

# THE BOOK OF ACTS

## *Part 11 – Paul’s Arrest, Trials, & Voyage to Rome (21:17-ch.28)*

(No. 1119.11 – - NLC)

### I. PAUL’S ARRIVAL AT JERUSALEM

**Acts 21:17-26:** <sup>17</sup>When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. <sup>18</sup>The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup>Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

<sup>20</sup>When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. <sup>21</sup>They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. <sup>22</sup>What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, <sup>23</sup>so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. <sup>24</sup>Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. <sup>25</sup>As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.”

<sup>26</sup>The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

A. “When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present.” (vv.17-18)

1. Paul met with the **apostles and elders**, the two groups of church leaders seen throughout the book of Acts.
2. James. This was James the Lord’s brother (Mat. 13:55), an apostle and leader in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 1:19; 2:9;

Acts 15:13; 21:18); [see *Section X.G* on p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**, Part 7];

- B. “Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they praised God.” (vv.19-20)
1. Paul gave the leaders a detailed account of his ministry (as was the apostles’ custom throughout the book of Acts) among the Gentiles;
  2. He reported **what God had done** through him, always acknowledging that it was God, not man, accomplishing these great works.
  3. The Jerusalem leaders rejoiced and praised God when they heard Paul’s testimonies.
- C. However, the Jewish brethren were apprehensive and feared trouble in Jerusalem because word had traveled around that Paul had taught “all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.” (vv.20-21) Was this charge accurate? Is this really what Paul had been teaching or not?
1. He did teach that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe;
  2. He did teach that once the Christian faith had come, believing Jews were no longer under the law;
  3. He did teach that if a man received circumcision as a means of obtaining justification, then such a man cut himself off from salvation in Christ Jesus;
  4. He did teach that to return to the types and shadows of the law, after Christ had come, was dishonoring to Christ.
  5. In view of this, it is not hard to see why the Jews should think of him as they did.
- D. The brethren in Jerusalem had a scheme which they thought would placate their countrymen, both saved and unsaved; they suggested that Paul should join four other men in a Jewish vow (probably the Nazirite vow: see Num. 6:1-21) to show that he was also living in obedience to the law of Moses (vv.23-24).

- E. “The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.” (v.26)
1. Paul agreed and went along with their plan. Paul’s controversial action in taking part in this Jewish ritual has been defended and criticized.
  2. In Paul’s defense, it has been argued that he was acting according to his own principle to be a Jew to the Jews in order to win them to Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-23).
  3. On the other hand, Paul has been criticized for going too far in his effort to conciliate the Jews, and thus creating the impression that he was under the law. Paul has been charged with being inconsistent with his view that the believer is not under the law, either for justification or as a rule of life (Gal. 1 and 2). From what follows, it could be argued that the whole plan was a resort to carnal reasoning—God didn’t seem too pleased with whole idea.

## II. PAUL ARRESTED IN THE TEMPLE

**Acts 21:27-36:** <sup>27</sup>When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, <sup>28</sup>shouting, “Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place.” <sup>29</sup>(They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area.)

<sup>30</sup>The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. <sup>31</sup>While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. <sup>32</sup>He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

<sup>33</sup>The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. <sup>34</sup>Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the

*uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks.* <sup>35</sup>*When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers.* <sup>36</sup>*The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Away with him!”*

**A. In any event, the **ploy of the Jerusalem elders did not work.****

Before the seven days of purification were completed, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple and stirred up trouble—they raised all of the very accusations against Paul that the Jerusalem church leaders had hoped to avoid, even bringing additional charges that he had defiled the temple by bringing Gentiles into the inner courts. (vv.27-30).

1. A riot ensued and the whole city was in an uproar.
2. Paul was dragged from the temple and the gates were shut: the temple doors were shut *physically*, and Luke may even imply, *spiritually*—the temple had ceased to fill its honorable function for the Lord.

**B. The mob went wild, violently beating Paul and trying to kill him; Paul’s life was spared only because the Roman soldiers came and arrested him, binding him with two chains and carrying him away to safety in the barracks (vv.31-36).**

### **III. PAUL SPEAKS TO THE CROWD**

**Acts 21:37 – 22:21:** <sup>37</sup>*As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?” “Do you speak Greek?” he replied.* <sup>38</sup>*“Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?”* <sup>39</sup>*Paul answered, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people.”*

<sup>40</sup>*Having received the commander’s permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:*

<sup>22:1</sup>*“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.”* <sup>2</sup>*When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said:* <sup>3</sup>*“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.* <sup>4</sup>*I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,* <sup>5</sup>*as*

also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

<sup>6</sup>“About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. <sup>7</sup>I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute Me?’ <sup>8</sup>‘Who are You, Lord?’ I asked. ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ He replied. <sup>9</sup>My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of Him who was speaking to me.

<sup>10</sup>‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked. ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ <sup>11</sup>My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

<sup>12</sup>“A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup>He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him. <sup>14</sup>Then he said: ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth. <sup>15</sup>You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup>And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name.’

<sup>17</sup>“When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance <sup>18</sup>and saw the Lord speaking. ‘Quick!’ He said to me. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’ <sup>19</sup>“‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in You. <sup>20</sup>And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ <sup>21</sup>“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

A. Just as they were about to take Paul into the barracks, amazingly, Paul asked the officer if he could address the angry crowd. Here we see Paul at his best: bold and fearless! Having received the commander’s permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he began to speak to them in Aramaic (vv.37-40).

