

***1 Acts 25 The “I Appeal to Caesar” Card (6/30/2019)**

***2 Israel Tour **RR Elementary coordinator – Parking Lot**

***3 Acts 25** ¹ Three days after **Festus** arrived in Caesarea to take over his new responsibilities, he left for Jerusalem, ² where **the leading priests and other Jewish leaders** met with him and made their accusations against Paul. ³ They asked Festus **as a favor** to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (planning to ambush and kill him on the way). ⁴ But Festus replied that Paul was at Caesarea and he himself would be returning there soon. ⁵ So he said, “Those of you in authority can return with me. **If Paul has done anything wrong**, you can make your accusations.”

What do we know about Festus?

First, his name is Porcius (“**POUR shih us**”) Festus. Porcius was a popular family name based likely on swine/boars which the Romans held in high esteem – so not meant to be humorous – but to signify strength. His First name Festus (60-62) mean “festival.” His name probably had something to do with a festival of the god Mars occurring near or on the time of his birth. **The man has been brought up under the Roman system of pagan worship.**

Secondly, he had a much better reputation than Felix (52-59) before him or Albanias (62) who succeeded him. He seems to have been a good man and an able administrator. Josephus the historian had favorable things to say about him.

Lastly, whether he knew it or not, he was in the last 2 of years of his life!

“the leading priests and other Jewish leaders” The Jewish leaders had plotted against Paul for two years. There were two reasons for this: first, they hated Paul and his message, especially that he was taking it to non-Jews.

During the riot earlier in the Temple: ***4 Acts 22:21–24 (NASB95)** ²¹ “And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to **the Gentiles.**’ ” ²² They listened to him up to this statement, and *then* they raised their voices and said, **“Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!”** ²³ And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks...

It is interesting that God’s people, called to be the light of the world, had put their light under a basket and disdained non-Jews! Paul, knowing this truth, had proclaimed this in Antioch – quoting Isaiah: ***4a Acts 13:46–47 (NLT)** ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, “It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For the Lord gave us this command when he said, **‘I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.’”**

****The Jews had lost their vision to bring a knowledge of God to the nations, and had withdrawn to the safety of religious practice – calling the nations “Gentile dogs” (unclean). We need to be careful today that we don’t make our need for personal holiness as a follower of Christ an excuse to disdain those outside the faith. We are called to reach our unsaved neighbors and friends with the Gospel; so that necessitates mingling and befriending!**

Also, the other reason the Jewish leaders were so adamant about continuing their hatred of Paul and their plan to kill him was that the Romans had embarrassed them and interfered with their attempt to kill Paul! ***5 Acts 23:12–13 (NASB95)** ¹² When it was day, **the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.** ¹³ There were more than forty who formed this plot... ***5a Acts 24:7** “But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands...

***6 Acts 25** ⁶ About eight or ten days later Festus returned to Caesarea, and on the following day he took his seat in court and ordered that Paul be brought in. ⁷ When Paul arrived, **the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem gathered around and made many serious accusations they couldn’t prove.**

This was probably getting discouraging for Paul; two years of the same hateful accusations by the Jews, and vacillating, dishonest Roman leadership.

Reminds me of the terrible situation David was in with Saul chasing him and trying to kill him. King Saul was put into authority by God to righteously rule Israel. But he became jealous and paranoid and tried to kill David. Although we don’t know how long, traditional Christian scholarship has placed the time period in which Saul sought David’s life at about seven years. Seven years of being chased, hiding, living with his enemies (village idiot), sending his parents to Moab, almost getting killed by his own men in Ziklag! It was a rough time.

David’s Psalms (**Psalms 7, 27, 31, 34, 52**) tell us how he endured this time by prayer;

***6a Psalm 7:1–11 (NLT)** ¹ I come to you for protection, O YAHWEH my God. Save me from my persecutors—rescue me!...⁶ Arise, O YaHWeH, in anger! Stand up against the fury of my enemies! Wake up, my God, and bring justice!...Declare me righteous, O YaHWeH, for I am innocent, O Most High!

***7 Psalm 27:12** Do not let me fall into their hands. For they accuse me of things I’ve never done; with every breath they threaten me with violence.

Paul was trusting in the same Lord as David and had memorized most of David’s Psalms. Worshipping the Lord knowing that eventually he was going to Rome and not in a body bag! ***7a Acts 23:11 (NIV84)** ¹¹ The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! **As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.**”

***8 Acts 25** ⁸ **Paul denied the charges. "I am not guilty of any crime against the Jewish laws or the Temple or the Roman government," he said.** ⁹ **Then Festus, wanting to please the Jews,** asked him, **"Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?"**

Paul reasserts the truth that in all charges he is innocent. He has not broken any Laws in Israel. He has not violated any Temple Laws or even customs, and he has not broken any Roman laws or incited insurrection against the Roman government in Judea.

