

PAUL'S APPEAL TO CAESAR
ACTS 25

Felix had made the decision to leave Paul bound when the new governor came on the scene. Paul has been bound for at least two years now. He will now have to deal with Porcius Festus. According to Josephus, Nero (emperor) called Felix to Rome to answer for his crimes, and Felix barely escaped execution. Though Felix left Paul in prison to appease the Jews, the Jews later turned up to accuse him before Nero. Porcius Festus was appointed to succeed Felix and he died in office some two years later. While some historians and commentators emphasize that in personal character and integrity he was much better than Felix, the fact remains that there was much to be desired in his character as will be noted in this present study. We come to Acts 25...

I. Paul's Trial Before Festus (25:1-12).

A. Festus and high priest (25:1-5).

1. After three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.
2. He probably went to Jerusalem to meet the leading local government officials (e.g. Sanhedrin)
3. He moved immediately to acquaint himself with the responsibilities, circumstances, and problems of his proconsulship of Palestine.
4. Jerusalem, the city of the Jews, constituted by far the greatest single responsibility and the greatest potential for problems and uprisings.
5. One of the things Felix had left undone was, what to do with Paul.
6. The high priest and chief of the Jews told him about Paul.
 - a. Paul had spent two years in prison in Caesarea, but the hatred of these Jews toward him was still evident.
 - b. They wanted him returned to Jerusalem, where they would kill him somewhere along the way.
7. Festus refused to go along with their request (v.4).
8. They were to go with Festus to make their formal accusation (v.5).

B. Paul Before Festus (25:6-8).

1. When Festus takes his place on the judgment seat, he commands that Paul be brought before him.
2. The Jews who made this journey began to accuse Paul.
3. They made accusations which they could not prove (v.7). (24:12,13).
4. Paul answered:
 - a. Paul had not sinned against the law—i.e. his affirmation of the resurrection of Christ was not contrary to the law of Moses, but instead, the doctrine of the resurrection was in agreement with the law.
 - b. Paul had not sinned against the temple, i.e. he had not desecrated it by taking a Gentile into the court of the Jews.
 - c. Paul had not sinned against Caesar, i.e. he had not violated Roman law.

C. Paul Appeals to Caesar (25:9-12).

1. Two reasons why the question is asked.
 - a. To gain favor with the Jews (v.9)
 - b. Festus was perplexed as to what to do (v.20).
2. You know that I have done no wrong (v.10).
3. I appeal to Caesar (v.11).
4. Festus granted the appeal (v.12).
5. The appeal to Caesar was an appeal to the court of last resort.
 - a. No case, except that which was exceedingly grave and involved, should have been allowed by a Roman court to move to the court of last resort.

- b. Festus was left in an embarrassing situation.
 - c. In his first experience to sit as judge on the bench at Caesarea—he had received an appeal from the decision to the court of last resort.
 - d. He had not one single criminal charge to file against the defendant.
- II. Festus before Agrippa (25:13-22).
- A. King Agrippa came before Festus to salute Him (formal recognition).
 - 1. Bernice was Agrippa II's sister.
 - 2. King Agrippa controlled certain areas along with control of the Temple and its treasury, and the power of appointing and displacing the high priest.
 - B. Festus lays out Paul's cause (15-22).
 - 1. Certain man left in bonds by Felix.
 - 2. They wanted me to pass judgment on him.
 - 3. Not the custom of Roman law.
 - 4. He deserves a fair trial.
 - 5. They brought no accusations like I expected.
 - 6. It surrounds one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive (v.19).
 - 7. Festus was at a loss how to investigate such matter s(v.20).
 - 8. Paul appealed to Caesar.
 - 9. He is being kept until I can send him to Caesar.
 - 10. Agrippa requested an audience with Paul
 - a. He would have been familiar with Christianity.
 - b. It was his great-grandfather who had attempt to kill the new born Jesus in Bethlehem.
 - c. It was his uncle who had killed John the Baptist and sat as judge in a trial of Jesus on the day He was crucified.
 - d. It was his own father who had tried to suppress Christianity and thereby please the Jews by killing the apostle James and imprisoning Peter with the intention of killing him.
- III. Paul Before Agrippa (25:23-27)
- A. Agrippa and Bernice come with great pomp.
 - 1. Show, pageantry.
 - 2. Sounds like a parade.
 - 3. Protocol would have been followed.
 - 4. Notice the audience Paul is going to have (royal persons, politicians, military officers, professional people, and prominent businessmen).
 - B. Festus sets the stage.
 - 1. Gives some of the background for this setting.
 - 2. He left out some of the things that had occurred to make it more favorable for self. (e.g. send him to Jerusalem, etc.)
 - 3. I have nothing to write concerning him.
 - 4. Roman law seem to require that when a case was appealed to Caesar, the lower courts were to send along a full report of the legal proceedings which had preceded the appeal.
 - 5. Festus is in an embarrassing situation. What do I say to Nero?
 - C. The stage is set for Paul to answer for himself.
- Con: Festus stated that all the problems are based on one they call Jesus who died and they say rose again. Do you believe that statement?