

J.W. Maul 20, 77 P.M. WXXII
(P. Verine)
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PAUL'S APPEAL UNTO CAESAR

Acts 25

INTRODUCTION:

Paul has now been for something over two years in prison. Felix has been recalled to Rome in disgrace. And has been succeeded Porcius Festus.
Caesarea - Capital of Roman Province, Judaea.

In Chapter 24, Paul forceably touched the lives of three people. First, Ananias the high priest. He came saying that Paul had stirred up trouble. Carrying on sacreligious things and was guilty of treason against the Roman empire. He was unable to prove either.

The second person was Felix the governor. One of the greatest rascals that ever lived. Paul pulled off his robe and exposed him for his immoral life, before the court.

Drusilla was the third person who was living with Felix in a life of sin. Guilty of sin, not only against mankind but God in Heaven. She was a loose living woman who had no respect for herself or the laws of God. All of these characters were touched by Paul in the 24th chapter. Which we considered under the title, Paul under the jurisdiction of Felix.

They had a powerful lawyer by the name of Tertullus. To bring the charges against Paul. But Paul was able to defend himself, very acceptably. And the trial closed with Felix desiring more information. He felt that the chief captain should come down from Jerusalem. And give something of the original problem with Paul during the mob action.

During the private hearing with Felix, Paul preached his creed. He talked

about his orthodoxy. He spoke of the righteousness of God. He declared that there was such a thing as temperance that all men should be under self-control. And finally, he pointed out judgement. That was ever so real. Felix made the mistake of looking for a more convenient season. The last part of Chapter 24, we read that Festus is now sent to take the office of Felix. And Felix without making a decision, left Paul bound in prison.

I imagine Paul at this point, felt that it was a tragedy. That neither one of the people that he had touched on that day was willing to repent. Felix had a hard heart. And was a man that had sinned grievously against life and knowledge. He trembled - but he would not go beyond that.

There are many people who are afraid to look into their hearts and examine them. As they consider the besetting sin. And to test them as to whether or not they need the approval of God. Like Felix, they listened to the sermon, and yet they are no better off after they have heard it. Felix made two great mistakes -- first, he did not know what constituted a convenient season. And second, he presumed that he might repent and turn to God whenever he pleased. We all give too much light to the external circumstances. How many of you have said, some day I am going to become more religious. By and by, I am going to take a position in my church, or I will begin living a much holier life. And the temptations continue, and the religious advantages seem to become less. And that you are in no better state today than you were years ago.

What is a convenient season - when you feel the willingness of God to receive him. When you feel the drawing of a secret constraining power by the Holy Spirit. When you hear the still small voice within. These things make for a convenient season. And God will make it convenient whenever you are ready

to exercise your faith.

But ~~why~~ do you delay. Naturally, you wish to get rid of the disagreeable subject.

Or you may think there is time enough to think of a serious matter. And then you can become religious as you get older.

You may have an impression that your heart will somehow, first of all need to enjoy the pleasures and the duties of this world. And you just cry out.

And of course, there are others who delay because they do not want to give up something which is inconsistent with God's love and service. Delay is really dangerous. It is the wrong way to go about it. It will rob you of a lot of blessings.

What really happened to these three people that Paul confronted in this last chapter. Well, the high priest was killed. Felix was soon given back to Rome and he died in exile in the mountains. Drusilla went back to Rome and was later buried under the lava flow of Mt. Vesuvius. This ended the career of three wicked persons. Who stood before God's man. They had a chance to be saved. They rejected their opportunity and went down to death and Hell.

We should be careful how we treat God's message in our hearts. It can mean life or death - Heaven or Hell. Heb. 3:7-8.

According to Josephus when Festus arrived in Judea, it happened at some of the villages - that they had been set fire. And Festus moved promptly to clean up the situation. According to Luke, he was going to try to handle Paul's charges that

had been left undecided by Felix.

I think somehow Paul stood at this point very much like the poet expressed it.

Just where you stand in the conflict

There is your place

Just where you think you are useless

Hide not your face.

God placed you there for a purpose

What era it be

Think he has chosen you for it

Work loyally.

Gird on your armour

Be faithful

At toil or rest

Whichever it be

Never doubting

God's way is best.

Out in the light or the darkness

Stand firm and true

This is the work which the Master gives you to do.

