



**Politicians Never Change
Felix Becomes Festus But You Can't Fix Stupid
Acts 25:1-22**

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Acts 25:1–5

“Festus, then, after arriving in the province, went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea three days later. And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were pleading with Festus, requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way). Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody in Caesarea, and that he himself was about to leave shortly. “Therefore,”



he said, **“have the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, have them bring charges against him.”** (NASB 2020)

One more thought from Paul before we dig in today. Since we are dealing with those who are so convinced they are the ones who are wise, i.e. politicians and religious leaders.

1 Corinthians 3:18–20

“Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world’s standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say, “He traps the wise in the snare of their own cleverness.” And again, “The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise; he knows they are worthless.”” (NLT)

As we discussed last time, Felix wound up getting fired and recalled to Rome because of his less than ethical methods and standards. He was replaced by Porcius Festus, and Paul has been languishing there in quasi-captivity for two years now because of politicians and religion.

Brand new on the job, and in Judea, what do you do? You go and talk to the religious movers and shakers who basically are the shot callers in the province.

This is not a good thing for Paul. This is a new face who wants to repair the breach that is open between Rome and the Temple. Festus, by the way, was not in the job for very long, only two years.

Virtually unknown before his time in Judea, Festus’ tenure was so short that Luke’s account in Acts represents the most we know of this “foot soldier for Rome.” He seems the perfect politician, quite willing to consult local authorities while trying not to offend anyone, an appropriate posture since his predecessor had just been summarily fired by Nero. (Gangel 1998, 416)

Three days after arriving in the province, Festus goes to Jerusalem.

After two years, has the Sanhedrin moved on? Is Paul now a past issue? Remember who is leading the Sanhedrin, Satan. He hates Paul because of how effectively Paul has presented the gospel throughout the empire. No, the Sanhedrin is still in the same foul mood they were in before.

We will also discover that they have not backed away from violence either to achieve their political goals. Thousands have already died thanks to them and more yet to come. I find it interesting to see how irreconcilable the Sanhedrin was and note that in these last days, that is a sign of the times we live in. Paul will later warn Timothy about this.

2 Timothy 3:1–5

“But understand this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, opposed to what is good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, loving pleasure rather than loving God. They will maintain the outward appearance of religion but will have repudiated its power. So avoid people like these.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Earlier, the conspiracy in the Sanhedrin was pointed to assassinate Paul, that has not changed (Acts 23:12-15). They still want him dead.

Here is the problem, our culture is arriving at the same location as the Sanhedrin. The Colson Center reports “the August 27, 2025, mass shooting at the Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis is revolting for many reasons. The victims were largely children in the midst of praying. The shooter had



written a hate-filled manifesto and, chillingly, scrawled his hatred directly onto his weapons. He wanted everyone to know not only what he had done, but why.

While mental illness played a role, political and social agendas were the fuel, making this atrocity the latest expression of what some are now calling an “assassination culture”—a disturbing “level-up” of cancel culture. Where cancel culture sought to erase voices and reputations through social pressure in the digital arena, assassination culture seeks to eradicate adversaries through violence in the physical world.” (Murray 2025)

Again, we are reminded of the times we live in here in the last days, and as we have seen with the recent martyrdom of Charlie Kirk and the violent rhetoric coming from certain political leaders. It is not getting better.

We must have an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in power in a national renewal before anything will change. Prayer is required and the church getting serious about Jesus Christ is an absolute essential. Revival is nothing more than the church being the church. We are past needing that. The only answer is Jesus.

“According to NCRI (Network Contagion Research Institute at Rutgers), 67% of left-of-center respondents saw murder as justified, compared to 54% on the right. A year ago, left-of-center support was 56%. Women overall were about 15% more likely to support assassination culture, 14.8% for Trump and 21.2% for Mamdani. While support for assassination culture is on the rise on both sides of the political spectrum and across both genders, the study found it is especially pronounced on the left, and among women of any ideology. (Ruiz 2026)

If we had any curiosity of what it will be like after the church is raptured, that provides a strong hint.