B. Paul very wisely **addressed the Jewish mob in Aramaic** rather than Greek; hearing their mother tongue, they were

pleasantly surprised, and their shouts subsided, at least for a short while (vv.1-2)

- C. Paul began explaining his Jewish roots; born in Tarsus, educated in Judaism at the feet of the well-known Jewish teacher, Gamaliel. In his zeal for Judaism, he had persecuted the Christians, filling the prisons with believers in Jesus, to which the high priest and the Sanhedrin could bear witness; from them he had received arrest warrants authorizing him to go to Damascus and bring back Christians from there to Jerusalem to be punished (vv.3-5).
- D. In vv.6-16, Paul shares his own version of the events surrounding **his conversion on the road to Damascus** which are recorded by Luke in Acts 9:1-19 (Paul gives the testimony a second time before King Agrippa in Acts 26); [see *Section V.D* on p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**, Part 6]. In this account, Paul adds **several details not mentioned in Acts 9**:
1. This happened about noon, indicating that the light was more brilliant and glorious than the sun at its height (v.6);
  2. The men travelling with Paul saw the light, and heard the sound of the voice (Acts 9:7), but they could not understand the actual words that were spoken (v.9);
  3. Paul's second question is recorded here, "What shall I do, Lord?" (v.10)
  4. Here we learn that Paul's blindness was caused by the brilliance of the light of Christ's glory that flashed around him (v.11);
  5. Paul supplies more important details about Ananias; he describes him to his Jewish audience as a devout observer of the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews in Damascus. This was important in corroborating the account of Paul's conversion (v.12);
  6. More is learned about what Ananias told Paul: "The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth. You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name." (vv.14-16)

- a) Ananias stated that it was the God of our fathers who had ordered the events on the road to Damascus. If the Jews were to oppose and resist what had happened, they were really fighting against God;
  - b) Ananias told Paul that he would be a witness for the Lord to all men. This should have prepared the Jewish crowd for Paul's announcement that he had been sent to the Gentiles;
  - c) Paul was told to arise and **be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on His name.**
- E. In vv.17-21, we hear for the first time about an experience Paul had toward the end of his **first visit to Jerusalem**, after his conversion. While praying in the temple, he **fell into a trance** and heard the Lord command him to leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people would not receive his testimony concerning Christ. It was difficult for Paul to comprehend how the Jews, knowing his previous history as a zealous persecutor of the Christians, would refuse to listen to him. But the Lord repeated His command, "Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles."

#### IV. PAUL THE ROMAN CITIZEN

**Acts 22:22-29:** *<sup>22</sup>The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" <sup>23</sup>As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, <sup>24</sup>the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. <sup>25</sup>As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"*

*<sup>26</sup>When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen." <sup>27</sup>The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes, I am," he answered. <sup>28</sup>Then the commander said, "I had to pay a big price for my citizenship." "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied. <sup>29</sup>Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.*

- A. Up until this point, the Jews had been listening to Paul quietly. But his mention of going to the Gentiles with the gospel aroused insane jealousy and hatred. Shouting furiously in wild disorder, they cried out for Paul's life (vv.22-23).
- B. When the commander saw the crowd in a mad frenzy, he concluded that Paul must have been guilty of some very serious crime. Apparently, he had not understood Paul's message in Aramaic, so he determined to extract a confession from the apostle by flogging him. As they were about to start flogging Paul, he quietly asked the centurion if it was legal to flog a Roman citizen who hadn't even been found guilty. Actually, it was unlawful even to tie up a Roman citizen before his guilt had been proved! To scourge him was a very serious offense (vv.24-25).
- C. When it became known that Paul was a Roman citizen, the authorities became very afraid and all plans to flog him were suspended (vv.26-29).

## V. PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

**Acts 22:30 – 23:11:** <sup>30</sup>*The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.*

<sup>23:1</sup>*Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."* <sup>2</sup>*At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.* <sup>3</sup>*Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"* <sup>4</sup>*Those who were standing near Paul said, "You dare to insult God's high priest?"* <sup>5</sup>*Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"*

<sup>6</sup>*Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead."* <sup>7</sup>*When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.* <sup>8</sup>*(The Sadducees say that there is no*

*resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)*

*<sup>9</sup>There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” <sup>10</sup>The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks. <sup>11</sup>The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”*

- A. The commander, still curious to know why Paul had been accused by the Jews, had him released from prison and brought before the chief priests and the Sanhedrin (v.30).
- B. Paul, standing before the Sanhedrin, prefaced his remarks with a statement that throughout his life, he had lived in all good conscience. The **high priest, Ananias**, was infuriated by this statement. He probably viewed Paul as an apostate from the Jewish religion, one who had turned from Judaism to Christianity. Thus, the high priest **ordered that Paul be struck** on the mouth. This was extremely unjust, since the case had barely gotten underway (23:1-2).
- C. Paul snapped back at the high priest, **calling him a whitewashed wall** and saying that God would strike him for violating the law by commanding that Paul be struck unjustly. The attendants were shocked that Paul dared insult God’s high priest in this way (vv.3-4).
- D. Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’” (v.5)
  - 1. For some reason, Paul was not aware that Ananias was the high priest;
  - 2. As soon as he realized it, he apologized, quoting Ex. 22:28.
- E. Paul, seeing that there were both Sadducees and Pharisees in the Sanhedrin, astutely decided to divide and conquer, and widen the rift between the two groups; he did this by declaring that he was a Pharisee who was on trial because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead. Paul would have known that the

**Sadducees denied the resurrection**, as well as the existence of spirits or angels; and that the **Pharisees, being very orthodox, believed in both**. The plan worked, and such a violent uproar broke out that Paul had to be escorted by the Roman soldiers back to the barracks before he was torn to pieces (vv.6-10).

