden of administration was left pretty much on the shoulders of the local authorities. Imperial Rome got involved only if there was danger from without or if the local governing units were at odds with one another.

In this chapter we see the Roman legal system at work and three men each making his contribution.

- Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary NT*, p. 397

Now as true as that is, we also need to understand that God has a plan and Paul will go to Rome in God’s timing and not necessarily in Paul’s, just as God had told Paul. And God has plans for our lives and many times it is not in line with what we think should happen, but all things work together for good because God knows what He is doing, and we don’t. We need to listen and obey!

That is where we will pick-up our study this evening in Acts chapter 24 starting in verse 1 as Paul waits for his accusers to come and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we go through His Word!

ACTS 24**VERSE 1**

Paul has spent some five days in Caesarea now and as the Jewish religious leaders got the request to come and make their defense against Paul, it took them five days to get things in order and travel those 60 or 65 miles from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

And for Ananias, the High Priest to make that journey is impressive since he was around 80 years of age. That just tells me the animosity against Paul was so great that Ananias wanted to make sure this guy was put away or really, put to death! That is how much they hated Paul!

And make no mistake about it, they were prepared to make their case before Felix against Paul. They hired either a Roman or Hellenist Jew, we are not sure, as their prosecuting attorney you might say. His name was Tertullus and he was slick, he was good and if anyone could bring Paul down, this guy could, or at least that is what they thought, that is what they were hoping for.

So they come with Ananias, this lawyer named Tertullus, and the elders in Jerusalem to take down Paul.

VERSES 2-4

Tertullus was using flattering words to get on the good side of Felix, basically saying, "We are so thankful to have a man like you!"

But those words were not true, and they knew it. Felix was not a good man and the Jews did not like him.

Tacitus, a Roman historian said of Felix, “He exercised royal power with the mind of a slave.” You see, he was a slave that won his freedom and through the influence of his brother Pallas, who was in good with Emperor Claudius, he obtained this position.

Felix basically treated others as he was treated as a slave but Tertullus is buttering him up. But you must understand that this was nothing more than lies by Tertullus as Stott tells us, “In reality he [Felix] had put down several insurrections with such barbarous brutality that he earned for himself the horror, not the thanks, of the Jewish population.”

Also, “The picture drawn by Tacitus of Felix’s public and private life is not a pretty one. Trading on the influences of his infamous brother [Pallas, a favorite of the emperor Claudius], he indulged in every license and excess, thinking ‘that he could do any evil act with impunity’ (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.54).” (Williams)

But before the accusations, the crimes against Paul, we see first the lying flattery and then comes the “***But . . . here is the problem we have Felix . . .***”

Let’s read on and see what he has to say.

VERSES 5-9

Here is the case that Tertullus brings against Paul. They have four things against Paul.

First of all, he is a pest, not very nice but they are saying he is nothing but trouble, he is irritating.

Secondly, he is a creator of dissension, something that Rome would not tolerate.

Now this is a very serious charge in a Roman court. Because one thing that Rome would not tolerate was rebellion against the Roman government, as I have said.

Third, he is the boss, the leader of this sect of the Nazarenes or Christians, which Rome considered an off-shoot of Judaism or else they would have put an end to it!

And fourth, he tried to profane the Temple, which he did not do! But, keep in mind that desecrating the Temple also had political overtones because the Romans had given the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who went inside the barrier of the Temple!

And we see what Tertullus does here, he is embellishing the story to make the Jews look good, to make Paul and even Claudius Lysias, the Roman commander on the Temple Mount, look bad!

Tertullus says that as the Jews were dealing with this problem, with Paul, the Roman commander came in and took Paul by force.

That is not exactly true for the Roman commander came in and rescued Paul.

Some lawyers stretch the truth or don't exactly speak forth the truth, only giving details they want.

As he closes he tells Felix that when you see these things for yourself, you will see that Paul is evil and deserving of death!

And to put the icing on the cake you might say, the Jews who were present said they agreed with all that Tertullus presented before them.

