

# ***“Normal Church for Normal People”***

Acts 25:1-12

April 3, 2016

## **Acts Chapter 25**

**Verse 1.** *Now when Festus was come.* [Acts 24:27](#).

*Into the province.* The province of Judea; for Judea at that time was a Roman province.

*After three days.* Having remained three days at Cæsarea.

*He ascended.* This was the usual language which described a journey to Jerusalem. Thus the English people speak of going up to London, because it is the capital. [Acts 15:1](#).

*To Jerusalem.* The governors of Judea at this time usually resided at Cæsarea; but as Jerusalem had been the former capital; as it was still the seat of the religious solemnities; as the sanhedrim held its meetings there; and as the great, and rich, and learned men, and the priests resided there, it is evident that a full knowledge of the state of the province could be obtained only there. Festus therefore, having entered on the duties of his office, early went to Jerusalem to make himself acquainted with the affairs of the nation.

[Verse 2](#). *Then the High Priest*. The high priest at this time was Ismael, the son of Fabi. He had been promoted to that office by Agrippa. Josephus' Antiq. b. xx. ch. viii. [Acts 23:2](#). Some Mss. read *high priests* here, in the plural number, and this reading is approved by Mill and Griesbach. There is, however, no improbability in supposing that the high priest Ismael might have been also as much enraged against Paul as the others.

*Informed him against Paul*. Informed him of the accusation against him; and doubtless endeavoured to prejudice the mind of Festus against him. They thus showed their unrelenting disposition. It might have been supposed that after two years this unjust prosecution would be abandoned and forgotten. But malice does not thus forget its object; and the spirit of persecution is not thus satisfied. It is evident that there was here every probability that injustice would be done to Paul, and that the mind of Festus would be biassed against him. He was a stranger to Paul, and to the embittered feelings of the Jewish character, he would wish to conciliate their favour on entering on the duties of his office. And a strong representation therefore, made by the chief men of the nation, would be likely to prejudice him violently against Paul, and to unfit him for the exercise of impartial justice.

(\*) "informed against" "Brought an accusation"

**Verse 3.** *And desired favour against him.* Desired the favour of Festus, that they might accomplish their wicked purpose on Paul.

*Would send for him to Jerusalem.* Probably under a pretence that he might be tried by the sanhedrim; or perhaps they wished Festus to hear the cause there, and to decide it while he was at Jerusalem. Their *real* motive is immediately stated.

*Laying wait in the way to kill him.* That is, they would lie in wait, or they would employ a band of Sicarii, or assassins, to take his life on the journey. [Acts 21:38](#); [Acts 23:12](#). It is altogether probable that if this request had been granted, Paul would have been killed. But God had promised him that he should bear witness to the truth at Rome, ([Acts 23:11](#);) and his providence was remarkable in thus influencing the mind of the Roman governor, and defeating the plans of the Jewish council.

(\*) "laying wait" [Acts 23:14,15](#)

(\*) "wait" "purposing to lie in wait"

**Verse 4.** *But Festus answered,* etc. What induced Festus to refuse their request, is not known. It is probable, however, that he was apprized that Paul was a Roman citizen, and that his case could not come before the Jewish sanhedrim, but must be heard by himself. As Cesarea was also at that

time the residence of the Roman governor, and the place of holding the courts, and as Paul was lodged there safely, there did not appear any sufficient reason for removing him to Jerusalem for trial. Festus, however, granted them all that they could reasonably ask, and assured them that he should have a speedy trial.

**Verse 5.** *Which among you are able.* Enjoy all the advantages of a just trial, and exhibit your accusations with all the learning and talent in your power. This was all that they could reasonably ask at his hands.

(++) "wickedness" "anything amiss"

**Verse 6.** *More than ten days.* See the margin. The Syriac reads it, "eight or ten." The Vulgate, "not more than eight or ten." The Coptic, "eight or ten." Griesbach supposes this to be the true reading, and has admitted it into the text.

*Sitting in the judgment seat.* On the tribunal; or holding a court for the trial of Paul.

*Commanded Paul to be brought.* To be brought up for trial. He had been secured but was placed in the care of a soldier, who was commanded to let him have all the freedom that was consistent with his security.

**Verse 7.** *Grievous complaints.* Heavy accusations. Doubtless the same with which they had charged him before Felix, [Acts 24:5,6](#). Comp. [Acts 25:19](#).

*Which they could not prove.* [Acts 24:13,19](#).

(\* "come" "when he appeared" ([Psalms 35:11](#), [Matthew 5:11,12](#), [Acts 24:5,13](#)

**Verse 9.** *But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure.* Desirous of securing their favour, as he had just entered on his administration. Comp. [Acts 24:27](#). In this he evinced rather a desire, of popularity than an inclination to do justice, Had he been disposed to do right at once, he would have immediately discharged Paul. Festus perceived that the case was one that did not come fairly within the jurisdiction of a Roman magistrate; that it pertained solely to the customs and questions among the Jews, ([Acts 25:18-20](#);) and he therefore proposed that the case should be tried before him at Jerusalem. It is remarkable, however, that he had such a sense of justice, and law, as not to suffer the case to go out of his own hands. He proposed still to hear the cause, but asked Paul whether he was willing that it should be tried at Jerusalem? As the question which he asked Paul was one on which he was at liberty to take his own course, and as Paul had no reason to expect that his going to Jerusalem would facilitate the cause of justice, it is not remarkable that he declined the offer, as perhaps Festus supposed he would. ("pleasure/desiring to gratify Jews")

**Verse 10.** *Then said Paul, etc.* The reasons why Paul declined the proposal to be tried at Jerusalem are obvious. He had experienced so much violent persecution from his countrymen, and their minds were so full of prejudice, misconception, and enmity, that he had neither justice nor favour to hope at their hands. He knew, too, that they had formerly plotted against his life, and that he had been removed to Cesarea for the purpose of safety. It would be madness and folly to throw himself again into their hands, or to give them another opportunity to form a plan against his life. As he was, therefore, under no obligation to return to Jerusalem, and as Festus did not propose it because it could be supposed that justice would be promoted by it, but to gratify the Jews, Paul prudently declined the proposal, and appealed to the Roman emperor.

*I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat.* The Roman emperors, after Julius Cæsar, were all called Cæsar; thus, Augustus Cæsar, Claudius Cæsar, etc., as all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh, though they had each his proper name, as Pharaoh Necho, etc. The emperor at this time (A.D. 60) was Nero, one of the most cruel and impious men that ever sat on a throne. It was under him that Paul was afterwards beheaded. When Paul says, "I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, he means to say that he regarded the tribunal before which he then stood, and on which Festus sat, as really the judgment-seat of Cæsar. The procurator, or governor, held his commission from the Roman emperor, and it was, in fact, his tribunal. The *reason* why Paul made this declaration may be thus expressed:

**"I am a Roman citizen. I have a right to justice. I am under no obligation to put myself again in the hands of the Jews. I have a right to a fair and impartial trial; and I claim the protection and privileges which all Roman citizens have before their tribunals, the right of a fair and just trial."**

It was, therefore, a severe rebuke of Festus for proposing to depart from the known justice of the Roman laws; and, for the sake of popularity, proposing to him to put himself in the hands of his enemies.

*Where I ought to be judged.* Where I have a right to demand and expect justice. I have a right to be tried where courts are usually held, and according to all the forms of equity which are usually observed.

*Have I done no wrong.* I have not injured their persons, property, character, or religion, This was a bold appeal, which his consciousness of innocence and the whole course of proceedings enabled him to make, without the possibility of their gainsaying it.

*As thou very well knowest.* Festus knew, probably, that Paul had been tried by Felix, and that nothing was proved against him. He had now seen the spirit of the Jews, and the cause why they arraigned him. He had given Paul a trial, and had called on the Jews to adduce their "able" men to accuse him; and, after all, nothing had been proved against him. Festus knew, therefore, that he was innocent. This abundantly appears also from his own confession, [Acts 25:18,19](#). As he knew this, and as Festus was proposing to depart from the regular course of justice for the sake of popularity, it was proper for Paul to use the strong language of rebuke, and to claim what he knew Festus did not dare to deny him, the protection of the Roman laws. Conscious innocence may be bold; and Christians have a right to insist on impartial justice, and the protection of the laws. Alas! how many magistrates there have been like Festus, who, when Christians have been arraigned before them, have been fully satisfied of their innocence, but who, for the sake of popularity, have departed from all the rules of law, and all the claims of justice.

**[Verse 11](#)**. *For if I be an offender.* If I have injured the Jews so as to deserve death. If it can be proved that I have done injury to any one.

*I refuse not to die.* I have no wish to escape justice. I do not wish to evade the laws, or to take advantage of any circumstances to screen me from just punishment. Paul's

whole course showed that this was the noble spirit which actuated him. No true Christian wishes to escape from the laws. He will honour them, and not seek to evade them. But, like other men, he has rights; and he may and should insist that justice should be done.

*No man may deliver me unto them.* No man shall be allowed to do it. This bold and confident declaration Paul could make, because he knew what the law required, and he knew that Festus would not *dare* to deliver him up contrary to the law. Boldness is not incompatible with Christianity; and innocence, when its rights are invaded, is always bold. Jesus firmly asserted his rights when on trial, ([John 18:23](#);) and no man is under obligation to submit to be trampled on by an unjust tribunal in violation of the laws.

