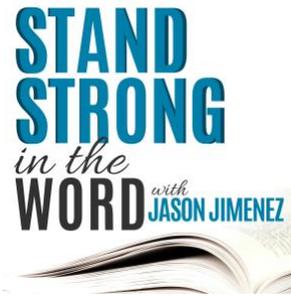


“Paul Gives Evidence of the Gospel Before Royalty”
Acts 25:1-26:32

I. Paul Presents His Case Before Festus (25:1-12)

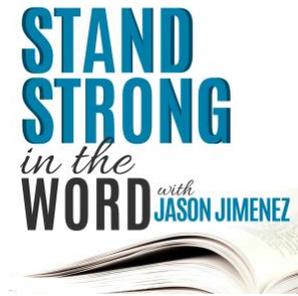
1. *Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.* Festus, now governor (procurator) of Judea, travels to Jerusalem to hear what is troubling the chief priests.
2. *² And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, ³ asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. ⁴ 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.”* The elite Jews employ the same plot as they did in 23:12 to have Paul ambushed and killed. *Let the men of authority among you go down with me*—Festus doesn’t give into the demands of the Jews. Instead, he requests they return with him to Caesarea where he remains in control and can use the fate of Paul as leverage.
3. *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.* After meeting with the Sanhedrin, Festus returns to Caesarea and convenes an official hearing in court to decide what to do with Paul.
4. *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.* Still, after two years, Paul’s accusers are unable to find fault with him (24:2-9).
5. *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.”* At this point, Paul was probably tired of defending himself against the three false accusations (see 21:27-36; 24:5-6, 10-21). Paul did not defile the temple (see 21:29) and remained a strong advocate of law and order (Rom. 13:1-7).
6. *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?”* Festus sets forth a compromise to have Paul tried in Jerusalem (to appease the Jews) by the Roman court (to appease Paul).



7. 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 (Nero)." Paul knew that if he returned to Jerusalem to face trial, he would be assassinated. Therefore, he exercises his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to the highest court (*provoati*), Caesar (the Emperor).*
8. ¹² *Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go." Festus looks to his aids (advisers and legal counsel) to ensure Paul was within his rights to appeal his case before Caesar—therefore, nullifying any lower court decisions.*

II. Festus Tells King Agrippa About Paul (25:13-22)

1. ¹³ *Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. Agrippa, also known as Herod Agrippa II, ruled over Galilee and Perea. He was the son of Herod Agrippa (Ac. 12) and the great-grandson of Herod the Great who had many children killed during the time of Jesus's birth (Matt. 2). There were many rumors he was in an incestual relationship with his sister, Bernice.*
 - A. *NIV Study Bible Notes, Fully Revised Edition, "When only 13, she married her uncle, Herod of Chalcis, and had two sons. When Herod died, she lived with her brother, Agrippa II. To silence rumors that she was living in incest with her brother, she married Polemon, king of Cilicia, but left him soon afterward to return to Agrippa. She became the mistress of the emperor Vespasian's son Titus but was later ignored by him."*
2. ¹⁴ *And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix, ¹⁵ and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. ¹⁶ I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. ¹⁷ So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. ¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. ¹⁹ Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about*

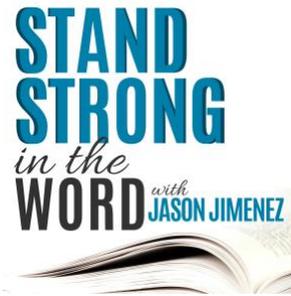


their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. ²⁰ Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. ²¹ But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.” ²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” said he, “you will hear him.”

Supposing Paul to be guilty (given the uprising among the Sanhedrin), but new as a governor and unfamiliar with Judaism and Christianity, Festus seeks King Agrippa’s advice about what to do with Paul. *I would like to hear the man myself*—Agrippa was a Jew who was well-versed in Palestinian politics and had the power to depose and elect the high priest.

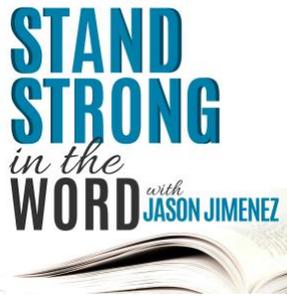
III. Paul Make His Case Before Royalty (25:23-26:32)

1. ²³ *So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp (ostentatious display), and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men (commanders of the cohorts) of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.* Agrippa puts on a full display his power as a reminder to the Jews who they are to serve. This royal setting is a fulfillment of the words of Jesus, “they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake” (Lk. 21:12).
2. ²⁴ *And Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵ But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. ²⁶ But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. ²⁷ For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.”* Despite the fact there is no evidence proving Paul is guilty, Festus is still looking for charges against Paul. Because Agrippa had no jurisdiction in Judea, the hearing amounts to nothing more than an informal inquiry.
3. *26:1 So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:* Paul’s defense



