

# Acts Week 50

## Chapters 25, Paul gets his trial.

After being somewhat used by Felix, it seemed hopeful that Paul, after talking to Felix numerous times, might offer him some money. Luke then notes that as Paul began discussing “righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you.” Verse 24:25.

Oh, the power of conviction; how many times have I wanted to close it off, cover my ears so I would not hear? Laughable as it is, we pretend that it has no power if we do not hear it. Does this actually work? As we look around our nation today and at some of the churches teaching an all-loving God and never addressing His wrath, we actually have churches and messages like this. They do not want to offend; attendance is more important than changed hearts. But the hard truth is that closing off our hearing or ignoring it does not change or remove the conviction. A person merely creates mannerisms to deal with them differently. However, Godly convictions may go away if you ignore them long enough, as we read in Romans chapter one. But, this is a dangerous place and situation to be in, and one will, one way or another, be made to deal with them someday.

Luke then goes on, “But after two years, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound. Verse 24:27

After two years! Like it was a week, what took place during this time? This is like Joseph being thrown into prison because of the lie Potiphar’s wife told him. However, Joseph found favor in the eyes of the Lord, but it would still take some time, two years, when the Pharaoh’s cupbearer, who had been imprisoned also and was with Joseph, finally remembered how Joseph could tell what dreams meant. This is another one of those types of moments when one smacks their own forehead and says, “Well, slap me silly; I just remember this really nice guy we were in prison with who could explain dreams.”

Now we get to Chapter 25,

**1 Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, 3 asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him. 4 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself was going there shortly. 5 “Therefore,” he said, “let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him.”**

The fact that Festus is using the words “to see if there is any fault in him” must have been troubling for Paul’s accusers, wanting to hear about a death sentence above allowing him to live. The leader’s hearts were filled with hate and resentment. But, who brought such an attitude upon them, festering like an infection was hate and desire to see Paul executed, and for what? A difference in opinions: is this really that simple? I don’t believe it to be that simple; this was a complete change in beliefs; the only system they knew was changing. However, were the fears as much about changing religious practices as they were about prestige and power?

Fame drives people to protect what they have, and this, I believe, is the more telling response to the changes Paul was now teaching. Could they honestly have been so blind as not to even question the sincerity of what Paul was now committed to, especially knowing his history? And this, Jesus had already challenged the Pharisees about the Scripture identifying Him,

**John 5:39-42, You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**

**41 “I do not receive honor from men. 42 But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.**

You may think this argument was not yet recorded, and it may not have been, but even if it was yet to be recorded, Jesus addressed the Pharisees around A.D. 28, and Paul’s case was in the late 50’s A.D. There is no claiming innocence for their actions.

The message Paul was taking to Rome was addressed to both Felix (Chapter 24) and Festus (Chapter 25) at different times; Paul shared his testimony and gave a sound reason for what he preached. It was not against the Romans or the Jews but the newness of Revelation, a changing of dispensation.

**Galatians 4:3-6, Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”**

Moody addresses “The fullness of time” as being the maturity of the human mind in knowing right from wrong. Now was the time the people of the time were to notice their need for a savior.

The phrase “when the fullness of time came,” does not speak of human events that constrained God. Rather, the Father set the time in advance. The time’s completion (Fulness, vs. 4) was brought about by the coming of the Son. His

coming is the center of history. The Son is fully prepared to redeem (vs. 5) because He is fully human (born) and fully Jewish (under the law) is the position of a Jewish person.

Moody then continues explaining how salvation comes also to all who will believe. “The Spirit imparts assurance of being God’s children (sons) and enables believers to recognize and confess their new intimate relationship with God, (Abba).”

The blessings we receive ...for Paul, are all about salvation, the removal of sin, and man’s inability to be capable of doing so without the work of the Godhead in all Believers. Paul’s heart is not resistant to the Sadducees and Pharisees but one of hurt, for they will not believe.