- F. “The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, ‘Take courage! **As you have testified about Me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.**’” (v.11)
1. Jesus made a personal appearance to Paul in prison;
  2. He affirmed the apostle for being a faithful witness in Jerusalem, assuring him that he would also testify in Rome.

## VI. THE PLOT TO KILL PAUL

**Acts 23:12-22:** <sup>12</sup>*The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.* <sup>13</sup>*More than forty men were involved in this plot.* <sup>14</sup>*They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.* <sup>15</sup>*Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here.”*

<sup>16</sup>*But when the son of Paul’s sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.* <sup>17</sup>*Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him.”* <sup>18</sup>*So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, “Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.”*

<sup>19</sup>*The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, “What is it you want to tell me?”* <sup>20</sup>*He said: “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him.* <sup>21</sup>*Don’t give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request.”* <sup>22</sup>*The commander dismissed the young man and cautioned him, “Don’t tell anyone that you have reported this to me.”*

- A. The next day, more than **forty Jews banded together to kill Paul**, swearing not to eat or drink until they had killed him. They went to the chief priests and elders, suggesting that they bring Paul before the Sanhedrin on the pretext of getting more information about his case. But the forty assassins would be lying in wait to ambush Paul as he was being transported to the council hall (vv.12-15).
- B. In the providence of God, a nephew of Paul overheard the plot and reported it to the apostle. Paul, in turn, reported the matter to one of the centurions, who escorted the nephew to the commander. The nephew then revealed the plot to the commander who decided to take immediate action (vv.16-22).

## VII. PAUL SENT TO FELIX THE GOVERNOR

**Acts 23:23-35:** <sup>23</sup>Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, “Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. <sup>24</sup>Provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix.”

<sup>25</sup>He wrote a letter as follows: <sup>26</sup>Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix:

Greetings. <sup>27</sup>This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. <sup>28</sup>I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. <sup>29</sup>I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. <sup>30</sup>When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him.

<sup>31</sup>So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. <sup>32</sup>The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. <sup>33</sup>When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. <sup>34</sup>The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, <sup>35</sup>he said, “I will hear your case when your accusers get here.” Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.

- A. The commander quickly called for two centurions and arranged for a **military escort to take Paul safely to Governor Felix in Caesarea** under cover of darkness at nine o'clock at night; the guard consisted of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen (vv.23-24).
- B. In a letter to Felix, the commander identified himself as Claudius Lysias, explaining the situation with regard to Paul. Lysias tried to portray himself as a hero and a defender of justice. The commander explained that his investigation showed Paul to be innocent of any charge deserving of death or imprisonment; rather, the tumult seemed to be concerned with questions of Jewish law. Because of a plot against Paul, he felt it advisable to send Paul to Caesarea so that his accusers could come there also, and the whole matter could be aired in Felix's presence (vv.25-30).
- C. Paul arrived safely in Caesarea the next day, and Felix ordered that he be kept under guard in Herod's palace until his accusers arrived, and his case could be heard (vv.31-35).

## VIII. PAUL'S TRIAL BEFORE FELIX AT CAESAREA

**Acts 24:1-21:** <sup>1</sup>Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.

<sup>2</sup>When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation.

<sup>3</sup>Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. <sup>4</sup>But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

<sup>5</sup>"We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect <sup>6</sup>and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him [and wanted to judge him according to our law.] <sup>7</sup>[But the commander, Lysias, came and with the use of much force snatched him from our hands] <sup>8</sup>[and ordered his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him." <sup>9</sup>The Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

<sup>10</sup>When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. <sup>11</sup>You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. <sup>12</sup>My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup>And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. <sup>14</sup>However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, <sup>15</sup>and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. <sup>16</sup>So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

<sup>17</sup>“After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. <sup>18</sup>I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. <sup>19</sup>But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. <sup>20</sup>Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin—  
<sup>21</sup>unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’”

- A. Five days after Paul had left Jerusalem for Caesarea, Ananias the high priest arrived with certain members of the Sanhedrin. They hired a Roman lawyer named Tertullus to prosecute their case; his duty was to stand before Felix and press charges against Paul. Tertullus opened the case for the prosecution by showering the governor with flattery, ingratiating his cause with Felix (vv.1-4).
- B. Tertullus proceeded to specify **four distinct charges against Paul** (vv.5-8):
1. He was a troublemaker [lit. “a plague or pest”];
  2. He was a creator of revolt, sedition, and riots among all the Jews;
  3. He was a ringleader of the seditious sect of the Nazarenes;
  4. He tried to desecrate or profane the temple.