Their case has been presented and now it is time for Paul to give his defense. And, maybe they were hoping that Paul would hang himself with what he says. Listen to what transpires next.

VERSES 10-13

Notice what Paul does here. No flattering speech about Felix, he just let's Felix know that he had been governor over the area of Judea "**for many years**" or for about five years and thus Paul reminds Felix that he knows Judaism and thus he can rightly judge this case.

And think about this. Even though it had been no more than twelve days since Paul's arrest, and many witnesses could be easily found, Paul's accusers gave no witnesses to prove that he was in fact in the Temple disputing or inciting the crowd. There was simply no proof for their accusations.

And I guess you can say that Paul's defense is simple, "Where's the beef?"

In other words, where is the evidence of these things they accused him of? You see, they presented no evidence only empty words!

This is something that we need to learn. The Devil loves to blow a lot of hot air about us, some of what he says may be true. He wants to discourage us, cause us to drop out, to destroy our witness. And sometimes we listen to him, but we shouldn't.

Do you know why? Because we have the greatest Defense Attorney around. And as Satan tries to prosecute us, persecute us, our Defense Attorney, Jesus Christ does this for us, as John tells us, "**My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**"

I John 2:1-2.

What a comfort that should be to us. Jesus will defend us before the Father because His blood has cleansed us from all our sins and we are righteous before God in the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith!

VERSES 14-21

Paul now gives his defense before Felix. And Paul wants him, and really the Jews who have come to accuse him, to understand that even though he had come to Christ, he was a Christian, it did not mean he worshiped a different God than the God of his fathers.

What it did mean is that he worshiped the God of his fathers in a new and living way, for the only acceptable way to worship the Father is through Jesus Christ. His faith was still founded on the Old Testament Scriptures, and they bore witness to Jesus Christ.

In fact, what Paul is saying is that all he is guilty of is believing all that the Scriptures teach, he didn't just pick and choose what he wanted and what he didn't want.

And you have to love Paul here as he turns the tables on these religious leaders saying that he is not the heretic, but they are for not believing in all of the Scriptures!

Remember what Jesus said to the Jewish religious leaders in John 5:39-40, "**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**"

And something that Tertullus left out, Paul wants them to hear, the reason he was in Jerusalem in the first place. He was there to bring a gift of money to the church in Jerusalem and the only reason there was trouble was because some Jews from Asia stirred up the people against Paul. He came to help his fellow Jews!

And here Paul gets them again because those who brought these charges against Paul were not even there, so why is Paul even on trial?

And Paul speaks of his time before the council, the Sanhedrin, if there is something he did wrong, let them speak but all that he said was that he believed in the resurrection and the Pharisees believed that also, so again, why is there this trial? The resurrection was the hope of the Jewish people, even though the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection life.

But Job tells us, **“For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”** Job believed in resurrection life!

And in Isaiah 26:19 we are told, **“Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead.”** That is resurrection life folks!

Now the Jews tried to make a political issue out of this, because they knew that was the only thing Rome would act upon. But Paul turned it back into what it really was, a religious issue, because he knew that Rome wouldn't get involved in matters of Jewish theology.

Now as we have been reading through this court case, who is missing? And this is very sad. The ones that were missing were the church, the believers from Jerusalem did not come to Paul's hearing. Where were James and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem who gave Paul the counsel to go into the Temple in the first place?

As I have said before, they became the “Frozen chosen” because they let legalism get in their way.

Tragically, they are nowhere to be found and yet these religious leaders who wanted Paul to be put to death, let nothing stop them from going down to Caesarea! May we stand up for our brothers and sisters in the Lord, come to their side and help them in the situations that they are facing! Encourage them in the work that they are doing!

VERSES 22-23

Make no mistake about it, this was a stall tactic on Felix's part. Keep in mind that Lysias sent a letter explaining everything and there is no evidence that Lysias ever came down to Caesarea.

