

Against All Odds - Acts 25:1-27

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[0 : 00] Acts 25, I'm going to make it run at the whole chapter, and then we'll only have three chapters left, 26, 27, and 28. Crazy.

What, we've been in Acts for about three months, right? Okay, wake up. A lot of different places. Okay, so if you remember last time, Paul had been brought to Caesarea, and Felix was the governor there.

At that time, they brought in the lawyer Tertullus, Mr. Triple Hardened. They brought him in, the Jews did, to try and build a case against Paul, but there was no case.

Felix goes through this whole process with the Jews, responds to their flattery, and in the end, he's yanked by Rome because he's such a bad governor.

But willing to show the Jews a pleasure or grace, willing to show graciousness to the Jews, hoping to gain some type of political favor, he leaves Paul. And he's left there for two years. He leaves Paul bound.

[1 : 22] Now, Paul is given his liberty. We saw that in verse 23, that Paul has his liberty, and he's not forbidden to receive anyone or to go in and out. I'm assuming he's just kind of under house arrest. And so, this is where Paul has been for these two years, where we're going to pick up then in chapter 25 on the timeline.

So that puts us AD 60 to 62, somewhere in there, where Paul, he's currently in Caesarea.

He's not yet started his journey to Rome. This time frame in chapter 25 maybe covers a month or a couple months at most, it seems like, by the time Paul is sent to Rome.

So the title for this section of scripture, tonight's message is Against All Odds. We're going to see this word against here in this chapter. It comes up eight times. The Greek word, I did not try to pronounce the Greek word, so just trust me that this Greek word comes up eight times.

It's translated against, and a couple other places it's translated a few other things. It means to come down from, to come down upon, towards the face, or face to face, or according to.

[2 : 37] And so here is Paul against all odds as the world and the Jews try and continue to bring accusations against him. And our outline, kind of going with that theme of poker, verses 1 through 6 is another chance that Paul will see the Jews come and try again.

One more chance to try and come at Paul. 7 through 12 is upping the ante, where Paul responds and kind of ratchets things up a little. Verses 13 through 22 is the showdown.

Showdown literally just means when you reveal your hand, like to drop your card, to show your hand. And that's what Festus is going to do here. And then 23 through 27, it's all just one big bluff.

It's all the world has. So we will dive in, but let's pray. Lord, again, we're going to offer up our hearts to you in this time, Lord, as we open the word, Lord.

We know it doesn't return void, but Lord, so often I identify with one of the types of soil, Lord, in the parable of the soil. And when the seed, the word of God is sown, Lord, is it going to find good soil?

[3 : 45] So, Lord, you know. You know where our hearts are at, and I pray that we would have open hearts, Lord, to receive what the Spirit has to say to the church tonight. And in Jesus' name, amen. So I don't know how many of you are interested in, like, court dramas.

I'm not. There's a big court drama going on in our culture, in our country today. Okay, so this 25 does not have a lot of Paul speaking in it.

It's kind of a behind-the-scenes look of what's happening in the courtroom or what's happening between those that are prosecuting Paul, those that are the judges.

And it's this kind of process they're working through with Paul here. And so we pick up in verse 25, and we see someone, instead of Felix, we have this guy named Festus.

Remember last time we learned his name was Portius Festus, which meant swinish festival. So, you know, like a barbecue. Just a great guy to be around. Probably Southern.

[4 : 44] So when he was coming to the province, after three days, he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. So Felix was known for being really cruel to the Jews and a terrible governor.

Festus was an all-right guy. He was known for pretty righteous judgments. He was not cruel. He was a pretty okay guy. And so after two years, this is the picking up, sorry, at the end of verse 24, chapter 24, verse 27, as we move into 25.

After two years, remember we said that was against Roman law, Portius Festus came into Felix's room, and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound. So Paul's been there two years.

If you want to get an idea, I didn't put this on the slide. But an idea about what Paul is doing at this time. It's like, Paul, what are you doing this whole time while you're there?

In the end of Acts, Acts 28, in verse 30, it says, And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, this is in Rome, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

[5 : 56] With all confidence, no man forbidding him. So what was he doing this whole time in Caesarea? Probably the same thing. You know, receiving all that came in unto him and preaching the kingdom of God. It seems like he was under house arrest.

He didn't have the opportunity to move freely. He's been used to that. He's been Paul the missionary. Now he's Paul the prisoner. And soon he's kind of become Paul the philosopher or theologian as he's just kind of stuck in one place.

So he comes, he's willing to leave Paul bound, hoping to get some kind of political or monetary opportunity. And in his stead comes Festus in verse 1.

Now when Festus was coming to the province, after three days he ascends to Caesarea, or ascends to Jerusalem from Caesarea. He's not wasting any time in an attempt to kind of undo what Felix has done, trying to prove I'm not Felix.