- C. After Tertullus had expressed confidence in Felix's ability to determine the accuracy of the charges against Paul, the Jews who were present joined in accusation, asserting that all of Tertullus' charges were true (v.9).
- D. Paul, granted permission to respond, answered the charges brought against him, one by one (v.10):
1. As to his being a troublemaker, Paul replied that only twelve days had passed since he went up to Jerusalem, and that his purpose in going was to worship, not to cause a disturbance (v.11);
  2. Next, he denied the charge that he had incited riots among the Jews. At no time, either in the temple, the synagogues or in the city, had he disputed with the people or attempted to stir them up. These were the facts, and no one could disprove them (vv.12-13);
  3. Paul did not deny the third charge, namely, that he was a ringleader of the Nazarenes. He admitted that he worshiped the God of his fathers as a follower of the Way, which they called a sect. He did say that he believed all things which are written in the Old Testament, sharing the expectation of all orthodox Jews, especially the Pharisees, that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. In light of that coming resurrection, he sought to always keep his conscience clear before God and man. Far from stirring the Jews up to insurrection, Paul had come to Jerusalem to bring alms to the Jewish people (vv.14-17).
  4. With regard to the fourth charge, namely, that he had profaned the temple, Paul made this reply: While he was in the act of bringing gifts for the poor and offerings to the temple, in the performance of a Jewish vow, certain Jews from Asia found him and accused him of taking unclean Gentiles into the temple. This, of course, was not true. The apostle was alone at the time, and had been purified from ceremonial defilement. These accusing Jews from Asia who caused the riot against him in Jerusalem ought to have come to Caesarea to accuse him, if they had anything against him (vv.18-19).
- E. Paul then challenged those Jews who were present to state clearly what crimes he had been proved guilty of when he

stood before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. The only charge they could possibly bring against him was for shouting out in their presence: **“It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.”** (vv.20-21)

## **IX. PAUL KEPT IN CUSTODY**

**Acts 24:22-27:** <sup>22</sup>*Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.”* <sup>23</sup>*He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.*

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

<sup>27</sup>*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.*

- A. Felix knew enough about the Christian faith to realize that Paul was obviously innocent of any crime against Roman law. But as was always the case, it was a delicate balance these Roman rulers had to keep between Caesar and the Jewish people. Felix faced a serious dilemma—if he were to acquit Paul, he would incur the wrath of the Jews. From a political standpoint, it was important that he should curry their favor. If he condemned Paul, he knew he was violating Roman law. So he adopted an expedient solution to the problem—stall for time. He announced he would wait for Lysias the commander to come to Caesarea; Lysias never had any intention of coming to Caesarea, and there is no historical record that he ever did so. Thus, Paul was kept under house arrest, similar to what occurred when he was awaiting trial later on in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). Paul was given some freedom so that his friends could visit him and take care of his needs. Obviously the governor did not consider Paul a threat or desperate criminal (vv.22-23).

- B. “Several days later **Felix** came with his wife **Drusilla**, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As **Paul discoursed on 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.’” (vv.24-25)
1. Felix and his wife arranged for a private meeting with Paul, apparently to hear more about the Christian faith.
  2. Whether that was the expressed purpose for the meeting or not, Paul took his liberty and boldly spoke to them about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come.
  3. Felix became afraid [“trembled” – KJV], showing that he had some conscience or sincerity; nothing is said about his Jewish wife’s reaction.
  4. But again he decided to stall for time: “**That’s enough for now!** When I find it *convenient*, I will send for you.” It seems Felix was starting to feel the pin pricks of Holy Spirit conviction, but deferred making any decision for Christ. This is very dangerous, for the Scripture warns us that *today* is the day of salvation, and if we hear His voice *today*, we should not harden our hearts (2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7-8). As far as we know, the convenient time never came for Felix to receive Christ.
- C. However, over the next two years, Felix frequently sent for Paul and talked with him, not about righteousness and judgment, but about money—he was hoping that Paul would pay him a bribe for his release. At the end of the two years, **Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus**; however, as a favor to the Jews, **Felix left Paul in prison**. Historical records indicate that Emperor Nero appointed Festus as governor of Judea in A.D. 60 (vv.26-27).

## X. PAUL’S TRIAL BEFORE FESTUS

**Acts 25:1-12:** <sup>1</sup>Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges

against Paul. <sup>3</sup>They urgently 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. <sup>4</sup>Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. <sup>5</sup>Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there, if he has done anything wrong.”

<sup>6</sup>After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. <sup>7</sup>When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove.

<sup>8</sup>Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”

<sup>9</sup>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?”

<sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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!” <sup>12</sup>After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

A. “Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. They urgently 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.” (vv.1-3)

1. **Paul had now been in prison in Caesarea for more than two years**, but the Jewish leaders had not forgotten him nor had their jealous hatred for the apostle subsided.
2. It was not justice they were seeking from Festus, just another opportunity to ambush and kill Paul.

B. But Festus would have been informed of their previous plot to kill Paul, and of the massive military escort needed to transport him safely from Jerusalem to Caesarea. He therefore refused their request, but encouraged them to come to Caesarea and

press charges against Paul there, “if he has done anything wrong.” (vv.4-5)

- C. Upon his return to Caesarea, **Festus convened Paul’s trial the very next day**. Paul’s Jewish accusers had come from Jerusalem, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove. Paul, knowing that they had no proof to back up their charges, gave a very simple defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.” (vv.6-8)
- D. Festus, trying to curry favor with the Jews, offered Paul the option of going back to Jerusalem to stand trial before the Sanhedrin. Paul knew that to go back to Jerusalem was suicide—he would never reach there alive. He refused, stating that the court in Caesarea was the proper place for his trial. If he had committed a crime against the Roman Empire, he was not unwilling to die for it. But if he was not guilty of such a sin, then on what legal ground could he be handed over to the Jews? Taking full advantage of his rights as a Roman citizen, the apostle then uttered the memorable words, “**I appeal to Caesar.**” (vv.9-11)
1. Was it a mistake for Paul to appeal to Caesar? Was he placing too much dependence on his earthly citizenship, rather than entrusting his fate into the hands of God? It is not clear.
  2. But one thing is certain: Even though his appeal to Caesar hindered his being set free at this time, one way or another, **Paul had to go to Rome**—Jesus had appeared to him in his prison cell in Jerusalem two years earlier, saying, “You must also testify in Rome.” (Acts 23:11)
- E. “After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: ‘You have appealed to Caesar. **To Caesar you will go!**’” (v.12)