THE GIVER OF MIRACLES

A little girl overheard the doctor say of her sick mother, "Only a miracle can save her." She went to her savings box and took out all she had and gave it to the physician saying, "Is this enough to buy a miracle?" The good doctor said, "We do not have miracles for sale. They come when God steps in, and God only comes as we believe and have faith."

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
Miracles happen every day we believe they will happen.

Now as we come to Chapter 25, there are many outstanding values in this chapter.

And we shall briefly survey the picture - taking the picture as a whole. And then perhaps talk about a couple or three matters in this chapter for some outline that would fix it in your mind.

First, arraignment. V. 1-9.

Second, appeal. V. 10-12.

Third, assemblage - V. 13-27.

I. ARRAIGNMENT - V. 1-9.

Now in this passage, we are going to discover that there is the call for judgement, and the charges are made. But Paul is going to be called into account once more. The new governor, Festus.

V. 1 - Festus was new and he made a trip to Jerusalem. To familiarize himself with the political problems that he had. / Get acquainted with the people. And of course, if he had a telephone and T. V. set up - he could have carried on as Mr. Carter to get the pulse beat of the people. This was what Festus was after. He wanted to study the situation. And meet some of these people to determine - he just set foot upon his province. And it is interesting here to note, when he says, after three days. That is on the 3rd day, with a day of rest in between. The language used here is of the resurrection of Jesus, after three days--on the third day. So by common usage then as now - he made this trip down to Jerusalem to become a conscientious ruler. In the political capitol, he visited.

V. 2 - The chief priest and the elders came to pay their respects to the new ruler, upon his very first visit to Jerusalem. And information is given - the renewal of the charges after two years - at the very first opportunity helps us to

see the importance to which they attached to Paul's influence in Jerusalem. The Jews went as soon as they could get to the new governor. They sought an interview with him and told about the crimes of Paul. And at the same time - V. 3 - they sought a favor of the new governor. They wanted him to send the prisoner to trial. What they wanted to do was to kill Paul by ambush. And get some plot worked out. Because it was a good trip from Caesarea to Jerusalem. And they would ambush him. You remember that 40 people had already promised that they were not going to do certain things. They made a vow until they put Paul to death. And there would be plenty of opportunity if they could get Paul transferred back to Caesarea, and down to Jerusalem - if they had knowledge of it. They wanted to kill Paul. That was the plan of this group.

V. 4 - He said, Festus said we are going to keep him in bonds. And this I know disappointed his enemies. They refused to yield to his request.

This is a very good example of hatred. Now some people never give up hatred in their hearts. But they struggle and hug their hatred to their hearts, they nurse them. And grow.

There are still people who have the same attitude - for some reason they begin to dislike someone. They are soon hating them. And although the years come and go, it never dies. It becomes a burden which they must carry around with them. It comes to be a constant irritation. They can never be happy. And really, they are to be pitied.

Leonar ^{Divincio} Devincio was a great artist. A draftsman and an engineer. Then there came a time when his hatred almost ruined him. Just before he painted the Last Supper - he had a quarrel with another painter. He became in raged and embittered and he began to paint. One of the first faces that he painted was the face of Judas.

He decided to ~~heap~~ vengeance upon the other artist by painting his face as the face of Judas. When he had finished painting the face of Judas, everybody recognized it as the face of the other artist. Oh now, he had his revenge. He would hand this picture down to shame this man through succeeding generations.

Then he ~~set about to paint the picture of Christ~~. He ~~could not do it~~. Something held him back. All of his efforts were useless. At length, he came to realize that he could not paint the picture of Christ as long as ~~there was hatred~~ in his heart. So he painted out the face of Judas - and apologized to the other artist. Then he painted the face of Jesus, and the other faces in the picture - which has since become one of the greatest painting the world has ever seen.

My friend, as long as you have any bad feelings in your heart, you will never show forth Jesus in your life. You will never be happy, nor will you be useful in God's kingdom.

Why not get this burden off of your heart. Why not get right with God, in the matter of your feelings for others.

V. 6 - Festus spent 10 days in Jerusalem and then went to Caesarea - the hating Jews were on the job and were ready to accuse Paul. The trial was immediately set up. And took place at Caesarea. Now very few details were given - because they were unnecessary and the charges are to be made. Festus took his place on the judgement seat. Festus lost no time, for the chief men had come down with him. And he sat on the judgement seat to give weight to the decision. The bema - or judgement seat was used. The mighty ones - the men of power. That is, the first men of the Sanhedrin. The Jews had no orator or lawyer this time. At least there

is nothing said about it.

