

Acts 24-25:12 John Karmelich

1. About 30 years prior to this chapter, Pontius Pilate asked the crowd of Jews outside the temple "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:22).
 - a) The question "What shall we do with Jesus?" is a question every adult must face at some point in their life. Their answer to that question has an effective upon their eternal destiny. Unfortunately, most people choose to ignore Jesus, for the most part of their life, and live for the here and now. Those who have an eternal perspective and choose to follow Jesus gain their life.
 - i) Jesus said: "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:39 NIV)
 - b) The feeling of déjà vu should hit you when you read Chapters 23-26, of Acts. It is now 30 years later. Pontius Pilate has been replaced as Governor of the territory by a man named Felix. In Chapter 25, Felix is replaced by a guy named Festus. In the last few chapters of the gospels, we have Jesus' account of his trials in front of the Jewish high council and in front of the Roman Governor Pilate. Here, we have the trials of Paul in front of the Jewish high council and in front of the Roman Governor Felix & Festus.
 - i) What we are watching in Paul's trials, in some way, is history repeating itself. About thirty years ago, Jesus was crucified. The Jews thought they were done with "that problem". The Romans could go back to their governmental business and not worry about any more rioting.
 - a) The Jews wanted him dead out of jealousy of power and the belief he was not the Messiah. Pilate, the Roman governor didn't know what to do with him. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent of the charges against him, yet he needed to please the Jewish people under him and keep the peace. One can't help but see the parallel with Paul's trials!
 - ii) The "problem" of course, is that Jesus rose again. After appearing on and off again for about 40 days, Jesus commanded his followers to take the good news to "Jerusalem, Samaria, and the Ends of the Earth" (Acts 1:8)
 - c) So here we have Paul, about 30 years after Jesus trial, facing the same sort of dilemma. Like Jesus, Paul is facing false charges in front of Jewish Courts and Roman Courts.
 - i) The difference between Paul and Jesus is that Jesus already paid the price for sin. Therefore, it was not necessary for Paul to unwillingly give up his life. Unnecessary martyrdom is not required as a Christian. Therefore, Paul is taking, and will take, every legal means necessary to keep himself alive to preach another day for Jesus.
 - a) That is the lesson for us! God calls us to be alive and be his witnesses. There are some who are called to lay down his life for Jesus, but most of us are called to live for Jesus. That is what we are seeing in the last few chapters of Paul's trials as examples for our lives.
2. Before we start, Chapter 24, I have an announcement. After 23 chapters of one-chapter at a time, I'm breaking my pattern a little. (Gasp! ☺) Chapter 24 is only 27 verses, and the first 12 verses of Chapter 25 fit better with the applications of this lesson, while the rest of 25 and Chapter 26 make a good single lesson. Therefore we have a chapter and a half tonight.

3. Studying this whole passage, the key line to me personally, is in last verse of Chapter 24. Paul was on trial before Governor Felix. Felix didn't know what to do with him, so he left him in the jail cell for two years.
 - a) Verse 27: When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.
 - b) Let that stop and sink in for a minute. Two years of your life!
 - i) In the last chapter Jesus told Paul that he would testify of him (Jesus) in Rome. Paul probably thought "Woo hoo, I'll be released from this silly trial, and I'll be free to go to Rome like God said I would. We'll, two years in a jail cell makes you question that promise!"
 - ii) Paul probably thought "Did God really say I will testify of him in Rome? Did I just imagine it? Here was Paul, used to traveling around, winning souls for Christ. Now, all based on false accusations, he is sitting in a jail cell for 2 years.
 - c) This is key to think about. One moment, you are like Paul the missionary. Yes, you have some trials, but the results are tremendous. You can see thousands giving their life for Christ. You can see your results. Paul loved to be a missionary. After three journeys, you get the impression he couldn't sit still very long. Now here was the same guy, in jail on false charges, sitting and waiting on God.