So he's going right up to the Jews, right to Jerusalem, knowing that this is the seat of power for the Jews, trying to establish himself as a non-Felix.

[6 : 59] Then the high priest and the chief priest of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

Two years. It's been two years. Here we see that first use of the word against. The high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul.

The usage here is kind of like to come down upon. So they're informing him to come down upon Paul. They want him to come down upon Paul is the idea here. And so they're beseeching him.

It's like to call to one side. They're saying, hey, take our side in this. We want you to do what we can't do and come down on Paul. So after two years of Paul being bound, who was more bound?

Paul or these Jews? Still bound up in their hatred. Still bound up in their animosity towards Paul. That right away, they're just like, hey, there's this guy. He's still there after two years.

[7 : 56] And it probably aided them that there's news coming back from Caesarea. That the church is thriving. That people are getting saved. That the name of Jesus is continuing to go out throughout the region.

Matthew 5, 25 says, Jesus says to agree with our adversary quickly while we are in the way with him. Lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer.

They'll be cast into prison. So the idea there is like forgiveness. And we're saying, all right, I'm going to take care of this quickly. Or if there's someone against you. Same when the enemy attacks us.

We want to agree with our adversary quickly. Wait a minute. I'm not going to agree with Satan. Yeah, when he attacks and he says, you're a sinner. We want to agree and say, yes, I am. Because if we try and justify ourselves, we remove ourselves from the Lord's justification.

Right? We want him to be our justifier. I don't want to be the one to try and justify myself. But here you see this principle with these Jewish leaders. That they have now been cast into prison.

[8 : 54] They are bound in this angst they have towards Paul. And we saw that at one point, they were just kind of a little bit complicit with those, what were they, 40 men?

Right? Who must have starved by now. They said they weren't going to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. So they're gone. But now in verse 3, we see that they themselves laying in wait to kill Paul.

I have a quote here by a commentator, Boyce. It says, We see a growth of corruption in Acts 23 where the plot to murder Paul was first launched.

We find that it was the zealots who were responsible. Now in Acts 25, we find that the leaders are initiating the very thing that they were only incidentally involved in earlier. So what do we see here?

Corruption. Right? If you sow to the flesh, you shall of the flesh reap corruption. Corruption is not neutral. It makes palatable the most repugnant of deeds. Corruption makes palatable something that at one time you thought, I would never do that.

[9 : 58] I'd never be involved in that. But corruption is not neutral. It continues to eat away. It's like rotteness. Right? Just cut up a ton of firewood. A ton of it. Some of it looked really good from the outside.

And then you cut it and the whole inside is rotten. And there's just tons of ants. And there's nothing that you can't, you can't reverse that. You can't undo that. It's going to continue to grow in corruption. Corruption and rotteness.

So the Jewish leaders, they had influence. They had authority. And they had power. And they were using it for their own ends, their own gain, to harm another and for the perversion of justice.

And ultimately, it was towards the church, wasn't it? Paul representing the church. It was their own ends and their own gains at the church's expense to the harm of the church and the perversion of justice against the church.

And this is what religion was doing. Romans 13.3 tells us that rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. So, well, wait a minute.

[10 : 57] We have plenty of rulers in this world today that are a terror to good works and not to the evil. Yes. But this is who they are. They may be corrupting their office, but this is who God's called them to be.

And so Festus answers the Jews. As the Jews say, we want you to come down upon Paul. We just can't stand this guy. Bring him here for judgment. And they're going to lay in wait in the way. And Festus answers that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself would depart there shortly.

There's a proverb. There's lots of proverbs that apply to this that we're looking at. 1813 says, he that answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame unto him. So if you try and give an answer to something you don't have all the information on, it's just going to turn to your embarrassment.

Here we see this is good. Festus is like, no, no, we're not going to do that. Listen, I'm going to go back to Caesarea and you can come there. Verse five. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, that literally means to have power, go down with me and accuse this man if there be any wickedness in him.

The idea is that if there's any certain wickedness. Do you really have the ability to accuse him? Is there really anything certain? If so, come on. The only thing the Jews were certain of was their hatred of God.

[12 : 25] Say, wait a minute. I mean, hatred of Paul, right? Well, Jesus said in John 15, 18, if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. The Jews hated God.

They did. They out and out hated him. Well, no, their religion was based upon something that God started. Yeah, it was. But they had come to the point where they had come to hate God because he didn't meet with their preferred method of religion.

And unfortunately, you see that in our country, in our culture, and even parts of the church where, man, when the word comes in and the truth comes in, the reaction is so strong and visceral against it when it kind of speaks against the traditions and things that people have, you know, become used to.

Especially down here in the South, there's a lot of tradition in some churches. In 1 Peter, Peter writes in chapter 4, verse 15, he says, But let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief or as an evildoer or as a busybody in other men's matters.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. And Peter could write this. He's like, man, I suffered as a, all kinds of things.