This thinking though comes from the enemy, Satan and his disciples at the time of Paul live in Jerusalem working in the Temple.

That isn't my assessment, that is the assessment of Jesus.

John 8:44

“For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (NLT)

The recent study and the results reported reflect the one who is moving towards the place he will be in for the Tribulation and the simple fact that many are now already following him and most do not know that.

Festus arrives in Jerusalem and you would think that maybe they would want to discuss the most recent issue taking place between gentiles and Jews costing thousands of lives. Nope, they want Paul dead and he is the agenda. Felix didn't deal with the problem, surely Festus will. After all, he is here to smooth things over because of the gross failures of Felix. So, make it an issue.

Let's look at this from Paul's perspective. He is totally innocent and should have been released per Roman law, but politics got in the way. Politicians have not changed in thousands of years. It is all about making people happy that you are there, Paul is one of those chips to keep around and play as needed.

Political realities collide with Roman ideals of justice for Roman citizens, and the tightrope Festus walks in this narrative probably resembles the tightrope he had to walk in history. Paul was too small an issue in the larger scheme of Judea's administration to be allowed to simply go free at the expense of the local



leaders' annoyance, yet not guilty or inconsequential enough to be summarily convicted. (Keener 2015, 3450)

Paul is no dummy and he will react, with the Holy Spirit's guidance, because of the games going on involving his freedom.

I find it amazing that after two years, the Sanhedrin still wants to kill Paul and still wants to do so via assassination, meaning Roman soldiers are expendable in their minds. These are religious people, who are supposed to be following the dictates of Torah, not hardly.

One of the first things that happens with religious people is they throw out the word of God wherever it does not meet their own personal agendas. Terms will be redefined and "new" definitions to words will be "discovered" in order to uphold the latest and greatest false teaching or to justify the spiritual abuse being poured out on others who still do not know about the hypocrisy going on.

There is a new chief priest, but that changes nothing. Per Josephus, "about this time king Agrippa gave the high priesthood to Ismael, who was the son of Fabi." (Josephus and Whiston 1987, 536) The idea of killing Paul though remained and assassination seemed to be the desired method of doing so.

The nation was moving further towards being completely lawless and by this time, per Josephus, there were also traveling gangs of assassins traveling the countryside. Ones which Festus will have to deal with.

This is the major concern of Festus during his short time as the governor. "Upon Festus's coming into Judea, it happened that Judea was afflicted by the robbers, while all the villages were set on fire, and plundered by them. And then it was that the sicarii, as they were called, who were robbers, grew numerous. They made use of small swords, not much different in length from the Persian acinacae, but somewhat crooked, and like the Roman sicae [or sickles] as they were called; and from these weapons these robbers got their denomination; and with these weapons they slew a great many; for they mingled themselves among the multitude at their festivals, when they were come up in crowds from all parts to the city to worship God, as we said before, and easily slew those that they had a mind to slay. (Josephus and Whiston 1987, 537)

Whether Festus had been fully briefed or not, he did not agree with the idea, not that he didn't have other things to concern him, but obviously, Paul was not his first concern.

Acts 25:4-5

"Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody in Caesarea, and that he himself was about to leave shortly. "Therefore," he said, **"have the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, have them bring charges against him."**" (NASB 2020)

When the governor traveled, he had a military escort and was protected. He has invited that the Sanhedrin send some of their own to travel with him back to Caesarea and bring charges against Paul there. In other words, ever the politician and Roman, he wanted to maintain Roman control as long as possible of what was going on.

The problems that Paul has, and the reason he is still being held, is due to politicians making decisions contrary to the law. This is not a lot different than what we see in some jurisdictions today, globally.

By dealing with Paul early in the new administration, before other prisoners have "accidents" on the way to Jerusalem, they hope to finish what Lysias had stopped two years earlier. Paul's death.



For Festus, he is new on the job, wants to look good before Rome and a transfer of venue without a hearing might be a red flag he does not want to throw up just yet.