 - i) Most of us know of at least one person who was at a peak of his career and then "the walls came down around them". This is the chapter to read in those times. When you feel like nobody is helping you. When you feel like God has abandoned you. When your friends aren't supporting you. (One thing to notice about Paul's trials is the lack of any witnesses in support of Paul!) That is when the gut-level trust in God, no matter what the circumstances has to come in.
4. With that cheerful introduction ☺, lets go to the text. In the last chapter, we had Paul on trial in front of the Jewish high council. Paul made a statement that divided the council, and a riot broke out. The Roman Commander Lysias saved Paul's life. The Jews then planned an ambush to kill Paul. Lysias got word of it, and sent Paul, surrounded by soldiers to Governor Felix, who was in Ceasearea, a beach-town about 2-days away by foot.
 - a) In Chapter 24, we have the trial in front of Felix.
5. Verse 1: Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.
 - a) The first 9 verses of this chapter are the Jews laying out their charges against Paul.
 - b) The high priest, Ananias himself made the trip. I suspect he was still angry how Paul "dared" to call him a white-washed sepicur (tombstone) in the previous chapter.
 - c) The Jews hired a lawyer named Tertullus to bring the charges. Not much is said about this guy by the historians. All we know about him is from the text.
 - d) As I stated in the last chapter, Felix was a very unpopular and unscrupulous governor. He was the only slave in Roman history to be a governor. He was hated by the Jews for his ruthlessness. He was eventually "re-called" by Rome for his wickedness.
6. Verse 2: When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. ³ Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. ⁴ But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.
 - a) To really appreciate these set of verses, read them out loud. Notice how hard this lawyer is trying to "butter up" Felix. It is almost comical to read.
 - i) Here is the guy using all sorts of flattery to butter-up Felix. Both the Jews and Felix himself knew that nothing this guy was saying is true.

- ii) In the end, Felix refused to find Paul guilty. I suspect this flattery hurt the Jews case more than it helped. Once you start off speaking things nobody believes is true, you lose your credibility.
 - b) Remember that Felix was hated by the Jews, and the whole crowd knew that all of this flattery was a lie.
 - i) In Verse 5, the flattery comes to an abrupt halt. Commentators speculate that 1) the attorney felt that was enough to make a good impression or 2) Felix himself started rolling his eyes at all the false-flattery and the attorney changed tactics.
 - c) I heard a great quote about flattery from Jon Curson that is appropriate here: "Flattery is like perfume. It should be smelled, but never swallowed."
7. Here come the actual accusations against Paul, Verse 5: "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect ⁶ and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. ⁸ By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him."
- a) Remember that the main concern of Roman law was "keeping the peace". By accusing Paul of being a riot-starter, was a serious concern.
 - b) The other charge was "desecrating the temple" by allowing Gentiles into the "Jewish-only" section of the Temple. This was a Jewish religious crime, and Judaism was an officially allowed religion under Roman law.
8. Verse 9: The Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.
- a) I just pictured a whole group of people nodding their heads and going "yeah, yeah".
 - b) You have to remember that none of this is true. Paul didn't start the trouble. He was accused by some Jews from Asia Minor (today-Turkey) who were aware of Paul's growing church in that territory. This group was bringing false accusations against Paul.
 - c) If you remember from last week, I talked about spiritual-warfare. These people hated Paul because he was teaching Gentiles could be saved without Judaism, which renders Judaism null and void (a topic for later!) AND the fact that Paul was converting Jews to Christianity. That hatred was focused toward Paul, and now they were "rationalizing" the necessity to have Paul killed via a Roman trial.
9. Here comes Paul's defense, Verse 10: When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense.
- a) There is a little bit of humor in this verse. Paul, wanting to say something positive, or say something nice about Felix, couldn't think of a thing. So he just says "Well, Felix, I do know you have been a judge over this nation for a number of years".
 - i) The humor is that Paul couldn't think of one complimentary thing to say about Felix, so he just says, "well, you are a governor. "
10. Verses 11-16 are Paul making his defense: You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. ¹³ And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me.
- a) Paul actually made a good lawyer. Here is his defense.
 - i) First, Paul states that he only got to Jerusalem 12 days ago. That is hardly enough time to organize a riot.
