

Acts 25 & 26**Lesson 24
Paul Before Festus and Paul Before Agrippa****Outline Chapter 25****I. Paul Before Festus (vv. 1-12)**

- A. *The Jews informed Festus about Paul (vv. 1-5)*
 1. They asked that Paul be brought to Jerusalem so they could kill him along the way (vv. 1-3)
 2. Festus said he would go to Caesarea and asked the accusers to go with him (vv. 4-5)
- B. *Paul appealed to Caesar (vv. 6-12)*
 1. The Jews brought many charges against Paul, but no proof (vv. 6-7)
 2. Paul responded saying he had done no wrong (v. 8)
 3. Festus asked if Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem to be judged (v. 9)
 4. Paul asked to go before Caesar (vv. 10-12)

II. Festus Informed King Agrippa (vv. 13-22)

- A. *Festus told of Paul's appeal to Caesar (vv. 13-21)*
 1. Paul was a prisoner left by Felix (v. 14)
 2. When informed I waited until his accusers came (vv. 15-16)
 3. The accusations were not what I thought – it was about Jesus whom Paul affirms to be alive (vv. 17-19)
 4. Paul appealed to Caesar (vv. 20-21)
- B. *King Agrippa said he would hear Paul himself (v. 22)*

III. Festus Presented Paul to King Agrippa (vv. 23-27)

- A. *All entered the auditorium (v. 23)*
- B. *Festus asked king Agrippa to hear Paul so he would have something to write to Caesar (vv. 24-27)*
 1. The Jews said he was not fit to live (v. 24)
 2. But I (Festus) found no cause of death (v. 25a)
 3. He appealed to Caesar, so I am sending him (v. 25b)
 4. I had nothing to write to Caesar, so I brought him to you (vv. 26-27)

Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter**Acts 25:25**

But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him.

Outline Acts 26

I. Paul's Defense before Agrippa (vv. 1-23)

- A. *I am happy to speak – beg you to hear* (vv. 1-3)
- B. *My life before my conversion* (vv. 4-11)
 - 1. Was raised as a Jew (v. 4)
 - 2. Was a Pharisee – the strictest sect (v. 5)
 - 3. Held to the promise made to our fathers (vv. 6-8)
 - a. This (still holding to the promise) is why I am accused (vv. 6-7)
 - b. Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead (v. 8)?
 - 4. I was opposed to Jesus of Nazareth and persecuted his people (vv. 9-11)
- C. *My conversion* (vv. 12-18)
 - 1. A bright light shone on me while on the road to Damascus (vv. 12-13)
 - 2. I heard a voice from heaven (vv. 14-18)
 - a. The voice asked why I was persecuting him (v. 14)
 - b. The voice identified himself as Jesus (v. 15)
 - c. Jesus called me to preach to the Gentiles (vv. 16-18)
- D. *I have been fulfilling my mission to preach to the Gentiles* (vv. 19-23)
 - 1. I preached to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (vv. 19-20)
 - 2. This is the reason they seek to kill me (v. 21)
 - 3. By God's help I continued to preach what the prophets said about Christ (vv. 22-23)

II. Reaction to Paul's Defense (vv. 24-32)

- A. *Festus said he was mad* (vv. 24-26)
- B. *Agrippa was almost persuaded* (vv. 27-29)
- C. *Two conclusions* (vv. 30-32)
 - 1. Done nothing worthy of death or chains (v. 31)
 - 2. Would be set free – except he appealed to Caesar (v. 32)

Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter

Acts 26:31

And when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains."

Paul is left in prison at Caesarea for two years (A.D. 58-60). Felix, the governor, is removed from office by Rome and Festus takes his place. Festus now has to make a decision about what to do with Paul. Because Paul appeals to Caesar, Festus merely becomes a transition point to Paul going before Agrippa. For that reason we will quickly move through chapter 25.

In chapter 26, Paul is giving his defense before King Agrippa. Here, as with Felix, we have another notable case of non-conversion.

Paul Before Festus (25:1-12)

The Jews informed Festus about Paul (vv. 1-5). When Festus visited Jerusalem, the leaders among the Jews told him about Paul and asked that he be brought to Jerusalem so they could kill him along the way (vv. 1-3). Festus said he would go to Caesarea with the accusers to lay the charges out before him (vv. 4-5).