## **XI. FESTUS CONSULTS KING AGRIPPA**

**Acts 25:13-22:** <sup>13</sup>A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders

of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

<sup>16</sup>“I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>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.” <sup>22</sup>Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.” He replied, “Tomorrow you will hear him.”

- A. Soon after Paul’s trial, **King Herod Agrippa II** and his **sister Bernice** came to Caesarea to congratulate Festus on his new appointment. Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa I, who murdered James, imprisoned Peter, and was struck dead by the Lord (Acts 12). Bernice seems to have been a woman of questionable moral character (v.13).
- B. As King Agrippa was spending many days with Festus, the governor discussed Paul’s case with him in great detail. He explained to the king how the charges brought against Paul by the Jews were not criminal charges; rather, they were on certain points of dispute about their own religion and about **“a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.”** After describing Paul’s appeal to Caesar, King Agrippa requested his own hearing with Paul which Festus arranged the following day (vv.14-22).

## **XII. PAUL BEFORE KING AGRIPPA**

**Acts 25:23 -26:32:** <sup>23</sup>The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>For I think it is unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him.”

<sup>26:1</sup>Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: <sup>2</sup>“King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, <sup>3</sup>and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

<sup>4</sup>“The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup>And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. <sup>7</sup>This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. <sup>8</sup>Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

<sup>9</sup>“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

<sup>12</sup>“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup>About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. <sup>14</sup>We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, “Saul, Saul,

*why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'*

<sup>15</sup>*"Then I asked, 'Who are You, Lord?' " "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup>"Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of Me and what I will show you. <sup>17</sup>I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup>to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'*

<sup>19</sup>*"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. <sup>20</sup>First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. <sup>21</sup>That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup>But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— <sup>23</sup>that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles."*

<sup>24</sup>*At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane." <sup>25</sup>"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. <sup>26</sup>The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa do you believe the prophets? I know you do." <sup>28</sup>Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" <sup>29</sup>Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."*

<sup>30</sup>*The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. <sup>31</sup>They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." <sup>32</sup>Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."*

A. "The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and

the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.” (v.23)

1. At the time of Paul’s conversion, Christ had revealed through Ananias that the apostle would *carry His name before the Gentiles and their kings* (Acts 9:16); that prophetic word was about to be fulfilled now, and later in Rome when Paul was to stand before Caesar.
  2. Since Agrippa was a Jew, and therefore conversant with matters involving Judaism, Festus hoped he would get some help in drawing up a suitable charge.
- B. Festus begins the hearing by going over the history of the Paul’s case again—the charges and demands of the Jews for Paul’s death, Festus’ inability to find the apostle guilty of any crime deserving of death, and Paul’s appeal to Caesar. Festus knew he had a serious dilemma: he was now forced by Paul’s appeal to send him to Nero, but there was no legal basis for a trial. Festus plainly stated that he was hoping Agrippa would be able to help him resolve the matter (vv.24-27).
- C. “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You have permission to speak for yourself.’ So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: ‘King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.’” (Acts 26:1-3)
1. The scene here has been described as “the enslaved king and the enthroned prisoner.” From a spiritual standpoint, Agrippa was a weak, pitiable figure, while Paul stands up in regal form, soaring far above his circumstances. Although Paul is the prisoner on trial, he seems to take command of the courtroom, and finally, it is *Paul* cross-examining King Agrippa!
  2. Paul was genuinely grateful to have a hearing before Agrippa, for he was very much aware of the king’s familiarity with Judaism.
- D. Paul first appeals to his exemplary life as a Jew, which, if they were willing to testify, all of the Jews would have to admit they knew about; Paul’s zeal and orthodoxy as a strict Pharisee was widely known (vv.4-5).

- E. “And now **it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today**. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? (vv.6-8)
1. Paul’s only “crime” was in believing what the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had promised to the twelve tribes of Israel: that God raises the dead!
  2. Remember that Pharisees all believed in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6-8).
  3. He masterfully showed how illogical it was for the Jews to be sentencing him to death for believing exactly what they believed!
  4. **“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?”** That was exactly what Abraham their father believed when he offered up his son Isaac (Heb. 11:19).
- F. Returning to his own personal testimony, Paul recounted the savage and unremitting campaign he had waged against Christians, opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth with all his might. He explained how he had arrested many followers of the Way, from Jerusalem to foreign cities, trying to force them to blaspheme, and even casting his vote against them when they were put to death (vv.9-11).
- G. In vv. 12-18, we have the **second record in Acts of Paul’s own account of his conversion**, in addition to Luke’s account given in Acts 9 [see *Section III.D* on p.258 of Part 11]; there are several unique details given in this account that are not mentioned in either of the other accounts:
1. “We all fell to the ground” (v.14) – the other accounts only mention Paul falling to the ground, although Luke says that Paul’s companions were *unable to speak for terror* (Acts 9:7 – AMP)
  2. Jesus told Paul, **“It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”** (v.14) *Goads* were sharp, pointed instruments (like our modern cattle prods) used to force stubborn animals to move. Any animal that kicked against the goads was only injuring himself. Paul had been kicking against the goad of the Holy Spirit’s conviction. He had been fighting against

God Himself, which had only made him more obsessed and filled with hatred.