How many opportunities Felix had as he spent time with Paul and he never received Jesus and thus, he is spending eternity in Hell apart from Him because he kept putting it off!

So now we see that Paul is under house arrest, and he had the freedom to see his friends. Which tells me that Felix knew that Paul was innocent, but could not let him go, he was trying to stay in good with Rome and with the Jews.

Who were the friends that visited Paul? I think Philip, who lived there and Luke, as well as others. Remember, Paul is going to be under house arrest in Caesarea for two years before he goes to Rome! Again, Felix knew that Paul was innocent but walked the middle ground not wanting to offend the Jews!

Again, that is another good lesson for us. We can't sit on the fence or play on both sides. We need to take a stand for the truths of God found in the Word of God. It is as simple as that! And in doing so, you will offend people, but do you fear man more than you fear God? I hope not!

I can't tell you how difficult it is right now. People will fight and argue over false teachers and false teaching, embracing these teachers and teachings, and when you speak against it, they come down hard against you. But, as I have said, I fear God more than I fear man, even though it is tough because God is more important to me!

VERSES 24-25

For whatever reason, maybe curiosity, Felix wanted to hear about Christ from Paul, but he was not moved by the message – why?

I think one reason was his lifestyle, it prevented him from coming to Jesus because he was unwilling to change his ways and the missed opportunities cost him eternal life with Jesus!

Now let me give you a little background information and then we will look at the message the Paul gave to Felix and his wife Drusilla.

Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, the one we read about in Acts chapter 12 who let pride eat away and consume his life – he was eaten by worms and died!

She was the third wife of Felix and because of her beauty Felix lured her away from her husband the King of Emesa (located in the province of Syria).

She became the wife of Felix when she was 16 years old and she is also the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice mentioned in Acts chapter 25.

And I think Stott explains the message of Paul to them nicely. He wrote, “The lax morals of Felix and Drusilla help to explain the topics on which Paul spoke to them.”

It was a three-point message that Paul gave.

The first point was on *righteousness*. That we are not righteous before a holy God. In fact, our righteousness is like filthy rags before Him. Thus, you can't stand before God in your own righteousness, but we can stand before Him in the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith!

The second point was on *self-control*. As we have seen with the brief description of their lifestyle, they need to have self-control, not to continue on in sin! Keep in mind that Felix was an unscrupulous official who did not hesitate to lie, or even to murder, in order to get rid of his enemies and promote himself.

And the third point was on *the judgment to come*. In other words, if you do not come to Christ, if you stand in your own righteousness, you will come under the judgment of God. And make no mistake about it, His judgment is coming!

How did Felix respond to this message? We are told that “**Felix trembled**” (Acts 24:25), which literally means, “Felix became terrified.” That is conviction, heavy conviction upon this man.

Keep in mind that Roman leaders prided themselves in their ability to be stoical and restrain their emotions under all circumstances, but a conviction from God gripped Felix's heart, and he could not hide it. Paul had diagnosed the case and offered the remedy. It was up to Felix to receive it.

And in the end, Felix put Christ off, he said to Paul, “**Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.**” Acts 24:25.

Please understand this, it is important. The claims of Jesus are never convenient for us. If we insist on waiting for “**a convenient time**” we will wait for an eternity – an eternity spent in agonizing separation from God. That is what happened to Felix and Drusilla!

Paul spoke boldly to people who were living in sin, people who needed Jesus and he did not pull any punches. Today, we would water down the message and make it more appealing to the masses but in the end, there is no conviction, there is no coming to Christ! They are just comfortable going to Hell!

Spurgeon put it like this, “Are there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment when we face thy tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might.”

He also wrote, “But some men will say, ‘Sir, ministers ought not to be personal.’ Ministers ought to be personal, and they will never be true to their Master till they are. . . . But now we poor craven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities; but we are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago. There walketh not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove.” (Spurgeon)

May we boldly proclaim the truths of God found in the Word of God and not be ashamed or fearful of what people may think! Remember, Paul said, “**. . . Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**” II Corinthians 6:2.