Acts 25:6–8

“After Festus had spent no more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered that Paul be brought. **After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many, and serious, charges against him which they could not prove, while Paul said in his own defense, “I have not done anything wrong either against the Law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar.”**” (NASB 2020)

In two years, nothing had changed. Some new players from the Sanhedrin, but the same old accusations. Now, the case had moved forward, and Festus is ready to judge.

Festus wants to come across to the Jewish leadership as a man of action and one who drives towards compromise no matter what. His intent is to hear the case as much as possible and then do a change of venue which is a death sentence for Paul. Paul may know that since he has been receiving visitors and we already know the opsec of the Sanhedrin is less than airtight.

Upon arrival back in Caesarea, he has moved to accommodate the Jewish leadership. This is politics, not justice and Paul knows it. Especially when the accusers are allowed to stand all around him.

Once again, he reasserts his innocence. But it doesn't matter.

Acts 25:9–12

“But Festus, **wanting to do the Jews a favor, replied to Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?”** But Paul said, **“I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know. If, therefore, I am in the wrong and have committed something deserving death, I am not trying to avoid execution; but if there is nothing to the accusations which these men are bringing against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.”** Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, **“You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.”**” (NASB 2020)

In other words, as much as Festus wanted to compromise and schmooze things over with the religious leadership in Jerusalem, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was not going to allow it to take place. Once again, the Jewish leadership had no case and could not convince Festus to affirmatively move in their favor.

As a Roman citizen, Paul had rights, they had been trampled on under the guise of political expediency and graft for two years. And now, whether he says yes or no, the decision was already made that he would go to Jerusalem, so he provides a totally unexpected answer. Since this is an official tribunal, treat it as such.

One other thing as well. Felix has just been recalled by Nero to Rome for misconduct. Normally, there are those things that follow along behind the one who conducted the business of the Empire in a manner that was less than legal. A group of Jews has already left from Caesarea to Rome to complain of the actions of Felix.

Paul is no dummy and he knows politics has been the reason he has been held. His will simply be one more case against the administration of Felix if he appeals to Rome and I am sure that is how Festus sees it. This will not reflect negatively on Festus but will on Felix.



What Festus says in verse 9 reflects that fix is in, even though the trial would be before Festus, it would be a no-win situation for Paul, if he lived long enough to get there. Festus is beginning to figure out that this is a politically sensitive case, he is beginning to understand why Felix did nothing. This would be a great way to get in a better standing with the locals, or so he thinks. Paul is offered justice in Jerusalem, and he knows he will never get it there.

Legally, there has already been a trial and there is no need for another one and when Paul says to Festus, "as you know," he is implying that Festus has read the entire record and understands the facts.

We have no idea if he had but facts do not matter to politicians, spin does. That is not a new discovery, it has been a consistent finding over the centuries. Paul reiterates that he has been standing in front of Caesar's tribunal the past two years as is his right as a citizen. The jurisdiction is not Judean, it is not Jewish, but Roman and he has been in the correct venue. Felix played games, Festus is trying not to but the damage has already been done. Thus, the official appeal to Caesar.

The right of appeal to Caesar initially started with Octavian in 30 B.C. (cf. Dio Cassius, History, 51.19). This initial dictate was expanded to forbid blinding, scourging, and torture to any Roman citizen who appealed to Caesar (cf. Paulus, Sententiae 5.26.1). (Uitley 2003, 265)

Per Cassius Dio, They also decreed that Caesar should hold the tribunician power for life, that he should aid those who called upon him for help both within the pomerium and outside for a distance of one mile,—a privilege possessed by none of the tribunes,—also that he should judge appealed cases, and that in all the courts his vote was to be cast as Athena's vote. (Dio 1914-1927, 53-55)

This appeal to Caesar was completely unexpected by Festus.