[13 : 40] Put my foot in my mouth, tried to, you know, Jesus told me, get behind you, Satan. But you know what? If you suffer as a Christian, glorify God in that. Don't be ashamed when they try to shame you for your association with Christ.

And when he had tarried among them, and when he had tarried among them more than 10 days, he went down into Caesarea. The idea is not more than 10 days.

And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, commanded Paul to be brought. So Paul at this point has no idea what the Lord has been setting up for him behind the scenes. He doesn't know any of this is happening.

Most of what takes place in this chapter, Paul doesn't have a clue what's going on. This is all behind the scenes as God is working this. I mean, he knows Festus is now gone, right?

After two years. So, I mean, sorry, Felix is gone. So Felix would have been there two years holding Paul, hoping for some type of remuneration. And now he probably knows, okay, Felix is gone and Festus is in, but nothing's really changed in his life.

[14 : 45] For Paul, he would write to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, verse 2. I think he would write to him exactly what he's doing now and exactly what he's going to be doing in Rome. Preach the word.

Be instant in season, out of season, under house arrest, on a missionary journey. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Reprove, rebuke, and exhort. That's two negatives and a positive. Reproving, reproving, and rebuking is more negative. Exhorting is a positive. And that's the way God's word, it cuts deep.

And it usually has to, you know, slough off a bunch of the junk before it gets to the exhortation where we're feeling built up. And so he was come down, because you always come down from Jerusalem.

So he comes back to Caesarea. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood roundabout and laid many ingrievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

[15 : 46] And the idea here is the way they stood roundabout. It's like nobody wants to be singled out. You know, we're all here in a bunch. We're all kind of here together. It's like, you go talk. I mean, what happened to Mr. Triple Harden?

I guess that was the end of his career. He couldn't convict Paul. And so now they're all here together. But nobody wants to be singled out. And the word proved there and laid many grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not exhibit, point out, or demonstrate.

They had nothing. They had nothing they could show, right? We're going to have young adults this Friday night, our first young adults group. Woo-hoo! And other than, you know, we're going to go through the doctrines of the faith.

Not all of them Friday night, but start going through doctrines. And then I said, one of the activities, just kind of get to know each other. Let's do show and tell. And like, man, everybody, you'd think that they had to give a presentation.

But this is like the Jews coming. They had nothing to show or tell. They had like absolutely nothing. It's like, well, I want to tell you all that Paul has done. And it would just turn into nothing. Matthew 23, 4, Jesus says about the Pharisees, he says, You bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born and lay them on men's shoulders.

[17 : 06] But they themselves, the Pharisees, will not move them with one of their fingers. So they're quite happy to put upon Paul all kinds of burdens, all kinds of things.

But all the Jews could really prove was their own folly. Proverbs 28, 5 says, evil men understand not judgment. But they that seek the Lord understand all things.

All these guys could prove was that after two years, they were still just as foolish as ever. You know, we're going to see against all odds, all of these things against Paul.

And here's this, I mean, Paul's in what is 50s, 60s at this point. He's just this little old man, faithful to the word.

And all the powers of religion and the Roman Empire are coming against him. And he's just living his life. And so the Jews, they have nothing they can prove.

[18 : 12] And then it says, the little bit we get to hear from Paul. While he answered for himself, Paul did now. Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all.

Offended means same kind of thinking of sin, to miss the mark. But this one, offended means to miss the mark of honor. Paul says, I have not dishonored in any way.

Man's system, man's religion, or man's government. However, Paul was not for or against that. But he did not dishonor man's system, religion, or government.

And I think like for us, it's the same thing. I don't need to come against man's system, their religion, or their government. I don't have a part in that. That's not our home. That's not part of my kingdom. The kingdom that we're a part of.

Jesus said, speaking to Pilate in Matthew 18, He said, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews.

[19 : 19] But now is my kingdom not from hence. And so for Paul, you know, he said, I have nothing to do with these things, so I have not spoken against them.

Why would I? And here's Paul all alone. As we said before, the truth will stand alone. It's never afraid to stand alone, because only the truth can stand.

Nothing else can stand, no matter how many people you get together. Ephesians 6, 13, Paul would write, that were to take unto us the whole armor of God. And once we've done that, what do we do?

We go out and fight. We go out and take over this world for the kingdom of God. That you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all to stand, stand therefore.

So we stand. We stand in the truth. The truth cannot be denied. It cannot be rejected. I mean, the truth, sorry, can be denied, rejected, and even twisted, but it can never be disproved.

[20 : 16] The truth cannot be disproved. You can deny it. You can reject it. You can even twist it. But you can't disprove it. It stands there as an immovable object, that no lie, no system, no corruption can move the truth.

And as we said last time, it's because it's not abstract. It's a person. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. So Festus, he is attempting here to drag Paul into a political scheme.