*I appeal unto Cæsar.* I appeal to the Roman emperor, and carry my cause directly before him. By the Valerian, Porcian, and Sempronian laws, it had been enacted, that if any magistrate should be about to beat, or to put to death, any Roman citizen, the accused could appeal to the Roman people, and this appeal carried the cause to Rome. The law was so far changed under the emperors, that the cause should be carried before the emperor, instead of the people. Every citizen had the right of this appeal; and when it was made, the accused was sent to Rome for trial. Thus Pliny (Ep. 10, 97) says, that those Christians who were accused, and who, being Roman citizens, appealed to Cæsar, he sent

to Rome to be tried. The reason why Paul made this appeal was, that he saw that justice would not be done him by the Roman governor. He had been tried by Felix, and justice had been denied him; and he was detained a prisoner in violation of law, to gratify the Jews. He had now been tried by Festus, and saw that he was pursuing the same course; and he resolved, therefore, to assert his rights, and remove the cause, far from Jerusalem and from the prejudiced men in that city, at once to Rome. It was in this mysterious way that Paul's long-cherished desire to see the Roman church, and to preach the gospel there, was to be gratified. [Romans 1:9](#), and [Romans 1:10,11](#). For this he had prayed long, ([Romans 1:10](#), [15:23,24](#);) and now at length this purpose was to be fulfilled. God answers prayer; but it is often in a way which we little anticipate. He so orders the train of events—he so places us amidst a press of circumstances—that the desire is granted in a way which we could never have anticipated, but which shows in the best manner that he is a hearer of prayer.

**[Verse 12](#)**. *When he had conferred with the council.* With his associate judges, or with those who were his counsellors in the administration of justice. They were made up of the chief persons, probably military as well as civil, who were about him, and who were his assistants in the administration of the affairs of the province.

*Unto Cæsar shalt thou go.* He was willing in this way to rid himself of this trial, and of the vexation attending it. He did not dare to deliver him to the Jews in violation of the Roman laws; and he was not willing to do justice to Paul, and thus make himself unpopular with the Jews. He was, therefore, probably rejoiced at the opportunity of thus freeing himself from all the trouble in the case, in a manner against which none could object.

### **- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament**

vv.1–5. The long imprisonment of Paul seems not in the least to have moderated the hatred of his enemies; but upon the change of governorship they renewed their efforts for his destruction. (1) *“Now when Festus had come into the province, after three days he went up from Cæsarea to Jerusalem. (2) And the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, (3) requesting as a favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, preparing an ambush to kill him on the way. (4) But Festus answered that Paul should be kept in Cæsarea, and that he himself would shortly depart thither. (5) Let the influential men among you, said he, go down with me, and if there is any thing wrong in this man, accuse him.”* He further told them, as we learn from his speech to Agrippa, that it was contrary to Roman law to condemn a

man to death before he had an opportunity for defense, face to face with his accusers. All this shows that Festus was, at this time, disposed to see justice done. He, of course, knew nothing of the plot to waylay Paul: for they kept this purpose concealed, while they professed another.

vv.6–8. He made no delay in granting them the promised hearing. (6) *“And when he had remained among them not more than ten days, he went down to Cæsarea, and the next day sat upon his judgment seat, and commanded Paul to be brought. (7) And when he arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around, bringing many and heavy charges against Paul, which they were not able to prove: (8) while he answered in defense, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar have I at all offended.”* The specifications embraced in this defense are the same as in the defense against the speech of Tertullus before Felix, showing that the charges were still the same. Being a “ringleader of the sect of Nazarenes” was his sin against the law; the false imputation of taking Greeks into the temple, his sin against that holy place; and the excitement of sedition among the Jews, his sin against Cæsar. In the last specification, reference was had to the mobs which the Jews were in the habit of exciting against him, whose crimes were thus charged upon him.

v.9. The accusers not being able to prove their charges, and the prisoner having plead not guilty to each specification, he should have been unconditionally released. But Festus,

notwithstanding the fairness of his answer to their demands in Jerusalem, was now disposed to yield to the clamor of the Jews. (9) *“But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem, there to be judged concerning these things before me?”* It is possible that Festus still knew nothing of the plot to murder Paul by the roadside; but he knew that the Jews desired his death, and he here exhibited a willingness to give them the opportunity which they desired.

vv.10-11. The purpose of the Jews was well understood by Paul. He remembered the purpose of the similar request preferred before Claudius Lysias, and perceived that his only safety was in frustrating their present attempt. Fortunately, the very imprisonment which exposed him to danger also furnished the means of his safety. (10) *“Then Paul said, I am standing at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself very well know. (11) If I am a wrong-doer, and have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die. But if there is nothing in these things of which they accuse me, no man is able to deliver me up to them. I APPEAL TO CÆSAR.”* This appeal every Roman citizen had the right to make, and it required a transfer of the case to the imperial court in Rome. The statement, “I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat,” was intended to justify him in refusing to be taken for trial away from Cæsarea, which was the appointed capital of the province where the courts were properly held.

His appeal to Cæsar, like his communication to Lysias, which secured his rescue in Jerusalem, is claimed as a sanction of military power. But, like that, it is only a demand made upon the military power which was holding him in unjust confinement, not to add to this injustice the crime of yielding him up to assassination. It is not an appeal from a free man to military power for protection; neither was there any necessity for the use of violence in granting his request on either occasion.

v.12. This appeal put an end to the trial, as it did to the murderous hopes of Paul's enemies. (12) *“Then Festus, having conferred with his council, answered, You have appealed to Cæsar; to Cæsar you shall go.”* The conference with his advisers was probably in reference to Paul's right to make the appeal; for he would hardly have dared, if the right was unquestioned, to hesitate about allowing it. His answer indicates some irritation under the severe rebuke of Paul's last speech.

- **A Commentary on Acts of Apostles**

**Paul Before Festus, He Appeals to Caesar ([25:1-12](#))**

**See how restless malice is. Persecutors deem it a peculiar favour to have their malice gratified.** Preaching Christ, the end of the law, was no offence against the law. **In suffering times the prudence of the Lord's people is tried, as well as their patience; they need wisdom.** It becomes those who are innocent, to insist upon their innocence. **Paul was willing to abide by the rules of the law, and to let that take its course. If he deserved death, he would accept the punishment.** But if none of the things whereof they accused him were true, no man could deliver him unto them, with justice. Paul is neither released nor condemned. **It is an instance of the slow steps which Providence takes;** by which we are often made ashamed, both of our hopes and of our fears, and are kept waiting on God.

- **Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.**

## **Chapter 25**

Some think that Felix was turned out, and Festus succeeded him, quickly after Paul's imprisonment, and that the two years mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter are to be reckoned from the beginning of Nero's reign; but it seems more natural to compute them from Paul's being delivered into the hands of Felix. However, we have here much the same management of Paul's case as we had in the foregoing chapter; cognizance is here taken of it,

- I. By Festus the governor; it is brought before him by the Jews ([v. 1-3](#)). The hearing of it is appointed to be, not at Jerusalem, as the Jews desired, out at Caesarea ([v. 4-6](#)). The Jews appear against Paul and accuse him ([v. 7](#)), but he stands upon his own innocency ([v. 8](#)); and to avoid the removing of the cause to Jerusalem, to which he was pressed to consent, he at length appeals to Caesar ([v. 9-12](#)).
- II. By king Agrippa, to whom Festus relates his case ([v. 13-21](#)), and Agrippa desires he might have the hearing of it himself ([v. 22](#)). The court is accordingly set, and Paul brought to the bar ([v. 23](#)), and Festus opens the cause ([v. 24-27](#)), to introduce Paul's defence in the next chapter.

## By Festus the Governor; It Is Brought Before Him by the Jews

### [25:1-3](#)

We commonly say, "New lords, new laws, new customs;" but here was a new governor, and yet Paul had the same treatment from him that he had from the former, and no better. **Festus, like Felix, is not so just to him as he should have been, for he does not release him; and yet not so unjust to him as the Jews would have had him to be, for he will not condemn him to die,** nor expose him to their rage. Here is,

I. The pressing application which the high priest and other Jews used with the governor to persuade him to abandon Paul; for to send him to Jerusalem was in effect to abandon him.

1. **See how speedy they were in their applications to Festus concerning Paul.** As soon as ever he had come into the province, and had taken possession of the government, into which, probably, he was installed at Caesarea, within three days he went up to Jerusalem, to show himself there, and presently **the priests were upon him to proceed against Paul.** He staid three days at Caesarea, where Paul was a prisoner, and we do not find that in that time Paul made any application to him to release him, though, no doubt, he could have made good friends, that he might hope to have prevailed by; but as soon as ever he comes up to Jerusalem the priests are in all haste to make an interest with him against Paul. **See how restless a thing malice is. Paul more patiently bears the lengthening out of his imprisonment than his enemies do the delay of his prosecution even to the death.**

2. **See how spiteful they were** in their application. They informed the governor against Paul ([v. 2](#)) before he was brought upon a fair trial, that so **they might, if possible, prejudge the cause with the governor,** and make him a party who was to be the judge. But this artifice, though base enough, they could not confide in; for the governor would be sure to hear him himself,

and then all their informations against him would fall to the ground; and therefore **they form another project much more base, and that is to assassinate Paul before he came upon his trial.** These inhuman hellish methods, which all the world profess at least to abhor, have these persecutors recourse to, **to gratify their malice against the gospel of Christ, and this too under colour of zeal for Moses.** Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum-Such was their dire religious zeal.

