

## 180513 Acts 25 - Pomp and Circumstance

Since Paul went to Jerusalem - He found himself in a riot in the temple, beaten by the rabble rousers, bound by the Romans, the high priest had him punched, he had to be rescued from the Sadducees and Pharisees from tearing him apart, then his nephew got wind of the assassination plot

Paul was escorted to Caesarea (by the sea), Stood trial before Felix, flattery fest, but no case against Paul, Felix the rat and Drusilla the fox, would have Paul share with them. Felix hears of righteousness, self-control, and judgement to come - trembles in conviction - sadly says come back when it is more convenient.

For two years Paul finds himself under “house arrest”, because Felix wants to please the Jews, unless Paul is willing to offer him a bribe to be released from his incarceration.

I think he Lord was giving Paul a rest after two pretty long and intense missionary journeys, and in preparation for his journey to Rome.

Outbreak of civil war between Jew and Gentiles in Caesarea, and Felix with brutality stirred the hornet's nest of the Jews. Felix was recalled to Rome and relieved of his duties.

Porcius Festus was appointed - new Roman Governor of Judea. He was in his 70's, and he was a “good guy”, he had the incredibly difficult task to try and come in and clean up after Felix's mess.

The Jews were a thorn in Rome's side - touchy, stubborn, prideful, religious zealots - still wanted to murder Paul - in 10 yrs - Titus will destroy Temple in Jerusalem, in 13 yrs - 936 jewish rebels will commit suicide on top of Masada. Festus finds himself in a very tenuous situation.

1 Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Festus is not messing around, and basically heads straight to Jerusalem diplomatically - the headquarters of his headaches. To regain favor with the Jews - “Under new Management”

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.

You would think that after two years of prison, they would get over it. Instead their bitterness toward Paul has taken deep root, that resulted in the religious leaders now devising a plot to kill Paul.

Hebrew12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

If the fruit of your religious pursuits results in murdering and lying, there is something wrong with your religion, suffered a disconnect from God

As it turns out, not only was Paul recovering, being provided for, and prepared for the mission ahead, he was also being protected (protective custody)

4 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly.

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Did Festus know the Jews plan to ambush Paul? We don't know. Regardless he denied their request to bring Paul back to Jerusalem, and this was another way that God protected Paul. Providence

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."

Having another trial was a capitulation on Festus part - diplomatic move - to win favor and a denial of venue change to remind them who is in charge - velvet hammer of Festus

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."

False - baseless - accusations - hard to hear, hard to handle -especially when life is in the balance.

How often Paul must have been encouraged by **Joseph and Daniel, and Jesus.**

He had already written the book of Romans - How often did he prink Romans 8 - daily?

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Romans 8:23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor

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things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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?"

Festus being good man honored the civil rights of a Roman citizen therefore he respectfully asks Paul. Festus is trying to avoid the fate of Felix, and est. good relationship with the Jewish people.

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."

Though Paul was not aware of the ambush plot, he knew that going to Jerusalem was a death sentence. But he clearly testifies - I'm not afraid to die, but I am not a fool either.

Paul wasn't afraid to face the lions, but he didn't want to unnecessarily put his head in a lion's mouth.

Every Roman citizen had the right to have his case heard by Caesar himself. Paul appealed to the supreme court of the Roman Empire. Caesar Nero - He wasn't crazy yet.

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

Checking with counsel, probably looking to see if there was a way out of this, knowing that he would be seen as incompetent to send Paul's case to Rome, with no charge against him.

13 And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

Agrippa and Bernice politically come to pay respects to the new Roman Governor Festus. Agrippa II the last of the Herods to rule in the region.

He was the great-grandson of the Herod the Great — the paranoid king who ordered every baby boy in Bethlehem under the age of 2 years old to be murdered in the hopes of killing Jesus (Matt 2:16-18).

Agrippa II was the son of the Herod who killed the Apostle James (Acts 12).

Agrippa was king of a very small part of that region, North of Galilee (Lebanon - Syria). He also had the responsibility of presiding over the temple mount and picking the high priest in Jerusalem.

