

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for April 19, 2020

Paul Delivered to Agrippa
Acts 25:13-27

Acts 25 begins with Paul in custody in Caesarea as Festus replaces Felix as governor of Judea. After defending himself against the same charges as were made by the Jews before Felix two years earlier (Acts 24), Paul exercised his right as a citizen to have his case heard before the Roman emperor.

Acts 25:13-27 revolves entirely around two characters, Porcius Festus, the governor of Judea, and Herod Agrippa II, ruler over a large region that included Caesarea.

Porcius Festus:

- He was governor of Judea from 59 to 62 AD.
- He succeeded Antonius Felix, who held Paul for two years.
- Like his predecessor, Felix, Festus sought to appease the Jews to protect the peace of Judea by allowing Paul to be put on trial in Jerusalem (25:2-5).
- Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar to try his case.

Herod Agrippa II (Marcus Julius Agrippa):

- Herod Agrippa II was the eighth and final ruler of the Herodian dynasty, which began with his great grandfather, Herod the Great.
- His father, Agrippa I, executed James the apostle (Acts 12) and imprisoned Peter. His aunt was Herodias, who asked for the head of John the Baptist (Mark 6:17-29).
- Agrippa was in his early 30s and was part Jewish but had sided with the Roman empire. Rome had given him the authority over the temple and to appoint the high priest. He grew up in Rome and was educated in the court of Emperor Claudius.

1. Agrippa privately previews the Jews' allegations (25:13-22)

Agrippa visited Caesarea to welcome Festus as the new governor of Judea. Festus took the opportunity to discuss the case of Paul. Agrippa's position as king and his heritage and personal knowledge of Jewish customs led Festus to value his role in the matter.

Festus' predicament:

- He inherited the problem of Paul from Felix.
- His desire to do the Jews a favor (25:9) was met with an appeal to Caesar by Paul.
- Festus was newly appointed and his first case was appealed to Rome.
- This appeal meant that he would have to send the charges in writing to Rome.
- The charges were unproven (25:7).
- He considered the charges simply a religious squabble (25:19).
- He had to submit an appeal over charges that he did not believe warranted the requisite

punishment (25:25).

We should not miss the irony that it was the justice of the Roman government that protected God's messenger from death at the hands of God's chosen people. The Jews were so determined to do away with Paul that they violated their own Law (25:16, cf. John 7:51).

While Festus was unclear regarding the charges against Paul, one thing that was clear to him was Paul's testimony of the resurrection of Jesus. Yet Festus disbelieved this testimony as he considered Jesus to be a dead man. Note that Festus did not question the crucifixion of Christ as just a story, unlike many today.

2. Agrippa publicly presented Festus' assessment (25:23-27)

Agrippa's role was only as an advisor to the new governor as the appeal was to Rome, not to him.

The pomp and circumstance with Agrippa was typical at the time and observed by Luke, who was in Caesarea at the time (cf. Acts 27:1). Luke reported on the events of Paul's arrest (Acts 21:17-26:32) through his personal observations and interviews with eyewitnesses (cf. Luke 1:2).

Luke included Bernice as a contrast to Paul's character. Bernice was the sister of Agrippa II and Felix's wife Drucilla (Acts 24:24). She was formerly the wife of her uncle, Herod of Chalcis and would later be the lover of future Roman Emperor Titus. Agrippa and Bernice were widely considered to be engaged in their own romantic relationship.

Paul would have the opportunity to address King Agrippa (Acts 26) and explain the truth of the resurrection. This is a fulfillment of the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:17-18, "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles"

Festus' dilemma was that he was unsure of what to write about the charges against Paul, which demonstrated the weakness of the case. Festus considered Paul innocent but did not free him.

Furthermore, Festus should have done further investigation regarding Paul's claim regarding the resurrection of Jesus so he could report this to Rome. If we hear of the resurrection of Jesus, we owe it to ourselves to do an investigation as to the merits of this claim. Do not dismiss the significance of the resurrection without consideration.

Paul spent two years in house arrest waiting for the governmental authorities to allow him additional opportunities to serve the Lord. This was all part of God's will for Paul.

May we also patiently make the most of our time while we are waiting for our own opportunities.