He's like, all right, I need a way to bring Paul into this. I need a way to get him on board with this so that we can work this thing out. Festus is not operating on truth.

Festus is operating on his own morality, which was much better than Felix's, yes. In verse 9, There's that word grace again.

He says, well, Paul, I've got an idea. Maybe we could just make everybody happy.

[21 : 25] Would you go up to Jerusalem and be judged of these things before me? You see, Festus, at this point, he's stepping outside of his jurisdiction. What does jurisdiction mean? I don't know, so I looked it up.

It's the legal power of authority, of doing justice in cases of complaint. So it's the legal power to execute, the legal power and authority to execute justice. It's the limit within which power may be exercised.

At this point, Festus is stepping outside of his jurisdiction. He does not have the power to say to Paul, I will protect you. It's essentially what he's saying. He was promising Paul that he had the power to perform something that only God could do.

Remember when Paul was in Corinth and he was afraid? And what did it say? The Lord stood by him and said, Paul, do not fear. Hold not your peace, but speak.

I am with you and no man shall set on you to hurt you. For I have much people in this city. And so Paul, recognizing this, it's like, Festus, this isn't your place. God has already promised.

[22 : 30] You can't offer something that's not yours to give. So Paul essentially calls his bluff at this point, Festus's, and the Jews. Then Paul said, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged.

To the Jews have I done no wrong as thou very well knew. So we ultimately see what? Festus is no better than Felix, right? Ultimately, he's not willing to uphold justice.

As Paul points out, you know clearly that I have done no wrong. Where he says there, Let no man may deliver me unto them.

I stand at Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged. To the Jews, if I don't no wrong as thou very well knowest. The idea is that he's not going to surrender himself in order to gratify another.

He's like, this isn't about justice. This is about trying to please the Jews or you, Festus. Psalm 140 verse 12 says, I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor.

[23 : 41] It means the justice of the poor. Justice and judgment, they're not determined by man. Felix, keep mixing those two guys up. Festus is not the one to determine what is just.

He's not the one to determine judgment. His place is to uphold it. He doesn't get to decide it. He doesn't get to write it. When I was 18, 19, the summer of my 18 and 19th year, I worked for the sheriff's department.

Two lakes bordered our county. And so I worked on the boat patrol. I would just ride around with a deputy. And two most exciting parts of the day were taking off from the dock and coming back to the dock.

In between, it was just really boring. Just driving around these big lakes and nobody's out there. But one of the deputies, man, he did not just uphold the law. Like his place, like an officer of the law, is to embody the law, to represent the law.

But he thought he was the law. And he would just make things up as he felt like it. He'd pull someone over and he'd be like, well, you've got a choice. You can either get a lecture from me or a ticket.

[24 : 45] And then he would give them this big lecture. It's like, well, you don't get to decide that. You know, there was times we'd be out there and he would just kind of make stuff up as he felt like it. But man doesn't get to determine justice and judgment.

It is for man to uphold it as God appoints them. But ultimately, it comes from God. So Paul says, look it, in verse 11.

If I be an offender or if I've committed anything worthy of death, I don't refuse to die. Remember, he'll write, to die is gain. To live is Christ and to die is gain.

But if there be none of these things, whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. And there it is, the phrase, no man may deliver me unto them.

In other words, no one will surrender me over for their gratification. And that word deliver me, again, is the word grace. Nobody will grace me to them. Nobody's going to give me over to them.

[25 : 41] Only the Lord has that power. Paul understood who his deliverer was. Psalm 116, verses 6 through 8 says, The Lord preserves the simple.

I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto your rest, O my soul. For the Lord has dealt bountifully with me. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

I love that. The Lord preserves the simple. Just keep it simple. Acts 23, 11.

And the night following, the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul. For as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. Paul understood who his deliverer was.

He knew who it was, who was the one who would preserve him. So then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, it's not the Jewish council, this would be his people that he has in judgment with him.

[26 : 47] So he says, hey, Paul's appealed to Caesar. What's the precedent here? You know, he was okay not rendering a verdict of innocence to Paul when he knew he was innocent, you know, in corrupting justice that way.

But now he's like, oh, we want to go by the book here. And so then Festus, when he conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar you shall go. In other words, Paul, you brought this on yourself.

You brought this on yourself. I was trying to find a way we could all work together in this and everybody could benefit. And you brought this on yourself because you chose to stand in the truth, Paul. So I'm going to send you to Caesar.

Now we have a space of time here in verse 13. And after certain days, King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. Agrippa, that name comes up a lot.

It's Herod Agrippa. This is Herod Agrippa II. He ruled a client kingdom of the Roman Empire to the northeast of Festus' province. So Festus is the north part of Jerusalem, Caesarea.

