

## 2096 - PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA - Acts 25:23 - 26:32

PRELIMS. Paul has been in Caesarea for over 2 years under trial for stirring up a riot. Although no proof was presented, Felix left Paul in prison, but with some liberty. Festus takes over from Felix and he too finds no proof so Paul appeals to Caesar. As he waits to be sent to Rome, King Agrippa makes a State visit to Caesarea and ask Festus could he hear Paul! ‘Yes, tomorrow’!! (Why did he ask?)

### FESTUS’ PROBLEM

At the State visit, Festus told King Agrippa about Paul. Festus outlined his problem *I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him...before you King Agrippa, so that after we have examined him, we may have something to write* [25:26]

The problem of course was simply that there was **no evidence!**

Festus wanted to find Paul guilty and appease the Jews, but he couldn’t without evidence – the Pax Romana! Festus thought Agrippa being a Jew, might be able to ‘throw light’ on the whole affair and perhaps find Paul guilty! After all, Agrippa was *familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews* [3] - even Paul said so! [26:3]

Although Festus **said** he could not *indicate the charges against him* [25:27] he was **lying**, he **had** the charges but **no evidence!** As is often the case, our problems are caused by the **truth!** It was actually not about the Truth, but what **to do** about the Truth! Festus knew the truth, but the truth didn’t suit Festus, because he wanted to *do the Jews a favour* [25:9] - it was very **inconvenient** not to find Paul guilty. **APP** As long as we are unprepared to **face** the Truth, we will have problems. If we **waffle-on**, we will only **increase** our dilemma!

Witness the embarrassment of Festus at the end when Agrippa finally said *This man might have been set-free if he had not appealed to Caesar* [32]! Ie, ‘**You** Festus, ought to have dismissed this case’!! Here is a **prejudiced Jewish King** stating categorically ‘Paul is innocent, what’s the problem, he should be set-free. You know the Jewish law regarding this sort of thing Festus’! **Embarrassing!**

Festus could **not backtrack!** The stage for releasing the accused was past! Festus’s dilemmas was compounded – to send a prisoner

without a charge was **absurd**, to send a prisoner without evidence was **incompetent** – and **censurable**! We are often the **makers** of our **own** problems! Festus is now embarrassed, all because he was unwilling to be straight and honest and do justice to a Jew!

This King Agrippa II, came from a **long family** of **hatred** to Xnity! This was the **great grandson** of Herod the Great who massacred the baby boys in order to **kill Jesus**! His son, Herod Antipas (*that fox* [Luke 13:32] ), ordered the execution of John Baptist. His son, Herod Agrippa I, executed James and imprisoned Peter. His son was this Herod Agrippa II, he came with **Bernice** – who was his **sister** – yes, it seemed to be an **incestuous** relationship! So, a long line of Jews who **disregarded** the **moral law of their God** and hated **Xnity**! So it seems that those in high position in these day were equally immoral as we experience in our day! Disregard for God's Law. Nothing new!

**APP** I was a little **depressed** this week when the mail came in with a booklet from The Christian Institute! 'Election Briefing' re all the statements of the various Parties made re **Morality**! Almost **every** Big Party supported what Xns would call **immorality**! But I was **encouraged** in returning to this passage and realised that 'Nothings new' - the gospel has **overcome** this and bigger obstacles before!

*on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with **great pomp** [25:23]. All the officials were present, many **prominent men of the city** [23]! The 'prisoner' Paul is called in, he has no purple robes, nor gown, nor crown. He is wearing something **unique**/? **Handcuffs!** ...*these chains* [29]! What a contrast – it was a real 'them and us'!*

Yet, this is what is **beautiful**. Paul was not good-looking! He said himself, people wrote about him saying *his **bodily presence is weak and his speech of no account*** [1 Cor 10:10] It is said Paul was 'unprepossessing, balding, with beetle brows, hooked nose, and bandy legs, yet '**full of grace**' '!! Imagine – all the pomp and pageantry and glories of position and office, and this humble man in **handcuffs** appearing, **dignified by grace!** A **presence!** As far as **true dignity** was concerned, Paul **stole the show!** **APP** We ask – what are people's **1st impression** of you/I? There is such a thing as a presence and 'demeanour' and character! Of course 'looks' can be deceiving!