 - a) That fact could be verified by witnesses if need be.
 - ii) Second, Paul states that his accusers did not find Paul arguing with anyone prior to the incident. Remember that the charge was Paul is a "riot instigator". Paul was stating that there are no witnesses that could state that fact.
 - iii) Paul focuses on lack of evidence.

- b) Notice the practicality of Paul's defense. He did not say "God will defend me, I don't have to say anything" or "God told me I'm going to Rome, so you better release me". Since Paul did not have any further revelations from God, he did the right thing and defended his name against false charges.
11. Paul continues, Verse 14: However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets,¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.
- a) Felix was aware of Christianity, which was called "The Way" at that time.
- b) Paul was stating that he was a good Jew by the claim in verse 15 "I have the same hope in God as these men" and then Paul focuses on the resurrection issue.
- c) Paul mentions his belief in the resurrection of all. To paraphrase Paul's argument, "Why would a God-fearing man want to "sin" by starting a riot?
- d) Paul speaks of the resurrection of all people, not just Christian believers:
- i) The book of Revelation mentions this: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. (Rev. 20:12 NIV)
- ii) The best illustration I heard describing the resurrection is that of a computer floppy disk. When it is empty, it weighs about 1.5 ounces. When it is full of software programs, it still weighs 1.5 ounces. The real you is software. When we die, we simply "transfer" to our new heavenly bodies.
- a) (I know this illustration isn't Biblically perfect, but it's not bad! ☺)
12. Paul continues, verse 16: So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.
- a) There is an application for us. Paul believed God forgives our sins, past, present and future. Yet he still strives to keep his "conscience clear" before God and man. What does Paul mean by that?
- i) Paul is summarizing how Christians are to live our lives. To be diligent in the confession of our sins, our prayer life, our worship and our study of God's word. In Ephesians, Paul teaches the constant act of "putting off the old man, putting on the new".
- a) "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds;²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."
- b) (Ephesians 4:22-24, NIV)
- ii) Another example can be found in Philippians: "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," (Phil 2:12 NIV)
- a) That verse does not mean our salvation is up to us, it means to focus our lives on God, and God will guide us in how He wants us to live out our life for his glory.

13. Paul continues, Verse 17: After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.¹⁸ I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance.
- a) Paul tackles the accusations by stating what his business was in Jerusalem, to deliver a cash gift to the poor and go through a Jewish "purification-ritual" at the temple. Paul states that he can get witness to collaborate his story.
 - b) One thing that puzzles me from reading this – Where was James? Remember, it was James idea to go through this ritual at the temple to prove he was still a "Good Jew" to the Jewish-Christians in Jerusalem. And where were other Jewish Christians to support Paul? Why weren't they there?
 - i) The sad answer was his friends were not there probably out of fear for their lives. This angry mob was probably after any of the leaders of the Jewish-Christian church. As suppose to supporting Paul in his hour of need, they were fleeing in hiding.
 - ii) Was Luke there? I suspect not. Since Paul is going to spend the next 2 years in jail, Paul probably recounts the events of the trial to Luke at this point. We'll discover later in this chapter that Felix lets Paul have visitors.
 - iii) So here was Paul, making his own defense, without the visual support of any of his friends. That had to hurt as much as the accusations themselves.
14. Verse 19: But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me.
- a) Roman law as well as American law requires that you face your accusers. The fact that the guys who actually started the riot where not there could lead to Paul's innocence.
15. Verse 20: Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin--²¹ unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: `It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'"
- a) Paul admits the only thing he is guilty of is yelling in the Sanhedrin Council "I'm a Pharisee and I believe in the resurrection of the dead". The Pharisee's believed in the resurrection and Paul hoped his "Pharisee brothers" would support him. The other political party, the Saducee's, were more liberal and did not believe in a resurrection.
 - b) Paul is adding to his credibility by being total honest about his riot-starting sentence in the Sanhedrin.
16. Verse 22 begins Felix's verdict, or lack of a verdict, I should say. Verse 22: Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case."