[27 : 48] Arabia outside of then Israel, in the north part of Israel. Outside of Israel in the north would be Herod Agrippa. He didn't have a very, very big territory, but he did have great influence because the emperor gave him the right to oversee the affairs of the temple in Jerusalem and the appointment of the high priest.

The appointment of the high priest at this time was political. Rome decided. And so Agrippa II, he was the guy who got to appoint the high priest. So though he did not have jurisdiction over Paul in this case, his hearing the matter would be helpful for Festus.

Festus doesn't have a clue about all this Jews' religion and stuff, where Agrippa is very well versed in this. His name means hero, and Bernice, his sister, means bring victory.

It was his sister, but they weren't living as brother and sister. Of this King Agrippa, his great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus as a baby, Herod the Great. His grandfather had beheaded John the Baptist.

His father had martyred the first apostle, James. And now Paul stood before the next in line of the Herods. Not a good history to have in your family.

[29 : 02] You pull out the photo albums. Oh, look, there's great-grandpa. Oh, there's my dad. Remember that? Yeah, he fell down and was eating my worms. Yeah, that was a bad day. And when they had been there many days, so they come to visit him.

So you're talking weeks, a month, many days. Festus then brings up Paul, and he declares Paul's cause unto the king, saying, there's a certain man left in bonds by Felix.

Look, this isn't my problem. This is a problem left to me by Felix, and I don't know what to do. About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

That word again, desiring a favor, desiring grace. Those who are against the church, those who come down upon the church, they are very favored by the world.

And where he says here that they desired a favor. They were desiring something from me. They wanted me to show favor towards their position as I came down upon Paul, as I came down upon the church, because then I would be on their side.

[30 : 10] Then we'd have favor. To whom I answered, it is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die. Before that, he which is accused would have the accusers face to face.

That word face to face there is the same Greek word against. The other places in the text here you see against, it's the same word. It means against, opposed, face to face, against each other.

This is good. Festus is answering rightly here. He's upholding justice here. It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

Now, I also think he's covering his butt. He knows Paul's a Roman. So, he's treading carefully here. He can't just deliver him over unto death. So, he's giving Paul an opportunity.

He's giving him an opportunity to face to face answer his accusers. Not just talking to Festus, but answering these men face to face. They don't want to come face to face.

[31 : 16] Before they brought Tertullius, now they come as a group to speak to Festus, but they don't want to have to speak with Paul because sin hides its face, doesn't it?

Remember in Jesus, in John chapter 3, he said that everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. So, I don't want to come to the light.

I don't want you to see all the junk. I don't want you to see that, and I don't want to see myself, that I have all these issues, that my deeds should be reproved. But in verse 21 of John chapter 3, it says, he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

So, for you and I, right, he that does truth, we are those who do truth, we walk in the truth, we want to come to the light. Now, the enemy in our flesh will say, no, no, no, no, no, don't go to the light.

Don't go to the light. It's going to, oh, everyone's going to see that. But that's not what the word says. So, we come to the light for the purpose of assuring ourselves we belong to God. When we come to the light, we gain assurance, not condemnation.

[32 : 18] We come to the light that we may see that our deeds are manifest, that they are wrought in God. In Revelation, verse 1, I'm sorry, chapter 1, John sees Jesus.

And in verse 14, it says that Jesus, when he saw him, he saw that his head and his hairs were like white wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire.

His eyes were like fire at that point, face to face. I don't want to come face to face with that. And John falls down at his feet as though he was dead. And then it says, Jesus reaches down and he says, what?

Fear not. Fear not. We don't have to fear when we come face to face with those piercing, burning eyes of Jesus. It assures us. It doesn't condemn us. Now, in Revelation 19, Jesus is coming back on a white horse to bring judgment to the world.

And again, it repeats that his eyes are like fire. And there he executes judgment. So, one way or another, you're going to come face to face with Jesus, with those piercing, burning eyes. We can either come as those that we don't want to come to the light because our deeds will be reproved, because they'll just expose us for what we are, a fake, a phony.

[33 : 31] Or we come to the light because we want that assurance that we are in God. And so, Festus says, Paul should have an opportunity to answer for his crimes.

That word answer means, it's the Greek word apologia, where we get apologetics from, to give an answer. So, Paul was allowed, he was given an opportunity to essentially lay hold of his accusers here.

The wording here where it says, and have license to answer. That word license is like to lay hold. Paul is being given an opportunity to lay hold of these guys.

Therefore, verse 17, when they were come thither, or hither, without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought forth. As Festus is relaying this to his buddy here, Agrippa.

Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none such accusations as I supposed. So he says, listen, I got this problem that Felix left. I don't know what to do with it. It's not our place.

[34 : 39] As Romans, you know that, Agrippa, to put any man to death, far be it from me, to pervert justice. So I gave Paul an opportunity. I gave him an opportunity to face these guys face to face, to lay hold of them, to answer for himself.