But remember the first name, Porcius. In the Roman world, that had some meaning and Paul, receiving intel as he was from the Roman church, would know this ahead of time. "The Christians at Rome would have gathered what information they could about Festus and passed this on to Jerusalem for transmission to Paul in Caesarea. There may not have been much to learn; he apparently made no mark before his appointment but presuming he had held a praetorship, he must have been over thirty-nine. Most importantly, the more educated believers would have discovered what it meant for Festus to be a Porcius; that presuming Paul was still incarcerated at Caesarea when Festus arrived, the apostle would be dealing with a man whose family pride (such as survived under Nero) was bound up with the Porcian Laws popularly connected with the right of provocatio. (Gray-Fow 2016, 482-483)

In other words, the God of the universe was in total and complete control of all the events taking place even to the point of making certain the right man was the governor from Rome at the right time.

Acts 25:12

"Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go."" (NASB 2020)

Festus had to consult with his legal staff. It appears he has someone who is up on the law in his tribunal and as a result he had to seek expert assistance as well. Paul had asserted a legal right that he had as a Roman. This was the "Roman citizen's ancient right of provocatio, which protected him 'from summary punishment, execution or torture without trial, from private or public arrest, and from actual trial by magistrates outside Italy.'" (Stott 1994, 367)

Paul had been receiving and sending correspondence the entire time he was being held. He knew about Festus for some time thanks to the church in Rome. "Keeping their ears open and reading the published announcements, they would soon learn about Felix's designated successor. Provincial governors were



appointed at the beginning of the year but did not take up their appointment until the summer sailing season, giving ample time for information about Porcius Festus to reach Judea before he himself arrived.” (Gray-Fow 2016, 480)

God was in this.

There are some who believe that Paul made a mistake. Remember though, the Holy Spirit was with him and guiding him all along the way. This was not a mistake but exactly what the Lord wanted.

Paul would have the opportunity to witness to Festus, Agrippa II and Bernice.

But once again, we see Paul willing to use his rights as a citizen of Rome to his advantage. We really need to take note of that especially in a culture where there are those seeking political office who hate those who follow Jesus Christ and want to do away with the church.

As we see just some of the political details behind the scenes here of how the Lord is taking care of Paul, remember, He is still on the throne today and in total and complete control of all the events we see taking place around us.

This appeal did not end the issue for Festus. This is a Roman legal case and yes, there is indeed paperwork. “He was required to send materials on to whoever would judge the case in Rome detailing the original charges and the fact of appeal to Caesar. (Such materials were termed officially *libelli dimissorii*, but curiously were also known as *apostoli*.) While the governor and his advisors were probably still laboring over a dossier that explained the legal issues from a Roman viewpoint without getting entangled in Jewish religious controversies, Festus received a courtesy visit from Agrippa II and his sister Bernice. (Gray-Fow 2016, 484)

Festus spills to Agrippa the details and they are now based on his thorough and mind-numbing review and authoring of all the legal documents required by the Empire to go with Paul to Rome.

Paul has to wait for all of that to be completed before he can proceed to go to Rome himself. He has now shown, graphically, the hard hearts of the leadership of the Temple. He still wants to see the Jews saved, even those who want him dead. He is still trusting God and as we can tell just by the glance we have given to this point, God is moving on his behalf.

Acts 25:13–22

“Now when several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea, paying their respects to Festus. And while they were spending many days there, **Festus presented Paul’s case to the king, saying, “There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix; and when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. I replied to them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any person before the accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.** So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered that the man be brought. When the accusers stood up, they did not begin bringing any charges against him of crimes that I suspected, but **they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.** And being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these matters. **But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor’s decision, I ordered that he be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar.**” Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he said, “you shall hear him.”” (NASB 2020)



Agrippa II (Marcus Julius Agrippa) is “King” as appointed by Rome to rule over a client kingdom on behalf of the Roman Empire. It is just northeast of the province Festus is in charge of and he is considered to be a known expert of the time on Jewish customs and religious matters. He literally has no dog in this hunt and no jurisdiction at all. He is the classic political consultant.

