

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 4TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

TRIAL AND APPEAL (ACTS 25:1–12) A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

In the last couple of chapters, we learned that Felix was over the province of Judea. But we are now introduced to Festus, the new provincial leader.

- Still, the Jews were dedicated to their plan to ambush and murder Paul (Acts 23:12–15). This mission was better accomplished with the Roman government on their side.

FESTUS COMPARED TO FELIX

While Festus doesn't seem as corrupt as Felix, he was new to the position and desired order.

- Festus showed up relatively quickly to Jerusalem to continue Paul's case and seems to care deeply about the way in which things were done. **Festus was not in a hurry to have Paul executed, but he was also not in a hurry to rescue him either.**

FEAR OF A FAIR TRIAL

The chief priests and other Jewish leaders knew that if they had any chance of fulfilling their oath to kill Paul, it was not going to be through a "fair" trial where Paul was seen as not guilty according to Roman law.

- The Jews wanted Roman authorities to hate Paul as they did, or at the very least, allow them to operate under their own authority.

"THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE AUTHORITY"

At the other end, Festus and other Roman authorities we have seen previously in Acts desired order in all areas. Many times, this was done by appeasing the Jews without compromising Roman law.

- Festus invited those with authority to go with him to Caesarea out of ignorance of the situation and to appease the Jews.

INNOCENT ON ALL ACCOUNTS

Paul had not broken a law so he could fulfill another. He was not only innocent of the false accusations against him according to Jewish law, but also innocent according to Roman law.

- **Being a Christian does not give us the right to disobey the law of our country and vice versa. Only when national law infringes on our faith is this appropriate** (Daniel 3:1–18).

UP THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

We can assume that Paul was exhausted of rebuking untruths and wanted to end the back-and-forth. As a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to request to be heard by Caesar Nero, and Festus had to honor that request.

- At this point in the journey, the case would not end until it was heard by Caesar. **Believers should never fear bringing truth to light.**

WHY CAESAR?

The position of Caesar was important to Paul, not the person. Though Nero would later be known for his cruelty towards Christians, at this point (59 A.D.), Paul did not have a reason to believe he would have hatred towards Christians.

- **This is all fulfillment of the Lord's decrees:** Paul would "carry [His] name before Kings," and "testify in Rome" (Acts 9:15; 23:11).

A RECOUNTING (ACTS 25:13–22)

KING HEROD AGRIPPA II

King Agrippa II was the great-grandson of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1–12), and Bernice, his sister.

- Herod the Great set out to kill Jesus upon hearing of His birth.
- Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded (Matthew 14), and interviewed Jesus (Luke 23:9).
- Herod Agrippa I killed James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1–19).

RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

King Agrippa II was culturally familiar with the Jews, with an obvious devotion to Rome. With King Agrippa visiting, Festus took the opportunity to ask him about the case.

- No amount of expertise in culture can replace the conviction and leading that the Holy Spirit brings. **Familiarity with Christianity does not solely qualify us as Christians.**

"A CERTAIN JESUS"

Obviously, Festus did not understand who Jesus was or believe in the things Paul said. Even so, Paul's innocence in accordance with Jewish law confused Festus even more.

- Like Festus, we may **attempt** to please opposing parties (Jesus and the world). We cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). **When faced with truth, we must take a stand.**

"I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR THE MAN MYSELF"

Agrippa, like many Roman leaders before him, allowed Paul the opportunity to defend himself. More than that, it seems that there was a genuine curiosity about what Paul had to say.

- As was the case when Jesus was brought before Pilate, no lawful wrongdoing was found. **Also, in both accounts, there was interest in the accused party's claim.**

PAUL'S HEARING (ACTS 25:23–27)

AN ATTEMPT AT A DEFENSE

Up until this point, it seems that Festus is in favor of keeping Paul in prison or even carrying out the Jews' requests upon finding evidence. Then, in front of some important Roman and Jewish officials, he says he has found nothing...shocking.

- When truth seems true and is undeniable, it is. **Christians must be willing to defend truth, but ultimately, truth can defend itself.**

SELFISH MOTIVES

With Paul's appeal inevitably sending him to Caesar, Festus needed proper reasoning to send him so that he could avoid trouble. Festus knew he could not send Paul to Rome, basically stating, "Paul is innocent, but the Jews want him dead, so I am sending the problem to you."

- **If we are committed to keeping the peace without the Giver of peace, we will fail.**

GOD'S PERFECT PROVISION

- What the enemy means for evil, God will use for His good (Genesis 50:20).
- Do we walk in fear, or do we walk by faith?
- Just because we know God can protect us, it does not give us the right to walk into explicitly dangerous situations, especially if we do not proceed with caution, proper preparation, and dependence on His Spirit.

WE HAVE A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

- Full of corruption, pride, and selfishness, Festus and the Roman authorities in general were about as unrighteous as they come.
- "He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his faithfulness" (Psalm 96:13).
- **Our eternal judge is perfect in His justice, and our defense is found in Jesus.**

POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL ALLEGIANCE

- Our political systems will fail us, but our Spiritual authorities are unfailing.
- What have we made Lord in our lives?
- All of us are slaves to something (Romans 6:16).
- **Have we mistaken national freedom for spiritual freedom** (John 8:30–47)?
- **Defending Jesus is less about protecting Him and more about proclaiming devotion.**

MORE THAN INTERESTED

- To properly follow Jesus, we must put into practice what He has tasked us with:
- **Are we being sanctified (growing/learning)?**
- **Are we a living example of truth?**
- **Are we evangelizing (sharing our faith)?**
- **Are we making disciples (teaching others)?**
- **Being a Christ follower is active, not passive. We must live out our faith!**