3. See how specious the pretence was. Now that the governor was himself at Jerusalem they desired he would send for Paul thither, and try him there, which would save the prosecutors a great deal of labour, and looked most reasonable, because he was charged with having profaned the temple at Jerusalem, and it is usual for criminals to be tried in the court where the fact was committed; but **that which they designed was to way-lay him as he was brought up, and to murder him upon the road, supposing that he would not be brought up under so strong a guard** as he was sent down with, or that the officers that were to bring him up might be bribed to give them an opportunity for their wickedness. It is said, They desired favour against Paul. The business of prosecutors is to demand justice against one that they suppose to be a criminal, and, if he be not proved so, it is as much justice to acquit him as it is to condemn him if he be. But to desire favour against a prisoner, and from the judge too, who ought to be of counsel for him, is a very impudent thing. The favour ought to be for the prisoner, in favorem vitae-to

favour his life, but here they desire it against him. **They will take it as a favour if the governor will but condemn Paul, though they can prove no crime upon him.**

## **The Hearing of It Is Appointed to Be, Not at Jerusalem, As the Jews Desired, Out at Caesarea**

[25:4-6](#)

II. The governor's resolution that Paul shall take his trial at Caesarea, where he now is, [v. 4,5](#). See how he manages the prosecutors.

1. He will not do them the kindness to send for him to Jerusalem; no, he gave orders that Paul should be kept at Caesarea. It does not appear that he had any suspicion, much less any certain information, of their bloody design to murder him by the way, as the chief priests had when he sent him to Caesarea (ch. [23:30](#)); but perhaps he was not willing so far to oblige the high priest and his party, or he would maintain the honour of his court at Caesarea and require their attendance there, or he was not willing to be at the trouble or charge of bringing Paul up; whatever was his reason for refusing it, God made use of it as a means of preserving Paul out of the hands of his enemies. Perhaps now they were more careful to keep their conspiracy secret than they had been before, that the discovery of it might not be now, as it was then, the defeat of it. But **though God does not, as then, bring it to light, yet he finds**

**another way, as effectual, to bring it to nought, by inclining the heart of the governor, for some other reasons, not to remove Paul to Jerusalem.** God is not tied to one method, in working out salvation for his people. He can suffer the designs against them to be concealed, and yet not suffer them to be accomplished; and can make even the carnal policies of great men to serve his gracious purposes.

2. **Yet he will do them the justice to hear what they have to say against Paul, if they will go down to Caesarea, and appear against him there:** "Let those among you who are able, able in body and purse for such a journey, or able in mind and tongue to manage the prosecution-let those among you who are fit to be managers, go down with me, and accuse this man; or, those who are competent witnesses, who are able to prove any thing criminal upon him, let them go and give in their evidence, if there be any such wickedness in him as you charge upon him." **Festus will not take it for granted, as they desire he should, that there is wickedness in him, till it is proved upon him,** and he has been heard in his own defence; but, if he be guilty, it lies upon them to prove him so.

III. Paul's trial before Festus. Festus staid at Jerusalem about ten days, and then went down to Caesarea, and the prosecutors, it is likely, in his retinue; for he said they should go down with him; and, since they are so eager in the prosecution, he is willing this cause should be first called; and, that they may hasten home, he will despatch it the next day. **Expedition in administering justice is very**

**commendable, provided more haste be not made than good speed.** Now here we have,

1. The court set, and the prisoner called to the bar. Festus sat in the judgment-seat, as he used to do when any cause was brought before him that was of consequence, and he commanded Paul to be brought, and to make his appearance, [v. 6](#). Christ, to encourage his disciples and keep up their spirits under such awful trials of their courage as this was to Paul, promised them that the day should come when they should sit on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel.

### **The Jews Appear Against Paul and Accuse Him**

[25:7](#)

2. The prosecutors exhibiting their charges against the prisoner ([v. 7](#)): **The Jews stood round about, which intimates that they were many. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! It intimates also that they were unanimous, they stood by one another, and resolved to hold together; and that they were intent upon the prosecution**, and eager in clamouring against Paul. They stood round about, if possible, to frighten the judge into a compliance with their malicious design, or, at least, to frighten the prisoner, and to put him out of countenance; but in vain: he had too just and strong an assurance to be frightened by them. They compassed me about like bees, but they are quenched as the fire of thorns, [Psa. 118:12](#). When they stood round about him, they brought many and

grievous accusations against Paul, so it should be read. **They charged him with high crimes and misdemeanors.** The articles of impeachment were many, and contained things of a very heinous nature. They represented him to the court as black and odious as their wit and malice could contrive; but when they had opened the cause as they thought fit, and came to the evidence, there they failed: **they could not prove what they alleged against him, for it was all false,** and the complaints were groundless and unjust. Either the fact was not as they opened it, or there was no fault in it; they laid to his charge things that he knew not, nor they neither. **It is no new thing for the most excellent ones of the earth to have all manner of evil said against them falsely,** not only in the song of the drunkards, and upon the seat of the scornful, but even before the judgment-seat.

## **But He Stands Upon His Own Innocency**

[25:8](#)

3. The prisoner's insisting upon his own vindication, [v. 8](#). Whoever reproaches him, his own heart does not, and therefore his own tongue shall not; **though he die, he will not remove his integrity from him.** When it came to his turn to speak for himself, he insisted upon his general plea, Not guilty: Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

(1.) He had not violated the law of the Jews, nor taught any doctrine destructive of it. Did he make void the law by faith? No, he established the law. **Preaching Christ, the end of the law, was no offence against the law.**

(2.) He had not profaned the temple, nor put any contempt at all upon the temple-service; his helping to set up the gospel temple did not at all offend against that temple which was a type of it.

(3.) He had not offended against Caesar, nor his government. By this it appears that now his cause being brought before the government, to curry favour with the governor and that they might seem friends to Caesar, they had charged him with some instances of disaffection to the present higher powers, which obliged him to purge himself as to that matter, and to protest that he was no enemy to Caesar, not so much as those were who charged him with being so.

### **And to Avoid the Removing of the Cause to Jerusalem, to Which He Was Pressed to Consent, He at Length Appeals to Caesar**

[25:9-12](#)

IV. Paul's appeal to the emperor, and the occasion of it. This gave the cause a new turn. Whether he had before designed it, or whether it was a sudden resolve upon the present provocation, does not appear; but God puts it into his heart to do it, for the bringing about of that which he had said to him, that he must bear witness to Christ at

Rome, for there the emperor's court was, ch. [23:11](#). We have here,

1. The proposal which Festus made to Paul to go and take his trial at Jerusalem, [v. 9](#). **Festus was willing to do the Jews a pleasure, inclined to gratify the prosecutors rather than the prisoner**, as far as he could go with safety against one that was a citizen of Rome, and therefore asked him whether he would be willing to go up to Jerusalem, and clear himself there, where he had been accused, and where he might have his witnesses ready to vouch for him and confirm what he said. He would not offer to turn him over to the high priest and the sanhedrim, as the Jews would have had him; but, Wilt thou go thither, and be judged of these things before me? The president, if he had pleased, might have ordered him thither, but he would not do it without his own consent, which, if he could have wheedled him to give it, would have taken off the odium of it. **In suffering times, the prudence of the Lord's people is tried as well as their patience; being sent forth therefore as sheep in the midst of wolves, they have need to be wise as serpents.**

2. Paul's refusal to consent to it, and his reasons for it. He knew, if he were removed to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the utmost vigilance of the president, the Jews would find some means or other to be the death of him; and therefore desires to be excused, and pleads,

(1.) That, as a citizen of Rome, it was most proper for him to be tried, not only by the president, but in

that which was properly his court, which sat at Caesarea: I stand at Caesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged, in the city which is the metropolis of the province. The court being held in Caesar's name, and by his authority and commission, before one that was delegated by him, it might well be said to be his judgment seat, as, with us, all writs run in the name of the sovereign, in whose name all courts are held. **Paul's owning that he ought to be judged at Caesar's judgment-seat plainly proves that Christ's ministers are not exempted from the jurisdiction of the civil powers, but ought to be subject to them, as far as they can with a good conscience;** and, if they be guilty of a real crime, to submit to their censure; if innocent, yet to submit to their enquiry, and to clear themselves before them.

(2.) That, as a member of the Jewish nation, he had done nothing to make himself obnoxious to them: To the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. **It very well becomes those that are innocent to plead their innocency, and to insist upon it;** it is a debt we owe to our own good name, not only not to bear false witness against ourselves, but to maintain our own integrity against those who bear false witness against us.

(3.) That **he was willing to abide by the rules of the law, and to let that take its course, [v. 11](#).** If he be guilty of any capital crime that deserves death, he will not offer either to make resistance or to make his escape, will neither flee from justice nor fight with it: "I refuse not to die, but will accept of the punishment

of my iniquity." Not that all who have committed any thing worthy of death are obliged to accuse themselves, and offer themselves to justice; but, **when they are accused and brought to justice, they ought to submit, and to say both God and the government are righteous; as it is necessary that some should be made examples.** But, if he be innocent, as he protests he is, "If there be none of these things whereof these accuse me,-if the prosecution be malicious and they are resolved to have my blood right or wrong,-no man may deliver me unto them, no, not the governor himself, without palpable injustice; for **it is his business as much to protect the innocent as to punish the guilty;**" and he claims his protection.

