

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Exposition

by

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Over two years before the history contained in the present chapter transpired, the Lord had spoken to Paul during that memorable night in the castle Antonia, **“Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also in Rome.”**

In this chapter we approach the end of this book. Paul appealed to Caesar, and the new governor answered him, **“Unto Caesar shalt thou go.”**

After his great speech before King Agrippa, we have the record of the journey, the shipwreck and his arrival in Rome and his presence there. With this the great historical book of the Acts closes.

**I. Festus and the Jews. Paul appeals to Caesar.**

**II. King Agrippa visits Festus** (Verses 13-22).

**III. Paul brought before the King** (Verses 23-27).

**I. Festus and the Jews. Paul appeals to Caesar.**

**“Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him. And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself, neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.**

**“But Festus, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go”** (Verses 1-12).

The new governor, Festus, had arrived at Cesarea, and then went up to Jerusalem, the capital of the province. The Jews had not forgotten Paul, though they had not attempted another accusation before Felix, knowing that the case was hopeless. But they made at once an effort with the new governor.

No sooner had this official made his appearance in Jerusalem, but the high priest and the chief of the Jews made a report about Paul.

Most likely Festus had not even heard of Paul up to that time. Ananias was no longer high priest; Ishmael Ben Phabi had taken the office. What really took place in Jerusalem, Festus later relates to Agrippa. When Paul was presented to Agrippa, Festus introduced him by saying, **“Ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer”** (verse 24).

A scene of tumult must have been enacted in Jerusalem when Festus showed himself. The mob clamored for the life of Paul. When they noticed the reluctance of the governor, they concocted another plan. They requested that Paul should be brought to Jerusalem. On the way there they intended to murder him.

Why did not Festus fall in line with this suggestion? When he saw Paul face to face he asked him the question if he would go up to Jerusalem to be judged there. Why then did he not consent to the proposal of the Jews? He knew nothing of the murderous plot against Paul.

It was God who kept him from granting the desire of the Jews. That eye which neither sleeps nor slumbers kept watch over Paul as it still does over every child of God.

Festus demanded instead that some Jews should come to Cesarea and accuse Paul and he would hear the case.

After he had tarried in Jerusalem for over ten days, he returned to Cesarea. Paul then appeared before him for trial and the Jews were there from Jerusalem. But it was a wild scene again. They brought many and grievous complaints against Paul, but they could not prove anything. This failure must have been the source of much excitement. It was then that the same scene which took place in Jerusalem was gone through once more. They cried out that he should not live any longer (verse 24).

But how calm the Apostle stands in the midst of that scene of turmoil.

His words are brief and positive. **“Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar have I offended anything at all.”** This shows that the same accusations were brought against him.

Festus remembered the former request of the Jews to have Paul in Jerusalem. To please them he asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem. He refuses to be delivered unto them. If he is an offender, he is ready to die. Then it was when he appealed unto Caesar. Did he do wrong? Certainly not. He knew the Lord’s will that he had to testify in Rome. Rome was the goal before him. He acted in this according to the will of God.

Festus and Agrippa later declared that he might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar. It was not lack of faith Paul exhibited in appealing to Caesar, but an evidence of faith and submission to the will of the Lord. Festus held a meeting with his council and declared, **“Unto Caesar thou shalt go.”**

## **II. King Agrippa visits Festus.**

**“And after certain days King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul’s cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cesar. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him”** (Verses 13-22).

Agrippa and Bernice paid a visit to the new governor. The father of this king was known as Herod Agrippa and died under awful circumstances (Chapter 12) in the year 44. When his father died Agrippa was in Rome. He was too young to receive the kingdom of his father Herod. Eight years later, Herod, King of Chalcis, the uncle of Agrippa, died. He had married Agrippa’s sister Bernice, and Caesar gave Chalcis to Agrippa. Later Agrippa received the title as king. Agrippa I had left three daughters besides this son-Bernice, Marianne and Drusilla, the wife of Felix. Bernice, who was the wife of her uncle, after his death joined her brother Agrippa in Rome. She married a Celician ruler, but deserted him and joined again her brother, in whose company she paid this visit to Cesarea.

The coming of King Agrippa solved the dilemma of Festus.

He knew little of the case, yet he was expected to make in the so-called “letters demissory,” a full statement of the case. Agrippa was a Jew and he was also thoroughly Roman, so that Festus could expect help from him in knowing the facts about his prisoner. After the visit had lasted many days, Festus lays the case of Paul before Agrippa. No further comment is needed on the words of Festus. He shows his ignorance as a Roman heathen of the Lord Jesus and His resurrection, when he calls this great event a Jewish superstition. Agrippa then expressed a desire to hear the man and Festus was only too willing to show this favor to the king.

### **III. Paul before the King.**

**“And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus’ commandment, Paul was brought forth. And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him”** (Verses 23-27).

The presentation of Paul was made a state occasion. Agrippa and his wicked sister Bernice appeared in royal splendor and all the military and civic officials turned out. It must have been a splendid gathering which had come together in the audience chamber.

After they had all entered and taken their places, the rattling of a chain was heard and Paul was led into the presence of the assembled company. What a contrast! Perhaps they looked upon him with pity as they saw the chain. But more pity must have filled the heart of the great servant of Christ as he saw the poor lost souls bedecked with the miserable tinsel of earth.

Festus addressed the King and the whole company. He frankly states what troubled him and that he expects the King to furnish the material for the statements he had, as governor, to send to Rome.

~ end of chapter 25 ~

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