

Help People Know Jesus - Acts 25

Icebreaker: Can you think of a time when you or a family member changed the truth in order to look better?

Acts 24:24-27

24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 As Paul talked about 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." 26 At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. 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.

1. Note that Felix's reaction to the Gospel was one of fear (24:25). Of what was he afraid?
2. How much time has passed between chapter 24 and 25? (24:27) Why does Felix leave Paul in prison for so long?
3. How do you think this time in prison might have been used by God to further the proclamation of the Gospel? How do you think God is using this period of Covid-19 to further the proclamation of the Gospel?

Paul's Trial Before Festus

25 1 Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, 2 where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. 3 They 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 if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there."

6 After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. 7 When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.

8 Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law 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?"

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!"

12 After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

4. How long did it take Festus to start working on the case of the accusations against Paul? How do you think this speaks of the character of Festus?

5. What favor did the Jews ask of Festus? What were they really planning on doing?

6. How do we know that Festus was becoming a compromised judge? (v. 9)

7. How does Paul make his defense? Can you remember a time when you had to stand up for yourself?

Note: The "appeal to Caesar" (25:11) was one of the most ancient and cherished rights of a Roman citizen. The right applied only to extraordinary cases, that is, those not specifically defined by statute laws. It was usually used to appeal the verdict of a lower

court but could be exercised at any stage in the proceedings. The case would then be transferred to Rome and a verdict rendered by the emperor. (Hughes, Robert B., and J. Carl Laney. Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers)

Festus Consults King Agrippa

13 A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. 14 Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. He said: "There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. 15 When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

16 "I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. 17 When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. 18 When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. 19 Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. 20 I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. 21 But when Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar."

22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself." He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him."

8. How does Agrippa become involved? Why is Festus seeking Agrippa's counsel? (v. 20) Did he speak with the total truth when he reviewed about his own asking of Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial? How or how not?

9. Why do you think Agrippa wants to hear Paul? (Hint: his full name was Herod Agrippa II)

Paul Before Agrippa

23 The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24 Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me

about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. 26 But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. 27 For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him."

10. How does Acts describe the coming of Agrippa and Bernice?

11. How does Festus introduce Paul to Agrippa? Do you think he is fair in his introduction of Paul? How so?

12. How does this turn out for the proclamation of the gospel? (Acts 9:15)

Pastor Dave closes his sermon with the admonition: BE CLEAR ABOUT WHO JESUS IS

13. How can we make our case about Jesus more clear? (1 Peter 3:15-16)

I Peter 3:15-16

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

From Pastor Dave: LOVE PEOPLE LIKE JESUS LOVED. . .

14. How is it even possible to love like Jesus loved? (Phil. 2:5-8, 1 John 4:11,12)

Philippians 2:5-8

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

1 John 4:10-12

10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Pastor Dave: PRACTICE SELF-CONTROL ABOUT DIVIDING OR DISTRACTING TOPICS

15. What are the dividing and distracting topics today? How do we gain more self control? (Galatians 5:22,23; Titus 2:11,12)

Galatians 5:22,23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Titus 2:11,12

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

Again, Pastor Dave: BE GENEROUS LIKE JESUS HAS BEEN WITH YOU

16. How can we be more generous? (Romans 12:1,2; 1 Timothy 6:18,19)

Romans 12:1,2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Timothy 6:18,19

18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.