Paul appealed to Caesar (vv. 6-12). After several days Festus went to Caesarea and had Paul brought to him as he sat on the Judgment seat (v. 6). The Jews brought many charges against him, but gave no proof (vv. 6-7). Paul responded saying he had done no wrong against the Jew's law nor against Caesar (v. 8). Festus asked if Paul wanted to be judged before him in Jerusalem (v. 9).¹

Paul asked to go before Caesar (vv. 10).² He told Festus that he had done no wrong. However, if he had committed some crime worthy of death, he would not fight the death penalty (v. 11).³ On the other hand, if he was innocent "neither you nor anyone else has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me" (v. 11, LBP). So he appealed to Caesar. Festus said that Paul would go to Caesar (v. 12).

Festus Informed King Agrippa (25:13-22)

Festus told of Paul's appeal to Caesar (vv. 13-21). After a few days King Agrippa⁴ and his wife Bernice came to visit Festus. Festus informed the king that Paul was a prisoner left by Felix (v. 14). Festus waited until Paul's accusers came (vv.15-16). He found that the accusations were not what he had thought. Rather, it was about Jesus whom Paul affirmed to be alive (vv. 17-19). He appealed to Caesar so he is still in prison (vv. 20-21).

King Agrippa said he would hear Paul himself (v. 22).

Festus Presented Paul to King Agrippa (25:23-27)

All entered the auditorium (v. 23). Agrippa and Bernice came in with great ceremony along with commanders and prominent men. Felix called for Paul to be brought in to him.

Festus asked King Agrippa to hear Paul so he would have something to write Caesar (vv. 24-27). He told the king that the Jews said he was not fit to live (v. 24). However, he found no cause of death in Paul (v. 25a). He appealed to Caesar, so he was sending him to Caesar (v. 25b). Because Festus had nothing to write to Caesar, he brought him to Agrippa (vv. 26-27).

1 This told Paul of the real intent of Festus. He was wanting to show favor toward the Jews.

2 It was within his legal right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar.

3 Capital punishment is approved of God (Gen. 9:6; Exo. 21:12; Deut. 17:4-7; Rom. 13:4).

4 This is Agrippa II, son of Agrippa I (who killed James) and great grandson of Herod the Great. He was a brother to Bernice and Drusilla. "His relation to Bernice his sister was a scandal among Jews and Gentiles alike (Ant, XX, vii, 3)" (I.S.B.E.). He ruled over Judea, and parts of Galilee and Perea (Gareth L. Reese, Acts, xviii).

Paul's Defense before Agrippa (26:1-23)

I am happy to speak – beg you to hear (vv. 1-3). Paul was glad to address the accusations by the Jews before Agrippa especially since he was an expert in the customs and questions of the Jews (v. 3).⁵ Because of that, Agrippa would understand what Paul would say and have a greater potential to be converted.

My life before my conversion (vv. 4-11). He first addressed his background and life before his conversion. He was raised as a Jew (v. 4). He was a Pharisee of the strictest sect (v. 5).

He was being judged because he preached the things that the Jews hoped for—the coming of the Messiah. He held to the promise made to the fathers (vv. 6-8).⁶ In view of this hope, it should not have been thought incredible that God should raise the dead (v. 8).

Going back to his former life, he (like the Jews who opposed him) was set against Jesus of Nazareth (v. 9). He persecuted them to the point of death (v. 10). He even sought them out in foreign cities (v. 11).

My conversion (vv. 12-18).⁷ Next he addressed the change in his life and what caused it. While involved in a persecution trip to Damascus, the Lord appeared to him (vv. 12-18).⁸ He saw a bright light (brighter than the noon sun) shining around him (vv. 12-13). He heard a voice from heaven speaking in Hebrew saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (v. 14).⁹ Saul asked who he was, and the voice identified himself as Jesus (v. 15).