By the way, it was his great-grandfather who killed all of the babies in Bethlehem trying to kill Jesus. HIS grandfather had John the Baptist murdered, and his father had killed the first apostle to be martyred, James, the brother of John. He is the only surviving son. Not exactly a slat of the earth kind of guy.

And he wants to meet Paul? By the way, Bernice is Agrippa’s sister.

Festus welcomes this visit as he is struggling with what to write to Nero. Literally, we get elements of the first draft here in Acts. But Festus is concerned and talking to someone who might be able to advise him.

What was Festus not telling the emperor that he ought to know about the situation in Judea involving the Jewish authorities? These are the sorts of thoughts that were likely running through Festus’s mind as he sought way to write his report so that he himself would not fall under suspicion. (Witherington III 1998, 726-727)

As the text tells us, several days have now gone by after the rather abrupt and unplanned for end to the hearing.

Yes, this is indeed the first political problem that Festus now must deal with, and Agrippa’s visit helps him frame what he is writing.

It was quite natural for Agrippa as ruler of the neighboring territory to come to pay his respects to the new Judean governor, especially since Agrippa was a supporter of Rome and interested in Roman affairs. Agrippa’s importance was not limited to the territory over which he ruled, because he also had been appointed by Claudius curator of the temple in Jerusalem, giving him the power to appoint the high priest, possession of the priestly vestments worn on Yom Kippur, and the task of looking after the temple treasury. (Witherington III 1998, 727)

We are not told if he was asked to come, but this will indeed be used by the Lord as one more opportunity to present the gospel to those in leadership positions in Judea.

Festus will later fess up and give the reason to Agrippa why he is telling him all of this (Acts 25:26) and yes, it is writer’s block.

Festus explains that unlike his predecessor, he was doing all he could to bring folks to trial as soon as possible unlike his predecessor, Felix. Felix was looking for how he could take advantage of someone, Festus is a Roman politician loyal to Rome and to his emperor, but also interested in keeping himself healthy and very alive.

As he begins his narrative to Agrippa, he does indeed make himself out as the hero. The Temple leadership wanted him to bow to their pressure and he did not. He makes that clear.

Acts 25:15–16

“and when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. I replied to them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any person before the accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.” (NASB 2020)



He then relates how he was surprised that the leadership did not bring any charges that he was expecting, nothing involving anything that he, as a Roman judge, would be involved in adjudicating. It is indeed all about religion, in his mind.

And, as Paul said more than once, all about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and nothing more than that. "Specifically, the issue is Jesus, a man who died and now is claimed to have come back to life. The Romans did not believe in resurrection, so this would be a foreign religious concept for them. So Paul is being charged with believing in the resurrection, something that Rome cannot judge and that is not a civil matter anyway." (Bock 2007, 711)

Interesting enough, Agrippa says he would like to hear what Paul has to say. Apparently, he has been wanting to hear more about the Way for some time now and it is reflected in his comment.

Paul is to be invited to present the gospel to the two men who are in control of this corner of the Roman Empire. All because he has remained faithful to the Lord.

As followers of Jesus Christ, are we standing strong for Him knowing that He is in charge of all we are seeing come down round us? We live in the last days and the Bible is clear, it will not get better anytime soon. Dr. Mohler lays out our task as follows, "Today, as Christians, we will meet opposition and persecution, and face accusations. We will stand trial in the cultural courts of modernity and postmodernism. The high priests of the moral revolution will charge us with heresy and sedition. They will indict us for holding antiquated beliefs which oppose the new post-Christian status quo. Indeed, Western culture views Christian dogma as diametrically opposed to its vision of progress. The question, therefore, is this: are we, as God's people, willing to give an answer for the hope that is within us? (Mohler Jr. 2019, 159)

The events that took place recently in St. Paul reflect the heart of Jesus as the pastor of the invaded church, remained true to his calling and his Lord.

Peter put it this way.

1 Peter 3:13–16

"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." (ESV)

We have a bit more time traveling with Paul, but he too is showing us what it means to be faithful to Jesus Christ in an insane culture.

Romans 3:21–24

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly



declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." (NLT)

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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