- a) Notice it says Felix was "well acquainted with the Way" (i.e. Christians). There were a lot of Jewish Christians living under Felix's jurisdiction. Felix knew Christians didn't go around starting riots. This was a positive witness of the local Christian community despite the oppression of the Roman Government. A good lesson for us to remember!
 - b) It appears that Felix was just stalling for time. He says in this verse that he will make his decision once the Roman commander Lysias comes down. As we will discover in the next several verses, Felix was simply stalling for time and he wanted a bribe from Paul in order to let him go.
 - c) Felix knew that the Sanhedrin controlled the power in Judea, so therefore he didn't want to anger them by releasing Paul. He also knew that Paul was innocent. Therefore, he simply stalled for time. Like a good beaurocrat he delayed on the decision so as to not get in trouble.

17. Verse 23: He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.
- a) Back in Verse 17, Paul stated that he came to Jerusalem to bring a money-gift to the Jews as the territory was currently going through a drought.
 - b) In Verse 26, we will learn that Felix wanted a bribe from Paul in order to release him. I suspect Felix raised his eyebrows when he heard about the money in Verse 17.
 - c) Here in Verse 23, Felix told the guards to "give Paul some freedom and let his friends visit him".
 - i) Grant it, it is speculation that the reason Felix wanted to allow visitors was so that they could bring him money, but given these 3 verses, that does fit the case.
 - ii) From what we know about Felix, this was a very rotten, immoral person. Personally, I don't think he cared one way or another about Paul. The money did probably peak his interest. Felix did know that he must do "justice" or he could be in trouble with his superiors. One great contributions of the Roman Empire was their sense of justice, at least for Roman citizens.
18. Verse 24: Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.
- a) We know from history that Drusilla was Felix's 3rd wife and the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. This is the Herod who had James (James the apostle, John's brother) killed in Acts Chapter 12. She was probably 19 at the time. Historians say she broke off her marriage to another king because she was attracted by the greed and power of Felix. (They sound like a pretty disgusting couple, who deserve each other! ☹ I remember Chuck Smith once said "God sometimes punishes adulterers by letting them live out the rest of their live with their new partner!" ☹)
 - b) I suspect that Felix and Drusilla were both curious about Christianity. They probably refused to sink so low as to go out and get more information, but here was a chance to get some basic knowledge about Christians since they had Paul locked up. Felix's reasons for listening to Paul may have been out of simple boredom or just plain curiosity. The other possibility, as stated in the text, was that Felix made himself available to Paul so Paul could offer him a bribe.
 - i) Although the text does not say so, you know that Paul was praying for Felix, that God would give him an opportunity to witness to him. That prayer may have been influential in driving Felix to see Paul and ask questions.
 - ii) Although God does not violate your free-will as far as your decision for Christ, I do believe God opens up opportunities to witness for Him if you pray for such opportunities, as Paul did here.
 - iii) The application from Paul's perspective is a good one. Notice in Verse 24 it says, "Paul spoke of faith in Christ Jesus". Paul didn't discuss his wrongful imprisonment, local politics or even what he truly thought of Felix. He focused on the Gospel.
 - a) A good bit of Christian advice is to not look at people with contempt, or focus on their faults, but to look at them as someone who needs to know more about Jesus. God is not about changing people from the outside-in, but the inside out!

19. Verse 25: As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." ²⁶At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.
- a) Imagine having Paul as a one-on-one Bible teacher! Even if Felix had the wrong motivations to visit Paul, Paul used that opportunity to preach about God and the Good News of the Gospel. Verse 25 says Paul focused on three things:
 - i) 1 Righteousness: We are all sinners before God. Righteousness only comes by trusting what Jesus did for us. Righteousness means "right-standing" before God.
 - ii) 2. Self-Control: After we become born again, self-control becomes an issue. I personally don't like that term, because it implies my ability to have self-discipline makes me holy. To me, it is God working through me that gives me the ability to live the life God has intended for me.
 - a) I do like "self-control" as it applies to this application of God's command for our lives. As God calls us to lead a certain life, he expects us out of our free-will, to act accordingly.