And they brought these accusations against him, but they were nothing like what I supposed. They were nothing that I expected. After two years, Paul's accusers still had nothing to stand on.

They had nothing concrete. They had nothing substantial. After two years, it was the same old. You see, sin falls where truth stands.

In Matthew 7, 24, Jesus begins to give the parable of building upon the rock. In Matthew 7, 24, he says, Therefore, whosoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock.

And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not for it is founded upon a rock. The truth stands firm because it stands on Christ.

[35 : 47] And everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell and great was the fall of it.

Sin falls where truth stands. Truth stands firm in Christ but truth is not just something we think of. It's not just a philosophy. It results in an action because those that hear the truth and don't act upon it, they're the foolish ones.

Do not build on that rock which is Christ. But the Jews in verse 19 he says they had a bunch of questions against him of their own superstition and of one Jesus which was dead and here we kind of hear what Paul's defense or his arguments continually were whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

This is Paul's this is kind of Paul's method of his defense to affirm the resurrection. Affirm means to profess. He professed it.

Profess means it's like two words combined proclaim and confess. So Paul is proclaiming and confessing that he had what? He had Jesus. The Jews had superstition.

[36 : 59] Paul had Jesus. It's so simple. I like that how in Psalms it says you know the Lord upholds the simple. Paul very simply had Jesus. He's like guys I just have Jesus.

Well tell us about this Paul. What does that mean? What does that mean in relation to the world system? What does that mean in relation to the temple? What about religion? What about well where's your politics? Who did you vote for?

I mean tell us Paul. I just got Jesus guys. He's alive. Well that's not enough. How's that gonna benefit me? How my finance is gonna grow? I just have Jesus.

John 1 14 and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus came to be with us and we beheld his glory. The glory is the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

That's what we have. We have Jesus full of grace and truth. We have the glory of the Father. Festus says in verse 20 and because I doubted of such manner of questions in other words I had no idea what they were talking about I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters.

[38 : 03] Not entirely true. See Festus had nothing to stand on. He didn't have the truth to stand on so he chooses the path of least resistance. Hey you know what?

Paul just go up to Jerusalem with me. I mean it'll all work out Paul. Agrippa yeah I don't know what to do so what can we do to just smooth this over and make it all go away?

But what are we supposed to follow? Right? Paul would write and say that we are not to follow cunningly devised fables we are not to follow our heart we're to lead our heart we're not to follow the flesh we're to follow sin so what do we follow?

In Colossians 3:15 there's this little phrase tucked away and it says let the peace of God rule in your hearts so wherever God's peace goes we go wherever God's peace doesn't go we don't go it's simple very simple we have Jesus we have the peace that he said my peace I give unto you my peace I leave unto you not as the world give I unto you so wherever God's peace is man I have I have full confidence to go there is no door that's closed where God's peace opens it right?

I go through that no matter what the resistance is what the odds are against me from the world but when Paul had appealed he's telling again a grip of this but when Paul had appealed to be reserved under the hearing of Augustus I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar Paul had appealed to be reserved under the hearing of Augustus he exercised his Roman right as a citizen to go and stand before Caesar Paul knew who was preserving him for what he was being reserved for didn't he?

[39 : 50] He appealed to Caesar because he already had God's promise he already had God's promise that you're going to get to Rome Paul so I think for Paul it wasn't so much about how I'm going to get there I think he's like man I've been two years sitting here I can tell you guys aren't going to do anything so just send me to Rome send me to Caesar I know who it is who's preserving me and then Agrippa said unto Festus well I would also hear the man myself and so Festus says well tomorrow said he thou shalt hear him I'm sure Agrippa as we're going to find out Paul's going to say Agrippa I know that you know about these things they were not done in the dark so I think Agrippa's like I wanted to meet Paul interesting at this point in Paul's ministry his audience is now coming to him he's not having to go to them they all come to him he gets to Rome they all come to him he doesn't have to go to them he didn't have to set up a meeting or get on the agenda for the city council to come and preach the gospel God opened that door God made the way for him and God brought these people to him this was not Paul's choice to be in politics

God opened the door for him for the sake of the gospel and Agrippa's curiosity it meant that Paul would have another opportunity to speak God's truth to a Gentile ruler and this would be the third time the third opportunity that God will give him Felix Festus and Agrippa three Gentile rulers going all the way back to when Paul on the road to Damascus is falls to the ground and then he goes to the house and Ananias comes to him and says Paul God has ordained you to go to the Gentiles to go to the nations and to preach before kings and kingdoms and I will show him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake so on the next day on the morrow when Agrippa was come and Bernice with great pomp and was entered into the place of hearing that's like the auditorium this was the place of judgment with the chief captains that would be the captains over thousands of the Romans and principal men of the city at Festus' commandment