3. His appealing to court. Since he is continually in danger of the Jews, and one attempt made after another to get him into their hands, whose tender mercies were cruel, he flies to the dernier resort-the last refuge of oppressed innocency, and takes sanctuary there, **since he cannot have justice done him in any other way: "I appeal unto Caesar. Rather than be delivered to the Jews" (which Festus seems inclined to consent to) "let me be delivered to Nero."** When David had divers times narrowly escaped the rage of Saul, and concluded he was such a restless enemy that he should one day perish by his hands, he came to this resolution, being in a manner compelled to it, There is nothing better for me than to take shelter in the land of the Philistines [1 Samuel 27:1](#). So Paul here. But it is a

hard case that a son of Abraham must be forced to appeal to a Philistine, to a Nero, from those who call themselves the seed of Abraham, and shall be **safer in Gath or Rome than in Jerusalem. How is the faithful city become a harlot!**

V. The judgment given upon the whole matter. **Paul is neither released nor condemned. His enemies hoped the cause would be ended in his death; his friends hoped it would be ended in his deliverance; but it proved neither so nor so, they are both disappointed, the thing is left as it was.**

**It is an instance of the slow steps which Providence** sometimes takes, not bringing things to an issue so soon as we expect, by which we are often made ashamed both of our hopes and of our fears, and are kept still waiting on God. **The cause had before been adjourned to another time, now to another place,** to another court, that **Paul's tribulation might work patience.**

1. The president takes advice upon the matter: He conferred with the council-*meta tou symbouliou*, not with the council of the Jews (that is called *synedrion*), but with his own counsellors, who were always ready to assist the governor with their advice. **In multitude of counsellors there is safety; and judges should consult both with themselves and others before they pass sentence.**

2. He determines to send him to Rome. Some think Paul meant not an appeal to Caesar's person, but only to his court, the sentence of which he would abide by, rather than be remitted to the Jew's council, and that Festus might have chosen whether he would have sent him to Rome, or, at least, whether he would have joined issue with him upon the appeal. But it should seem, by what Agrippa said (ch. [26:32](#)), that he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar—that, by the course of the Roman law, a Roman citizen might appeal at any time to a superior court, even to the supreme, as causes with us are removed by certiorari, and criminals by habeas corpus, and as appeals are often made to the house of peers. Festus, therefore, either of choice or of course, comes to this resolution: Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar thou shalt go. He found there was something very extraordinary in the case, which he was therefore afraid of giving judgment upon, either one way or other, and the knowledge of which he thought would be an entertainment to the emperor, and therefore he transmitted it to his cognizance. **In our judgment before God those that by justifying themselves appeal to the law, to the law they shall go, and it will condemn them; but those that by repentance and faith appeal to the gospel, to the gospel they shall go, and it will save them.**

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

**QUOTE:** The latter part of Acts finds Paul a prisoner of Rome. Because of his faithfulness, he had made an unparalleled impact for Jesus Christ on the world. He had evangelized the lost, boldly confronted false religion, founded churches, and disciplined faithful men for the task of spreading the gospel.

But Paul's diligent, faithful, tireless efforts stirred up a wake of hatred and opposition from the enemies of the gospel. Shortly after his conversion, he "*kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ*" ([Acts 9:22](#)). Shocked and outraged by his startling change from persecutor to evangelist ([9:21](#)), "the Jews plotted together to do away with him" ([9:23](#)). But Paul discovered their plot and managed to escape ([9:24](#)).

**That early incident set the pattern for Paul's ministry; it started that way and stayed that way. Seemingly everywhere he went, he faced hostility, opposition, even outright persecution. Most of that opposition came from unbelieving Jews**—a fact that deeply grieved him ([Rom. 9:1-3](#)). Other times, as in Ephesus ([19:21-41](#)), it came from Gentile followers of false religion.

We have already learned that Paul's Jewish enemies managed to have him arrested by the Romans on trumped-up charges ([21:27-33](#)). For the next several years, he remained a prisoner, first in Jerusalem, then in Caesarea, finally in Rome. During that time, he repeatedly defended

himself against the false charges brought against him. Shortly after Roman troops rescued him from the angry mob on the temple grounds, Paul defended himself from the steps of Fort Antonia ([21:37-22:21](#)). Unable to determine Paul's crime, Claudius Lysias, the Roman commander at Jerusalem, brought him before the Sanhedrin ([22:30-23:11](#)). But **the highest court in Israel failed to convict him of any wrongdoing**. Learning of a plot against Paul's life, Lysias sent him to Caesarea, the Roman headquarters in Judea ([23:12-33](#)). **There he stood trial before the governor, Felix, and again was exonerated** ([24:1-27](#)). Felix, however, fearing the Jewish authorities (and hoping for a bribe from Paul), rendered no verdict but instead kept Paul imprisoned for the remaining two years of his term as governor.

**This text records Paul's fourth defense**, before Porcius Festus, Felix's successor as governor. Felix's brutal term in office had culminated in the ruthless subduing of a riot in Caesarea. When the outraged Jews sent a delegation to Rome to protest Felix's actions, Emperor Nero recalled the governor to Rome in disgrace. Festus soon arrived in Judea to replace him.

Unlike Felix, who was a former slave, **Festus was a member of the Roman nobility. Little is known of his brief term as governor (he died about two years after taking office). Since the first-century Jewish historian Josephus described him as better than his predecessor (Felix) and his successor (Albinus), he appears to have been an able leader.**

Paul's trial before Festus unfolds in four scenes: the assassination plotted, the accusations presented, the absence of proof, and the appeal proposed.

### The Assassination Plotted

*Festus therefore, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul; and they were urging him, requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way). Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly. "Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him." ([25:1-5](#))*

**When Festus, the new governor, arrived in the province of Judea, he inherited the political problems left by his predecessor's inept rule.** Felix's callousness and cruelty had left a legacy of profound hatred toward Rome by the Jews. Their hostility and suspicion now focused on Festus, their new Roman overlord in occupied Palestine.

**Unlike Felix, Festus was not a procrastinator.** He moved swiftly to acquaint himself with the situation; a mere **three**

days after arriving in Judea, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. His first goal was to meet the Jewish leaders (the high priest and the Sanhedrin) and, as much as possible, conciliate them. Those leaders, Festus knew, were the key to establishing peace in Judea. And maintaining peace was the highest priority of a Roman provincial governor.

Festus faced a difficult challenge, as the Jews had proven to be adept at manipulating their governors. Capitalizing on Pilate's blunders, they had blackmailed him into executing Jesus. And although they had failed to pressure Felix into executing Paul, they had forced him to keep the innocent apostle imprisoned and out of circulation.

Adding to that challenge was the constant threat of revolution. Two centuries earlier, under the Maccabees, the Jews had thrown off the yoke of Greece. More recent times had seen the rise of ultranationalistic movements such as the Zealots. The revolt that was always smoldering would finally erupt in A.D. 66. Festus, like his predecessors, faced the dilemma of maintaining control without sparking a revolt.

Not only did Festus inherit Felix's political problems, he also inherited his most celebrated prisoner. Although Paul had been imprisoned in Caesarea for the past two years, the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem had not forgotten about him. One of the first things the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews did after Festus arrived in Jerusalem was to revive the charges against Paul. Perhaps they feared that the new governor would, as

often happened, quickly dispose of the cases left by his predecessor and release Paul.

Hoping to capitalize on Festus's inexperience and desire to placate them, they were repeatedly urging him, requesting a concession/favor against Paul.

Their request seemed innocent enough—merely that Festus might order Paul to be brought to Jerusalem for trial. But at the same time, Luke notes, **they intended setting an ambush to kill him on the way.** The old ambush plot, foiled two years earlier by Claudius Lysias, was revived—this time by the Sanhedrin itself.

Festus was not to be so easily duped, however. To the Jewish leaders' request he cautiously answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly to return there.

Accordingly, **he saw no reason to transport the prisoner to Jerusalem. He maintained that the proper place for Paul, a Roman citizen, to be tried was at Caesarea, seat of Roman rule in Judea.** If the influential men of the Jewish nation believed there was anything wrong about Paul, they could prosecute him there. Though Festus was inexperienced, had an obvious desire to conciliate the Jewish authorities, and lacked personal knowledge of Paul, **God used him, as He had others, to providentially protect Paul from another plot against his life.**

## The Accusations Presented

*And after he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea; and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. And after he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him ([25:6-7a](#))*

**True to his word, Festus**, after he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, went down from Jerusalem to Caesarea. **Proving himself again to be a man of action**, on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal (the *bēma*, or judgment seat, cf. [Matt. 27:19](#); [John 19:13](#); [Acts 18:12](#); [25:10](#), [17](#)), thus making it an official Roman trial, and ordered Paul to be brought before him.

After the defendant had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him. **They swarmed around Paul like a pack of wolves attacking a sheep. But these wolves were toothless; the many serious charges they brought were the same ones (sedition, sectarianism, and sacrilege, cf. [24:5-6](#)) that they had been unable to prove two years earlier before Felix.** Those unsubstantiated charges were no more likely to convince Festus than they had Felix.