3. “I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of Me and what I will show you.” (v.16)
  4. “I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to **open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God**, so that they may **receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.**” (vv.17-18) – This commission, found only in this account, gives a nice summary of what the gospel promises to do in a believer’s life.
- H. “So then, King Agrippa, **I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven** [“heavenly vision” – KJV]. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, **I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.** That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.” (vv.19-21)
1. Paul confidently informed the king that he had faithfully carried out Christ’s commission, preaching everywhere that men should repent, turn to God, and prove their repentance by their actions.
  2. It was Paul’s *preaching* that had incited the Jews to want to kill him!
- I. “But **I have had God’s help to this very day**, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles.” (vv.22-23)
1. Paul acknowledged God’s help and protection to the present day, enabling and strengthening him to boldly **testify to small people**, like the unnamed cripple who was healed in Lystra (Acts 14:8-10), **and great people**, like Governor Festus and King Agrippa.

2. All that Paul preached was in perfect harmony with the Old Testament Law and Prophets, which had predicted the Messiah’s ministry, His sufferings, and His resurrection (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47).
- J. “At this point **Festus** interrupted Paul’s defense. **‘You are out of your mind, Paul!’ he shouted. ‘Your great learning is driving you insane.’** ‘I am not insane, most excellent Festus,’ Paul replied. ‘What I am saying is true and reasonable.’” (vv.24-25)
1. Being a Gentile, Festus was obviously clueless concerning all that Paul had spoken; indeed, the preaching of the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing, and spiritual truth seems like insanity to the natural man devoid of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14-16).
  2. Without any apparent irritation, Paul answered Festus calmly and respectfully, insisting that he was not insane, for the things Paul had been speaking were **true and reasonable**. The gospel of Jesus Christ is absolutely true and it is perfectly reasonable. It only seems foolish and unreasonable to those who are lost and still blinded by sin and the devil.
- K. “**‘The king is familiar with these things**, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.’ Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’ Paul replied, ‘Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.’” (vv.26-29)
1. Realizing that Agrippa would better understand what he had been saying, Paul directly addressed the king, boldly trying to persuade him to become a Christian!
  2. Paul knew that the testimony of Christ had not escaped the king’s notice—**it was not done in a corner!** The gospel is based on actual events, lived out in historical times and places. The news of Jesus Christ had travelled far and wide, especially His resurrection, an event confirmed by over 500 eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:6)!
  3. “**‘King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.’** Checkmate! What wisdom God gave Paul in situations

like this one. He would later admit to the Corinthians: “Crafty fellow that I am, I caught you by trickery!” (2 Cor. 12:16) If Agrippa said, “No, I don’t believe the prophets,” Paul’s Jewish accusers would have turned on him; if he said “Yes,” Agrippa knew where Paul was going with this—he was trying to lead the king to Christ right there in the courtroom!

4. **“Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”** Whether this response from Agrippa was sincere or merely a lighthearted joke to relieve the pressure, Paul’s answer was dead serious: “I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am [a Christian!].”
  5. This is without a doubt one of Paul’s shining moments recorded for us in the book of Acts!
- L. With that, the king, Bernice, the governor, and all the other officials left the room. It is amazing how even the great and mighty flee in fear when confronted with their sins and the Risen Christ! Unfortunately, a Day is coming when there will be no place to hide (Rev. 6:14-17; 20:11-15). Agrippa and Festus both knew that Paul had done nothing deserving of death, and had he not appealed to Caesar, he could have been set free (vv.30-32).

### **XIII. PAUL SAILS FOR ROME**

**Acts 27:1-12:** <sup>1</sup>When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. <sup>2</sup>We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

<sup>3</sup>The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. <sup>4</sup>From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. <sup>5</sup>When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup>There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. <sup>7</sup>We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the

lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. <sup>8</sup>We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

<sup>9</sup>Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Fast. So Paul warned them, <sup>10</sup>“Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.” <sup>11</sup>But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. <sup>12</sup>Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

- A. The “**we**” narrative is now resumed, after being broken off at Acts 21:18. We have no information about Luke’s movements during the two intervening years, but he likely spent much of the time in or around Caesarea (where Paul was kept in custody), making good use of his opportunities of gathering information about the early days of the Christian movement. Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus set sail from Caesarea en route to Rome; there were other prisoners on board who, like Paul, were being sent to Rome for trial. The ship landed at Myra in Lycia, where Paul and the others were transferred to an Alexandrian ship that was sailing for Italy (vv.1-6).
- B. Travel from Myra was very slow due to adverse winds. With great difficulty, the ship arrived off Cnidus and continued south around Crete, finally reaching Fair Havens, a harbor on the coast of Crete (vv.7-8).
- C. By now **considerable time had been lost due to unfavorable sailing conditions**. The approach of winter weather made further travel dangerous. The Fast (Day of Atonement) was already over, so it must have been late September or early October. Paul warned the crew that navigation was unsafe and that if the voyage was continued, it would be disastrous and there would be great loss to the cargo, ship, and even the lives of some on board (vv.9-10).
- D. However, **they did not listen to Paul’s advice**. The pilot and the owner of the ship wanted to sail on to Phoenix, a more suitable harbor to spend the winter that was about forty miles west of Fair Havens (vv.11-12).

