

## Acts 25 “Injustice”

As we read Acts 24, it seems that Felix was genuinely intrigued with Christianity and wanted to hear more. Sadly, Felix was content to tiptoe around truth. He was never willing to take a stand. Verse 25 says he looked for “a convenient time” to make a commitment to Jesus. There is no such thing as *a convenient time* - but the crucial time is now! 2

Corinthians 6:2 Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

**Repetition dulls truth’s potency** Some who have heard the good news for years and years greet extraordinary truth with a yawn.

**CRITICAL OBSERVATION:** Felix’s mind was enlightened (Acts 24:22), his emotions were stirred (Acts 24:25), but his will would not yield.

**NOTE WELL:** Jesus Christ is either your Savior or your Judge.




“PROCRASTINATION IS THE THIEF OF TIME”. **REALLY** “PROCRASTINATION IS ALSO THE THIEF OF SOULS.”

The best time to trust Jesus Christ is—**NOW!** Best time to be completely surrendered is **NOW!** The best time to tell others the Good News of the Gospel is — **NOW!** **PRAY**

Quoting the story from R Kent Hughes’ commentary of the book of Acts, “In the early morning hours of October 4, 1980, a young nursing student was brutally murdered in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. Following the advice of well-meaning friends, Steve Linscott, a student at Emmaus Bible College, told police about a dream he’d had the night of the crime. Oak Park Police later arrested him, interpreting his dream account as the roundabout confession of a **psychopathic killer**. Later a jury found Linscott guilty, and he was sentenced to 40 years in prison. There was just one problem – Linscott was innocent! Only after time in prison and numerous legal appeals – a process that lasted 12 years – was Linscott free and vindicated!

*Those years undoubtedly brought the most difficult challenges Linscott will ever face – separated from his wife and children for three and half years except brief visits, wondering if he had somehow brought all this on himself and why God allowed it to happen, surviving prison violence. Those were tough years, and yet years of growth and a growing awareness of the goodness of God. In Linscott’s words:*



*“I came to realize that we cannot judge God’s purposes, nor where He places us, nor why He chooses one path for our lives as opposed to another. The Bible itself is replete with accounts of divine action (or inaction) that does not seem fair, that does not make sense except when viewed in light of God’s perfect plan. Thousands of Egyptian children were massacred while a baby named Moses was spared. Jacob was a liar and a thief, and yet it was he, not his faithful brother Esau, who received the blessing of their father Isaac and of God. On one level it makes no sense that God would allow His Son to die for the sins of humankind. But God has a plan – a perfect plan.”*

We know the truth, we know who we are in Christ, but slander hurts.

The Apostle Paul, one of the most devoted servants of Jesus Christ in the history of the Church, was at times **hated**, **persecuted**, and **falsely charged**. Our Text today recounts such a time.

**Acts 25** Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. **When Festus took over for Felix, he was about 70 years old. History tells us he would rule in this province for 2 years before dying in office.** Felix was undoubtedly a bad man, but history tells us Festus was basically a good man. Festus governed well, despite all the problems left him by Felix.

**Verse 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. **I don’t know if God revealed to Festus Paul’s danger it seems he smelled a rat so verse 4** But Festus answered that

Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going *there* shortly. **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."

**6** And when he had remained among them more than 10 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." **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?"

**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."** Realizing he would not receive justice from Festus or from the Jews, he submitted his case to the authority of the emperor himself... It was the right of every Roman citizen to have his case heard by Caesar himself, after initial trials and appeals had failed to reach a satisfactory decision. This was in effect an appeal to the **"SUPREME COURT"** of the empire.

**NOTE: 1.** Paul did not make this appeal because Caesar was a believer or even a “just” man. This was his “HAIL MARY”... with only seconds left in the game he threw it out their hoping one of his guys would catch the ball. **It worked!**

**NOTE: 2.** Also God told him he would minister in Rome... well, this is one way to get to Rome.

**Verse 12** Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!” **13** And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

**Bernice:** Described in literature as being a ravishing beauty, Bernice was Drusilla’s sister—making her the half sister of Agrippa. Because of this, Agrippa and Bernice were never married, but they lived together. **Yes, they LIVED TOGETHER (incestuously).** Bernice was a shady lady and Agrippa was no angel. **Thus, many historians say they deserved each other.**

**Herod:** Herod is a name used of several kings belonging to the Herodian Dynasty of the Roman province of Judaea: **Herod is also the name of a heavy metal band from the United States**

**Herod Agrippa II ruled a client kingdom of the Roman Empire to the northeast of Festus' province, and was reputed to be an expert in Jewish customs and religious matters. Though he did not have jurisdiction over Paul in this case, his hearing of the matter would be helpful for Festus.**

**HEROD AGRIPPA 11:** his great-grandfather **Herod the Great** had tried to kill Jesus as a baby; his grandfather **Herod Antipas** had John the Baptist beheaded; his father **Herod Agrippa I** had martyred the first apostle, James. Now Paul stands before the next in line of the Herods, Herod Agrippa II. Agrippa II was the last of the Herods.

