

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 25

We are continuing our study through the book of Acts

Let's pray...

So we left off in our study last week with Paul getting his court date in front of the governor, Felix

His accusers came up from Jerusalem to present charges against him but as we saw in our study, everything was hearsay.

They provided no witnesses / no evidence to accompany the charges they made against Paul.

It was a slam dunk case – Paul should have been set free –

However, after hearing the case – Felix procrastinated.

He dragged his feet in making the decision because he was looking for a payout.

However, after two years – he was removed from his position by Rome and replaced with Festus.

I want you to look at the last verse in chapter 24 again –

**[Act 24:27 NKJV] 27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.**

I want you to make a note of the word favor –

And the 1<sup>st</sup> reason is because we are going to see the same word used in our text today.

The second reason I want you to make a note of it is because – the word that is used here in the Greek is the word charis (pronounced haris) which means grace.

**[Tit 2:11 NKJV] 11 For the **grace** of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,**

God's grace is His charis, His favor toward His people and Paul here in the verse we just read in Titus describes Jesus as the personification of grace. (Titus 2:11)

So as we read the text, I want you to notice that the Jews are going to ask Festus for this favor/grace and Festus is going to then want to give them this favor/grace and we will see that this favor/grace is nothing like God's grace at all.

God's charis is unmerited favor given as a free gift.

Not as leverage, not to manipulate, not so He can hold something over us.

But out of immeasurable love He freely offers us salvation and satisfaction in abundance.

It's His favor toward us, working all things together for good.

And as we will see, this is not the kind of favor/grace Festus and the priests were talking about.

**[Act 25:1-27 NKJV] 1 Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.**

Festus, unlike Felix, he is not a procrastinator.

As soon as he arrives in Caesarea, he gets to work.

And he goes down to Jerusalem – Jerusalem is the biggest city – he wants to make a good impression.

**2 Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, 3 asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem--while [they] lay in ambush along the road to kill him.**

So, Festus arrives in Jerusalem – and the religious leaders in Jerusalem saw it as an opportunity to take advantage of his inexperience.

It has been two years since they made their arguments in front of Felix and notice that they are still bitter.

Even though Paul is under house arrest – they still want him dead.

They start hammering Festus, who, most likely, didn't know any of the details of Paul's case yet, to give them this favor and transfer Paul to Jerusalem.

You may remember a few weeks ago, the last time there was a plot on Paul's life it had been these Jewish assassins who came to the religious rulers and said, "Here's what we want to do...we're going to ambush Paul and murder him when they bring him before the council."

But now the elders and chief priests have determined to kill him themselves.

**4 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going [there] shortly. 5 "Therefore," he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with [me] and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."**

Festus knew he had to make a stand against the religious rulers – he knows they were trying to manipulate him just like they did with Felix and Pontius Pilate.

But he also does not want to upset them – he doesn't want them to go to Rome to complain.

So, he gives the impression that he was willing to work with them but that he was going to do everything "by the book."

He wants to please the Jews but also establish that he is the one in charge.

Now, notice that Paul has no say in any of this -

**6 And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. 7 When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove,**

I had you make a note of the words, stood about – and the reason is that the language seems to indicate that as Paul was brought before Festus – the religious rulers encircled him as they hurled their accusations toward him.

But, notice that just as before – they had no evidence. It was all hearsay.

**8 while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all."**

Try to put yourself in Paul's shoes.

He has been falsely accused of sedition, of being a traitor

He has been in prison for over two years now

He's got a new judge who seems less informed about everything

And here, he is being charged again –

He could have easily given up – he is being treated unfairly – he is not getting justice.

However, the scriptures do not tell us that he was afraid or broken down by this.

He was calm and collected –

He defended himself with integrity.

He didn't resort to flattery or personal attacks.

Church,

God's favor gave him the ability to endure this hardship.

The Bible says that God's grace, His favor, strengthens us for moments like this.

So even during times when we are wrongly accused or treated unjustly by the world, we can lean on God's grace and He will sustain us.

**9 But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"**

So here we see that Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor –

Festus' favor had nothing to do with kindness or love –

It had to do with desire to get on the good side of the religious rulers – that way they would owe him one later on.

“What Festus is suggesting – “Why don’t we just all pick up and do this again in Jerusalem?”

Going back to Jerusalem meant submitting to a lower court, the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Paul knew their verdict already – guilty!

He knew that the sentence would be death.

**10 So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. 11 "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."**

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time we have seen Paul use his citizenship card.

He did it in chapter 16 – when the magistrates said he could leave the prison in Philippi

He did in a few weeks ago in Acts 22 – when the Roman officer was about to have beaten to find out why the Jews were upset at him.

And what we have here is God’s grace shows Paul a way out.

He would explain to us through his epistle to the Ephesians that the Lord has planned good works for us long ago and it is our duty to discover them. (Ephesians 2:10)

But, by God’s grace, He shows us the way.

We see it in Paul.

He knew that he was to preach in Rome.