V7 ✓ The charges are exactly the same. They fail in their proof - just as they did before. And they convinced Festus just as they convinced Felix. That there was nothing in the accusation for the Roman court to take note of.

The Jewish leaders in their robes and the old preacher stood on the prisoner's dock. The Jews speak their charges. Not one charge are they able to prove against this man.

V. 9 - What was the judge's duty here. To free the man. He was in a position to acquit him and to release him. But instead of doing his duty, he makes a proposition to Paul. Which we commence reading at V. 9. He is desiring to gain favor with the Jews. Answered Paul and said, wilt thou go up to Jerusalem. And there be judged of these things before me. It is a little difficult to know just what the proposition meant. It may have meant - will you consent to go to Jerusalem and let me try the case all over again at Jerusalem. Are you willing, if I am present, to let the case be taken to Jerusalem and let the Sanhedrin try it. Now the proposition was unfair. Even if it meant that Festus would try the case. Because it took the place of the trial where there was animosity against the prisoner. Which would have been unfair to Paul - but this was the desire of the Jews.

Now the question is, why would Festus please the Jews anymore than he should please Paul. What has a judge to do with things of this kind.

He had been tried and re-tried. And the proposition meant a great hazard to the Apostle Paul. He knew that the Jews knew, and he knew that the chief captain

knew. And Festus knew this because he had all of the correspondence. And Paul says you know that I am not guilty of a single offense. But what Festus suggested was, would mean death for Paul. How would he escape that. How would he overcome that.

Therefore, in summary you discover one or two things. One is that the Jews did not want justice. The Jewish rulers wanted one thing. The death of the man who preached Jesus and the resurrection.

And they were somehow trying to stall the situation until they could bring about his death. They made this strange request.

Well, you remember the last man, Felix, felt that he could perhaps get a bribe out of Paul and sort of let him off the hook. And these blood thirsty enemies had one weapon that they wanted to use and that was death.

And that brings us to the second section of the chapter.

II. THE APPEAL - V. 10-12

What had been done this far was unfair and it was safer for Paul to be in Caesarea. And Festus had reversed his previous decision. He wanted to give a fair favor to the Jews. And he was willing to go against his own promise that he was going to give Paul a fair trial. Men stifle their convictions today because of wealth, or power, or even position.

Now Festus, wanted to do the Jews a favor. You remember Pilate bent Roman

justice in the case of Jesus. And antagonized the Jews. And Felix did the same thing in the case of Paul. He wanted to be loyal to the Romans and to the Jews. He had to live with these people. And Festus didn't want to get off to a bad start.

V. 10
And it was Paul that made his appeal to Caesar. If you had gone to Jerusalem - it would have been the last of him. And the emperor had the right to the final decision. I am standing before Caesar's court. Where I ought to be tried. To the Jews, I have done no wrong. As you well know, if then I am a wrong-doer and I have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. V. 11.

That is the governor Paul is talking too. But Paul knew his rights as a Roman citizen. Moreover, Paul was just tired of waiting. So Paul took the case out of the governor's hands. And went to Caesar. They had a right to appeal directly to the emperor. The effect of the appeal was that the case was to stay all action. The very moment the appeal was made. Only Caesar could act on the case.

The defendant then had the responsibility to present a complete report of the case and transmit it promptly to Rome.

V. 12 - Festus conferred with his council of advisors on the technicalities of Roman law. Is this appeal and order. Is this man a Roman citizen. They perhaps questioned. And they said, V. 12 - You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you shall go.

In our own country when a man is convicted in a lower court he can appeal to a high court. And he continues his appeal til he gets to the highest court which

is the ~~Supreme Court in the U. S.~~

I appeal to Caesar - his trial stopped right there.

Rome was a Republic. The judges had power at any time to arrest the case and to stop its proceedings. Without citing a reason and have it tried before them. The emperor assumed all the functions of the high court. In other words, the emperor had the power and the authority to stop the proceedings of any court in the empire. He also had power to reverse any decision that had been rendered.

But as a Roman citizen living in any of these countries, just by simply saying I appeal to Caesar, it could stop any case, anywhere. They could proceed no further after they made that appeal. There was not anything left of the Roman council or Festus to do. Thou hast appealed to Caesar, unto Caesar shalt thou go.

There were one or two exceptions if a Roman citizen had been caught as a bandit. Or as a pirate. He could not appeal that to Caesar. That had first to be tried by the lower court and a decision rendered on.