## XIV. THE STORM AT SEA

**Acts 27:13-26:** <sup>13</sup>When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had obtained what they wanted; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. <sup>14</sup>Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the “northeaster,” swept down from the island. <sup>15</sup>The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. <sup>16</sup>As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure. <sup>17</sup>When the men had hoisted it aboard, they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. <sup>18</sup>We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. <sup>19</sup>On the third day, they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands. <sup>20</sup>When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. <sup>21</sup>After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. <sup>22</sup>But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. <sup>23</sup>Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me <sup>24</sup>and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ <sup>25</sup>So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. <sup>26</sup>Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”

- A. When a gentle south wind began to blow, the mariners took that as a confirmation of their plan, so they set sail for Phoenix. But soon they were caught in a **violent storm with hurricane force winds** called a “northeaster.” They lowered the anchor and let the ship be driven along by the storm. They were barely able to secure the lifeboat (vv.13-17).
- B. For days on end, the ship took such a violent battering that they began to throw the cargo and the ship’s tackle overboard. They had obviously taken on a lot of water, and this was necessary to lighten the load and prevent the ship from sinking. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm

continued raging, they finally gave up all hope of being saved (vv.18-20).

- C. “After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: ‘Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, “Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.” So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.’” (vv.21-26)
1. Paul gave all the men a message of hope, but first reminded them that they should have listened to his advice;
  2. He told them that, although the ship would be lost, there would be no loss of life;
  3. An angel of God had spoken to Paul assuring him that he had to stand trial before Caesar in Rome, so they were not going to sink;
  4. However, they would run aground on an island;
  5. Paul, though just a prisoner, seemed to take command of the ship, issuing orders and making life and death decisions for everyone onboard.

## **XV. THE SHIPWRECK**

**Acts 27:27-44:** <sup>27</sup>*On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land.* <sup>28</sup>*They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep.* <sup>29</sup>*Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.* <sup>30</sup>*In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow.* <sup>31</sup>*Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.”* <sup>32</sup>*So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall away.*

<sup>33</sup>Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven’t eaten anything. <sup>34</sup>Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” <sup>35</sup>After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup>They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. <sup>37</sup>Altogether there were 276 of us on board. <sup>38</sup>When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

<sup>39</sup>When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. <sup>40</sup>Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. <sup>41</sup>But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

<sup>42</sup>The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. <sup>43</sup>But the centurion wanted to spare Paul’s life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. <sup>44</sup>The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.

- A. **Fourteen days had elapsed** since they left Fair Havens. They were now drifting helplessly across the Adriatic Sea, About midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land, so they dropped four anchors and prayed for daylight (vv.27-29).
- B. Fearing for their lives, some of the sailors plotted to get ashore in the lifeboat, pretending they were going to lower more anchors. When Paul saw them trying to escape, he reported their plot to the centurion. He warned that unless the sailors remained on board, the rest would not be saved. So the soldiers cut away the ropes attached to the lifeboat and let it drift away (vv.30-32).
- C. Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone on the ship to eat, reminding them that they had gone two weeks without food. Now they needed to eat; their survival depended on it. The

apostle assured them that not a hair of anyone's head would be lost. Then **Paul set the example** for them by **taking bread, giving thanks to God publicly for it**, and eating. How often we shrink from praying in front of others! Yet how often such prayer speaks louder than our preaching. They were all encouraged and ate food themselves. There were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. After eating, they lightened the ship by throwing the uneaten grain into the sea (vv.31-38).

- D. When daylight came, they reached a sandy beach; the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The stern of the ship was broken in pieces by the pounding surf. The soldiers had planned to kill the prisoners to prevent their escape, but the centurion, wanting to save Paul, stopped them from carrying out their plan. He ordered all who could swim to make for shore. The rest were told to float in on boards or other parts of the ship. In this way, every one of the crew and passengers escaped safely to land (vv.39-44).

## XVI. ASHORE ON MALTA

**Acts 28:1-10:** <sup>1</sup>Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. <sup>3</sup>Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. <sup>4</sup>When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." <sup>5</sup>But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. <sup>6</sup>The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

<sup>7</sup>There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. <sup>8</sup>His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. <sup>9</sup>When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. <sup>10</sup>They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

A. Paul and the crew had landed safely on the island of Malta which is about 60 miles south of Sicily. The islanders welcomed them and showed unusual kindness, building a fire to warm them because it was raining and cold. As Paul was throwing wood on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, “This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.” But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up die, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god (vv.1-6).

1. Luke seems to recognize that the **kindness shown them by the islanders** was actually God’s kindness toward them, for he calls it unusual; after their long ordeal at sea, they were greatly encouraged by the warmth and hospitality of the Malta natives.

