

# Acts

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 24  
Pleasing God ... or Man  
Acts 25-26

... We are not trying to please men  
but God, who tests our hearts.  
1 Thessalonians 2:4

## Appeal to Caesar – Acts 25:1-12

### Day 1

1. a. Why did the Jewish leaders want to hold Paul's trial in Jerusalem?  
  
b. Why did Festus want to move Paul's trial to Jerusalem?
2. What do these verses say about living to please the Lord instead of others?  
2 Corinthians 5:9-10  
  
1 Thessalonians 2:4
3. Why do you think Paul appealed to Caesar?

## Learn the TRUTH!



This week, Paul gives refutes false charges that were made against him during the previous two years. As Paul makes his final recorded defense, he once again demonstrates boldness from the Holy Spirit. In every word or deed, his goal is always to please God rather than man. May this be our goal too!

## Festus and King Agrippa – Acts 25:13-27

### Day 2

4. What did Festus find puzzling about Paul's case?
5. From verse 18, what do you think Festus was expecting?
6. What does verse 19 tell you about Festus' knowledge or belief?
7. What did Festus hope to accomplish by bringing Paul before Agrippa?

**Paul Before Agrippa**  
**Acts 26:1-15**

**Day 3**

8. Why did Paul consider himself "fortunate" to speak before Agrippa?
9. a. Review Acts 21:28. What were the original charges brought against Paul?
- b. What did Paul have to say about these charges?
10. How did Paul describe himself before his conversion?

**Agrippa's Verdict**  
**Acts 26:24-32**

**Day 5**

14. From this chapter, describe each of the following people's attitude toward God.
- Paul
- Festus
- Agrippa
15. Read verse 29. Why do you think Paul said this?
16. What was Agrippa's verdict about Paul?

**Paul's Ministry**  
**Acts 26:16-23**

**Day 4**

11. Why did God appear to Paul?
12. a. What did God promise to do for the people Paul was sent to teach?
- b. Choose one thing from the list and describe what it means to you.
13. What do you find most interesting in Paul's defense to King Agrippa?

**Live the TRUTH!**

**Throughout his ministry, Paul was falsely accused, imprisoned without cause, and treated unjustly. Are you in a situation where you are being wrongly accused or treated unfairly? Do you think God is pleased with the way you respond to these difficulties? How could Paul's response be a model for you?**

## Commentary Acts Lesson 24

**Check  
It Out:**

**The Changing of the Guard:** Porcius Festus, the proconsul replacing Felix, was from a well-known, influential Roman family. Shortly after arriving in his province, sometime in 60 AD, he toured and inspected Jerusalem. He was met by the high priests and the Sanhedrin, who told him of Paul's case, hoping the inexperienced Festus would send Paul to Jerusalem for trial. They had plans to ambush and kill Paul on his way there. Instead, Festus invited them to go to Caesarea with him and state their case against Paul. In Caesarea, the Sanhedrin hurled unproven accusations at the apostle, who refuted them.

Festus was confronted with the same problem Felix had been unable to solve: Should he release Paul, an innocent man, or appease the Sanhedrin by sending him to Jerusalem? Wanting to do the Jews a favor at the beginning of his term of office, Festus asked Paul if he was willing to stand trial in Jerusalem. But Paul knew too well how dangerous standing trial in Jerusalem would be for him and stated that he wanted to be tried before Caesar. After consulting with his council, Festus replied, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!" (25:12). The arrangement relieved Festus of having to make a decision and allowed Paul a way to get to Rome, the objective of his dreams.

**Agrippa Visits Caesarea:** Before Paul left for Rome, Festus entertained King Agrippa II and his sister, Bernice, both great-grandchildren of Herod the Great, the builder of the glorious temple in Jerusalem. They arrived to welcome Festus as Rome's new proconsul in Judea. Their brother and sister relationship was questionable; she was his companion at all state functions, assuming the position of queen on ceremonial occasions. Their younger sister was married to Felix. King Agrippa's domain at this time included major portions of Palestine.

The relationship between the king and the proconsul was an interesting one. Rome maintained ultimate control and authority through the proconsul, and delegated ceremonial responsibilities and considerable authority to local kings or other state officials. Judea was one of the less reliable areas of the empire; the administrative functions of government took place in Caesarea rather than the more volatile city of Jerusalem.