There are two or three reactions to notice about this appeal...the Jews went away disappointed. They had hoped that they would have a chance to kill Paul. But they had to go back to Jerusalem in hatred and bitter despair.

Festus, perhaps, he was relieved. He stood between two fires. He wanted to be fair as a Roman judge. And he wanted to favor the Jews that he had to live with.

Paul, he is a happy man. He wanted to go to Rome and speak there for Christ. Acts. 19:21. Romans 15:23-24. Paul had preached throughout the Roman empire in the

great centers. Tarsus, the city of his birth. Jerusalem, the world's most holy city. Antioch, the golden city. Damascus, the world's oldest city. Athens, the city of philosophers. Corinth, the great center in Greece. But he always said he wanted to go to Rome. Now Paul's appeal we note - the reaction. The Jews, they went away disappointed. They hoped for a chance to kill him but they went back in despair. He was relieved. He took his stand between two fires. He wanted to be fair. And he wanted to favor the Jews. And there was Paul - he was happy. He had always wanted to go to Rome and speak for Christ. Acts 19:21. And Romans 15:23-24.

III ASSEMBLAGE - V. 13-27

We read that after certain days, Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea. Here is a great collection, a great crowd of rulers that had come.

Who was Agrippa - he was the last of the Herods. His father had murdered the innocent at the birth of Jesus. His great uncle had murdered John the Baptist. Agrippa had executed James. And he sought to get his hands on Peter also. Each of these men died in disgrace. Sixteen years before this occasion, his father had died in a tragic way - smitten by worms. Who was Bernice. Well, she was Agrippa's own sister. Also the sister of Drusilla. The woman who lived like a heathen with Felix. Now Bernice was married to her uncle Herod. And had abandon him. And the Roman historians tells us and agree - that the declaration of the fact was that at that moment Bernice was living in sin. She later became the mistress of Titus. So this is something of what the crowd made up.

Festus informed them of this case that was left behind - sort of left over. Left on his hands. But Agrippa had to deal with it. Or Festus had to deal with it.

And he tried to do his best. And the man had made an appeal. He was in the process of drumming up some kind of charges.

V. 14 - This group of leaders and rulers had been there for a few days. And he gives the complete story to them.

V. 15 - We read that the Jews had pressured Festus - he admitted to that.

V. 17 - He said we had a brief trial - without any delay. He told them exactly how the trial went off. And what the accusations were.

V. 19 - He gives them one point that amazed him. He said that Paul preached about Jesus. And that Jesus is dead. But Paul affirms that Jesus is alive. And so Festus informs Agrippa that he has a certain prisoner - and it seems that it is his own religion that he is charging him against.

Not violent wickedness But a system of Religion is the charge!

2 things

There are a couple of things to note here - first, Paul is being turned over to a pagan authority. The authority of the Jews. Now that is a strange thing - when a man is going from his countrymen - have to go for justice because his claims are on the citizenship. Rom. 13:1-4.

The second thing to notice here - that Festus said that the case was one concerning Jesus which was dead. This could be the root of all the trouble. Paul had not believed this - not one single chapter. If Paul had not believed in the resurrection - there would not have been a single chapter written, or the truth that abides. What would remain would be the cross. And there would be no power or meaning. To know the importance of the resurrection, is to turn to that familiar

passage in Cor. of Christ crucified. He did not say that Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God. But he is careful to say that it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again. The central fact of your Christian faith is the resurrection of the Lord. Take it away, and the cross remains a tragedy. It is a blunder. It is just the worst thing that has happened in the universe. But to get the real force of the Gospel of Christianity, is to discover that Christ is alive. *your only hope is that Christ is alive & Resurrection*

The Jews said Jesus is dead. Paul affirmed, Jesus is alive! There is a big difference. And the Christian religion presents a living redeemer. One who died on the cross, one who was buried, one who broke the bonds of death - came back to live forever. No other religion can make that claim.

Who was it that inspired the Disciples to go out and to give their lives. Who was it that moved martyrs to die. Who was it who saved Paul on the road to Damascus. It was not some Pharisee - but it was the living Christ. And who is it that comes today and transforms lives. Who is it that stands by the bedside of dying saints and causes them to shout for joy as they move out to another world. Who is it that saves, blesses, helps, and comforts you, as you walk through this weary wicked world. Is it a dead man. No, it is one that has conquered death. It is one who has all power. It is Jesus, our living Lord.