Festus may have been a better man than Pilate or Felix but he still had to deal with the Jews and keep the peace. He was probably willing to sacrifice Paul to do that, just like Pilate sacrificed Jesus in the face of the Jewish opposition.

You might be thinking, "That's terrible! What a coward Festus is in being so concerned about pleasing the Jews!" But don't we do the very same thing? We're frequently way too concerned about "keeping everyone happy" and we forget Paul's words in ***8a 1 Thessalonians 2:4** "just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, **so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God** who examines our hearts."

Paul even told the ***8b Galatians (1:10)**, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? **If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.**" BEWARE OF BEING A MAN-PLEASER!

***9** As the new governor, Festus did not want to do anything that would turn the Jewish authorities against him, especially in view of Felix's record. He did not know how to proceed (v. 20), but he wanted to stay in the Jews' favor. Therefore, he somewhat naively asked Paul if he was willing to move his trial to Jerusalem, the site of some of his alleged crimes. **The fact that he asked Paul's permission indicates that Paul was not a common criminal but an un-convicted Roman citizen with rights that the governor had to respect.** Tom Constable¹

***10 Acts 25 (NIV84)** ¹⁰ Paul answered: **"I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried.** I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, **no one has the right** ("power") to hand me over to them. **I appeal to Caesar!**" (Give me liberty or give me death!)

Paul did not hesitate to use his privileges as a Roman citizen, and this is not the first time! He is standing within his rights on a local level to appeal to higher government authorities for justice – liking taking your case to the Supreme Court.

¹ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ac 25:9.

He is using his position as a citizen of Rome to protect himself from injustice. This is an example of the tension that exists for the Christian and human government.

Jesus addressed this “tension” by asking whose picture was on a coin! ***10a** “Well, then,” he said, “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.” (Matt 22:21)

As God’s children in this world, we are to “render to Caesar” what belongs to human authorities (taxes, respect, compliance with laws).

We know that government is put in place by God to secure our God-given rights from those who would seek to take them away. We are to honor the authority God puts in place on earth to keep law and order. ***11 Romans 13** ¹⁻² Every Christian ought to obey the civil authorities, for all legitimate authority is derived from God’s authority, and the existing authority is appointed under God. To oppose authority then is to oppose God, and such opposition is bound to be punished.

***12** The founders understood the proper role of government. They nailed it, at least in part, when they said: *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights (“unable to be taken away from”), that among these are **Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.** — That to secure these rights, **Governments are instituted among men...**”*

***13** **1 Peter 2:13–15 (NLT)** ¹³ For the Lord’s sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, ¹⁴ or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.

The problem comes when people in power begin to abuse their God-given authority and try to take our God-given rights away from us, especially matters of conscience. Earlier, Peter had this happen in Jerusalem.

***13a Acts 4:18–20 (The Living Bible)** ¹⁸ So they called them back in, and told them never again to speak about Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, “**You decide whether God wants us to obey you instead of Him!**” ²⁰ We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we saw Jesus do and heard him say.”

In Paul’s case – the local authority is not following their mandate and so Paul will appeal to the higher authority to secure his rights.

***14** A modern example of someone who is appealing to the highest court in the land, like Paul, is Jack Phillips – the baker in Colorado who has been constantly harassed since 2012 by a few homosexuals and the state of Colorado, using the courts, for refusing to bake a cake for a homosexual wedding.

Jack Phillips, a Colorado native and cake artist, opened Masterpiece Cakeshop in 1993 and has served the community of Lakewood, Colorado for more than 20 years. In his years of business, Jack has been a part of major milestone events for many in the community. He’s watched families grow from young couples requesting wedding cakes to parents ordering graduation cakes for their children.

Masterpiece Cakeshop is also a family business. Jack's wife is a co-owner of the shop. His daughter helps him run it. One of his sisters decorates cakes, and another sister volunteers to keep the shop clean.

As a Christian, Jack knows that God can work as He chooses, including using small cake shops like his to do God's work. "[God] has chosen this bakery to do a lot of different things that we had never planned and that we would never want to stop," he said. Jack's faith motivates how he operates his business, but he would one day find out that the State of Colorado would order him to strip his faith out of his business.