VERSES 26-27

Look at the change in Felix now. That conviction of God was gone, and he remind separated from God. He did not want to change his lifestyle and now, even though he wanted to hear from Paul, he did so with the idea that Paul may bribe him, give him some money and then Felix could release him. And maybe hearing about that offering that Paul brought to the church in Jerusalem back in verse 17 of Acts chapter 24, he thought Paul had some money to give to him.

And Paul spends two years in prison for crimes he didn't commit because Felix wanted to remain in favor with the Jews but Felix, at this point was succeeded by Porcius Festus.

The reason for this is simple. There was a riot in Caesarea that Felix brutally brought to a stop and the Jews were so mad that they complained to Emperor Nero who recalled Felix to Rome and would have been severely punished if he did not have a brother who was influential and interceded for him. Felix had an opportunity to receive Christ but rejected Him and thus vanished from history. Felix lived out the rest of his life in disgrace in Rome.

Now, what happened to his wife, Drusilla? Two years after this event, in Europe on a shopping spree when Mount Vesuvius exploded, she was caught in the lava of the volcano and died at the age of twenty-one. Felix and Drusilla both had an opportunity to hear the gospel, but they put off making a decision.

It is as Paul said “**Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts . . .’**” Hebrews 3:7-8a.

ACTS 25**VERSES 1-3**

As we have seen, Acts chapter 24 ended with the transition from the governorship of Antonius Felix to that of Porcius Festus. This new governor, Porcius Festus was appointed Roman governor of Judea by the Emperor Nero in the autumn of 60 A. D. Caesarea was the political center for the Roman province of Syria, of which Judea was part of.

And, as we have talked about, Felix was undoubtedly a bad man, but history tells us Festus was a basically good man. He governed well, despite all the problems left him by Felix.

At this time Festus is about 70 years old, only holding this position for about 2 years before he died in office. And he was not a procrastinator like Felix. He took this position seriously as he goes to Jerusalem to meet the people he will be governing only three days after he took office. Not a bad idea.

And as Festus comes to Jerusalem he meets with the Jewish religious leaders; the High Priest and the chief men, the ones who spoke against Paul.

And keep in mind that it has been two years since the trial of Paul and yet, in those two years these Jewish religious leaders continue to hate Paul. In fact, they hate him so much that they still want him dead.

Thus, as Festus comes to town they tell him that they want to see Paul if he could send Paul down to them, and in this was a plot to kill Paul in Jerusalem!

Make no mistake about it, Festus had inherited some of the baggage that Felix left behind and now Paul was the biggest parcel he was going to have to deal with. And this is a huge problem as he takes over this position as governor!

Now I don't want you to miss this because this is what legalism will do. These were the religious leaders in Jerusalem. They were to be the ones to lead the people. And yet, in their actions; lying, plotting murder, there is something that is seriously wrong here.

You would think that after two years they would have let this go, but no, they could not. And that truly is the danger that is seen with the Law and with religion, it is not in contact with the true and living God but is a manifestation of man's heart, which is wicked.

And please don't misunderstand me here. I am not saying that the Law is bad, the Law is good, the Law is perfect, but we are not. Thus, for those who try to live by the Law, they look down upon those who are living in the grace that God has bestowed upon us, as we see here with these religious leaders.

VERSES 4-5

Festus had great wisdom in this situation, at least at this point. Maybe he smelled a skunk and told them if they have a problem with this man, then come down to Caesarea and you will be heard. For whatever the reason, this was a very wise decision on the part of Festus.

And for these Jewish religious leaders, they failed two years earlier with Felix in charge, but they are going to try once again to get Paul put to death!

VERSES 6-8

Keep in mind that Festus has only been the governor for a little more than two weeks and here is his first big issue to deal with.

And as Paul's accusers gathered in the auditorium, Festus sat in the judgment seat, and Paul was brought out once again.

And these Jewish religious leaders brought out all these “**serious charges**” against Paul, but they had no proof that Paul was guilty of any of them. None of these charges could be substantiated!