Charles Cox was pastor of little Method Church Atlantic Prairie, 60 people - School house. One day at a Lord's Supper - something happened - During the Communion service as he shared the broken bread & the crushed fruit of the vine - suddenly it came to my heart. "This is Real!" He actually said, Paul atoning sin for my sins, atoned for my justification, He lives, He's Real!

Paul was right when he claimed that Jesus was alive. He saw his glory in I go over to the life that was shown him on the Damascus road. He heard that voice, why persecuteth thou me. He knew that his own life had been changed altogether.

*soon
inviting
People.*

He knew that Christ lived within. Paul spoke his conviction. He lives, Jesus lives. I know my redeemer lives.

*John Wesley - came to Georgia & failed - Returned England - Moravian Miss
witnessed to him. Man was reading perfect goodness Commentary of Romans - Wesley
wrote in diary "my heart was strangely warmed. I knew Jesus death, his, his,*

Now Festus went on to tell about Paul's appeal to Rome.

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V. 21 - Of his appeal to Caesar. And he promised Bernice and Agrippa that they would hear him tomorrow.

V. 23 - The great assembly is gathered in tremendous pomp as the way Luke described it. That means to put emphasis on the appearance of things that were taking place. As you look on this scene, they must have been dressed in their best. The members of the court come in and the soldiers, the kings. And his sister in their expensive robes. It was a distinguished body.

And from the side door, it says Paul is brought forth. They came out leading the humble servant of Christ. The faithful preacher of God, God's man of the hour, a preacher. Has faced this group. And I imagine he was praying in his heart, I hope I'll have a chance to preach the Gospel. The meeting had been arranged and this was purely for the fact that they would like to see Paul and hear him. And so this was an exciting gathering - as they gathered to hear the old man tell what he had to say.

V. 24 - Festus makes a presentation. He resented the man. Men say that he ought to die.

V. 25 - He confesses that I found him not guilty of anything of death. But he has appealed to Caesar.

V. 26 - He makes a request of this assemblage. I really have nothing to write to my Lord, the emperor, whereof that I might send with this prisoner. O king Agrippa, will you not listen to him. And help me somewhat to write this charge.

It is very unreasonable that I send this prisoner without some crime being laid against him.

This is a pathetic sight - here is a man of God. I would like for you to help me state this case, for the emperor. I have nothing to write.

I can imagine that when Paul comes in, there are some comments. You mean that's Paul - that unimposing figure. He wore the chains. As he came in. He had God's spirit upon him. He doesn't look like a man that would start a riot. He doesn't look like a person who really deserves death.

Did Festus bring us in here to hear such a man as this. You wonder at this time what is going on in Paul's mind. Paul looks around at all the pomp and ceremony and great assembly. Was he identifying the great person is present. Was Paul wishing that somehow he would have been able to have a new robe on. Or to be better groomed. Have a little perfume on. He had been staying in that old prison. I wonder about his reactions and what he felt as he stood here. But in his mind he said, I have appealed to Caesar - I know that I am not guilty. Why don't they acquit me. And even the man admits that he has nothing definite to write about Paul.

Now Paul is going to be given the privilege of speaking. We are going to listen to his message in the next chapter. And you don't want to miss that message of Paul.

Paul was a real sufferer. No wonder he could write later on Rom. 8:29, we know that all things work together. He was a sufferer. All the powers of Hell

were against him. And here he was - but he knew Jesus.

ill
I read about a little Chinese Christian woman, that Hershel Ford told about once. Who was afflicted with a dread disease. Which brought insufferable pain. One day a group of Christian friends went to see her. They sang a few hymns. One of them offered a prayer. When they opened their eyes - they saw the tears streaming down the face of the invalid. And soon she said, in the midst of intense pain, "I don't know why. But I do know him."

That is the main thing after all. You may not know (why) - maybe some of you who are suffering this hour. But if you know him. The Apostle Paul brings to focus here as he makes his appeal to Caesar.

Julian Duguid tells how he once crossed the Atlantic in the same ship as Sir Wilfred Grenfell. Grenfell was not an imposing figure to look at. But he says when Grenfell entered one of the ship's rooms - he could tell he was there without looking around. Because a wave of power emanated from the man. When a man has Christ in his heart and God at his right hand, he has the secret of power. Of whom then shall he be afraid.

Here was this little tent maker with his hands chained. With great power that will flow through him.