

Refuge City Church — November 13, 2022

“Resurrection & Light” [Acts 25 & 26]

Introduction [Let's review]

- Paul arrived in Jerusalem, and was arrested on false charges. [Chapter 21]
- He defends himself in the temple, and after being rescued from certain death at the hand of the Jews, he's placed in Roman custody.
- Paul defends himself in front of the Sanhedrin. [Chapters 22-23]
- He's sent to Caesarea for protection, under Roman authority, as a Roman citizen.
- He stands trial before Governor Felix. Paul defended himself, and with no witnesses brought against him for the charges of being a plague, a ringleader, and for religious defamation, he was *not* charged, and yet kept in prison as consolation to the Jews.
- **Today:** Paul's continued imprisonment and seemingly constant defense of himself against trumped up charges.

Chapter 25 [a summary]

Verses 1-12

- **Acts 24:27, 25:3**, “When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison... [the Jews] asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.”
 - Two years has elapsed. Paul is still in prison. The Jews are still scrambling to find ways to kill him.
 - **2 Peter 2:19**, “...For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.”
- Festus keeps Paul in prison, but tells the Jews they could come over and argue their case once again. [apparently the letter from Claudius Lysias to Felix, or any report from Felix, did not provide enough consolidation for Festus; he needed to hear the case himself].
 - **Verse 7:** “When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that *they could not prove.*”
- Paul's appeal is to move up the chain of command, not go backwards.
 - **Verses 11-12:** “If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

Verses 13-22

- Enter King Agrippa II and his wife/sister Bernice [royal visit to meet/greet Festus]
 - Ruled over territory north of Judea; his father Agrippa I killed the apostle James. His great uncle Herod Antipas, had John the Baptist killed, and oversaw a portion of Jesus' trial. His great grandfather was King Herod who killed all Bethlehem babies after Jesus was born.
- Festus lays out the case against Paul, and declared him innocent of all charges worthy of death.
 - So this is not so much a trial, as it is an opportunity for others to hear Paul's testimony for legal reasons, and to send a detailed written report to Caesar.

- **Verse 19:** [the heart of the matter] “Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.”
- **John 2:19-21**, [Very early in Jesus’ ministry, he made a point of the resurrection] “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body.”

Chapter 25 Takeaways

- There will be long seasons of seeming impasse from difficult circumstances.
 - God is never far during these times = Cry out to Him!
 - God is sovereign and has a plan in all things.
 - **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”
- Choose faithfulness in your season of uncertainty and waiting.
 - Consider Joseph’s story of being sold into slavery by his own brothers.
 - **Genesis 45:7-8**, “And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God...”
 - **Genesis 50:20**, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...”
- **Psalm 105:3-4**, “Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice! Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!”
- [Set up for Ch. 26] **Acts 25:23**, “So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.”

Chapter 26

- The set up for Paul’s 5th defense of his innocence.
 - Two main reasons for this defense before Roman authority.
 1. Festus appeals to the king for definitive proof to send Paul to Caesar.
 2. God’s sovereignty/plan to allow Paul to share Jesus before the king.
 - **Acts 9:15**, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”
- **Acts 26:3**, “especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.”

Verses 4-8 [Life before Christ]

- A proper Jew. Studies to become a Pharisee.
- Like all Jews, he anxiously awaited the promised Messiah.
- Paul brings it right back to the resurrection, to which the Pharisees agree, and all of Christianity is established upon... His faith and hope rests on Jesus as the promised Messiah, who was raised from the dead.
 - [before the Jewish council] **Acts 23:6**, “It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.”
 - [before Felix] **Acts 24:15**, “...there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.”

- [Verse 8] As familiar as the Jews, Pharisees, and even Agrippa were with Moses and the Prophets, the concept of resurrection should not be surprising.
 - **1 Kings 17:21-22**, “Then [Elijah] stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the Lord, ‘O Lord my God, let this child’s life come into him again.’ And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.”
 - **Job 19:25-27**, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God...”
- **[For us today!] 1 Corinthians 15:17-20**, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins...If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

Verses 9-11 [Persecution of the Way]

- **Verse 11**: “And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme...”
 - We may never be asked to deny our faith, but we will be given opportunity to blaspheme by the things we say and how we live.
 - **Philippians 1:27**, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...”
 - **Romans 1:16**, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...”
 - **QUOTE**: “The great Christians have never been afraid to point to themselves as living and walking examples of the power of Christ. The gospel to them was not a form of words; it was not a form of intellectual belief; it was a power unto salvation.” [William Barclay]... **this is how Paul was living.**

READ Verses 12-23 [Conversion & Purpose]; Paul’s testimony (9:1-19 & 22:3-16)

- In the telling of his conversion, Paul gives a new detail; something his Gentile audience would understand.
- **Verse 14**: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”
 - **Goads**: sharp sticks used to drive stubborn cattle.
 - The Greek world understood this as a phrase for one in opposition to deity **[to oppose the inevitable]**.
- Paul’s commission came from God for a specific purpose; much like others before him.
 - **Jeremiah 1:7**, “But the Lord said to [Jeremiah], ‘for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.’” [Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, et al]
- **Verse 18**: “to open their eyes, so that they may turn from *darkness to light* and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”
 - The commission of Jesus
 - **Isaiah 42:7**, “to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”
 - The commission for all His disciples
 - **Mark 16:15**, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”

- **Verses 22-23:** “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim *light* both to our people and to the Gentiles.”
- Paul concludes. The gospel had been clearly defended & presented.
 - Paul presents his audience an opportunity to respond to the gospel; especially Agrippa; maybe the words of the prophet Isaiah would come to pass.
 - **Isaiah 60:1-3**, “Arise, shine, for your *light* has come, and the *glory* of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his *glory* will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your *light*, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”
 - **Colossians 1:12 NLT**, “[God] has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the *light*.”

READ Verses 24-29 [Obedience to & for the gospel]

- After explaining his early years before he met Jesus, all that he had done in opposition to God’s Word, his conversion experience, and then obedience to God in all that he was to do and present, he in essence shared the gospel with all in attendance!
 - **Verses 20:** “...that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”
 - **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,”
- Our gospel proclamation should be direct towards our audience. [Agrippa: “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?”]...Anyone within earshot is a potential brother or sister in Christ.
 - **Verse 29:** “...I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”
 - **2 Peter 3:9**, “[God] is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

Verses 30-32 [Innocence confirmed...again]

- Acts 23:9 — Pharisees admitted to Paul’s innocence.
- Acts 23:29 — Claudias Lysias declared him innocent.
- Acts 24:23 — Felix made no declaration, but gave him extensive liberty as a prisoner.
- Acts 25:25 — Festus finds nothing deserving of death.
- Acts 26:32 — King Agrippa declares Paul’s innocence and that he should have been set free.
- But Paul’s appeal to Caesar keeps him in chains, headed for Rome.

Chapter 26 Takeaways

- Considering what we just read today. If we read it straight thru, how long will it take you? [3-4 minutes].
 - That’s all the time you need to effectively share your testimony with someone.

- What's your *connection* point with your audience?
- Share your *conversion* moment. The hope that Jesus gave to you when you were lost in sin.
- How has Jesus effectively *changed* your life since that moment?
- **Remember**, Christ is at the center of it all! It's all about His resurrection and power that transfers us from darkness to light! That's the gospel message of grace.
 - Who we were created to be [\[imago deo\]](#)
 - How our sin separated us from God.
 - God sent His Son into the world to redeem us from our sin.
 - Our submission to Him brings us back into a right relationship with Him.
 - We then get to share with others this hope of salvation while we await eternal glory!