



## Sermon Text: Acts 25-26

Sermon Date: January 6, 2019

In Acts 25-26, Paul's trials in Caesarea continue, now appearing before both Festus and King Agrippa. We walked through this lengthy text in four stages.

### A DISHEARTENED APPEAL

After leaving Paul in custody for 2 years, Felix refused to grant Paul's release when he was removed from office. When the new governor Festus arrives, he begins to follow in his predecessor's footsteps. The Jewish leaders want Paul's trial moved to Jerusalem so that they can murder him on the way, and once it appears that Festus may acquiesce to their request, Paul appeals for Caesar to decide his case. While this is his right as a Roman citizen, in doing so any hope of immediate release has evaporated. While this wasn't what Paul hoped for, we see him remain faithful to the gospel even in this disappointing turn of events.

### A REGAL SPECTACLE

Shortly after Festus arrives in Caesarea, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice come to visit him. After informing Festus of Paul's unique case, Agrippa expresses a desire to hear from Paul himself. The next day, all the a-list celebrities of Caesar gather to listen to Paul's case. With great pomp and show Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus, along with Roman officials and prominent citizens parade into the audience hall. In contrast, Paul is escorted into hall as a spectacle for these self-important celebrities who can do nothing to change his fate.

### A FAITHFUL WITNESS

Even though this may have been frustrating and humiliating, Paul seized this special opportunity to present the gospel. In sharing his testimony, Paul highlights the truth of the gospel and calls the audience to turn and believe in Christ. From his testimony, we discover three truths about salvation. **We are not saved by our good works.** Paul didn't turn his life around and then find Christ. While in the midst of his rebellion, Christ encountered Paul. **We are saved by faith in Christ alone.** While Paul laid prostrate on that dusty road to Damascus, the truth that Jesus is the promised Messiah crashed home as Christ told him that sinners are sanctified "by faith in me" (26:18). **We are saved for good works.** While Christians are not saved by good works, we are saved for good works. Paul's life was transformed by Christ.

### A FERVENT PASSION

As Paul's testimony draws to a close, even though he is interrupted and mocked, Paul calls upon King Agrippa and the crowd to believe the gospel. More than anything else, Paul longs for everyone to come to know Christ.

### TAKEAWAY #1 – RECOGNIZE THAT OBSTACLES ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO UNIQUELY EXALT CHRIST

Paul's lengthy, frustrating imprisonment was ordained by God as a unique opportunity to bear witness to Christ before a group of people who wouldn't have listened otherwise. The things we pray God would remove from our lives are the very things God has placed there to give us opportunities to exalt Him.

### TAKEAWAY#2 – DO NOT GET UP AND JUST WALK AWAY FROM THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL

Few verses are sadder than Acts 26:30. After Paul shares the gospel and pleads for the crowd to respond, Agrippa, Bernice, Festus and the rest simply get up and walk away.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. How do obstacle give us unique opportunities to exalt Christ? Share a time you've seen that happen in your own life.
3. How can you remember God's continual faithfulness even while you wait for God to show Himself faithful in a particular area?