They want to put Paul to death and yet, they know that all their charges are not true, how wicked they were!

As Paul speaks he basically tells them that he was not coming against the Law of the Jews; he was not coming against the Temple; and he was not coming against Caesar or Rome!

In other words, he has not broken any laws and thus, why is he still in prison?

But, just like two years earlier the case should be closed, and Paul set free but, as we are going to see, that is not what takes place.

We see in the Bible many false accusations against those who love the Lord, like with Joseph and Daniel. And God took care of them just as He does with us.

But, as I have said, the followers of Jesus, will be a target of false accusations by the accuser of the brethren, Satan! Now that may shock some of you but listen to what we are told in Revelation 12:10, “**Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.’**”

And for us, the One who defends us is the Lord, it is Jesus! We are told in Romans 8:33-34, “**Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.**”

The attacks will come, rest in the Lord and He will see you through. Stand strong in the faith as Paul did, and God will take care of you!

As Spurgeon wrote, “We ought never to fear those who are defending the wrong side, for since God is not with them their wisdom is folly, their strength is weakness, and their glory is their shame.” Exactly!

VERSES 9-12

Festus was in a difficult position here. Being the new governor and knowing that his predecessor was recalled because of the trouble he caused with the Jews, Festus is trying to appease the Jews, to win their favor towards him.

But he gives Paul the option, is he willing to go to Jerusalem to face these men? Festus could not just move the court case, he had to get approval from the one who is being accused, since Paul was a Roman citizen.

And when you think about it, justice is supposed to be impartial – you are not to be influenced by anyone or show partiality to anyone, you are just to bring forth justice in the case, but as we have seen, that has not been the case!

For Paul, to return to Jerusalem meant almost certain death! And I think Paul knew that and thus, Paul appeals to Caesar.

Paul knows that he broke no law and if he really did, he was ready to die. It was the right of every Roman citizen, which Paul was one, to have Caesar hear their case if things were not satisfactorily reached in the case and that is what happened here.

Keep in mind that the first five years of Nero's reign, he was under the influence of good men. He was regarded as a wise and just ruler. So Paul had no reason, at least at this time, to believe that Nero would be anti-Christian!

Later on in his life, I believe after Paul witnessed to him about Jesus and made it clear that to reject Jesus meant eternal separation from God, once he rejected this truth, he became a mad-man! Maybe even demonically possessed, as you look at the things that he did!

And Festus speaks to these Jewish religious leaders, no doubt telling them, "Look, it is now out of my hands now. He has appealed to Caesar and that is where I will send him!"

He is basically washing his hands of the situation and I am sure he is glad to get rid of what Felix left behind, Paul.

VERSE 13

With the new governor over Judea in place, Herod Agrippa II, who ruled over the northern part of Israel and his sister Bernice come to pay their respect to the new governor.

Keep in mind that their father was Herod Agrippa I, the one who killed James and had Peter arrested and ultimately Herod Agrippa I was eaten by worms because he did not give God the glory but took it upon himself.

Herod Antipas was his grandfather who beheaded John the Baptist and tried Jesus along with Pilate.

And his great grandfather was Herod the Great, the one who ruled during the birth of Jesus and had the children in Bethlehem, from two years old and under, killed.

Herod Agrippa II was the king over the Jews, he appointed the High Priest for Rome and thus, he was very familiar with Jewish practices.

Now Agrippa and Bernice were more than just brother and sister, they also had an incestuous relationship which was the talk of Rome as you could imagine.

She would occasionally leave her brother for another man, Emperor Vespasian and later his son Titus, but she did return to Agrippa.

Also remember that their sister Drusilla was the wife of the former governor, Felix.

Herod Agrippa II didn't rule over much territory, but he was of great influence because the emperor gave him the right to oversee the affairs of the Temple in Jerusalem and the appointment of the High Priest, as I have said.