## The Absence of Proof

*which they could not prove; while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar." But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?" But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know. If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them." ([25:7b-11a](#) )*

Although the Sanhedrin had made very serious charges against Paul **they could not prove them. Two years had passed since Paul's trial before Felix, but they still had no witnesses, no evidence, and therefore no case.** That argues convincingly for the apostle's innocence and for their biased hatred of Jesus and the gospel.

Here, as he does **throughout Acts, Luke stresses that Christians are innocent, law-abiding people.** The town clerk at Ephesus acknowledged that ([19:37](#)), as did Gallio, proconsul of Achaia ([18:12ff.](#)). **The frequent allegations by unbelieving Jews that Christians were political**

**revolutionaries were untrue. Ironically, it was those same Jews, not the Christians, who finally rose in open revolt against Rome.** When Rome ultimately did take action against the Christians, it was not because they were revolutionaries. The Romans persecuted and killed them for refusing, on religious grounds, to participate in the empire-unifying ritual of emperor worship.

Since the Jews had presented no evidence against him, **Paul merely said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews (sectarianism) or against the temple (sacrilege) or against Caesar (sedition)."** He thus denied point by point the charges against him.

**Festus found himself on the horns of the same dilemma that had impaled Felix. Paul was a Roman citizen, falsely accused and obviously innocent. But to release him would antagonize the Jewish leaders**—the same leaders Festus desperately needed to conciliate to keep the peace.

**To his credit, Festus, unlike Felix, did not sweep the problem under the rug. Seeking a way out of his dilemma, he proposed a compromise.**

Wishing to do the Jews a favor, Festus asked **Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?"** **That the trial was to be before Festus, not the Sanhedrin, was no doubt intended to reassure Paul that his rights as a Roman citizen would be protected.**

To the inexperienced Festus, that no doubt seemed like an acceptable compromise. **But Paul knew** the Jewish leaders far better than he did. **The "compromise" actually gave them everything they wanted. The members of the Sanhedrin did not care who presided over Paul's trial—they never intended there to be one. They planned to murder him on the way to Jerusalem** ([v. 3](#)).

By now understandably frustrated at his failure to obtain justice, **Paul** immediately rejected Festus's compromise. Since, as governor, Festus was the emperor's representative, Paul could rightly claim, **I am standing before Caesar's tribunal.** As a Roman citizen, that was where he ought to be tried; **there was no reason to go to Jerusalem. The reference to Caesar's tribunal also served as a subtle reminder to Festus of his duty as the emperor's official agent.**

Paul again affirmed his innocence, asserting, **"I have done no wrong to the Jews."** Because they had presented no evidence against him, the Jewish leaders could not successfully dispute that claim.

**Paul's bold words to Festus "as you also very well know" served as a rebuke and a call to integrity, since he did know that Paul was innocent** ([vv. 18-19](#)). The high standards of Roman justice, and his duty as a Roman judge, demanded that he release the apostle.

**Paul then clarified his motives. "If then I am a wrongdoer,"** he said to Festus, **"and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die."** He

was not attempting to evade justice; instead, he demanded it by declaring, "**but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them.**" As a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to expect justice from a Roman court. Since there was no case against him, he was under no obligation to put himself into the hands of the Jewish authorities (cf. [v. 16](#)).

**Festus's obvious readiness to appease the Jews put Paul in a difficult and dangerous situation.** He had no illusions (even if Festus did) about what his fate would be if he did survive a murder plot and stand trial in Jerusalem. **He knew how adroitly the Jewish leaders would capitalize on Festus's inexperience. To return to Jerusalem meant almost certain death.**

Paul therefore chose a bold course of action.

### The Appeal Proposed

*"I appeal to Caesar." Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go." ([25:11b-12](#))*

**Festus's willingness to compromise did not bode well for Paul's getting a fair trial in Jerusalem.** Exercising his right as a Roman citizen, Paul announced his decision to **appeal** his case to **Caesar**. Such appeals could come after the verdict (*appellatio*) or, as in Paul's case, before it (*provocatio*). **Once granted, the appeal took the case out of the governor's hands and transferred it to the**

**emperor.** Paul's appeal seems at first glance to be sheer madness, since the emperor at the time was the infamous Nero. However, the early years of Nero's reign (during which Paul's appeal took place) were not marked by the cruelty and insanity of his later years.

**Paul's appeal offered Festus a convenient way out of the impasse.** Thus it comes as no surprise that after **Festus had conferred with his council** and obtained its legal advice, he granted Paul's appeal. **Undoubtedly relieved to have this thorny problem taken out of his hands, he informed the apostle, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."**

When Festus announced that his appeal had been granted, Paul must have felt a sense of exhilaration. **The Lord had kept His promise (23:11), and Paul was at last going to Rome.**

**From this passage several important lessons emerge.**

**First, it is another tragic example of Jewish hostility to the gospel—a theme running throughout Acts**

([4:1-31](#); [5:17-42](#); [6:9-15](#); [8:1-4](#); [9:23](#); [13:6, 45](#); [14:2, 19](#); [17:1-9](#), [13](#); [18:5-17](#); [19:8-9](#); [20:3](#); [21:27ff.](#); [23:12ff.](#)).

**Jesus predicted that opposition in His words to His disciples** recorded in [John 15:18-25](#):

*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, "They hated Me without a cause."*

The Lord's reference to "their Law" shows that He had the unbelieving Jews (particularly their leaders) in mind.

No religion is neutral about Jesus Christ; all non-Christian religions are openly or subtly opposed to Him. As He Himself put it, "***He who is not with Me is against Me***" ([Matt. 12:30](#)). Persecution of Christians by false religion is always based on two premises: it is based on false accusations, and it is for Christ's sake. Believers are to live blameless lives and so reveal their critics' accusations to be false ([Titus 2:2-8](#); [1 Pet. 2:12, 15](#); [3:16](#)).

**A second truth** this text illustrates is **the binding power of sin**. Although he had been out of the mainstream, incarcerated at Caesarea for two years, **the Sanhedrin's hatred of Paul had not abated**. "Truly, truly, I say to you," Jesus said in [John 8:34](#), "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." In [Romans 6:16](#), **Paul asked rhetorically, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"** Peter wrote in [2 Peter 2:19](#), **"By what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved."** The Jewish leaders were **enslaved by their venomous hatred of Paul**, an innocent man.

**Third, this passage reveals the sovereignty of God in human affairs** (cf. [Gen. 45:7-8](#); [Dan. 4:17](#); [Luke 22:53](#); [John 7:30](#); [19:10-11](#); [Acts 2:23](#)). The Sanhedrin's request to bring Paul to Jerusalem to stand trial seemed innocent enough. Festus needed the Jewish leaders' support, so it was essential for him to conciliate them. Granting that seemingly innocuous request would have been, from Festus's perspective, an easy concession. But **God providentially intervened to protect His servant**.

**Fourth, the believer's proper relation to government** also appears in this passage. **Paul willingly submitted to the Roman government**—even as embodied in the person

of Nero. **He practiced the principle he set forth in**  
[Romans 13:1-5](#):

*Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.*

Understanding and applying these principles helped Paul's life have the powerful impact on the world that it did.

**- MacArthur New Testament Commentary**

Paul did not waste time while in prison. Even so, justice delayed is justice denied, and Paul was clearly denied justice under the procrastination of Felix. Why did Felix put Paul in prison even though he knew Paul was not guilty of the charges? The answer comes a little bit later in the text: **But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul**

**bound** ([v. 27](#)). It was a political decision. Paul was kept in prison as a matter of political expediency. This Roman magistrate knew that under the law Paul was innocent, but in order to appease the Jews, who were screaming for the blood of the Apostle Paul, and to seek some measure of peace among the people, he judged not by principle but by expediency.

That was no different in the trial of Jesus. After saying publicly, “I find no fault in this Man,” Pontius Pilate washed his hands but could not remove the blood of Christ from them because he had compromised for political reasons to mollify the crowd ([Luke 23:4](#)). On those occasions lady justice took the blindfold off to see which way the wind was blowing before she reached a verdict. We should not be too hard on Felix or Pontius Pilate because this has been the way of rulers of all generations. Rulers always keep one eye on public opinion, and when they are torn between justice and expediency it is a rare ruler who will keep his eyes on justice. The idea of political expediency is a temptation that comes to everyone in a position of leadership or power, and we face it and feed it ourselves in our own culture.

### **Paul and Felix**

Felix was at least impressed enough by Paul to want to learn something from him. Felix’s third wife was Drusilla, and she is mentioned here in the text. When this conversation between Paul and Felix took place, Drusilla was not yet twenty years old. Felix was her second husband. She had broken one engagement because the man

to whom she was engaged did not embrace Judaism. After she had broken that engagement, she married a lesser monarch from Syria, to whom she had remained married for just a short time. When she was sixteen years old, Felix found her and persuaded her to leave her husband and come and live with him. Even though she came and inquired about Jesus and the Christian faith, she was no paragon of virtue. Drusilla and Felix had a son named Agrippa. Both Agrippa and his mother, Drusilla, died in the year AD 79, buried by the ashes of an eruption of Mount Vesuvius of Pompeii and Herculaneum fame.

Luke tells us that they came and inquired about Jesus, and Paul explained to them what it means to have faith. **Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you” (v. 25).** Luke does not include everything that they discussed, but he emphasizes what Paul emphasized, which first was righteousness. In his whole life Felix, who was supposed to govern according to justice and righteousness, had never been so thoroughly tutored in the concept of righteousness. Before Paul gave the gospel, he gave the law, because before the good news comes, there has to be an understanding of the bad news. He addressed Felix at the point of Felix’s sin—his unrighteousness. He also gave him a lecture on self-control, which Felix certainly hadn’t exercised when he took Drusilla from her previous husband.

