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Acts 25:1-27

Acts 26:1-32

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Exegetical Study

1. **Acts 25:1-22** - *“Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. They urgently requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. Festus answered, ‘Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there, if he has done anything wrong.’ After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove. Then Paul made his defense: ‘I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.’ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, ‘Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?’ Paul answered, ‘I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!’ After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: ‘You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!’ A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul’s case with the king. He said, ‘There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned. I told them that it is not the Roman custom*

to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges. When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar.' Then Agrippa said to Festus, 'I would like to hear this man myself.' He replied, 'Tomorrow you will hear him.' "

a. Porcius Festus

- i. Festus was the governor or procurator of Judea from 59 A.D. to 62 A.D.
- ii. Festus was sent by Emperor Nero to replace Marcus Antonius Felix.
- iii. Festus died suddenly in 62 A.D., and his death left Judea temporarily without a Roman governor.

b. Paul's Defense

- i. The Greek word for defense is *apologeomai*.¹
- ii. Pastor Gary said, "[This is an important word because] it is a theological term. The theological term is apologetics, and apologetics in its most basic, simple definition means the defense of the Christian faith. ... [An important verse about this is [1 Peter 3:15b](#), because it implies something]. [It implies] that people are noticing something about your life such that they would ask you. ... Our lives need to be on visible display that we belong to the Lord so that it would spur people on to inquire about our lives."
 1. [1 Peter 3:15b](#) - *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."*

c. Apologetics

i. Know The Bible

1. We need to read the Bible and become a student of the Bible.
2. The Bible is the handbook we need to defend the Christian faith.
3. Pastor Gary said, "You know one of the biggest things the enemy wants us to think? It's that because you don't know all of the Bible from cover to cover, you shouldn't open your mouth. So, we become paralyzed. We think that because we aren't Bible scholars... [that] we shouldn't say anything. Open your mouth and trust the Lord. You've got to know the foundations and

¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G626&t=NIV>

some Scripture to be equipped enough to defend your faith, so get into the Bible, ... and share as much as you know.”

ii. Know Your Audience

1. Pastor Gary said, “You have to be able to understand, as much as you can, where the person is coming from, [and] what is the point of entry into the conversation, and what is their worldview?”
2. When Jesus spoke with the rich young man, he asked him a question to discern what the man’s worldview was. Because if the man called him good, and no one was good except God, then there would be a different conversation than if the man didn’t think Jesus was God. Jesus’ question also caused the man to recognize that he wasn’t as good as he thought he was. ²
 - a. [Mark 10:18](#) - *“Why do you call me good?”*
3. The Bible teaches us that there are no “good” people.
 - a. [Romans 3:10-13](#) - *“As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’ ”*
 - b. [Jeremiah 17:9a](#) - *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.”*
 - c. [Isaiah 64:6](#) - *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags...”*
4. Paul understood the need to know your audience, and we can see this clearly when we read about his conversations with the philosophers in Athens. ³
 - a. Paul used the Athenian’s statue to the unknown god as a way to engage them from their worldview.
 - b. [Acts 17:22-23](#) - *“Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: ‘Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.’ ”*

iii. Rehearse Your Testimony

1. Pastor Gary said, “No one can dispute your story. They may not like it, but they cannot argue with it. It’s your story!”

iv. Read Good Apologetics Books

1. Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide by Dr. Norman Geisler

² [Mark 10:17-31](#)

³ [Acts 17:16-34](#)

2. Jesus Among Other Gods by Ravi Zacharias
 3. More Than A Carpenter by Josh McDowell
 4. Evidence That Demands A Verdict by Josh McDowell
 5. The Case For Christ by Lee Strobel
 6. The Case For Faith by Lee Strobel
- v. Rely On The Holy Spirit
1. [Luke 12:11-12](#) - "... do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."
- d. King Agrippa II
- i. His full name was Julius Marcus Agrippa.
 - ii. He was the son of Herod Agrippa I
 - iii. He was the great-grandson of Herod the Great
 - iv. He witnessed the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem
 - v. He ruled over much of Israel from 53 A.D. to until his death in 100 A.D.
- e. The Herodian Dynasty
- i. The Herods were Idumeans, from Edom, and they were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob.
 - ii. The Edomites would have been seen as cousins of the Jews.
 - iii. Herod Antipatras I was the first of the Herodian dynasty converted to Judaism.
 - iv. The Herods may have practiced Jewish festivals and feasts, but they were not godly people.
- f. Bernice
- i. Her full name was Julia Berenice.
 - ii. She was the sister of Herod Agrippa II.
 - iii. She married her uncle, with whom she would have two sons.
 - iv. She had an affair with Emperor Titus, who was eleven years her junior.
 - v. Juvenal, a historian of the first century, wrote that Bernice and Herod Agrippa II had an incestuous relationship.
2. [Acts 25:23-27](#) - *"The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. Festus said: 'King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. For I think it is unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him.' "*

a. Audience Room

- i. Bible scholars believe this was the theater in Caesarea, which seats about 4,000 people.

3. **Acts 26:1-32** - *“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You have permission to speak for yourself.’ So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense. ‘King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ‘Then I asked, ‘Who are you Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’ ‘So, then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also. I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen - that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his people and to the Gentiles.’ At this point Festus*

interrupted Paul's defense. 'You are out of your mind, Paul!' he shouted. 'Your great learning is driving you insane.' 'I am not insane, most excellent Festus,' Paul replied. 'What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.' Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?' Paul replied, 'Short time or long - I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.' The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, 'This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.' Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.' "

- a. In **Acts 19:21**, we read that Paul indicated that he would give testimony about Jesus in Rome, which was seven years prior to Paul's testimony before Festus and King Agrippa.
 - i. **Acts 19:21** - *"After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. 'After I have been there, he said, 'I must visit Rome also.' "*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "Sometimes how we get from point 'A' to point 'B' where God wants us to be is not always the straight path. For Paul, do you know how he was going to get to Rome? [He went] on a ship because he was accused of something that he didn't do wrong, to stand trial before Nero, but in the process, he was going to get to Rome, [just like the Lord said he would]. One way or another, God will accomplish his purposes in [our lives, and] it may not always be a straight line and the easiest course, but God will always fulfill his promises in our lives, in his timing."

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the 1984 New International Version (NIV)