Bernice was Drusilla's sister(wife of Felix), and Agrippa II's sister. Bernice was more of a foxy lady than Drusilla - eventually ends up with Titus - and back to Herod - Detested by Jews and Gentiles

Festus sees their visit as an opportunity to find a way out of his quandary, predicament, dilemma - Agrippa was more knowledgeable of the Jewish religion and most likely Jesus as well.

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

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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.'

It was clear to Festus that the Jews wanted the destruction of Paul.

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,

Festus expected substantial evidence to warrant the death penalty for Paul

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.

Paul boldly and clearly declared the resurrection of Jesus Christ that Festus knew about it.

Jesus is ALIVE and He's changes lives! The Authentic Message of the Christianity is Christ crucified and Christ risen — Religious leaders - must be convicted by Paul's transformation

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."

Festus and Agrippa were actually fulfilling prophecy: Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel... unaware of the hand of God in the glove of human will.

23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice 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.

You would think that King Agrippa and his sister Bernice would be the last people to want the limelight because of what happened to their dad in that very city. Agrippa the first became worm compost.

Acts 12:21-23 21 and an appointment with Herod was granted. When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. 22 The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!" 23 Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died.

### **God works through sinners:**

**great pomp** phantasia; to make to appear, pompous ceremony, implying a cheap display of high status - All the pomp and pageantry was meant to communicate importance (fantasy)

Festus is scratching to save his political career. Agrippa II, the fading last member of a dying dynasty takes advantage of Festus to fulfill a fantasy in order to feel influential and appear important. Through broken men, God fulfilled prophecy, accomplished His sovereign will, to Gospel goes forth.

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God can and does accomplish His sovereign plans and purposes, for your life and for the advance of the Gospel through your life, by way of broken people, bad circumstances and sinful behavior!

The stage was set for Paul to not only plead his case, but to bear his witness before a king. Jesus said “you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles” (Matt 10:18).

Matthew 10:19-20 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

**Witnessing:** This was more than a hearing of evidence; it was an event. It was held in an auditorium, and all the commanders and the prominent men of the city were there. Paul seizes the opportunity

**auditorium** & audience come from the Latin word *audire* ‘to hear.’ place and people of hearing

God gives every Christian an auditorium and an audience; a specific group of people in a specific place or places. Might be your home, your school, your workplace, etc.) and an audience (your spouse, your children, your neighbors, your classmates/students, your co-workers, etc..

No one is too far gone to hear the Gospel - Festus, Agrippa and Bernice were in the audience! As self-absorbed as you can get, but God loved them and put them in the audience to hear the Gospel! Paul’s testimony was for them.

In your place of hearing, how do you perceive your hearers? Who do you think God wants you to speak to? Selfish, self-absorbed, self-centered, broken people.

They are who they are, and they do what they do, because they are broken and they are trying to find life from broken things — just like you used to! The need to hear that Jesus is the fixer and forgiver.

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.”

Luke pointed out that Festus clearly understood that Paul was innocent. Therefore Festus wanted to use this hearing to prepare an official brief for Paul’s trial before Caesar.

Festus simply could not send Paul to Caesar with a letter that said, “I really don’t know what this man is accused of and he is probably innocent of any wrongdoing, but I thought I should send him to you anyway.” Festus would soon be out of a job as well.

Paul remains poised, at peace, and is able to preach powerfully - Christ Alive in him. -

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Mark 15: 55 Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find evidence against Jesus, so they could put him to death. But they couldn't find any. 56 Many false witnesses spoke against him, but they contradicted each other. 57 Finally, some men stood up and gave this false testimony: 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, made without human hands.'" 59 But even then they didn't get their stories straight!

60 Then the high priest stood up before the others and asked Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?" 61 But Jesus was silent and made no reply. Then the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

62 Jesus said, "I AM. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."

63 Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, "Why do we need other witnesses? 64 You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?"

"Guilty!" they all cried. "He deserves to die!"

65 Then some of them began to spit at him, and they blindfolded him and beat him with their fists. "Prophecy to us," they jeered. And the guards slapped him as they took him away.

Jesus was falsely accused of blasphemy - He truly was the Messiah, the I AM, Emmanuel God with the us - the savior of the World.

If it was us in His place - it would be an accurate accusation - anyone who seeks to save themselves - is trying to be their own God, their own messiah,