

ACTS

Chapter 25 & 26

Note from Kathy

Paul was such a beautiful example of a life lived for Christ. Jesus taught that his followers were to let their light shine for all to see. He said his followers were to live in such a way that their lives serve as a beacon of truth. That reminds me of a quote I read the other day, "People spend too much time trying to be the captain of someone else's boat. Learn to be a lighthouse and the boats will find their way." The Lord tells us something very similar in Matthew 5:14-16, "You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Acts 25:3-5

They requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. ⁴ Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. ⁵ Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there."



Observation

1. Acts 25 began with Festus arriving in Jerusalem to acquaint himself with all that was going on in the province he had been placed over. He met with the Jewish leaders and the chief priests. What favor did they ask of him?
2. What was their undisclosed motive mentioned in verse 3?
3. Festus did not grant their request. What did he offer instead?
4. The Jewish leaders took Festus up on his offer. They sent a delegation with charges against Paul. What were they missing if they wanted Festus to agree with their charges?

■ Acts 25:8-10

Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar." ⁹ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?" ¹⁰ Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well."

■ Acts 19:21

After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also."

■ Acts 23:11

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

■ Acts 26:2-3

"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently."

■ Acts 26:6-8

"And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. ⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. ⁸ Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?"

5. According to verse 8, what was Paul's three-part defense?
6. In verse 9, Festus offered Paul a solution. What was Paul's response?
7. Paul was a Roman citizen. He had already had his day before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and barely escaped with his life. Read Acts 25:10. What was Festus' real reason for making this offer?
8. All Roman citizens had the right to appeal to Caesar. Look back at Acts 19:21 and Acts 23:11. What had been Paul's planned destination?
9. King Agrippa and Bernice, his sister and cohort, arrived for an official visit to welcome Festus to his new position. This gave Festus a prime opportunity to get help with this delicate, political situation of which he was now in the middle. What did Festus share with Agrippa about Paul's case in verses 26:14-21?

How did King Agrippa respond to hearing this?

10. What was Festus missing in order to send Paul to trial before Caesar?
11. In Acts 26 King Agrippa took control of the proceedings. He gave Paul permission to speak in his own defense. What was Paul's response to presenting his case to King Agrippa, and why did he say he felt this way?
12. What did Paul say was the truth about the relationship he had with these Jewish leaders?
13. In verses 26:6-8, what did Paul say was the real reason he was on trial?
14. Paul admitted his past. He did not sugar coat it, and it was terrible. What did Paul say in verse 11 that he had been obsessed with doing?

Acts 26:11-18

Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.¹² “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.¹³ About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.¹⁴ We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’¹⁵ “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied.¹⁶ ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.’¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

Acts 26:30-32

The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them.³¹ After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”³² Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

15. As Paul was on his murderous mission, he said his life was dramatically altered. What did he say was the event that changed his life forever?
16. Following this life-changing experience, what was Paul's new mission?

Who gave Paul this mission?

Why was it important to know who gave Paul his mission?
17. Paul said he was obedient to carry the message to Damascus, Jerusalem, all Judea and then to the Gentiles. According to verse 20, what was this message?
18. In spite of tremendous opposition, who had been on Paul's side throughout all his trials?
19. Festus abruptly interrupted Paul's defense in verse 24. What did he tell Paul?
20. Not everyone in the room was confused by Paul's testimony. What did King Agrippa say to Paul that proved he knew Paul's intentions?
21. Summarize Paul's response from verse 29.
22. King Agrippa, Bernice, Festus and their entourage left the court. Sadly, what was the consensus of the rulers after hearing the case that day?

Application

1. Festus was in a new position of leadership as the governor of Judea. He wanted to establish his position, so he took a trip from Caesarea to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish leaders. He had hardly taken a breath upon arriving when the Jewish leaders asked for a favor. The scriptures do not say why Festus declined their request, only that he offered to hear the charges as soon as he returned to Caesarea. Whatever the reason, this prompting saved Paul's life. Even a lost man can be led by the Lord when it comes to the safety of a child of God. There are many wonderful verses on this subject. Summarize the verses on the next page in your own words. List any other verses you believe speak to the Lord's promptings.

Proverbs 21:1

In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.