The appearance before **Agrippa** was really a *hearing*, and not a *trial*; Again, Agrippa did not have jurisdiction in the matter.

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 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.' 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, 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. 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." **But the new governor's problems were not over. He had managed not to offend the Jews, but he had not determined the legal charges against his prisoner. How could he send such a notable prisoner to the emperor and not have the man's crimes listed against him?**

22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him." 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.



“The “place of hearing” was the amphitheater on the beach at Caesarea. It would have been packed. People would have been dressed up. Soldiers would have been standing guard. Dignitaries would have been in attendance. You see, it was a real “happening” whenever there was an official hearing in this beautiful amphitheater overlooking the Mediterranean.

**And here was Paul** In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul described his own appearance as being **physically weak**. Historians verify that he was a **short man** with **bowed legs**, a **long hooked nose**, little hair, and **RUNNY EYES**. And yet, here this “little man” commanded the attention of the entire Roman provincial capital of Caesarea. **You go with your bad self Paul!**

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.



Courson... “I find this man has done nothing worthy of death,” said Festus, “but since he has appealed to Augustus, I am required to send him.” Octavius, who preceded Julius Caesar, was the first Roman ruler to use the name “Caesar Augustus,” or “august one.” “Augustus” was a title of strength and authority, so every Caesar who followed Octavius chose to use the title “Augustus.” The Augustus spoken of here was Caesar Nero.

26 I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. **“My lord” is not a title of honor—but of deity. This is the first time in Scripture we see Caesar deified. Caesar Nero was the first Caesar who claimed to be God.**

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.”


## CONSIDER WHAT PAUL HAD ALREADY ENDURED.

1. He had been arrested in Jerusalem though he had done nothing wrong,
2. He had spoken to an angry mob who wanted to rip him apart,
3. He had addressed the Sanhedrin who wanted him dead on the spot,
4. He had been transferred to Caesarea to avoid assassination,
5. He had been tried before Felix, and now was about to appear before Festus, the new governor. He had not committed any crime, and yet he was a prisoner of the Roman Empire and on the receiving end of false accusations of hateful Jews. **Injustice** ... frustrates me

**Matthew 5:11** “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **Be thankful at least the evil was falsely spoken... it could be true!**

 **How long can a person cling to a dusty promise? As long as he hangs on to Jesus for dear life, that's how long!!!**

Consider Daniel, deemed a criminal and thrown into a pit of hungry lions. His crime? **Praying to the only true God** (Daniel 6). **How dare he!** Why, Daniel must have been as villainous as William Tyndale, who actually dared to translate the Bible into English, *or the ten Boom family, who dared to hide Jews rather than let the Nazis take them away to concentration camps!* To defy the authority of man in order to obey God is, in the eyes of the human government, improper. But God is honored and pleased with such obedience to him. In the words of the great John Calvin:

 **One commentator notes, “Christ’s servants ... must be all the more courageous to carry on through good and evil reports; they should not think it anything remarkable that evil is spoken of them when they have done good. At the same time, they must easily defend themselves before**

men when the opportunity arises.”

It is sad to see how evil is so entrenched in our world. **Why do pro-abortion politicians get reelected more easily than pro-life candidates? Why does a drunk driver walk away from a wreck while a darling two-year-old is killed? Why does the media so effectively portray Christian activists as meddlesome, Constitution-stomping kooks but God-denying radicals as heroes – and why do people believe them?** Why did innocent Steve Linscott, Pastor Saeed, Daniel, Joseph go to prison but some serial murderers are never caught?

The Psalmist speaks to this very issue... how can the wicked prosper while the godly suffer? **Psalm 73 verse 3** For I *was* envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked...

**Drop down to Verse 6** Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them *like* a garment. **7** Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish.

**Now drop down to verse 11** And they say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?” **12** Behold, these *are* the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase *in* riches. **13** Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, And washed my hands in innocence.

**Down to verse 16** When I thought *how* to understand this, It *was* too painful for me— **It is easy to mourn this seeming injustice, to forget that God is still Judge and that he will make all things right in His time.**

Then David wakes up to the truth... I thought this way, I mourned this truth... **then verse 17** Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *Then* I understood their end.



**Proverbs 24 verse 1** Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them; **2** For their heart devises violence, And their lips talk of troublemaking.

**Psalm 37 verse 1** Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. **2** For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,

And wither as the green herb.

## How did Paul stay so clam and trust in God?

Perhaps he remembered the opening verses of Psalm 109: Do not keep silent, O God of my praise! For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers, **But I give myself to prayer.**

**Hughes adds this nugget... “But Paul also had the satisfaction of knowing that though men maligned him, his Lord loved him and continued to be with him. What matters the spite of mere humans when the God of heaven says, “You are my child and will be forever – I am with you – I love you”?** Combined with this was the excitement Paul felt because he was going to Rome and was sure God would use him mightily in that great city, just as he had promised!”