In July 2012, two men came into Jack's cakeshop requesting a custom wedding cake celebrating their same-sex marriage. In a very brief exchange, Jack politely declined the request, saying that he could not design cakes for same-sex weddings, but offering to design them custom cakes for other occasions or to sell them anything else in his shop.

Shortly after that, Jack started to receive phone calls from people threatening and harassing him because of his decision to not use his artistic talents to design a cake celebrating a view of marriage that conflicts with his faith. Instead of responding in anger, Jack saw the calls as an invitation to prayer: "[The phone calls] give me an opportunity to pray for people I wouldn't know."

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) attorneys and ADF allied attorneys came to Jack's defense when the couple filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission for sexual orientation discrimination. Even after explaining to the commission that it wasn't the people Jack objected to, it was the message the cake would send about marriage, an administrative law judge ruled against Jack in December 2013, saying that designing and creating cakes for same-sex wedding ceremonies are not speech protected by the First Amendment. The commission ordered Jack and his staff to either violate Jack's faith by designing custom wedding cakes that celebrate same-sex marriages or stop designing all wedding cakes, which was approximately 40% of Jack's business. In addition, Jack was ordered to "reeducate" his staff by teaching them that he was wrong to operate his business consistently with his faith. The state also required Jack to file quarterly "compliance" reports telling the government every time that he declines a custom cake request and explaining the reasons why.

In July 2016, ADF attorneys and allied attorneys petitioned the United States Supreme Court to take up Jack's case. After the Supreme Court granted review, it ruled 7 to 2 in favor of Jack on June 4, 2018. The ruling reversed the state's decision to punish Jack for living and working consistently with his religious beliefs about marriage. (*Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*)

***14a** "It's hard to believe that the government punished me for operating my business consistent with my beliefs about marriage. That isn't freedom or tolerance," said Phillips. "I'm so thankful to the U.S. Supreme Court for this ruling." (2012 – 2019 almost 7 years!)

NOTE: This last week it was announced he is being sued again by someone from the homosexual community in CO.

“Jack Phillips faces third lawsuit over refusal to make gender transition cake”

Christian baker Jack Phillips of Colorado is facing a third lawsuit over his refusal on religious grounds to make certain cakes, the latest legal battle for the Masterpiece Cakeshop owner. Transgender woman Autumn Scardina filed a second lawsuit against Phillips last Wednesday (June 5th) in District Court for the city and county of Denver, Colorado. In the new lawsuit, Scardina claimed that Phillips violated Colorado's Anti-Discrimination Act and Consumer Protection Act by refusing to bake what the plaintiff labeled a "birthday cake."

It takes courage to stand on our faith and use the legal system to secure our rights. And thank God we can still do that! There may come a time, as it did later with Paul when Nero went to the dark side. And then, like David and Paul, we will just strengthen ourselves in the Lord!

***15 Acts 25** ¹² Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, "Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!"

Festus now faced an immense problem. **It was now Festus' responsibility to come up with charges as he was acting "prosecutor." Failure to have charges would have been a disaster for his career and even personal well-being. He was accusing a Roman citizen before Caesar!

**Actually, just the fact that a Roman citizen had been jailed so long without a verdict was considered a crime under the Roman system. BUT both Felix and Festus were afraid of the Jews, and shortly thereafter was the revolt which Titus had to put down destroying Jerusalem in the process!

***15a** In the provinces, H. J. Cadbury writes, governors had no authority to try and condemn citizens. With respect to charges that carried the death penalty, governors in effect functioned not as judges but as prosecutors who presented the cases, along with the accused citizens, to the emperor. Roman emperors honored this right of the citizens. Aided by their officials, they judged the cases according to the full descriptions supplied them by governors and consuls. (Paul exercised his rights during the first part of Nero's reign [A.D. 54–62], which is usually called the emperor's golden age.) Baker

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***16 Acts 25** ¹³ A few days later King Agrippa arrived with his sister, Bernice ("Bernike"), to pay their respects to Festus.