Meanwhile, NOTICE - everyone's trying to get him to go the opposite way – back to Jerusalem. The Jews – Festus –

Paul must have been wandering -

“How do I do what God has called me to do?”

And then God shows him the way.

He appeals to Caesar, which was his right as a Roman citizen

**12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"**

The council here refers to Festus' legal advisors.

There was no way around Paul's legal appeal.

He was on his way to Rome and now he would be guarded all along the way!

**13 And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.**

So King Agrippa and Bernice came to greet the new governor.

Now, this Agrippa is Herod Agrippa II, Bernice is his sister and also his mistress.



Before she was having relations with her brother, she had been married to her uncle, Herod, King of Chalcis

And later on, history tells us that she has an affair with the emperor of Rome – Titus –

Now, what I want you to take notice is that what we have from verse 13 – to the end of the chapter is dialogue between governor Festus and king Agrippa

**14 When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, 15 "about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed [me], when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.**

Festus has a big problem on his hands:

You see, because Paul appealed to Caesar –

When Festus sends Paul to Nero, he has to send an official report to detail the case and present charges.

However, Festus – as we will see in the text – he has no idea what to write in his report.

The last thing that Festus wants is Paul to stand before Caesar and Caesar realizes that there are no legitimate charges against Paul.

He is going to come to conclusion that Festus did not properly exercise Roman justice – which is something that the Romans prided themselves in.

He doesn't appear to be familiar with Jewish traditions and customs – and he seems to be confused about their charges against Paul.

This is where Agrippa comes in, even though he was not religious - he was an expert in Jewish affairs.

So Festus is looking for a favor from Agrippa in getting his report ready for Caesar.

**16 "To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.'**

So Festus begins by painting himself in the most positive light.

He is telling to Agrippa “I would never give up a Roman citizen without evidence”

However, we know from verse 9 that he was willing to give up Paul as a favor to the Jews.

**17 "Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded **the man** to be brought in.**

Festus had no idea who it was he had access to.

Notice – he doesn't even refer to Paul by name.

Last week we saw that Felix would have conversations with Paul. Paul reasoned with him.

Festus was clueless.

Festus was in such a hurry to show favor to the Jews – that he never bothered to interview Paul.

**18 "When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed,**

What Festus is telling Agrippa here – “When the religious rulers brought accusations against Paul – the charges that they brought forth were not the charges that I assumed they were going to charge him with?

This whole time, I thought he did something against Rome – and the charges had nothing to do with Rome.

**19 "but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.**

Festus must have been living in a hole somewhere for some time –

He hadn't picked up the newspaper in a while, he hadn't checked his facebook account in a while

He seems to be the only one in the world who has no idea of who this certain Jesus was.

Agrippa knew who Jesus was – his grandfather tried to murder him as a baby

His uncle was the king that had John the Baptist beheaded and the one who was king when Jesus was on trial.

His father was the one who had James martyred and the one that was eaten by worms

But it is amazing to find out that he didn't know who Jesus was.

In addition, we notice that he didn't seem to care at all about the idea that this Jesus might actually be alive. It didn't register and the reason it didn't register was because he had no interest in spiritual things.

Now, I asked you to make a note where he says "whom Paul affirmed to be alive"

This is in reference to this certain Jesus.

And the reason it is significant is because the resurrection was always central and critical to the preaching of the Apostles.

They didn't talk to people about living their best lives now, they always talked about how Messiah is alive now!

Because the resurrection not only validates everything Jesus said, it is the basis for our faith AND it changes everything!

**20 "And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. 21**

**"But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar."**

Festus was completely uninterested in what Paul might have to say.

And yet, God made sure that this man received the Gospel message. Twice.

That demonstrates the incredible love of God, even for those who are ignoring Him.

Church, as we witness for Jesus, we can't make people care. But we can remember that God still cares for each of them and is not willing that any should perish.

Here also, you will notice that Festus continues to bend the truth – he says he kept Paul a prisoner because he was uncertain of such questions –

That is not true – the reason that he kept Paul and offered to send the trial back to Jerusalem was because he wanted to do the Jews a favor.

**22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself."**

**"Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him." 23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.**

One of the things that we find throughout the book of Acts is a wide spectrum of belief when it comes to unbelievers.

We have the Sadducees – and we have seen their hatred and violence toward the gospel.

Obviously we have seen example after example of the prejudice that the Christians faced among the Gentiles

Then we have people like Festus – who couldn't care less

We have Agrippa who is somewhat curious.

Then we have examples like the Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius who were seeking for spiritual truth.

But it didn't matter where they were in the spectrum, we see the same message for all and we also see that God had a desire to save them all.

God sent Peter to Cornelius

He sent Philip to the Ethiopian

And Paul to Festus, Agrippa and others.

God sent the message to them – because as we studied this past Sunday, He draws all people to Himself.

What grace we see here!

God drawing despicable people to give them an opportunity to be saved.

**24 And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. 25 "But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. 26 "I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. 27 "For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."**

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'