Paul was brought forth here you have all of this authority all these principalities and powers and I don't think the visible ones were the only ones there I'm sure that there were demons there I'm sure that there was the elite of the elite in Satan's guard shall we say who was there I worked with a guy sweet man he's an older guy funny guy loves the Lord loves the Lord but he has some funny questions sometimes he'll be like I was sitting in church the other day and I was thinking God's omnipotent and all powerful and he's everywhere I was thinking I wonder how how everywhere Satan is because Satan's everywhere I'm like no Satan's not everywhere so that's what he wants you to think I said he can only be in one place at one time so I said I don't even know if he goes anywhere or he just sits there and kind of like orchestrates things I said I know in Job it says God says to him when he comes before him he's like well where have you been well I've been walking to and through throughout the earth so he can only be in one place at one time but he's got his minions he's got his one third of the angels he's already outnumbered two thirds didn't fall one third fell so I'm sure in this room it's the elite of the elite thinking we gotta get Paul

I'm sure there's other angels there too angels with Paul those that are fighting in the spiritual realm so in walks Paul into all this pomp pomp means it's the Greek word fantasia showy this pomp you know Paul wasn't thinking I got my guardian angel Paul's walking in and he's like I got Jesus it's Paul and it's Jesus and it's everybody else and it's Satan and all his minions it's the religion of the world it's the Romans the world system all odds against Paul and where it says there and principal men of the city that word principal is our word against it's the same Greek word those that are a part of in a sense the world has all the show of authority but they don't have any substance Paul would write in 2nd Corinthians or he'd already written it at this point do you look on things after the outward appearance if any man trust to himself that he is Christ let him himself think this again that as he is Christ even so are we Christ for though I should boast somewhat more of our authority which the Lord has given us excuse me for what purpose for edification and not for your destruction

I should not be ashamed and I cut off the D Paul has an authority Paul has authority and he recognizes I have authority but my authority is for edification these men they thought they had authority but Paul had a source of authority that they they couldn't imagine Paul derived his authority from God's word by anointing by calling and by commissioning Paul stood there essentially where where there's no hierarchy in the body but essentially Paul existed in the world as the man with the most authority I would think at this point in history because of who it came from so at this point the Jews have hounded Festus to the breaking point Festus says King Agrippa all men which are here present with us and all men who are here present with us the principal men of the city the captains over thousands you see this man he's like he's just this little harmless guy you see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me both at Jerusalem and also here crying that he ought not to live any longer the word in the Greek there crying is like a continual noise a continual constant hounding they brought him to the breaking point he's like

[45 : 43] I just want this to stop but when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death and that he himself had appealed to Augustus I've determined determined to send him wait a minute Festus what about that first part when I found he'd committed nothing worthy of death I let him go I declared him innocent nope that he himself appealed to Augustus why did he have to appeal to Augustus Festus because you wouldn't uphold justice at the core Festus was just another Felix unwilling to take responsible for the truth that God had placed before him for the responsibility he had put in his hands Proverbs 17 15 says he that justifies the wicked and he that condemns the just we read it before even they both are an abomination to the Lord two different things right two different approaches there justifying the wicked saying oh what they're okay we'll give them a pass that's okay if you do that I'll justify that that's making wickedness to look like something good the opposite of that is condemning the just making something righteous appear evil both of those are an abomination to the Lord and Festus then says

I have determined to send him of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my Lord I have nothing to write to Caesar wherefore I have brought him forth before you and especially before you O King Agrippa that after examination after examination had I might have somewhat to write he's saying I have nothing certain to write I have nothing firm I have nothing suitable I've got nothing it's interesting here where he says Lord nothing to write unto my Lord referring to Nero this is just again proof of Luke's authenticity in the book of Acts at this point this would be the first time in the history of the emperors where they would begin to call them Lord Nero was the first so you had Augustus and Tiberius neither of them would let themselves be called so but at this point we see that that title is beginning to be used Jeremiah 29 13 says and you shall seek me and find me when you shall search for me investigate search for me with all your heart

Festus here is saying I've searched I've investigated I've examined looking for evidence and I have nothing certain I have nothing that I can send Agrippa for it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not also to signify the crimes laid against him unreasonable and unsafe very unsafe for Festus to send this man a Roman to Rome without anything that he can lay against him you see Festus needed to get rid of Paul he needed to get rid of him he was a problem left over by Felix and he was becoming a problem for Festus Festus was trying to establish himself with the Jews he wanted to maintain this governorship and already the Jews are just on him so he needed to get rid of Paul but he needed to do that with the least amount of inconvenience to himself he said I need you to go Paul and I need to make sure this doesn't reflect badly on me I was thinking of how when the Lord comes to Abraham remember way back in Genesis 18 and he came with the two angels and then they went down to Lot in Sodom and Abraham went out with the Lord and the Lord is going to rain down fire on Sodom and Abraham says in 1825 he says to the Lord he says that be far from you to do after this manner to slay the righteous with the wicked and that the righteous should be as the wicked that be far from thee shall not the judge of all the earth do right what is it to do right it's not that hard not that hard you don't equate the righteous with the wicked you don't treat the righteous as wicked you don't treat the wicked as righteous it's really very simple shall not the judge of the earth do right and for Festus he was not doing right and here all of these men and all these people have come against Paul and like we said last time we wouldn't know the names of any of them if it wasn't for Paul