Jesus appeared to Paul for the purpose of calling him to preach to the Gentiles (vv. 16-18). The preaching would produce a change that Paul describes in three phrases. 1. To open their eyes. Preaching enables the hearer to see what he has not seen. The listener can see clearly about God, Christ, salvation and the church. 2. To turn them from darkness to light. Darkness stands for sin, ignorance and error. Through preaching the hearer is led to an understanding and walk in the light (cf. Eph. 5:3-14). 3. To turn them from the power of Satan to God. Preaching turns men from the rule of Satan to the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13).

The change produced by the preaching brings two results (v. 18): 1. The forgiveness of sins. Their sins are removed and remembered no more (Heb. 8:12). 2. An inheritance. Once one becomes a child of God he is thus an heir of God (Rom. 8:16-18).

5 Agrippa was given authority from Rome to appoint and remove the high priest. “Herod Agrippa II would thus be looked upon as some kind of authority in matters respecting the Jewish religion” (Reese, *ibid*, 863).

6 Genesis 12:1-3.

7 This is the third account of his conversion (cf. Acts 9, 22).

8 For evidence that Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus look at lessons 9 (Acts 9) and 21 (Acts 22).

9 “The sharp goad carried in the plowman’s hand, against which the oxen kick on being pricked. The metaphor, though not found in Jewish writings, was common in Greek and Roman writings” (M. R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies of the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

I have been fulfilling my mission to preach to the Gentiles (vv. 19-23). Paul pointed out to Agrippa that what has called him into question is his fulfillment of his mission of preaching to the Gentiles. He preached "that they should repent, turn to God¹⁰ and do works befitting repentance"¹¹ (v. 20). This was the reason they sought to kill him (v. 21). It was his preaching about the resurrection and salvation offered to the Gentiles that was the problem – not anything that they found him doing wrong. Yet, by God's help he continued to preach what the prophets said about Christ (vv. 22-23).

Reaction to Paul's Defense (26:24-32)

Festus said he was mad (vv. 24-26). Festus charged that Paul's learning had made him crazy.¹² Paul responded by saying he was not crazy, but spoke words that were true and reasonable (v. 25). He stated that the king knew this for none of this was done in a corner (v. 26). The life of Christ, his crucifixion and resurrection were well known and discussed by believers and enemies alike.

Agrippa was almost persuaded (vv. 27-29). Paul turned to Agrippa and asked if he believed the prophets, then stated he knew he believed (v. 27). Agrippa replied, "You almost persuade¹³ me to become a Christian"¹⁴ (v. 28). Paul responded by saying he wished that he was not just almost but altogether as he was, except for being in chains (v. 29).

Two conclusions (vv. 30-32). The king stood up (ending the hearing), went aside and conferred with Bernice and Festus. They drew two conclusions: 1. Paul had done nothing worthy of death or chains (v. 31). 2. He would have been set free, but he appealed to Caesar (v. 32).

Questions

1. Describe Festus' attitude toward Paul and toward the Jews. _____

2. Why did Paul ask to go before Caesar? _____

¹⁰ This is a reference to baptism. Consider parallel passages: Acts 2:38 (repent and be baptized); Acts 3:19 (repent and be converted); and here in Acts 26:20 (repent and turn to God). Baptism is the point at which one is converted and turns to God.

¹¹ Repentance involves a change of life (cf. Rom. 6). Goodspeed translation says, "live as men who have repented should." The NIV renders this, "prove their repentance by their deeds."

¹² The NIV translates this "Your great learning is driving you insane."

¹³ There is a question as to whether Agrippa was saying he was almost persuaded (see KJV, NKJV, and ASV) or was he ridiculing the idea that in such a short time he could persuade him to become a Christian. The fact that Paul said he knew that Agrippa believed (v. 27) would seem to point to his interest. Paul followed Agrippa's comments with an urge to be fully persuaded (v. 29).

¹⁴ The term Christian is used three times (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16).

3. What do we know about King Agrippa? _____

4. What do we know about Bernice? _____

5. What was the dilemma that Festus faced that caused him to bring Paul's case before King Agrippa? _____

6. What made Agrippa an expert in the Jews' religion? _____

7. Preaching is designed to create what changes? _____

8. What reaction did Festus have to Paul's defense? _____

9. What reaction did Agrippa have to Paul's defense? _____

10. What conclusions did Agrippa, Bernice and Festus draw? _____