 - (1) I like the expression "Where God leads, God enables". This means if God desires us to lead a righteous life, He will give us the strength and self-control to live that life.
 - iii) 3. The Judgement to Come: Paul lectured how all people will be accountable to God. This reminds me of something the late Dr. Walter Martin used to say about evangelism "If they won't listen to Jesus, give them Moses!" He was referring to judgement for our sinful life.
 - b) Notice Felix's response: "That's enough for now". I suspect Felix was convicted by Paul's speeches. Felix was not convicted enough to want to change, but was convicted enough to ask Paul to stop.
 - i) Preaching the truth of the Bible does that to people. The message of the Bible is so logical, so straightforward, so convicting, it makes people either want to accept the Gospel or run away because they don't want to change their lifestyle.
 - a) In order for one to turn to God, they first need to realize they are a sinner before God. Conviction of one's sins is a necessary step prior to the remedy for sin, which is accepting what Jesus did on the cross.
 - b) This reminds me of the old-joke at a pastor's conference. One guy, walking in late says, "is this seat saved? The pastor sitting next to the empty seat, looks at the seat and then at the other pastor and says, "I don't think it's even under conviction yet!" ☺
 - c) I suspect "Felix got more than he bargained for". As I stated, he wanted to hear about the Gospel either out of curiosity, or boredom, or he was waiting for Paul to make him an offer. In either case, I doubt he ever expected to get convicted by Paul's sermon.
 - i) Paul may have been witnessing to him in an indirect way. If Felix wanted a bribe, I'm sure he hinted or implied the suggestion to Paul or his visitors. If I know Paul, Paul never discussed his own freedom, but simply used the opportunity to teach Felix about the Gospel message.
 - ii) I may be reading too much into the text, but I have to suspect Paul's friends must have said "Come on Paul, let us take up a collection for you. You'll be out of here and then we can go on to Rome". Paul would have nothing to do with that. If Paul gave a bribe, he wouldn't be practicing what he preached. He saw an opportunity to preach to Felix, and he took it.

- iii) Notice also that his wife Drusilla is not mentioned in these verses. It probably means she was not interested in the Gospel message to begin with.
- 20. Verse 27: When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.
 - a) Paul wouldn't offer a bribe for his freedom, so Paul stayed in jail.
 - b) The story from Felix's perspective is a sad one.
 - i) He has gone down in history as an immoral man, a horrible governor, and one who has rejected the Gospel message flat out. God raised this man up from a slave to a Roman Governor. Here in chapter 24, he was given an opportunity to give the Glory to God and not himself, and at the same time receive forgiveness for all his sins. But Felix was too set in ways and died the same way he lived.
 - a) This reminds me of one of the Proverbs: When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan. (Proverbs 29:2 NKJV)
 - c) Now lets look at this chapter from Paul's perspective.
 - i) Paul was discouraged from his experience in Jerusalem.
 - ii) Even though it was predicted to him he would be bound in Jerusalem, he went anyway. Until it actually happened, I don't think Paul focused on it too much.
 - iii) Paul got his big opportunities to witness to the religious Jews of Jerusalem. It turned out to be a horrible disaster and a riot broke out.
 - iv) Paul's life was saved by the Romans. Paul got a chance to witness to the Jewish High Council (The Sanhedrin). A group he was part of years ago (Chapter 6).
 - a) Another disaster of a speech, and another riot broke out!
 - v) God encouraged Paul (Chapter 23) by saying he would preach about Jesus in Rome. Paul probably thought he was going to be set free to go.
 - vi) Verse 27 has some powerful words: "two years had passed".
 - a) Don't you think Paul was questioning God's promise?
 - b) Where were Paul's friends? There is no mention in this chapter of James. James, the leader of the church is the one who had the idea a few chapters back for Paul to go to the Temple in the first place!
 - (1) Grant it, Luke did probably minister to Paul while he was in prison here. There is no mention of anyone coming to Paul, but it would seem logical. The question is: Where was everybody during Paul's trials? The sad answer is they were probably afraid for their own lives and wouldn't come to Paul's defense.