**PAUL'S DEFENCE** - Paul is asked to speak [26:1]. He asks, rather bravely, *beg you to listen to me patiently* [3] No doubt Paul wants them to 'see the hand of God' in his life – how he **was brought to submit** to King Jesus! Luke has already recorded for **us** Paul's conversion **twice!** But Agrippa has **never** heard it! Paul's defence has **3 parts** First: **His Upbringing:** *My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning....* [4] How? Ans: as a **very strict** Jew – a Pharisee *according to the strictest party of our religion* [5] Paul is telling them he knows all about Judaism, more than King Agrippa knows! And Agrippa **agrees** with a lot of it! Paul even says *my hope is in the promise made by God to our fathers to which our twelve tribes hope to attain as they earnestly worship night and day* [7b] \*\*Paul speaks **approvingly** of the Phars - no **miscalling** brethren!! Perhaps Herod had Jewish friends there!

**Theologically**, Paul understood NT faith in X, **grew out of OT** faith in **God**. The God of the OT did miracles! So *Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?* [8] Didn't God perform miracles in the past? Then why not now? God is **changeless!**

Second, Paul explained **His Own Hatred of Xnity!** *I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus...when they were put to death I cast my vote against them...I punished them often...I persecuted them* [10,11]. Paul is saying he perfectly understands the Jews hatred of Jesus. **He himself** was **convinced** Jesus was a heretic also! But then.....

Thirdly, Paul told them about **His Personal Meeting with Jesus** and his **Call from Jesus!** *In this connection (of persecuting Xns) I journeyed to Damascus...a light from heaven, brighter than the sun...Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?* [12-14] Paul was saying to King Agrippa that **Jesus met him - uninvited!** It just happened **suddenly** and **unexpectedly!** It was **terrifying!** I did **not seek** this experience. I **had no control** over this experience!!

**APP** Can you remember when Jesus 'interrupted' your life and plans and altered things forever? A conviction that grew **deeper** and **deeper?** Paul's point is that Jesus was **calling** him - *my purpose is to appoint you as a servant and witness...I am sending you to open*

their eyes so that they may **turn** from darkness to light...from the **power** of Satan to God that they may receive **forgiveness of sins**... **Therefore**, O King Agrippa, I was **not disobedient** [16-19] Note the **Therefore** – because of the **authority** of X! Paul: ‘I had to obey’!

Paul went on and spoke of **repentance** being necessary for salvation in his message to the Jews *performing deeds in **keeping** with their **repentance*** [20]! Again Paul connects OT with NT *I stand here testifying... **saying nothing but** what the prophets and Moses **said** would come to pass that Christ **must** suffer...**rise from the dead*** [23] Paul now saw the **opportunity** which would probably convince Agrippa the ‘whole thing’ was not a civil problem but about **religion** and there was no substance to the charges - so he said: *It was **for this reason** the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to **kill me*** [21]!

Xnity **is** a **supernatural** religion, it is **not humanistic**! It is not devised by man! **Rising** from the **dead**? **Festus**: ‘Come on Paul, your reading too much its driving you *out of your mind* [24]

**APP** Has anyone **ever** said that to you **because** of your **beliefs**? Festus **represents** those who today **think** they are too **intellectual** to be a Xn! \*But Xnity **is** a **rational** religion *I am speaking **true and rational** words* [25]! We all believe believe things we cannot explain! **Electricity**! When there is **evidence**, we believe, although we **cannot explain**! There is evidence for Jesus Christ on the Cross! Read the answers which Xn scientists give to **evolutionists**! Its **reasonable**!

Paul asked Agrippa a **personal direct** question *do you believe the **prophets**? I know that you believe* [27] \*But things were getting out of hand – ‘Boot on the wrong foot here Paul, I should be asking you the questions’ thinks Agrippa, so he probably meant to make a ‘**wee jab**’ at Paul *In a short time **would** you **persuade** me to be a Christian?* [28] Such a momentous decision in such a short time? ‘You Paul maybe did it in one minute on the road, I will need a bit longer’! [Lit: ‘In a **little** me you persuade a Xn to become’]

Agrippa is probably ‘**escaping**’! **APP** Just like you/I! So Paul finally and probably very humbly and graciously says ‘I wish everyone was a Xn - and no-one a prisoner’! \*Whether we give a **verbal** response to the gospel or not, **everyone** gives a response.