

Acts 25:1–27 — God’s Purpose Moves Forward Through Human Politics

Three days after Festus arrived as the new governor, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Luke notes it simply: you always “go up” to Jerusalem. It is higher in elevation, and it carries spiritual weight in the story of Israel.

Old Hatred, New Governor

Almost immediately, the Jewish leaders brought up Paul’s case again. Two years had passed, leadership had changed, but the hostility remained. They asked Festus for a “favor”—that Paul be transferred to Jerusalem. The request sounded official, but the motive was deadly: they planned an ambush on the road.

Festus refused. He ordered that Paul remain in Caesarea and invited the accusers to come down and present their case. When they arrived, they surrounded Paul with “many and grievous complaints,” but they could not prove them. Roman courts demanded evidence, not rumors.

Paul’s defense was straightforward:

“Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.”

He had not violated Jewish law, desecrated the temple, or committed treason against Rome. He was guilty of one thing: preaching Jesus Christ.

The Pressure to Please People

Festus, newly in office, wanted goodwill with Jerusalem’s leadership. So he asked Paul whether he would go to Jerusalem and be tried there.

Paul understood the danger and the politics. He was tired of being used as a bargaining chip, and he exercised a right given to Roman citizens:

“I appeal unto Caesar.”

Festus consulted his advisors and replied:

“Unto Caesar shalt thou go.”

Paul’s appeal was not cowardice. He had already told others he was ready to suffer, even to die, for Jesus. But courage is not the same thing as recklessness. Paul would not hand himself over to a rigged process that was designed to kill him without a fair hearing. He used lawful means to continue the mission God had given him.

Agrippa and Bernice: Pomp Without Purity

A few days later, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea to greet Festus. This Agrippa was Herod Agrippa the Second, familiar with Jewish customs and Scripture. Bernice came with him in public splendor, though their relationship was morally scandalous. Luke doesn’t sensationalize it—he simply sets the scene: human power dressed up as greatness.

Festus explained Paul's case to Agrippa and admitted his real problem: the accusations were not what he expected. Paul wasn't charged with murder or rebellion, but with religious disputes "and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

That line is the pivot of the chapter. Christianity rises or falls on the resurrection. Paul's message was not, "Try religion." It was, "Jesus Christ is alive."

Agrippa said he wanted to hear Paul. So Festus staged a grand hearing—royal robes, military presence, city dignitaries, and Paul brought in as the spectacle. Festus then confessed what every honest reader can see: he had nothing solid to write as a charge, yet he had to send Paul to Caesar.

So the "hearing" was not truly a trial. It was Festus trying to borrow Agrippa's insight to craft a plausible accusation—something that would make him look competent before Rome.

Here is the irony: governors, kings, and commanders were scrambling to protect their reputations, while God was quietly moving His servant toward Rome exactly as promised. Human politics did not control Paul's future. God did.

Practical Application

1. God can advance His work through flawed systems

Festus was political. Agrippa was worldly. The accusers were malicious. Yet God was still governing the outcome. When believers feel trapped in messy circumstances—workplace politics, legal tangles, false accusations—Acts 25 reminds us that God is not hindered by human weakness.

2. Wisdom uses lawful means without compromising faith

Paul did not "trust Rome instead of God." He trusted God and used the tools available to him. Faith is not passivity. Sometimes the godliest step is to appeal, to ask for due process, to seek protection, and to keep moving forward.

3. The resurrection is the dividing line

The issue was never really the temple, the law, or Caesar. The issue was Jesus—crucified and risen. If Jesus is alive, then He is Lord, and every person must respond.

A Challenge for Believers

Refuse two traps at once: fear and people-pleasing.

Festus tried to "do the Jews a pleasure." Paul refused to be managed by public opinion. Ask yourself: where are you tempted to compromise clarity to keep peace, or to delay obedience to stay liked?

Choose integrity. Speak plainly. Live with a clean conscience. And when you must navigate complicated systems, do it with wisdom—without surrendering your convictions.

Invitation to Non-Believers

Festus said the dispute was about “one Jesus...whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” That is the question you cannot avoid.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. The resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. If that is true, then neutrality is not an option forever. Like Felix, you may feel conviction and still postpone. Like Festus, you may treat truth as a case study. Like Agrippa, you may listen with interest and still remain unchanged.

Do not delay. Turn to Jesus Christ today. Confess your sin to God. Ask Him to forgive you because of what Jesus did at the cross. Entrust yourself to the risen Lord—fully and honestly. The safest time to respond to God is when He is calling you now.