King Agrippa was well acquainted with religious conditions in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, and at least pretended to be interested in religious matters. Known for her frivolity and beauty, Bernice had a questionable moral reputation, though outwardly she displayed interest in religion, and even took a Nazirite vow at one stage. Agrippa and Bernice spent several days in Caesarea, and Festus — knowing very little about Jewish religion and practices — took advantage of the opportunity to consult the king about Paul's case. Festus correctly discerned the controversy to be over religious matters, but he was confused by Paul's claim that an executed man named Jesus was still alive.

Think about Jesus' words to Paul: "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (26:14b). A goad is a prod used to guide animals in the right direction. In the first century it had a sharp point, whereas those used today may emit a small electrical charge. We can imagine that God was prodding Paul to accept the truth of the gospel.

How can we be sure we are not resisting the prodding of the Holy Spirit? First, any thoughts or plans we might have, if they are the work of the Spirit, will be consistent with the whole teaching of Scripture. The Holy Spirit always urges us to know more of God's Word, and He provides answers when we search. Second, as we pray and seek to be open to God, we will have inner peace and a yielded will, not unrest or rebelliousness. Third, we will become aware of a desire to glorify Jesus and to help in the work of His kingdom.

If we are on the wrong track — as Paul was — God will stop us. If we are open to His leading and are willing to spend time in His Word, He promises, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (Psalm 32:8).

**Honored with a Royal Audience:** Agrippa expressed interest in the case and asked to see Paul for himself (the same way Herod Antipas wanted to see Jesus [Luke 23:6-12]). Festus arranged to meet the next day, assembling a group of high-ranking military and leading men of the city. The group, together with Agrippa and Bernice in their finest royal robes, created a spectacle as they marched with great pomp and ceremony into the court chamber of Herod's palace to question Paul. For a third time Paul found himself recounting his conversion, now probably the most important speech of his life. Once again he addressed a Roman official and a king of the Jews in defense not only of himself, but of Christianity. In his first account (chapter 9) Paul emphasized Jesus' extraordinary appearance, which gave him authority equal to that of the Twelve Apostles. In his second account (chapter 22), Paul proclaimed he was set aside to be God's witness. In this final account, Paul emphasized his call to preach to the Gentiles.

Paul began his defense by crediting Agrippa with a thorough knowledge of the customs and controversies of the Jews. Paul's reasoning here was that Agrippa would be interested in hearing what he had to say. Paul began his defense by stating that he is Jewish, a Pharisee belonging to the strictest party of Judaism. Then he described his earlier way of life when he opposed those who believed in Jesus. As leader of the persecutions in Jerusalem, he thought the Christian Jews were enemies of God. He had been so fanatical that he persecuted them in foreign cities as well. He then retold his conversion experience, describing how God's glory overtook him at noon as he came to Damascus. Jesus' appearance was so convincing and convicting to Paul that he spontaneously called the crucified One "Lord" (26:15). In response, Jesus appointed Paul to witness to the Gentiles (26:17-18).

Paul appealed to Agrippa as one Jew to another, stating that it would be wrong to disobey a message from heaven. He stressed the unity and continuity between the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus: Jewish prophets predicted Christ's death and Resurrection (Isaiah 53). At this point, Festus interrupted to accuse Paul of being mad (Acts 26:24). Paul defended his sanity and called on Agrippa to affirm the fulfilled prophecy. Agrippa's response was careful. Paul asked, "Do you believe the prophets?" (26:27a). He was so convinced that an expert in Jewish religion would have to agree with him that he tried to put words in the king's mouth. However, Agrippa would not be persuaded to become a Christian. Paul stated his earnest desire for Agrippa and the others to believe. The review ended as the king rose to leave the assembly. Both the king and proconsul later agreed that Paul was innocent, but because Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus could not declare him innocent without detracting from the emperor's prestige.



**Felix and Agrippa resisted Paul's teaching. His message ran counter to their values. They placed a higher priority on the pursuit of money, status and power. They were not interested in following the teaching of the gospel.**

**When a person accepts the teaching of the gospel, their life changes. The gospel exposes selfish lifestyles, fears and guilt. Jesus comes to us and makes us new. He delivers us from our selfishness. He removes our fears. When He is Lord in our lives. He sets us free from guilt and shame. Because God gives us grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can "put on the new self, created to be like God in righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).**

**After studying these two chapters, in what ways are you like Festus and Agrippa? In what ways are you like Paul? Are you willing to surrender your life to God and embrace the full teaching of the gospel?.**