2. In describing the details of **Paul’s snakebite**, Luke also seems to allude to a bigger picture:

a) It was the *heat* of the fire that drove out the viper; it was only after the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus that all of the demons in Israel got stirred up! Jesus taught that the fire of the Holy Spirit is what drives out demons:

**Mat. 12:28:** *But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

b) Paul suffered no harm from the viper’s bite; Jesus had promised His disciples that no poisonous serpent (physical) or any power of the enemy (spiritual) could harm them:

**Luke 10:18-19:** <sup>18</sup>*He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup>I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*

**Mark 16:17-18:** <sup>17</sup>*And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; <sup>18</sup>they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink*

*deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.*

- c) Paul shook the snake off into the fire; the Lake of Fire is the final destiny awaiting the great serpent, Satan (Rev. 20:10).
- d) NOTE: Paul didn't go looking for a serpent to pick up like the modern snake handlers!
- e) The islanders assumed that Paul was receiving Divine Justice for murder or some sort of crime, but when they saw that the viper's poison was having no effect on him, they changed their minds and, like the Lystrans with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-18), they said that he was a god [see *Section V.B* on p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.** of part 8].

B. By God's providence, the **ship had landed near the estate of the chief official of the island, Publius**. He, like the rest of the islanders, showed great kindness and hospitality to Paul and his companions, taking them into his own home for three days. And also by God's providence, **Publius' father was sick** in bed with fever and dysentery; after Paul prayed and laid his hands on him, he was miraculously healed him. This news spread like wildfire, and over the course of the next three months, all of the sick on the island were brought to Paul and they were healed. The Maltese natives honored them in many other ways, even furnishing them with needed supplies when they were ready to set sail (vv.7-10).

## **XVII. ARRIVAL AT ROME**

**Acts 28:11-16:** <sup>11</sup>After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. <sup>12</sup>We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. <sup>13</sup>From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. <sup>14</sup>There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup>The brothers there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged. <sup>16</sup>When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

- A. After the three months of winter had passed, and it was safe to sail again, the centurion, with his prisoners, embarked on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island. From Malta they sailed about eighty miles to Syracuse, the capital of Sicily. After a three-day stopover, they proceeded to Rhegium on the mainland of Italy. From there, they sailed to Puteoli, about 150 miles southeast of Rome. Paul found Christian brethren there, with whom he was permitted to enjoy fellowship for seven days (vv.11-14).
- B. We are not told how news of Paul’s arrival reached Rome, but two different groups of brothers were there waiting to greet Paul and his companions. Paul thanked God and was greatly cheered and encouraged by the love of the saints in Rome. Upon arrival in Rome, Paul was permitted to live in a private home under house arrest, with a soldier who guarded him; this was probably more for his own protection, as Paul was not a flight risk (vv.15-16).

### **XVIII. PAUL PREACHES AT ROME UNDER GUARD**

**Acts 28:17-31:** <sup>17</sup>Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. <sup>18</sup>They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. <sup>19</sup>But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. <sup>20</sup>For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

<sup>21</sup>They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. <sup>22</sup>But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.”

<sup>23</sup>They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. <sup>24</sup>Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. <sup>25</sup>They disagreed among themselves and

began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when He said through Isaiah the prophet:

<sup>26</sup>“Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

<sup>27</sup>For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’

<sup>28</sup>“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” <sup>29</sup>[After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.] <sup>30</sup>For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. <sup>31</sup>Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. In accordance with his custom of preaching the gospel to the Jews first, but not having the freedom to visit their synagogue, Paul sent out an invitation to all the Jewish leaders in Rome. Where there’s a will, there’s a way! He explained his case to them—his arrest, his innocence concerning all of the charges brought against him (he assured them that he had done nothing against the Jewish people or their customs), and his appeal to Caesar. Paul then clarified for them that his only crime was the *hope of Israel*—the hope of the fulfillment of the promises made to the Jewish patriarchs, especially the promise of the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead (vv.17-20).
- B. The Jewish leaders insisted that they had no knowledge of Paul; they had not received any letters from Judea, nor had they heard any bad reports about him. But they expressed an interest in hearing more about Paul’s views, for they had heard people everywhere talking against “this sect,”—the “sect” of Christianity (vv.21-22).
- C. “They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. **From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus** from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. (v.23)
- D. “**Some were convinced** by what he said, but **others would not believe**. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave

after Paul had made this final statement: ‘The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when He said through Isaiah the prophet: “Go to this people and say, ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.’ For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” ‘Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!’ After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.” (vv.24-29)

- E. “For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” (vv.30-31)

## **XIX. CONCLUSION**

- A. Acts chapters 21-28 can be summarized in just a few simple words: How the Jewish religious leaders hated Paul! Their obsession to kill him is obviously reminiscent of Paul’s former passion to destroy the Christians.
- B. But how the apostle shines time after time in the most adverse situations: boldly addressing the crowd in Jerusalem after being nearly torn to pieces and arrested; speaking to Governor Felix and his wife about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come; practically converting King Agrippa right in the courtroom during his hearing; his courage and command of the ship caught in a Northeaster; his amazing healing ministry on the island of Malta; and his boldness in preaching the gospel to the Jewish leaders in Rome while he was under house arrest! His zeal for God and his fearlessness before kings and mobs, in hurricanes and shipwrecks, or any other persecution or tribulation is truly inspiring. He was more than a conqueror, and nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:35-39).
- C. The book of Acts ends on a triumphant note, with Paul preaching boldly in his rented house while under guard in Rome. However, the reader is left hanging, not knowing Paul’s fate or the outcome of his trial of appeal before Caesar.

Obviously, as we will discuss further in part 12, the history of Paul and the Early Church doesn't end here. It is widely believed that Paul was released from this two-year imprisonment and had several more years of freedom to travel and minister before a second Roman imprisonment which ended in his death as a martyr for Jesus Christ.