The coup de grâce is when Paul focused attention on the last judgment. Here was Paul speaking to his captor about the last judgment and about righteousness. What would happen if the Apostle Paul came and talked to you about righteousness, self-control, and the last judgment? We like to make plans. We plan what we are going to do tomorrow, next week, and next month. We have plans for our children and grandchildren. We think about what our lives will be like ten or twenty years from now. Where will you be and what will you be doing one hundred years from now? I hope the consideration of that provokes in your soul nothing but absolute joy—the idea of being in heaven with your Savior and departed loved ones, your brothers and sisters in Christ. Statistically, some of you reading this book will one hundred years from now be in hell because you will fail on the day of judgment. I can think of nothing more terrifying than that.

What happened to Felix? He became terrified. The last thing he wanted to think about was facing God at the last judgment. However, he did not ask Paul about the remedy—the gospel. He told Paul to stop talking. He did not want to hear another word. But it nagged at him. The text says he kept coming back for further conversations with the Apostle. Surely Paul never changed his tune, but we can put callouses on our consciences. We can do everything in our power to suppress and repress the Word of God, but we cannot destroy it. We can flee from it. We can silence those who deliver it, but as Shakespeare's Hamlet understood, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." Felix had much to be afraid of, but what a tragedy.

Felix had the world's greatest theologian and evangelist explaining to him the things of Christ, yet he said, "Go away; I don't want to hear any more."

After two years of waiting in hope that Paul would give him a bribe to be let out of jail, Felix was recalled to Rome. The brother Pallas, who had protected him, was no longer in power. Nero was now sitting on the throne of Rome. Even though Pallas was no longer the head of civic affairs in Rome, he still was a man of unbelievable wealth and influence, and we are told from the historians that when Felix was recalled, he was not punished for his failures to rule well in Israel.

### **Festus**

In his place came Porcius Festus, who seemed just the opposite of Felix. Felix was known for his procrastination—"One of these days I'll render a verdict, but in the meantime Paul can rot in jail." Three days after Festus arrived, he went to Jerusalem. That was wisdom and good diplomacy. If he was going to govern the Jews, he realized he had better get to know the Jewish officials and authorities. No sooner had he arrived in Jerusalem than the leaders there petitioned Festus to send Paul to Jerusalem so that they could ambush and kill him. **But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly (25:4).**

After three days he went up from Caesarea, and the high priest and the chief rulers of the Jews informed him against Paul. All the same charges that had been leveled during the

hearings before Felix were brought up again, and Paul gave his own defense. None of the charges could be proven against him, so he said, **“Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.”** But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, **“Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?”** ([vv. 8-9](#)). One hand washes the other—that is politics. Festus wanted a compromise. He agreed to judge Paul, but instead of doing it in Caesarea, he decided to hold Paul’s trial in Jerusalem.

### **Appeal to Caesar**

There was a principle in Roman jurisprudence called the *provocation*, which granted the right of a citizen to appeal his case to Caesar. Paul invoked it: **“I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar”** ([vv. 10-11](#)). Paul knew that if he went down to Jerusalem, he would probably never get there alive, and if he did, there would be a multitude clamoring with false charges. The Roman seat was there in Caesarea, and Paul wanted to be judged there. If he was refused, he would appeal to Caesar. We can almost feel the relief of Festus at that point. He finally had a way to get Paul off his hands. **Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”** ([v. 12](#)).

The Caesar that Paul was asking to hear his case was none other than Nero, known as the Wild Beast in the first century. Nero came to power in the year AD 54, and we are told by both Josephus and Tacitus that between AD 54 and AD 59 Nero was tutored by the stoic philosopher Seneca, whose works are read and studied still today. Seneca instructed Nero how to judge and rule, and, for the first five years of Nero's reign, he was a model emperor. Then, for reasons we do not know, he became the bloodiest, most ruthless, most corrupt emperor in the history of Rome. At this time his corruption had not yet been manifested, so Paul did a very intelligent thing by appealing to Nero to hear his case. He did not know that Nero was waiting for him with a sword.

Paul was dismissed, at least temporarily, from the jurisdiction of Festus. Though Festus would subject Paul to one more hearing before a neighboring king, Agrippa, he delivered Paul to the hands of Caesar, and Paul had to wait again for his case to be decided. History shows that the church and the world are judged politically rather than by principle. We all do it; we all have it done to us; but we ought not to be like that.

**- St. Andrew's Expository Commentary – Acts.**

Paul was incarcerated in Caesarea during the final two years of Felix's governorship over Palestine. After he was removed from office and replaced by Festus, the Jews made

another attempt to move Paul's case forward. Indirectly, the apostle must also have been happy to see a break in the status quo.

### **Paul Appeals to Caesar ([25:1-12](#))**

GOVERNOR FESTUS MADE his first visit to Jerusalem three days after arriving in the province. He met with the Jewish leaders, who were quick to bring up the issue of Paul ([25:1-2](#)). Even two years after Paul's arrest their urgency over this case and their plans to kill him had not diminished. The first favor they requested of Festus was to have Paul brought to Jerusalem, with the intent that they might kill him on the way ([25:3](#)). Festus apparently preferred to conduct most of his business from Caesarea, particularly in cases that could be drawn out. So he asked the Jews to come to Caesarea with him and promised to take up the case on his return ([25:4-6](#)).

As in the trial before Felix, the Jews made serious charges against Paul, which they could not prove ([25:7](#)). Again Paul proclaimed his blamelessness before the Jewish law, the temple, and Caesar ([25:8](#); see [23:1](#); [24:16](#)). He should have been released at this stage. But Festus bowed to Jewish pressure and, wishing to grant them a favor, asked Paul whether he would be willing to go to Jerusalem for trial. Luke uses the word "favor" three times in the space of ten verses ([24:27](#); [25:3](#), [9](#)), showing that the chances of a fair trial for Paul were bleak.

Since the process of justice had been stalled for two years, Paul now realized that there was no hope of his getting a

fair trial in Judea. Instead, his life was in great danger. The famous Roman justice system that had served him well under Gallio ([18:17](#)) could not operate for his good here because of the influence of powerful locals. Paul must have felt that this problem would not be as serious in Rome. Besides, the Lord had told him that he would testify in Rome ([23:11](#)). Thus, he decided to appeal to Caesar ([25:11](#))—a privilege granted to Roman citizens. Felix must have been relieved by Paul's appeal to Caesar, for he could now wash his hands of the case. It was clearly beyond his abilities to judge, considering his unfamiliarity with Jewish customs and beliefs. He conferred with his council and declared the appeal valid ([25:12](#)).

### - NIV Application Commentary

When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews *a favor*, Felix left Paul in prison.

<sup>1</sup>Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. <sup>2</sup>And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, <sup>3</sup>asking as *a favor* against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. <sup>4</sup>Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there

shortly. **5**“So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.”

**6**After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. **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. **8**Paul argued in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.” **9**But Festus, wishing to do the Jews **a favor**, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?” **10**But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. **11**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.**” **12**Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

### ***To the Church in Ephesus***

**1**“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

**2**“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. **3**I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. **4**But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. **5**Remember therefore from where you have

fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. **6** Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **7** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

### ***To the Church in Smyrna***

**8** "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

**9** "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander<sup>a</sup> of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. **10** Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. **11** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

### ***To the Church in Pergamum***

**12** "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

**13** "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith<sup>b</sup> even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. **14** But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. **15** So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. **16** Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. **17** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

### ***To the Church in Thyatira***

18“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

19“‘I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants<sup>c</sup> to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, 23and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. 24But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. 25Only hold fast what you have until I come. 26The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28And I will give him the morning star. 29He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

### ***To the Church in Sardis***

1“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

“‘I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. 3Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. 4Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for

they are worthy. **5**The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. **6**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

### ***To the Church in Philadelphia***

**7**"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

**8**"I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. **9**Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. **10**Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. **11**I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. **12**The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. **13**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

### ***To the Church in Laodicea***

**14**"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

**15**"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! **16**So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. **17**For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. **18**I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to

anoint your eyes, so that you may see. **19**Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. **20**Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. **21**The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. **22**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

## Seven Churches of Revelation

by David Treybig

The apostle John was given important messages to the seven churches of Revelation. How are we to understand this section of Scripture today?



Map of the seven churches Jesus Christ addressed in Revelation 2 and 3 (artwork by Kelly Cunningham).

As the first chapter of the [book of Revelation](#) explains, the apostle John was given a vision of end-time events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ. Part of the instruction that John received was: “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea” (verse 11). The order of these cities corresponds to “the route along which a courier from [Patmos](#) [where John received the vision] would have carried the scroll” (*ESV Study Bible*, Revelation 2:11).

Trying to understand what these messages mean for Christians today has been puzzling. These seven churches, named by their locations, were not the sum total of all the congregations of the Church of God in the first century. Additional congregations were located at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2), Philippi (Philippians 1:1) and Colosse (Colossians 1:2), just to name a few of the additional cities where churches of God existed in the New Testament.

So why did **God the Father**, the author of this message (Revelation 1:1), select these seven congregations? What relevance do these messages have for us today? As we will see, God selected these seven congregations to give timeless instruction for His people throughout the centuries.