2 Timothy 4:18

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 37:39-40

The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. ⁴⁰ The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

Proverbs 21:1

2 Timothy 4:18

Psalm 37:39-40

Proverbs 18:10

Other verses:

2. After returning to Caesarea, Festus convened the court and called for Paul and his accusers so he could get to the bottom of this matter. Once again there were no witnesses and no proof brought against Paul of any wrong doing that would hold up in a Roman court. Because Festus wanted to look good to the Jews, he offered Paul a chance to go to Jerusalem and stand before the Sanhedrin. Paul was aware that his life would be at risk of an ambush by the Jews, just as it had been on his trip from Jerusalem. Paul appealed to Caesar. Paul knew he would at some point be going to Rome for the Lord, but do you believe this is how he wanted it to happen? Have you ever wanted an opportunity but when it came about, it didn't look anything like you had imagined?
3. A few days later King Agrippa and his sister Bernice arrived in Caesarea and welcomed Festus to his new position. Festus wanted to hear King Agrippa's thoughts on Paul's charges. I'm sure Festus hoped Agrippa would be able to help him determine the charges, so it would be understood why Paul was being sent to trial before Caesar. As he shared the details, King Agrippa was intrigued and asked to hear Paul for himself. Paul had given his testimony over and over and still he was locked up. Why would being able to testify again be a fortunate event?

From reading the scriptures, how do you believe Paul viewed his situation in Caesarea?

There may be times when we are in a position that looks desperate, but it might be our opportunity to shine the light of Jesus, revealing to whom we belong. Are you able to view your difficult and unchanging circumstances as a fortunate, eternal opportunity?

4. Paul was standing before Agrippa, a man who was very familiar with Jewish laws and customs. This was probably not the first time he had dealt with a controversy among the Jews. It would not be hard for

someone of King Agrippa's standing to get to the truth. There were many people who had witnessed Paul's zeal as he persecuted the church. There were also many who could be called to testify to the change that had happened to him since that day on the road to Damascus. What are some of the changes Christ has made in your heart and your life?

Have your friends and family witnessed the changes that Jesus has brought about in you?

■ Colossians 1:27

God wanted everyone, not just the Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you; therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory. It's that simple. That is the substance of our Message.

5. Paul spoke of the hope he had. It is the same hope that God had promised his Jewish ancestors. This is the very reason he is in prison. Paul would later write a letter to the church at Colosse sharing this truth with the believers there. Read the Message version of Colossians 1:27 in the sidebar. What is the hope Paul points out in this verse?

Paul never forgot his extraordinary encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. When we consider the amazing hope we have, everything pales in comparison. We only have this hope if Christ is in us. How much time do you spend recalling the day Christ saved you?

Why not ask the Lord for an opportunity to share your experience with someone else this week?

If you have not experienced God's amazing grace, we would love to talk to you about it.

6. Paul had a simple message: repent, turn to God and live out the gift of salvation you have been given. What is your message?
7. Often the world is confused by our faith. Paul shared his faith to the best of his ability, and yet Festus still thought Paul was crazy. The world cannot understand grace. Grace must be experienced. It is not our responsibility to see to it that people get saved. It is our responsibility to share the good news with them and to live in such a way that the light and love of Jesus can be seen and felt. List some ways those around you are being drawn into a closer relationship with Christ.
8. After Agrippa, Bernice and Festus left the courtroom they all agreed Paul had done nothing worthy of the death penalty or imprisonment. He could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. Paul was headed to Rome, where he had wanted to go. He is about to have a private audience with the most powerful man in the world at

John 7:38

Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

that time. Paul counted his chains as a blessing. Read John 7:38. Are you filled by the Spirit and controlled by the Lord in such a way that John 7:38 is a reality in your life?

Take a moment to pray to your heavenly Father thanking him for all the changes he has made in your life and all he is doing that you do not even realize, and ask him to help you make John 7:38 a reality.

9. King Agrippa and Festus were both rulers. Their positions, granted by the Roman empire, gave them great power to do much good or much harm. Influence is power. What are your areas of influence?

How are you using your power of influence for God's eternal purposes?

10. Paul was a man of great power. According to Acts 1:8, from where did Paul's power and authority come? _____

What are some characteristics you have seen in Paul that you would like to see in your own life?

How would remembering the character and promises of God help you handle future situations with virtue and grace?