It is important to keep in mind that in all of this, Paul would be willing to be put to death if he had truly broken the law, but he knew he had not, and the accusations were false; this probably hurt more than the thought of death. **Romans 9:3, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,”** Sometimes, when things happen to those you love, you see them suffer for no reason of their own; your heart becomes heavy, and you have no control over it. You pray and pray, and God always answers your prayer, maybe not how you wanted it, but He answers it, and later you understand what He had in mind all along. Paul is hurting because of the false accusations, but more because he wants everyone to believe so much.

**25:6 And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. 7 When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, 8 while he answered for himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.”**

**9 But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?”**

**10 So Paul said, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. 11 For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.”**

**12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”**

Boice writes of these religious leaders as corrupt, in fact he states, “The Jews in this setting illustrate what I would call the corrupting effects of religion when it is not actually in contact with God. We say, “Even if a person isn’t really born again, even if he or she doesn’t really trust God, isn’t it better at least better to be religious than not be religious?”

We read the verses but do we slow down enough to really hear what they are crying out to us? I intentionally use the word crying because as I read of Paul and think of how he came to Christ and how important it is to him to save souls through the preaching of the word, I hear his heart.

**Romans 10:1-4, Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

I pick up my Bible and my commentary each week, I read and review what others write and how they address the books and letters we have before us. There are many different ways to explain the events taking place; in this section of Scripture, it would be simple to just repeat the event; anyone can do that, perhaps throw in some simple wisdom to shine things up a bit, but this isn’t what God wants from us. We must pray before studying, ask God for wisdom, and be faithful to dig deeper. We must always remember that God looks at the heart; what is your heart saying? I don’t ask this of you only; I ask it of myself often; when God looks down, what does He see in me? Am I good enough? On our own the answer is no, but with the covering of our sin, brought about by the sacrifice on the cross, God sees His Son.

Paul knows his mission is not yet finished, he was told by Jesus to also go to Rome and preach the word.

Paul Appeals to Caesar

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#### **Paul Before Agrippa**

13 And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice<sup>1</sup> came to Caesarea to greet Festus. 14 When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying: “There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, 15 about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. 16 To them I answered, ‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.’ 17 Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. 18 When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, 19 but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. 21 But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar.”

22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.”

“Tomorrow,” he said, “you shall hear him.”

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**23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice<sup>2</sup> had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. 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. 26 I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. 27 For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."**

There is something we tend to miss as we continue to read about this incident: **Acts 23:12: And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.** It is getting, if not already, three years past; I would be surprised if they are still alive. Just a small comment we gloss over as a hyperbole, but why would something of seemingly very little importance be here? Remember, if it is in the Bible, it has reason. Yes, we all have said and made promises and oaths and then moved on neglecting them, but there are two very important issues here to see; the first is obvious: their hate was in full control, so much so they could not rationally reason the outcome if things did not go as expected, which they didn't. The second is the making of promises and oaths.

Think of the man Jephthah, who, when he went to battle the Amorites, made a vow to the Lord, **Judges 11:31: then whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.**" The first to come out and greet him would be his daughter. He kept his vow after giving her two more months to live as she requested.

**Matthew 35:33-37:<sup>3</sup>-Jesus taught concerning vows, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even**

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<sup>2</sup> Βερνίκη, -ης, ἡ, (for Βερενίκη, and this the Macedonic form [cf. Sturz, De dial. Mac., p. 31] of Φερενίκη [i. e. victorious]), Bernice or Berenice, daughter of Herod Agrippa the elder. She married first her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, and after his death Polemon, king of Cilicia. Deserting him soon afterwards, she returned to her brother Agrippa, with whom previously when a widow she was said to have lived incestuously. Finally she became for a time the mistress of the emperor Titus (Josephus, Antiquities 19, 5, 1; 20, 7, 1 and 3; Tacitus, hist. 2, 2 and 81; Suetonius, Titus 7): Acts 25:13, 23; Acts 26:30. Cf. Hausrath in Schenkel i., p. 396f; [Farrar, St. Paul, ii. 599f].

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/vows-God.html>

**one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No ,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one”**

So, as we read and we want to understand the purity of heart and the direction God has for us, we need to be mindful that what appears as very little can often have very large repercussions. Don't ignore the little things.

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