Paul's a big problem to them but Paul is also the only one here with any authority in Acts 20-24 Paul would write well would say Luke is writing Paul would have said he said to those as he was heading to Jerusalem and they were weeping because they knew it was coming he said none of these things move me neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received with the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God pretty simple pretty simple Paul's like I have Jesus I know what we're right from wrong I'm not gonna conflate the two as being the same thing and he's a problem because he stands on the truth which is immovable the waves of the enemy's accusations break upon the rock of truth you know the enemy it tells us in Revelation that the accuser of the brethren that he accuses us night and day before God night and day he's accusing us constantly accusing just as these these Jews were accusing him as Festus says

I have nothing to accuse him of we are night and day accused but it also tells us that Jesus is there and what's he doing also ever living to make intercession for us so what's how is he interceding for us is he interceding because he sees oh I see that Jared threw his back out cleaning up cat puke you know I gotta intercede for him is that I don't think so I mean yes we pray and hear I think the intercession though that he ever is living for is the enemy is there constantly casting accusations and Jesus is there at the right hand of the father interceding for every single one of those accusations every single one over and over and over Romans 8 31 what shall we say then to these things if God before us who can be against us if all odds are against us right we stand on something immovable and simple it's very simple we've got Jesus he that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us all things if you ever question if God's for you just remember what he gave up he gave up the most priceless thing he had his son who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect it is God that justifies whoever who's gonna put something on us who's gonna try and put my sin back on me no way it's God who justifies the waves of the enemy's accusations they break upon the rock of truth so that wasn't much where Paul was in it it was a lot of behind the scenes but you kind of see how

[53 : 02] God was working you see how as much as they try they cannot move this man they cannot move what God has determined is immovable they cannot change the truth they're stuck next time we will see Paul will have his defense before Agrippa and we'll see some more from him so I think for me like the application is just man it's so simple it's just it's there like that rock with the waves it's just there it doesn't have to do anything it's just there Jesus is there his truth is there I don't have to do anything it's really simple you know as Paul is brought in before Festus he's been two years sitting around doing whatever he's been doing ministering to the church and all of a sudden he's just brought in before them but it's not him right it's Jesus Paul goes representing Jesus when Jesus was led before Pilate right when he was led before Herod

I'm sorry when he went himself before Herod it says he answered him not a word that he was led as a sheep before the slaughter as a sheep before the slaughter is silent so is Jesus he was silent then but he's not silent anymore right when we as ambassadors of Christ when we go and represent him he says oh no I'm going to be with you I'm going to give you everything to say and it will not be you that speaks it at that time but it will be the Holy Spirit so yes Jesus was silent so that he might fulfill the obligation for our sin so that then he could stand there at the right hand of the Father interceding for us but he's not silent anymore he's very vocal but we don't have to worry about it I don't have to worry about it and that's really good news in a world that says to me well what are your politics what about man's system what about man's religion what about man's tradition I don't know I just got Jesus I really don't know I don't have an answer for you I just have the immovable truth of God's word Lord we thank you so much for that immovable rock in our life Lord Lord sometimes it's something we kind of stumble over Lord because it's an area of our life you're trying to to work on Lord you're trying to shine the light in

Lord not so you can expose us but Lord so you can assure us so that that area of our lives that is stumbling us or stumbling another Lord that we can be just as assured that there is redemption in that area Lord we can be just as assured that you are faithful to cleanse and faithful to heal and faithful to forgive every area Lord is not to expose us so I pray that we would be a people who just keep it very simple we have Jesus we have his truth and we walk in the light it's not hard and Lord I pray Lord as this world comes against us Lord as all odds are against us as we're questioned and we're plotted against Lord I don't think anybody's trying to kill us Lord but we know the enemy is we know Lord that the principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness of this world Lord that they are looking to take us out or to make us ineffective or worst of all to use us to bring down others to use us to lead others astray or to stumble others

Lord so Lord tonight we want to just bring it back to being simple just to bring it back to that we have Jesus and Jesus we thank you that you have us we pray that we would stand upon the truth that is immovable and that we would recognize Lord that you are the one who brings justice and judgment and in your time Lord you will do that here and so Lord we look to you we are not afraid of those eyes that pierce Lord because Lord in those eyes we also see compassion love you and thank you and in Jesus name Amen Amen