VERSES 14-22

What we see here is that Festus is laying this case before Agrippa since he was more familiar with the Jewish religious practices and was hoping for some kind of wisdom in this matter as he was preparing to send Paul to Rome to see Caesar.

Keep in mind that “**Augustus**,” was not a proper name but a title meaning “august one - revered” or “worshiped one,” and it was a title commonly applied to the emperor. The “Caesar” ruling at this time was the infamous Nero!

Now it seems so obvious, they had no real proof of any of these charges, there was no evidence, and thus, ***“If the glove doesn't fit, we must acquit!”***

But that is not what Felix or Festus did with Paul's case.

Now you can understand Festus not knowing much about the Jewish religion and then about Jesus who was dead and now Paul says He is alive.

Some say the reason he wanted to send Paul to Jerusalem to be heard was so he could hear more about the Jewish faith and see if these charges hold any water!

The problem I see with that is the religious leaders from Jerusalem were there in Caesarea and Festus could have questioned them there, so going to Jerusalem would not have helped the situation.

But he says that he asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to defend himself and Paul said no, that he has appealed his case to Caesar and thus, Festus is going to send Paul to Rome.

Now in regard to the risen Lord, it is not just that Paul claimed He was alive. He saw the risen Lord, he heard the risen Lord, he spoke to the risen Lord, he had a personal encounter with the risen Lord and thus he could say with 100% accuracy that He has risen!

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:8-11, **“Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”**

Now, like then, people today try to deny the resurrection and yet without it, we are lost.

Paul continued on saying in I Corinthians 15:17-22, **“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”**

That is our hope, that He is risen, and we can rest in the fact that He lives, and we shall live with Him!

Also, keep in mind that this was not a trial because Agrippa had no jurisdiction in the matter. Agrippa, understanding Jewish customs, wants to hear more of this matter, that he might gain some insight in these things for Festus and himself from Paul.

But here is what I love, Because of Agrippa's curiosity, it meant that Paul would have another opportunity to speak God's truth to a Gentile ruler.

This would be the third such opportunity for Paul in Acts 24-26 (Felix, Festus, and now Agrippa).

VERSE 23

Picture in your mind all that is taking place here. Here come all these political leaders with all the pomp and pageantry as they enter this big auditorium on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea there in Caesarea.

And here enters Agrippa in his robes of royalty, purple, with a crown of gold, gold rings and possibly even a scepter.

His sister Bernice, not technically a queen but probably dressed like one.

Festus was there in his royal robes.

Then there were the commanders of the five cohorts stationed at Caesarea all dressed up including the prominent men of the city.

As you look at all that pomp and pageantry here, it was like a Hollywood event.

Everyone was dressed up except one. As everyone has entered in, here comes Paul walking in. A short, crooked nosed, bow-legged man who was probably not dressed in his Sunday best! And yet, in all his weakness, in all of his unflattering clothes, Paul had more than all of them put together, he had Jesus!

We must never forget that or lose sight of that fact!

VERSES 24-27

As you read this you can clearly see that Festus was in trouble. And the reason he was in trouble was that before he could send Paul to Caesar, he had to have the appropriate paperwork put together, the charges against Paul and right now he has none! Luke is showing us very clearly the problem that Festus had, he understood that Paul was innocent.

And thus, Festus is saying, *“Help me get AGRIPPA this situation!”*

Sorry about that!

Festus is hoping that Agrippa will help him find something he could use against Paul and send on to Rome, charges against Paul.

When you stand up for the truth, when you are living in Christ Jesus, you will face persecution, people will come against you.

Look at Paul. He was innocent of any of the charges they tried to bring against him.

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 5:11, **“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.”**

And Peter tells us in I Peter 4:12-19, **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”**

Another words, we are to suffer for righteousness sake and not for being obnoxious or living in an ungodly manner. May we learn the lesson from Paul and be above reproach!

Next time we will see Paul’s defense before Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, and many others as he stands in this beautiful amphitheater sharing his faith! As you will see, Paul will use this opportunity to preach one of the greatest sermons ever recorded!