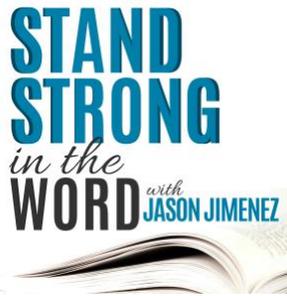
recorded here is the longest one in the book of Acts (26:2-23). At this point, it is quite clear Paul is innocent before the Jewish rulers, Festus and Agrippa, and the high-ranking Roman officials. Thus, Paul takes a measured approach and reworks his defense by sharing his personal testimony before the mixed audience. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament*: "Yet Paul's speech before Agrippa II is not just a personal defense of himself. It is also a positive presentation of the Gospel with an evangelistic appeal: (1) according to the OT prophets, the Christ would suffer, rise from the dead, and proclaim light to both Jews and Gentiles (26:23); (2) what God did in and through Jesus the Christ was done openly, "not done in a corner" (v.26); (3) believing the prophets leads one to accept redemption in Christ (v.27); (4) Paul's prayer for all who hear is that they "may become what I am, except for these chains" (v.29). After this climactic speech of Paul, all that remains for Luke is to sketch out the apostle's journey to Rome and his ministry there, thus completing the geographical framework of Luke's presentation and concluding it on a note of triumph (cf. 28:31)."

- A. ² ***"I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.*** Although Agrippa was a cruel and morally corrupt ruler, nonetheless, it gave Paul some relief to finally present his case before a ruler familiar with matters concerning Judaism and Christianity.
- B. ⁴ ***"My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵ They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.*** In his two previous defenses, Paul affirmed his commitment to his Jewish heritage (22:3-5; 24:14-16; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:4-6).
- C. ⁶ ***And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! ⁸ Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?*** Paul stands by the belief that Jesus (who is the Messiah) will deliver the people of Israel and raise them from the dead. ***That God raises the dead***—Agrippa, who oversaw the temple treasury and appointed the high priest, aligned



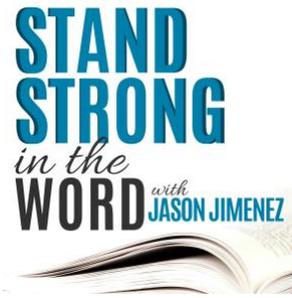
with the Sadducees and their theological beliefs. Hence, it's very unlikely he believed in the resurrection.

- D. ⁹ ***"I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.*** Paul refers back to when he was once like the Jewish officials and joined them in their efforts to persecute Christians and prosecute them for blasphemy.
- E. ¹² ***"In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵ And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'*** In verses 12-18, Paul recounts his conversion (9:1-30; 22:5-21) when he was on the road to Damascus. ***It is hard for you to kick against the goads***—A phrase meaning it's hard to fight against the purposes of God.
- F. ¹⁹ ***"Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. ²¹ For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.*** It was common for ancient presenters to justify their actions on account of a divine



calling. **For this reason**—Paul reveals the real reason the Jews arrested him. They rejected his message of repentance.

- G. ²² **To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.**” To conclude his case, Paul references “Moses and the prophets” as key evidence that the coming Messiah would suffer and die for the sins of mankind (both Jews and Gentiles). **Being the first to rise from the dead**—The Holy Spirit uses Paul to speak about the mystery of the resurrection to come for believers (see 1 Cor. 15:20-23).
4. ²⁴ **And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.”** Festus thinks Paul’s teaching about the resurrection is utter nonsense, and therefore, insults his intelligence and formal education.
 5. ²⁵ **But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶ For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.** The actions of Jesus and the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman empire is based on actual/historical events.
 6. ²⁷ **King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”**
 7. ²⁸ **And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” ²⁹ And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”** Although Agrippa didn’t embrace Paul’s teaching about Jesus and the resurrection, it gave him a clearer understanding of who Jesus is in light of predictive prophecy. **Would you persuade me to be a Christian**—Agrippa responds to Paul’s challenge in a cynical manner by sidestepping the issue because he didn’t want to lose favor with Festus or the Jews. **Christian**—This is the second time Luke uses this term (11:26).
 8. ³⁰ **Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. ³¹ And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.” ³² And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”** To prevent things from getting too personal,



Agrippa abruptly ends the hearing and sides with the innocence of Paul. Again, this is reminiscent of when Herod and Pilate saw no wrong in Jesus (see Lk. 23:13-15).