Much to the relief of Festus, King Agrippa II and Bernice came to Caesarea to pay their respects. Agrippa was of Jewish descent, had been educated at Rome, and was ruler of a kingdom. He would be able to give pertinent advice to Festus and help him out of his predicament. Baker

***16a** "Saul is My chosen instrument to take My message to the Gentiles and to kings" Acts 9:15

At this time (A.D. 60) Agrippa II was a young man of about thirty-three. He ruled the territories northeast of Palestine, bearing the title of "king." With power over the temple, he controlled the temple treasury and could appoint and remove the high priest. Bernice was his sister. When she was thirteen (A.D. 41), she had married her uncle, Herod Chalcis, who died in A.D. 48. Then she became a mistress to her brother, Agrippa II. In A.D. 63, she married King Polemon of Cilicia, but in the early 70s, she became mistress to Emperor Vespasian's son, Titus. Here Agrippa and

Bernice were making an official visit to Festus, to pay their respects. Agrippa, of Jewish descent, could help clarify Paul's case for the Roman governor. Barton ²

Acts 25 ¹⁴ During their stay of several days, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. "There is a prisoner here," he told him, "whose case was left for me by Felix. ¹⁵ When I was in Jerusalem, the leading priests and Jewish elders pressed charges against him and asked me to condemn him. ¹⁶ **I pointed out to them that Roman law does not convict people without a trial. They must be given an opportunity to confront their accusers and defend themselves.** ¹⁷ "When his accusers came here for the trial, I didn't delay. I called the case the very next day and ordered Paul brought in.

***17 Acts 25** ¹⁸ But the accusations made against him weren't any of the crimes I expected. ¹⁹ **Instead, it was something about their religion and a dead man named Jesus, who Paul insists is alive.** ²⁰ I was at a loss to know how to investigate these things, so I asked him whether he would be willing to stand trial on these charges in Jerusalem. ²¹ But Paul appealed to have his case decided by the emperor. So I ordered that he be held in custody until I could arrange to send him to Caesar." ²² "I'd like to hear the man myself," ("I was at the point of wishing") Agrippa said. And Festus replied, "You will—tomorrow!"

***17a** SECULAR MIND-SET: Festus's description of events is a vivid picture of the secular mind-set. He spoke of "a dead man named Jesus" and of being "at a loss how to investigate such matters." Festus's attitude is prevalent today. Unbelievers in this post-Christian culture do not understand Christian doctrine or terminology. **Christian theology and presuppositions are completely foreign to them. Even the word "God" means something vastly different to a secular audience. If we are to communicate the gospel effectively, we can no longer assume anything.** Take the time to understand the so-called "postmodern worldview," and ask the Spirit of God to help you learn how to take the old, old story to a new and rapidly changing culture. Barton

The truth of the Gospel has not changed – but how we present it needs to be relevant to our culture as it was in Paul's day! ***18 1 Corinthians 15:1–8 (NIV84)** ¹ Now, brothers, I want to remind you of **the gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ **For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,** ⁴ **that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,** ⁵ **and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.** ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

² Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, [Acts](#), Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 414.

***19 Acts 25** ²³ So the next day **Agrippa and Bernice** arrived at the auditorium with **great pomp**, accompanied by military officers and prominent men of the city. Festus ordered that Paul be brought in. ²⁴ Then Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are here, this is the man whose death is demanded by all the Jews, both here and in Jerusalem.

***19a** This description of the arrival of *Agrippa and Bernice* at the *auditorium with great pomp* is surely presented as irony. The Greek word for “pomp” is *phantasias*, meaning “pageantry” or “outward display.” The English word “fantasy” comes from it, suggesting the imaginary and fleeting nature of this outward show. **The real royalty in the room was the prisoner, the born-again child of the King of kings.** Barton

Again we should ask who is really on trial. Most of us know nothing of Festus, Agrippa or even Bernice – they are gone – dead awaiting the resurrection and the judgment! Paul we know and will get to know better in eternity!

***20 Acts 25** ²⁵ **But in my opinion he has done nothing deserving death. However, since he appealed his case to the emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome.** ²⁶ “But what shall I write the emperor (Lit. “The lord”)? For there is no clear charge against him. So I have brought him before all of you, and especially you, King Agrippa, so that after we examine him, I might have something to write. ²⁷ **For it makes no sense to send a prisoner to the emperor without specifying the charges against him!”**

***20a** “For dispatching a prisoner without indicating any charges against him seems absurd to me.” Lit.

Conclusion: Like Paul we are Jesus ambassadors on this earth – citizens of heaven. We are here to bring the ministry of reconciliation between people and their God. We have the “Good News” of the death of Jesus Christ for their sins and His resurrection from the grave as proof that He was the son of God and our Savior!

While there are times in our lives when we may “Appeal to Caesar” – we never look to man to save us or to give us justice. True justice comes from the Lord and may not come until the last judgment!

Let’s close by praying for the leaders of our great nation, that they may be touched by God’s Spirit and saved from eternal punishment, that basic order is preserved and justice enforced so that human flourishing may occur and the Gospel can be freely shared. ***25 Jack Phillips – courage, patience and boldness!**