

Acts Chapter 25 Continued

Let me lay a little ground work from the previous lesson. We know that Felix had imprisoned Paul for over two years, and Paul had preached the gospel to him. When Felix was succeeded by Festus, he tried to settle the Paul problem by trying to talk Paul into going to Jerusalem to be tried. Paul refused and appealed to Caesar, which was his right, as a Roman citizen.

Soon after Festus took office, he was visited by King Agrippa and his sister Bernice. After Agrippa has stayed a few days, Festus tells him about Paul. He is still explaining the problem to Agrippa, as we pick up the lesson here (in Acts 25:15).

Acts 25:15 "About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed [me], desiring [to have] judgment against him."

The chief priests and elders of the Jews had so much hate built up of Paul, that after two years they still wanted to kill him.

Acts 25:16 "To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him."

Festus wants Agrippa to know that he has not gone beyond the Roman law in this matter. He is trying to make a good impression on Agrippa the king. He recites to Agrippa the law of the Romans pertaining to this situation. He is saying, I know the Roman law and I stick to it.

Acts 25:17 "Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth."

Here, we see that Festus is explaining to Agrippa that he had not avoided this problem, but had fully done his job.

Acts 25:18-19 "Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:" "But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

Such charges did not belong in a Roman court (18:12-16).

It appears that Festus knows very little about Christianity or Judaism. He even calls their religious belief "superstition". He was telling Agrippa, I thought they would accuse him of breaking some civil law, but the law they were accusing him of breaking was their religious law.

Acts 25:20 "And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked [him] whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters."

“I doubted of such manner of questions”: Festus, a pagan Roman and new in Judea, could not be expected to understand the theological differences between Christians and Jews.

Festus wants Agrippa to know that he did not overlook the wishes of the Jews either.

Acts 25:21 "But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar."

“Caesar”: The “Caesar” ruling now, was the infamous Nero.

Here we hear an apology by Festus to Agrippa for holding Paul over. He is just explaining why he kept Paul over.

Acts 25:22 "Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him."

“I would also hear”: The Greek verb tense implies Herod had been wanting to hear Paul for a long time. As an expert on Jewish affairs (26:3), he relished hearing Christianity’s leading spokesman in person.

All of this has stirred an interest in Agrippa. Agrippa, being a Jew and a king, feels that he might be able to settle this matter himself. He is the superior here and tells Festus that he wants to question Paul the next day. Festus tells him that he will see to it.

Acts 25:23 "And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth."

“Agrippa ... Bernice”: The two are inseparable in Luke’s account (verse 13; 26:30); she is a constant reminder of Agrippa’s scandalous private life (see note on verse 13).

“Chief captains”: The 5 tribunes commanding the 5 cohorts stationed in Caesarea (see note on 10:1).

“Principal men”: The civic leaders of the city.

We see here, that all the men of the city who had any position of rule, came to sit in on this meeting of Agrippa and Bernice with Paul. There was much show of world power. This show was put on for Bernice and Agrippa.

This was probably a large room where trials were generally held. This outward show of world importance is done in honor of visiting dignitaries. Festus, being in direct charge of Paul, commanded him to be brought forth to be examined by Agrippa.

Acts 25:24 "And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and [also] here, crying that he ought not to live any longer."

Festus had just been in power a few days, and had made his first trip as ruler to Jerusalem, when the Jews came to him and asked him to turn Paul over to them. They wanted to kill Paul, but they were not able to convince Festus that he had done anything worthy of death.

Now Festus has explained to all present, who this Paul is who will stand before them. The Jerusalem Jews were not present at this meeting.

Acts 25:25 "But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him."

Remember, Festus has to defend his own decisions at this time, because he has just been in power a very short time. He says here that his decision to send Paul to Augustus Caesar was because Paul had requested that as a Roman citizen.

Acts 25:26 "Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write."

“I have no certain thing”: Since Festus did not understand the nature of the charges against Paul, he did not know what to write in his official report to Nero. For a provincial governor to send a prisoner to the emperor with no clear charges against him was foolish, if not dangerous.

“Specially before thee, O king Agrippa”: Festus hoped Herod’s expertise in Jewish affairs (26:3), would enable him to make sense of the charges against Paul.

Here we see Festus in front of all these witnesses, shifting the responsibility of deciding about Paul over to Agrippa. The name lord (not capitalized), was many times used in speaking of someone who had rule over you.

Acts 25:27 "For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes [laid] against him."

This is almost a plea by Festus. He says how can I send a man to Rome to be tried, when I really have not heard any charges placed against him that would be of interest to a Roman court?

Acts Chapter 25 Continued Questions

1. Who had imprisoned Paul for over two years?
2. Who was Felix replaced with, as ruler?

3. Who had Paul appealed his case to?
4. Who was Festus visited by, soon after taking office?
5. Who had tried to get judgment against Paul?
6. What was the right of a Roman to do, before he was delivered to die?
7. Why is Festus going into such detail to explain to Agrippa, what he had done?
8. In verse 19, he called their religious beliefs what?
9. When Paul appealed to Caesar, what did Festus do?
10. In verse 22, what does Agrippa tell Festus?
11. Why did he want to do this?
12. How did Agrippa and Bernice come to the hall?
13. Who else was present?
14. Who commanded Paul to be brought forth?
15. What did Festus say the Jews at Jerusalem had wanted to do to Paul?
16. Who did Festus address in his speech?
17. In verse 25, Festus says that he found Paul not worthy of _____.
18. Who is Festus calling lord in verse 26?
19. Why did Festus say he brought Paul before these men and Agrippa?
20. In verse 27, Festus said it seemeth unreasonable to do what?