

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### AMBUSH (ACTS 25:1-5) PLAYING POLITICS

As the transition from Felix to the new governor took place, Festus wasted no time solidifying his relationship with the Jews.

- Roman politicians and leaders had to establish a working relationship with the Sanhedrin or governing Judea (Southern part of Israel) would be a nightmare.

### TRAVELING AND GETTING COAXED

To get a sense of the most important city in his region, Festus traveled to Jerusalem. While there, the Jewish leaders tried to coax him into having the trial for Paul in their city, not Caesarea.

- After 2 years of Paul being on house arrest, the Jews still wanted to “ambush” and “kill” Paul.

### FESTUS WAS A BETTER POLITICIAN THAN FELIX

Though Festus played the political game to some degree, he was known for being an honest and capable leader.

- The Jews weren't bashful about requesting a favor that would lead to murder, but it seems that though Festus had no strong desire to free Paul, he did want things done lawfully.

### ANOTHER TRIAL (ACTS 25:6-12) AFTER SPENDING 8 DAYS IN JERUSALEM...

After being in Jerusalem and speaking to the leaders there, Festus goes back to Caesarea and commanded Paul to be brought in for trial.

- Luke paints a picture of the Jewish leaders surrounding Paul like ravenous wolves ready to tear him apart as they “brought serious charges.”

### “...CHARGES THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO PROVE”

The charges were breaking the law, defiling the temple, and treason against Rome. Paul not only denied them, but for the first time said he hasn't even offended Caesar or “sinned in any way.”

- **There is a time for silence and there is also a time to defend because we're defending the reputation of Christ.**

*“If I have spoken wrongly,” Jesus answered him, “give evidence about the wrong; but if rightly, why do you hit me?” John 18:23 CSB*

### “FESTUS, WANTING TO DO THE JEWS A FAVOR...”

Doing a favor for the Jews would have been a good political start for Festus. So, he starts to compromise and asks Paul “Are you willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried...?”

- This would have given the Jews an opportunity to carry out their assassination plot and Paul realizes he has to shut this conversation down.

### GETTING A LITTLE HEATED

Paul was not only vocal about his objection in traveling to Jerusalem, but was forcefully blunt in saying “I am standing...where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong, as even you yourself know very well.”

- Paul knew his destiny was in Rome, and **he was not wrong for his righteous anger at this corruption.**

### NOT AFRAID OF DYING

Though Paul had done nothing “deserving of death,” he made it clear that he wasn't afraid of death. Because Paul came to the conclusion that all other options had been exhausted, he plays the trump card and appeals his case to Caesar.

- Once a Roman citizen made an appeal like this, there was no going back.

### ONE OF THE WORST LEADERS IN ROMAN HISTORY

Nero was Caesar during the time when Paul was under trial. Historically, Nero is one of the most corrupt and hated leaders of the Roman Empire who only lived to be 30 because he made his secretary kill him.

- Paul's appeal wasn't as much to the Emperor as much as it was an appeal to the law and justice.

### ROME (ACTS 25:13-22) A COURTESY CALL WITH FESTUS

Before leaving for Rome, King Herod and his sister (possible lover...gross) arrived in Caesarea to see Festus. While there, Festus presented Paul's case to them.

- Herod wasn't a ruler, but an appointed “Curator of the Temple.” He had little power and was essentially a religious consultant to the Romans.

### IT WASN'T WHAT I EXPECTED

Festus tells Herod that the case was nothing like what he expected to hear, but was centered around a dead man named Jesus that Paul claimed resurrected from the dead.

- **The identity of Jesus is the most divisive topic on Earth. It invokes either a longing to connect with God or a blind hatred and hypocrisy.**

### JESUS BECOMES THE FOCAL POINT

Paul's case had moved from accusations of broken laws and temple defilement to the resurrection of a man from a small town that claimed to be God. A very odd case for such a practical man like Festus.

### THE GOD OF OUR CHOOSING

Caesar became associated with being a god around 44 A.D. This seems crazy, but don't we deify our leaders and world systems?

- **The conversation of Jesus makes us decide. Is Jesus our God? Do we want Him and His ways, or do we find our security and hope in earthly leaders, governments and systems?**

### CHARADES (ACTS 25:23-27) THIS WAS A SPECTACLE

Herod and Bernice “came with great pomp and entered the auditorium with military commanders and prominent men of the city” to present the accusations against Paul.

- This was all a show because they had no legal power over Paul's fate. It was a circus over a famed “criminal”.

### FLEXING MUSCLES FOR THE OTHER ELITES

Festus was a new politician in the area and in front of all the “prominent” people of this region, he exaggerates to them that “the whole Jewish community” wants Paul punished.

- Festus was trying to portray himself as savior of Paul and defender of the legal system of Rome. He even lies and says he “decided to send” Paul to Rome.

### AN UNREASONABLE REFERENCE

Roman leaders couldn't just send anyone to Rome to stand before Caesar. The main reason Festus took Paul before the Jewish leaders was to get on paper what exactly the offense was.

- The audacious event highlighted just how ridiculous and hypocritical the trial against Paul had gotten.

### EVEN THE “GOOD” ONES FALL FLAT

The lavish event with Herod and Bernice shows us that Festus was really just another corrupt politician looking to advance himself.

- The end of chapter 25 shows us that **even a “good” leader buckles to the selfish ambition and hypocrisy of the world if they are not connected to Jesus Christ.**

### PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- We learn from Christ and Paul that **there are times of reserved silence, but also times of vocal righteous anger.** It takes a tight connection with the Holy Spirit to discern when to use each.
- The identity of Jesus will always be a divisive topic. **When discussing Christ, we must decide if we want Him in His totality, or not at all.** There is no middle ground with Jesus.
- The “goodness” of the world is a smoke screen that will inevitably fail us every time. **If we rely on the systems and leaders of the world to save us, we will be sadly disappointed in this life and lost in the next.**