 - c) This period had to be one of the greatest tests of Paul's faith. God allowed Paul to remain in this jail for two years until the next set of events had occurred.
 - (1) God does that to us. God will often allow periods in our lives where we don't sense his presence. The purpose of such times is that God is trying to build our faith in Him and his promises, just as God had made that promise to Paul two years prior.
 - d) There is one other positive thing that probably happened during this 2 year period of time. Most scholars speculated that this is when Luke wrote The Gospel of Luke/ Acts.
 - i) In the next 2 chapters, Paul would be traveling to Rome for his court appeal. Luke traveled with Paul, and recorded the events in Chapters 27 and 28. While Paul was a prisoner in Caesarea, Luke had a 2-year opportunity to visit people like Peter, John, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and other people who knew Jesus first hand. I suspect Paul kept travel diaries from his travels with Paul. Collecting all the data, he put together the 2 books of the Bible.

- a) If you remember from Lesson 1, there is a theory that the purpose of the Gospel of Luke and The Book of Acts may have been as Paul's trial documents. The book of Acts ends before Paul's final trial before Nero, and the books could have been in preparation for that event.
 - e) Verse 27 said, "Felix wanted to grant the Jews a favor". A little historical background is helpful here.
 - i) The town of Caesarea was a mixture of Greeks and Jews. The historian Josephus records that a riot broke out between these 2 groups over political control of Caesarea. Felix commanded the Roman Army to support the Greek cause, and many Jews were robbed, plundered and killed in these attacks. The Jews complained to Caesar Nero. Nero took the Jews side and had Felix "re-called" to Rome. Felix would have been killed except his brother Pallas interceded for him. Thus, Felix, trying to keep his job and his life, offered to do the Jews "this favor".
 - ii) Verse 27 mentions that Festus succeeded Felix as Governor. The first 10 verses of Chapter 25 is Paul's trial before Festus
21. Chapter 25, Verse 1: Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, ² where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. ³ They urgently requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. ⁴ Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. ⁵ Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there, if he has done anything wrong."
- a) Here was the new Governor Festus. Compared to the corrupt Governor Felix, Festus was a "sigh of relief". Little is known about him prior to his appointment in AD 60. He only lived two more years.
 - b) Festus, trying to calm down the Jews after the massacre in Caesarea, went right to business. The Jews asked "as a favor" to bring Paul back to Jerusalem to stand trial. They had an ambush waiting for Paul. I suspect the same 40 guys who "took a vow" to kill Paul in Chapter 23 were at it again!
 - i) Here was Festus, fresh from Rome, not that familiar with the situation, trying to make a good impression over the local residents. He wanted to make a fresh start, and stated that he would hear the case himself from the beginning.
 - c) I also see Festus as trying to establish himself as ruler, and not given in completely to the religious council. By agreeing to a new trial but not turning Paul over to them, he is showing his authority and at the same time granting their request.
 - d) Notice a few things here. God is working on getting Paul to Rome. It is "interesting" that Festus refused to give in to the Jews request and granted Paul a new trial. It is simply another example of how God is working in the background.
 - i) "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases. (Proverbs 21:1 NIV)
 - e) It sort of baffles me a little why the Jews were still so obsessed to kill Paul. The guy has been in jail for two years now. You would have thought they would have calmed down by now. I suspect that the Jews saw the spread of Christianity in Jerusalem and around the surrounding territories and thought that Paul was the ring-leader. They figured by killing Paul, they could slow down the growth.
 - i) You have to remember that Paul was originally part of the Sanhedrin. They probably view Paul as a "traitor to their cause". The desire for vengeance was still strong as they blame Paul for the growth of Christianity.

- ii) Again, we are also seeing demonic influences on the scene. Satan knew it was God's plan for Paul to be his witness in Rome. Thus, he was doing everything in his power to have Paul killed before that happened.
- 22. Verse 6: After spending eight or ten days with them (Festus & the Jewish leaders), he (Festus) went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. ⁷ When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove.