Because this instruction is both historical and prophetic—John was told to write about “the things which *are*, and the things which *will take place after this*” (verse 19, emphasis added)—this information must be understood from more than one perspective. Here are three ways this section of Scripture can be understood.

### **Instruction for the first-century churches**

The seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 were congregations of the Church of God in the first century. Located in Asia Minor (now modern Turkey), these churches represented actual communities of early **Christians**—not buildings or meeting halls.

In addressing each of these congregations, God said that He knew their works. Knowing the challenges they were facing and how they were responding, He admonished them to repent of their mistakes and to remain faithful in order to receive salvation.

Although their circumstances varied, this message was similar for each church.

In closer examination of these messages, it is interesting to note that God clearly understood the difficulties and influences that the members of the congregation in each city had to endure and resist. For example, He knew that the members at Ephesus had lost their “first love” and that they were resisting the negative influence of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:4, 6). God also knew the “tribulation, and poverty” those in Smyrna were facing (verse 9).

One important lesson from Revelation 2 and 3 is that God knew the issues facing the churches and members of the first century. Similar to Paul’s letters to various congregations in other cities, these short messages to the seven congregations were intended to encourage the members in these cities to hold fast to God’s way of life so they could be rewarded in the future.

## Progressive history of the Church

Students of the Bible have also noted that the messages to the seven churches imply a progressive history of things “which will take place after this” (Revelation 1:19). Some have described this as the chronological development of the Church or church eras. Addressing this perspective, the late professor Dr. John F. Walvoord notes: “Many expositors believe that in addition to the obvious implication of these messages the seven churches represent the chronological development of church history viewed spiritually. They note that Ephesus seems to be characteristic of the Apostolic Period in general and that the progression of evil climaxing in Laodicea seems to indicate the final state of apostasy of the church. ... The order of the messages to the churches seems to be divinely selected to give prophetically the main movement of church history” (John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 1989, pp. 51-52).

Another scholar, C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), editor of the *Scofield Study Bible*, gives a similar explanation:

“Again, these messages by their very terms go beyond the local assemblies mentioned. It can be seen that Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7), though a local church in the apostle’s day, is typical of the first century as a whole; Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11) characterizes the church under persecution, e.g. from A.D. c. 100-316; Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17), ‘where Satan dwells’ ... is suggestive of the church mixing with the world, e.g. in the Middle Ages; Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29) reveals how evil progresses in the church and idolatry is practiced; Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6) is representative of the church as dead, yet still having a minority of godly men and women, as during the Reformation; Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) shows revival and a state of spiritual advance; and Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-19) is illustrative of the final state of apostasy which the visible church will experience” (*Scofield Study Bible*, Revelation 1:20).

While the Bible does not give us specific dates for the time periods

or eras of the Church's development and many of these periods of time overlap, there are indications of this historical progression within these messages to the churches. Here are a few of these apparent indications of the Church's developing history:

**Ephesus**, the first church mentioned in the messages to the seven churches of Revelation, served as the center for John's ministry at the end of the first century. The island of Patmos, where John received the vision recorded in the book of Revelation, was only 50 miles from Ephesus. It is well-known that John preached about love—some refer to him as the apostle of love—to help Christians at that time recapture their “first love” (Revelation 2:4; 1 John 3:10-11, 14, 16-18, 23).

Smyrna, the second church mentioned, was told that it would “have tribulation ten days” (Revelation 2:10). Commenting on this verse, Adam Clarke states: “As the days in this book are what is commonly called prophetic days, each answering to a year, the ten years of tribulation may denote ten years of persecution; and this was precisely the duration of the persecution under Diocletian, during which all the Asiatic Churches were grievously afflicted. Others understand the expression as implying frequency and abundance, as it does in other parts of Scripture” (*Adam Clarke Commentary*, Revelation 2:10).

Regardless of the exact meaning of “ten days” in Revelation 2:10, history shows that the Church of God faced great persecution in its earliest centuries. As shown, this is implied in the message to Smyrna and is also included in the third message (to Pergamos), in which God refers to “Antipas ... My faithful martyr” (Revelation 2:13).

The messages to the last four churches speak of Christ's return—an indication that at least a remnant of Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia will still exist, along with Laodicea, in the end time (Revelation 2:25; Revelation 3:3, 11, 20). Indicating that the progression of history prior to Christ's return has nearly run its course, Philadelphia is promised protection during “the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

In this world you will have tribulations but take heart, I have overcome the world!

- Jesus

Grace & peace to you... "Char-ees Shalom"  
Acts 25:1-12

The road to hell is paved with good intentions...

- A. Proverb bemoaning cost of inactivity
- B. See Ecc. 21:10
- C. The road to hell is paved with good intentions AND bad churches! - JDP

Faith:

- Hebrews 11:1
  - faith comes by hearing...
  - walk by faith & not by sight
  - faith without works is dead faith
  - shield of faith vs fiery arrows (warfare)
  - Christian/church model:
    - A. Acts 20:18-24
    - B. Paul's 5 point sermon to Felix...  
(example of Faith, Truth, Love, & Grace)
- VS.
- False faith
    - A. No concept - blind/UUPG
    - \* Read Jesus

[Great Commandments - Mt 22:37ff](#)

Great Commission - Mt. 28 & Acts 1

Great Collision - Matthew 10:16

B. False concept - deceived (happy/sad)

\* Read John

Gospel of John

~ Ch.3... 3,16,30,36

~ Ch.6... 66

~ Ch.14... 15 & 20

1 John... Define & Defend the Church

C. Corrupt concept - wolves

"favor" = desiring to gratify/satisfy. -Barnes

Grace = God's unmerited favor

(Amazing Grace is amazing due to us/sin)

See Proverbs 23:7... "As he thinks in his heart, so is he"

- "Our thoughts are like seeds that produce crops... The mind is a garden, and we have to cultivate it, and we are responsible for the kind of seed we sow into the furrows of our mind... If no useful seeds are sown into our mind's garden, then an abundance of useless (weed) seeds will... and they will continue to produce more of their own kind... Our lives run in the direction of our thoughts.-

See Matthew Henry:

- abbreviated = good summary

- extended:

A. vv.1-3... I.1&2&3

- \* See how impetuous malice is...
- \* Evil has no shelf-life...
- \* New names/faces... Same bad hearts
- \* Plot to kill... Now led by church leaders

No more 40-man mob...

No 470 soldiers likely this time...

No more

- \* Apply Matthew 10:16!!!

B. vv.4-5... II.1

C. v.7... III.2 (very applicable)

- \* Evil unites with evil...
- \* Devil's koinonia
- \* See Psalm 118:12
- \* Qt: capture last sentence

D. v.8... III.3

- \* Paul chooses death over integrity loss

E. vv.9-12... IV & IV.

- \* Qt: see last line of IV.1
- \* See IV.2.(2)... defend your witness
- \* "I'm willing to die... but not for your lie"
- \* Paul is defending the gospel here...
- \* See IV.3

P chooses Nero over church leaders

- Like David to Philistines v. Saul
- See 1 Samuel 27 for context...

Qt: must capture last 2 lines!!!

- \* V. Nothing changed... all disappointed

See poison, patience & providence

- Connect the dots... patience/hope

Qt: V.2... see last line

7 Churches of Rev. 2-3:

1. Ephesus = all great but "one thing" (you've lost your first love)
2. Smyrna = all good but dealing with false Jews from the synagogue of Satan; plus suffering, perceived poverty, coupled with true tribulation & 10 days of prison coming
3. Pergamum = mostly good BUT "I have a FEW things against you..." While you live where Satan's throne is and you have held fast the Lord's name & did not deny the faith (even when Antipas was martyred), you have some holding to the teachings of Balaam & some others to the Nicolaitians teachings... Therefore, repent "or I will come to you soon and war against them..."
4. Thyatira = "I know your: works, love, faith, service, sanctification (improvement), patience, & endurance... BUT, I have THIS against you... You tolerate Jezebel & her teaching (aka "the deep things of Satan") & seducing my servants to sin... I gave her time to repent but she rejected... Behold, I will throw her & those who commit adultery with her onto a sickbed with tribulation unless they repent... And I will strike her children dead... "I search minds & hearts & give to each of you according to your works"

5. Sardis = "I know your works, you have the REPUTATION of being alive BUT you are DEAD. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works to be complete in the sight of my God... Repent & wake up, if not I will come against you like a thief... Yet, you STILL have a FEW who are not soiled who WILL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE..."

6. Philadelphia = I know your works & have placed an open door before you that NO ONE can shut... Having little power, you kept my word & did not deny my name... The synagogue of Satan will bow to you & they will know that I have loved you... Because you kept my word... I will keep you from the coming hour of trial that will test the whole world... I am coming soon. Hold fast so that no one seizes your crown..."

7. Laodicia = I know your works. You are lukewarm, neither hot or cold & I will spit you out of my mouth. You say, I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing, BUT you are WRETCHED, POOR, PITIFUL, BLIND & NAKED... Those I love I reprove & discipline so be zealous & repent. Behold, I stand at the door & knock. If ANYONE hears my voice & opens the door, I will come in to him..."

# *“Normal Church for Normal People”*

Acts 24:27 – 25:12

April 3, 2016

INTRO: **VIDEO** – Easter opener.... “It Is Finished!”

