

# Acts 25 Handout

Here in this chapter we are going to see the shortest of Paul's five defenses that Luke documented.

1. The Jewish mob on the Antonia Fortress stairway (22:1-21)
2. The Sanhedrin (23:1-6)
3. Felix (24:10-21)
4. Festus (25:8, 10-11)
5. Herod Agrippa II (26:1-26)

This hearing that we are going to read about today is similar to Paul's defense before Felix except that here he is appealing to the emperor.

This chapter picks up from the last verse in chapter 24:

*"But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul imprisoned."*

It seems that Felix was replaced by Festus because of his cruelty and callousness. By the time he left, the Jews had such a hatred towards Rome.

## Verse 1

**What does Festus do three days after he arrives in Caesarea?** \_\_\_\_\_

Festus knows how important it is to get along with the Jewish leaders and wastes no time visiting the Holy City. We are going to see how the Jewish leaders also waste no time in bringing up Paul's case.

## Verses 2-3

**What did the chief priests and leading men of the Jews do?** \_\_\_\_\_

You would think that after two years, things would have died down concerning Paul, but that's not the case.

**What were these men requesting?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do they want?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is their plan?** \_\_\_\_\_

These men are not the 40 Jews from two years ago who planned to assassinate Paul. This situation is growing more serious. Now it was the religious leaders themselves, not a group of outsiders plotting to kill Paul. This plan comes straight from the top - the Jewish Sanhedrin.

#### **Verse 4 -**

**Does Festus agree to their request?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where is he going to keep Paul?** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Verses 5-6**

**What does Festus tell them to do?** \_\_\_\_\_

A better translation here would be "let the men of authority go down." The idea here being men who had the authority to bring charges against Paul.

He goes on to say that if something is wrong about Paul, then bring charges against him.

**How many days are we told Festus stays among them?** \_\_\_\_\_

After that, he heads down to Caesarea.

**What two things are we told he does?** \_\_\_\_\_

"On the tribunal" most commonly refers to a raised platform where an official was seated when rendering judgment on certain legal cases.

#### **Verses 7-8**

**What do the Jews who came from Jerusalem do?** \_\_\_\_\_

After two years, they still don't have any solid evidence against Paul. It's the same old accusations.

**Paul says he has done nothing wrong against:**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Verses 9**

**What does Festus want to do?** \_\_\_\_\_

Festus asks Paul if he's willing to stand trial before him in Jerusalem. A Roman judge could not move a case to another court without the consent of the accused.

Festus finds himself in somewhat of a conundrum. Paul is a Roman citizen who is being falsely accused and innocent. But if Festus releases him, it will cause the Jews to be angered which would run the risk of disturbing the peace and cause trouble for him back in Rome. So he

offers a compromise of trying Paul in Jerusalem, but it would be under Roman jurisdiction not Jewish.

### **Verses 10-11**

**What is Paul's response?** \_\_\_\_\_

Again he states that he has done nothing wrong (as you also very well know). Paul knows that if he can't get justice in Caesarea, that he certainly won't find it in Jerusalem.

**What does Paul say he is not trying to avoid?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you find so courageous about Paul's statements in these verses?**

**Philippians 1:21:** *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* As long as Paul lived, he would live for Christ. He would proclaim the gospel no matter where he was and no matter what circumstances he found himself in. Paul also knew where he was going when he died and looked forward to all that would bring.

Let's continue looking at verse 11 -

**BUT** (contrast here) - if there is nothing to the accusations no one can hand me over to these men.

**Who does Paul appeal to in verse 11?** \_\_\_\_\_

Paul is not seeking to evade justice - He's demanding it.

Paul's appeal for a trial in Rome was the right of every Roman citizen who felt they were in danger of violent coercion or capital punishment in a lower court. Only Roman citizens who were murderers, pirates or bandits caught in the act could not make this appeal.

By appealing to Caesar, Paul forced the Romans to guard him and take him to Rome. It must have infuriated the Jewish leaders that with one sentence Paul took the case completely out of their hands.

### **Verse 12**

**What is Festus' response after conferring with his council?** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Verse 13**

**Who are we told comes to pay their respects to Festus?** \_\_\_\_\_

This would have been a courtesy call from a neighboring ruler to the new governor of an adjoining province.



A little family background on King Agrippa:

- His great-uncle, Herod Antipas was the one who ordered the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29), sought Jesus' life (Luke 13:31-33) and later tried Him (Luke 23:7-12)
- His great-grandfather was Herod the Great who ruled at the time of Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:1-19; Luke 1:5) and murdered the children of Bethlehem in an effort to kill the newborn king.

King Agrippa ruled over parts of Palenstine. It seems that he was actually a subordinate to Festus in power and authority. He served as a consultant of sorts to the Romans on all things Jewish. He had a reputation for being an expert in Jewish matters because he was part Jewish. He was given the authority by Rome to appoint the Jewish high priest and to preserve the temple treasury and vestments.

Bernice was his sister who lived with him after her husband died. Agrippa and Bernice were seen as a scandal because they were blood brother and sister who had not married, but were living as man and wife.

#### **Verses 14-21**

**What does Festus share with King Agrippa?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What does Festus tell Agrippa the chief priests in Jerusalem were asking for at the end of verse 14?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Back in verse 3 what does it say they were asking for?** \_\_\_\_\_

We see that Festus perceived it was more than a concession that they wanted. They wanted condemnation.

**Festus says that Paul's accusers didn't bring charges against him that he suspected, but simply what (vs. 19)?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What is the disagreement about?** \_\_\_\_\_

Festus ends his story about Paul's case by saying he's keeping him in custody until he is sent to Caesar.

#### **Verses 22-23**

**What does King Agrippa want?** \_\_\_\_\_

The next day, Festus has Paul brought before them - Agrippa, Bernice, commanders and the prominent men of the city.

#### **Verses 24**

Festus addresses the group of people.

What major exaggeration does Festus make in this verse?

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**Verses 25**

What contrast is made here? \_\_\_\_\_

**Verses 26-27**

What is Festus hoping to get by having Paul stand before King Agrippa and these other men?

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What does Festus find absurd? \_\_\_\_\_

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Paul didn't fear death. We mentioned earlier Philippians 1:21: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

The assurance of the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection should free us from the fear of death and the fear of living. Sometimes we get so caught up in this life that we act like this is all we have before us. I think we can put so much emphasis on this life that we forget what lies ahead. The fact of the matter is that we should be spending our time on preparing for the life that awaits us. We can't say "for me to live is Christ" until we really believe that "to die is gain."

Back in chapter 20:24 Paul said, "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of God's grace."

Paul didn't see his life as his own. Everything he did was on account of Christ and the gospel. We have definitely seen that in these last few chapters. Paul was going to spread the word of God, whether he was in the midst of an angry crowd wanting him dead, or sitting in prison waiting to be heard.

Paul truly believed that to die was gain. **Do we believe that? Do we live like that?**