 - a) Another day, another trial for Paul.
 - i) It is interesting to see the accuracy and literalness of prophecy coming true. Back in Acts Chapter 9, when Paul (then Saul), was blinded by the light, God spoke to a man named Ananias and gave Ananias this prophecy:
 - a) But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name (1) before the Gentiles (2) and their kings and (3) before the people of Israel.(Acts 9:15 NIV)
 - b) Paul had 2 years to sit in that jail cell and think about these trials. I suspect from the next set of verses, Paul is changing his philosophy. He realizes that appearing in the Jewish court is a death-sentence and that he would never get a fair trial. His only hope for survival was the Roman court system.
 - i) It may have hit Paul by this time that the way God was getting Paul to Rome was via the Roman court system. His appeal to higher Roman Court was not only to save his life, but to carry out God's plan.
 - ii) That is a great lesson for us. The great quest for Christians is to try to figure out God's plan for our lives and go along with it. That 2 years in jail gave Paul time to let go of his personal desire to win over his fellow Jews, and focus on the mission God has personally called for his life. Those moments of growth we have as Christians is when we let go of our desires and realize that God is directing our live.
 - a) God never intended for Paul to be his witness to the Jews. Paul himself admitted this years earlier:
 - (1) "For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my (Paul's) ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles." (Galatians 2:8 NIV)
 - b) The problem is that Paul still had a personal desire to witness to his fellow Jews. Even though God warned him of his arrest, Paul pressed forward anyway. (I've discussed this issue to death a few lessons ago, so I won't belabor the point again!) The point here is simply that I believe Paul let go of his desire to do his will over God's will and grew another step as a Christian.
- 23. Verse 8: Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar." ⁹ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"
 - a) This trial appears to be a preliminary hearing in front of Festus. There is little detail about the charges, and Paul's defense is brief. It appears to be more like a modern "arraignment" prior to the actual trial.

24. Verse 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 to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"
- a) Festus asked Paul if he was willing to stand trial in Jerusalem, solely in attempt to gain favor with the local Jews. Paul realized that was a no-win situation, and appealed to Caesar. Every Roman Citizen had the right to appeal their case to Caesar.
 - i) Some people question Paul's appeal since Nero is known in history as a persecutor and murder of Christians. It is believed Nero at this time was peaceful toward Christians. In Nero's latter years, he became insane and was one of the worse and most sadistic murderers and persecutor's of Christians in history.
 - ii) The other reason people question Paul's appeal is that Festus had the power to let Paul go. If Paul didn't formally appeal to Caesar, Festus could simply rule on the case and let him go. Some commentators suspect that Festus would have let Paul stand trial in Jerusalem again if Paul didn't appeal. Remember that Festus was new to the scene and he may have wanted to grant the Jewish leaders "some favors" in order to get established.
25. Verse 12: After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"
- a) The reason Festus met with his council is that Roman Law states that one can appeal only if the charges are "extra-ordinary". Since the charges were rioting and desecrating the temple, Paul was charged with a capitol crime. Given that Festus, who understood the Roman Law, realized that this was an extraordinary situation and granted Paul's request.
 - b) I can almost hear the "groans" from the Jews in the room when Festus made this charge. Remember that they had an ambush ready to kill Paul at this point! They knew their plan to kill Paul had failed. The demonic influences that wanted Paul killed now realized themselves that Paul was on his way to Rome!
26. Next, we will read of Paul's trial before Herod Agrippa, who is the province leader. Agrippa had It is the final step before appealing to Caesar Nero himself. It is Paul's final recorded chance to be a witness to his fellow Jews and to the Roman leaders of Judea. The rest of Chapter 25 and Chapter 26 are Paul's trial before Agrippa, and we'll cover it next week.
27. Let's Pray: Father, we thank you for these lessons about patience, acceptance, and trust during times of trials. In our own lives, we often go through situations that we know are unfair, or there is no logical explanation. Help us to understand the lessons you want us to learn from these situations, and remember that "your ways are not our ways". For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.