**Everything is ALWAYS about Easter!**

**T/S:** Today...

- Continuing in Acts...
- A day of “worship” & wonder!
- Only one goal for today...come & see
- Zoom out & Zoom in perspective...
  - Creator to the cross...
  - Saul to Paul...
    - **VIDEO:** *“Flawless”*

**(story of Paul... story of the Gospel!)**

**T/S:** So... the next question is... **Is Paul “normal?”**

**T/S:** Let’s read today’s text and see what the Lord has...

## **TEXT: Acts 24:27 – 25:12**

*<sup>27</sup> When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.*

*<sup>1</sup> Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.*

*<sup>2</sup> And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him,*

*<sup>3</sup> asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.*

*<sup>4</sup> Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly.*

*<sup>5</sup> “So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.”*

*<sup>6</sup> After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.*

*<sup>7</sup> 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.*

*<sup>8</sup> Paul argued in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.”*

<sup>9</sup> But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?”

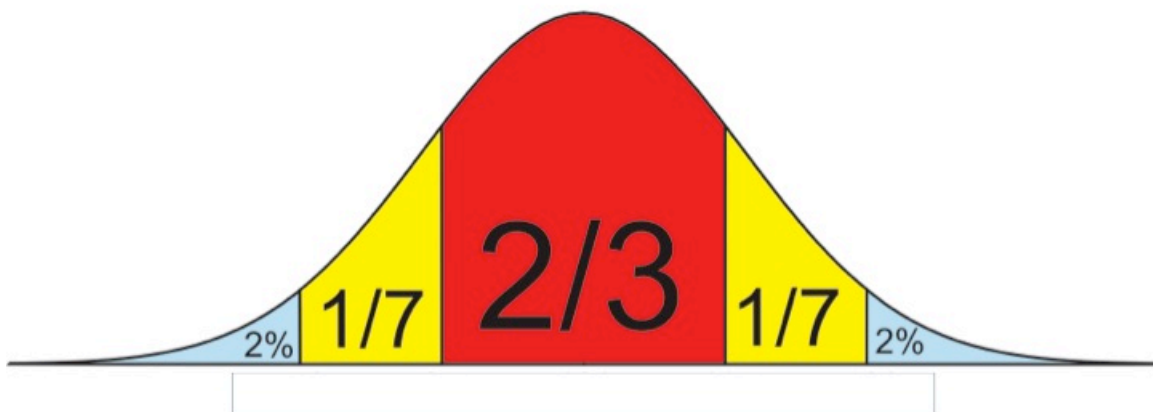
<sup>10</sup> But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well.

<sup>11</sup> 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.”

<sup>12</sup> Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

## I. Understanding People...

# “Normal People”



## II. Understanding Spiritual Warfare

**The road to hell is paved with good intentions  
and bad churches...**

## III. Understanding Faith, Favors & Grace

### a. Church @ Ephesus

**1. VIDEO: *Jesus Paid It All***

### b. Church @ Smyrna

### c. Church @ Pergamum

### d. Church @ Thyatira

**1. VIDEO: *Grace Wins!***

### e. Church @ Sardis

### f. Church @ Philadelphia

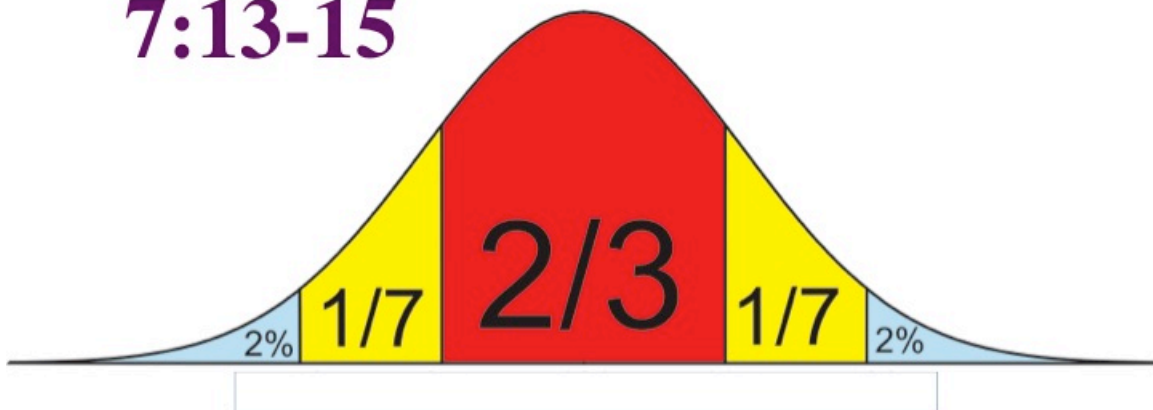
**1. VIDEO: *“Even So Come!”***

### g. Church @ Laodicia

**1. Grace warns & terrifies!**

# Matthew

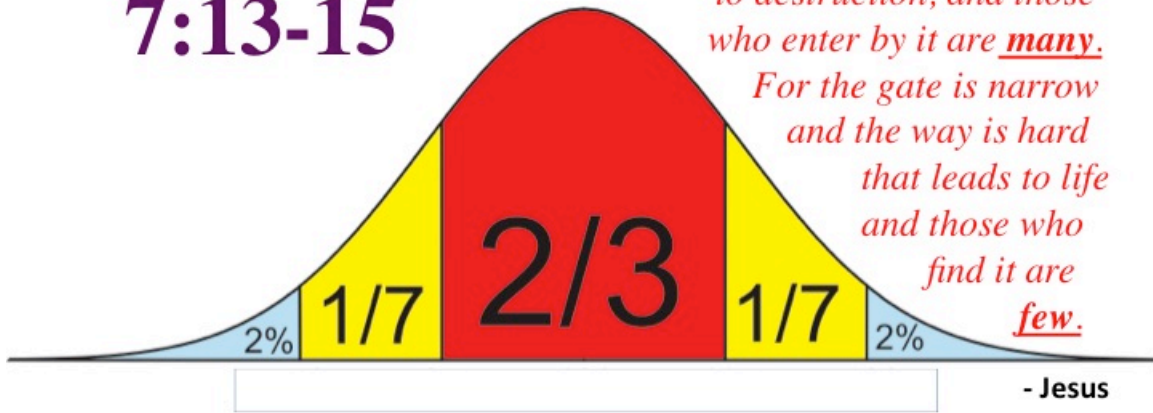
**7:13-15**



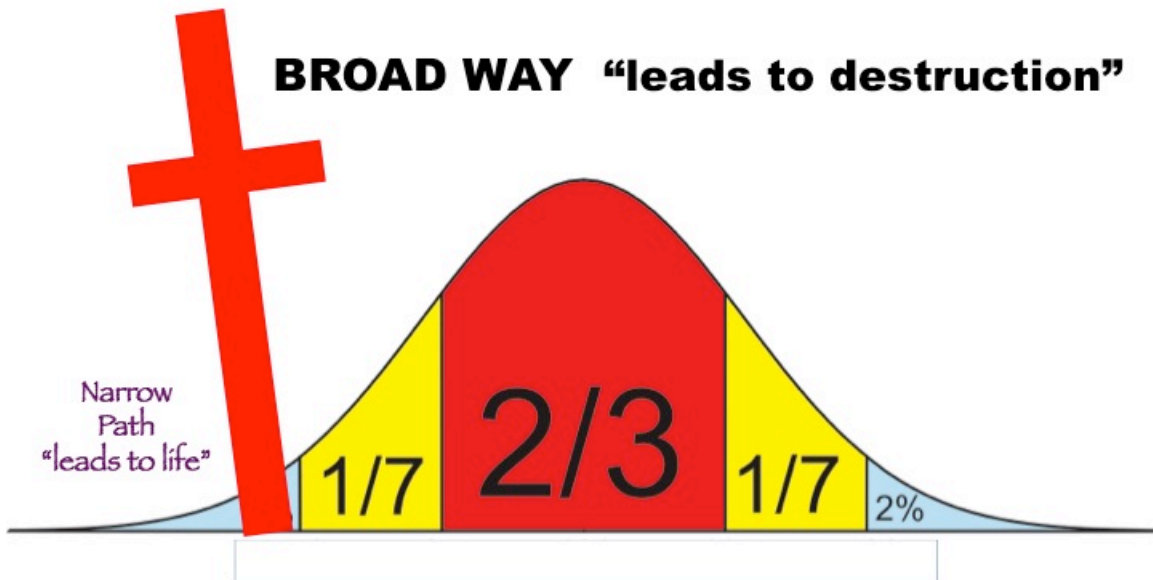
# Matthew

7:13-15

*“Enter by the narrow gate.  
For the gate is wide and  
the way is easy that leads  
to destruction, and those  
who enter by it are many.  
For the gate is narrow  
and the way is hard  
that leads to life  
and those who  
find it are few.”*



**BROAD WAY “leads to destruction”**



## 2. Grace loves & goes!

### a. Karen Watson

"When God calls there are no regrets,"

"I wasn't called to a place. I was called to Him," she wrote.  
"To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory was my reward, His glory is my reward."

The Missionary Heart:

Care more than some think is wise.

Risk more than some think is safe.

Dream more than some think is practical.

Expect more than some think is possible.

**I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience.**

She listed some of her favorite passages of Scripture, including **2 Corinthians 15:5**, which says, "*And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*"

In closing, Watson wrote, "**There is no Joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him.**"

## 3. Grace = "BE-ing" the Church

### a. VIDEO: "The Church"