**Pastor Saeed... 3 years in Iranian prison for loving Jesus. No evil done... As you know he has been released.** Greg Laurie... “I had the privilege to speak to Saeed Abedini on the phone a couple of days ago. I asked him what it was like to finally be out of that horrible Iranian prison. His response was, “I feel a day old!” Saeed was tortured and pressured to renounce his faith in Christ and return to Islam, but Saeed Abedini refused. During the first 6 months he thought he would be executed, and held hope in his heart that he would be released. Up to the day of his release, his captors tormented him psychologically, giving him no hope of ever leaving prison. Saeed told me he was aware of the prayer vigils on his behalf, and that helped him to not lose hope. God heard the prayers of His people. Up to his release, the hash tag has been **#FreeSaeed** Now, it ought to be **#GodfreedSaeed**

## Harmony Sloan

I have never been one to share my feelings on Facebook, I have only used it to share photos with family and friends. This is not a blog, this is much bigger than me or my opinion. Many of you have been following the story of sweet Noah Israel Chamberlin; the little boy who went missing on the 14th. Like a lot of you we followed his story and hoped, prayed, begged and even bargained with God to let the outcome be different than what it was. I don't understand why and I can't tell you how much my faith has been tested. All I can tell you is God is bigger. I can also tell you that this little boy and his story has brought countless people to fall on their knees in front of the Lord. I can tell you that his family and the people involved in his search are stronger in their walk and their faith than I could ever dream to be. Through this tragedy God has been revealed. I understand this story may be hard to hear about and may make you uncomfortable, but please, please, please take the time to stop and pray for this family who is hurting. Everyday their faith is tested and they stand strong. And to Noah; you are a tiny super hero leaving a mark on this world bigger than you even know.

◆ 1<sup>ST</sup> WORLD PROBLEMS... JUST HAD MY NAILS DONE AND BROKE ONE OFF ON THE CAR DOOR... 3<sup>RD</sup> world problems... **my brother just got eaten by a lion and now I'm the slowest one in the family.**

Genesis chapters 37-50 **Joseph**... *The main character in this dance is Yahweh.* 2 theaters are showing the same movie but from a completely different angle. The one on earth is one of tragedy and despair. The one in heaven is showing how this tragedy will end in the survival of a family from which the Messiah will come.

**THIS WORLD CAN TAKE A LOT FROM US... IT CAN'T TAKE OUR CHARACTER... WE HAVE TO GIVE THAT AWAY... DON'T... JOSEPH NEVER DID !!**

Had God abandoned Joseph? He had every reason to believe so. Why not pity himself? **He had not done anything to deserve this.** His actions and motives were pure...

**His father's favoritism messed up his sibling relationships.**

**Polygamy had created a mess with the "yours, mine, ours" struggles of parenting.**

**HE HAD BEEN MONSTROUSLY ABUSED BY HIS BROTHERS.** The scars were there to stay – their homicidal rage, his beating and humiliation, their demeaning destructive critical words.

## **The agonizing trip to Egypt.**

**HIS NAKED HUMILIATION ON THE SLAVE BLOCK IN EGYPT.**

**This dude should be messed up!** What an

opportunity for enslavement to victimhood. "Poor me" should be his mantra. NO! He knew God was MASSIVE and working in his suffering.

**We can thank God for His great plan.**

If Joseph's brothers never sell him to the Midianites, then Joseph never goes to Egypt.

— *If Joseph never goes to Egypt, he never is sold to Potiphar.*

**If he is never sold to Potiphar, Potiphar's wife never falsely accuses him of rape.**

— *If Potiphar's wife never falsely accuses him of rape, then he is never put in prison.*

**IF HE IS NEVER PUT IN PRISON, HE NEVER MEETS THE BAKER AND BUTLER OF PHARAOH.**

— *If he never meets the baker and butler of Pharaoh, he never interprets their dreams.*

**If he never interprets their dreams, he never gets to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.**

— *If he never gets to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, he never is made prime minister.*

**IF HE IS NEVER MADE PRIME MINISTER, HE NEVER WISELY ADMINISTRATES FOR THE SEVERE FAMINE COMING UPON THE REGION.**

— **If he never wisely administrates for the severe famine coming upon the region, then his family back in Canaan perishes from the famine.**

*If his family back in Canaan perishes from the famine, the Messiah can't come forth from a dead family.*

— **If the Messiah can't come forth, then Jesus never came.**

**If Jesus never came, you are dead in your sins and without hope in this world.**

Paul's life, Daniel's life, Joseph's life, **your life** teaches all, that *our* **disappointments are really God's appointments**. The merciful providence of God can cause us to rejoice tomorrow in the very same circumstances that today, may be causing us to mourn.

beautiful Things...