

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on May 2, 2021:**

**"Transformation of the Early Church Series on
The Book of Acts – Paul on Trial [Part 2]
(Acts 24 - 26) (Part 24)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman on Zoom shows us again that in the midst of contention and strife, God provided Paul with His peace to deal with it just as God provides us His peace and wisdom to guide and direct our ways today including sharing the Gospel.]

Introduction:

- Paul was on trial for 3 false accusations:
 - The first one was inciting a mob and breaking the peace in Jerusalem.
 - The second one was that he was leading a Nazarene sect that wasn't recognized by either the Jewish faith or the Roman government.
 - And finally, he was accused of defiling the temple.

Overview outline of last week's and today's message:

1. Paul before the Roman governor Felix (24:1-27)
 - a. Prosecution by Tertullus (verses 2-9)
 - b. Defense by Paul (verses 10-21)
 - c. Adjournment by Felix (verses 22-27)
2. Paul before Festus (25:1-22)
 - a. Festus refuses Jewish leaders' request to bring him to Jerusalem (verses 1-5)
 - b. Festus hears Paul's defense and his appeal to Caesar (verses 6-12)
 - c. Festus asks King Agrippa's advice (verses 13-22)
3. Paul before King Agrippa – the grandson of King Herold (25:23-26:32)
 - a. Festus introduces the case (25:24-27)
 - b. Paul makes his defense (26:1-23)
 - c. The judges react to the prisoner (verses 24-32)

Acts 25:1, Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, 2) where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. 3) They 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. 4) Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. 5) Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there."

- This was another conspiracy of the Jews so they could kill Paul if he went back to Jerusalem.
- But, as we see, Festus, was inspired by God, not to give in to the Jewish request.
- Once again, we see Paul every legal being protected by God

6) After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. 7) When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them. 8) Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar." 9) 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?"

10) 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. 11) 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!"

- Paul had Roman citizenship and had the legal right to appeal to Caesar.
- The Jewish community was very frustrated because of Paul and his protection by the Roman government.

12) After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

- Paul is being protected by the Romans to honor his request.

13) A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. 14) 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. 15) When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

- King Agrippa is grandson of King Herod, who killed all the Jewish male babies at the time of Jesus' birth.

16) "I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. 17) 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. 18) When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. 19) 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.

20) 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. 21) But 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." 22) Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself." He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him."

23) The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24) 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. 25) 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. 26) 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. 27) For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him.”

- In fact, God had intended to send Paul to Rome to share the gospel with the Roman leaders, but at first blush, this seems very negative.
- This is a good example for us to realize that when we are experiencing a trial, we need to remember that God is always with us, as he was with Paul.

Acts 26:1, Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: 2) “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, 3) and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

- Rome wanted to maintain peace throughout their empire.
- King Agrippa’s responsibility was that peace was maintained in this part of the empire.
- Many Roman leaders had heard the story of Jesus and were interested in hearing more, so Agrippa became kind of a friend of Paul.

4) “The Jewish people 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. 5) They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. 6) And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. 7) This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. 8) Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

- So, with the resurrection comes our great hope and foundation because of Jesus.
- Paul was trained and educated to be a top rank Pharisee – a Pharisee of the Pharisees.
- In Galatians, Paul said that God had set him apart from his mother’s womb and called him me by His grace. (Gal.1:15)
- So, God was involved in Paul’s life from his beginning.
- Eventually, Jesus did confront Saul, about his beliefs, on the road to Damascus and changed his heart.
- This change of heart gave Paul the ability to be one of the dynamic leaders of the church at that time along with Peter and James.

9) “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

- So, how can God be involved Paul's life molding and shaping his thoughts, when he was opposed to Jesus?
- It's obvious that Jesus had a future plan for Paul, at the right time.

10) And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11) Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

- Once again, God was right there involved in Paul's life even while he was persecuting the church.
- God doesn't transform us immediately – it's a lifelong process of ups and downs and misguided thoughts and then the recognition that we were wrong and then seeking out those we've hurt and asking for forgiveness.
- Paul was admitting that he was misguided in his thinking and was completely wrong.
- We are all broken people being transformed from the truth of our being to the way of our being through Jesus.

12) "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13) About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14) 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.'

- Saul was going against Jesus and His followers because he hadn't yet recognized Him as the Messiah.

15) "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' " "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 16) 'Now get up and stand on your feet.

- Jesus wasn't trying to inflict pain and punishment to Paul, but wanted to get his attention by having him become blind.
- When we come to faith in Jesus and want to serve God, our first point of action is to stand up and to participate.
- Remember that our action and participation always follows the relationship Jesus has with us.

16b) I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. 17) I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18) 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.'

- This is the gospel message of repentance.
- This is what we share with someone who is struggling, misguided or confused.
- Repentance is turning away from ourselves to Jesus.

- It's such a blessing to see things through our new eyes of Jesus and no longer through our old eyes of the self.

19) “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

- For Saul, this was an instantaneous transformation – Jesus converted Saul to Paul, who became obedient to Jesus.

20) First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

- In repentance – in that relationship change and knowing who we are in Christ, participation and activity then follows.
- We demonstrate this through our actions and through the way we live, because the Holy Spirit is flowing through us.

21) That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. 22) But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen – 23) that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

24) At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

- Festus apparently felt embarrassed that he invited King Agrippa to hear this message.

25) “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26) 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. 27) King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

- Paul, guided by the Spirit, is appealing to the king’s knowledge of the Law and Prophets.

28) Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

- This is an interesting question from Agrippa, because there is a certain implication that Paul was getting to Agrippa with his message.

29) Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

- Paul was still a prisoner in chains, but that didn’t prevent him from sharing the gospel of Jesus with others.
- Even in this negative context, Paul was able to share the gospel of Jesus hoping that many would come to faith.

- And when we have the opportunity to share the gospel with someone, it may not always be the best of circumstances, just as it wasn't always for Paul.

30) The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. 31) After they left the room, they began saying to one another, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." 32) Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

- So, here the king is telling Festus that he should have let Paul go.
- And because he didn't, Paul then appealed to go to Caesar.
- Again, God was working it out that Paul was able to then share the gospel with King Agrippa and those around him, before going to Rome.

Poetic Summary of last week's and today's message: (Let's say this together):

*The time has come for Paul to present his Case,
In doing so, the gospel of Jesus will be given Space.
Before three Roman officials Paul is now Tried,
They find Jewish condemnation and charges can't be Relied.*

*Paul appeals to Felix that they have no Proof,
But in worshipping God following the Way he was not Aloof.
I have the same hope as them and this is True,
Resurrection of both righteous and wicked I tell You.*

*I presented gifts in Jerusalem, remained ceremonially Clean,
Not defiling the temple, nor disturbance is what I Mean.
The case had now adjourned for several Days,
Then Felix's Jewish wife Druscilla gathered to hear his Ways.*

*Paul spoke of Jesus and clearly shared his Faith,
Describing Paul's witness and testimony Luke does Saith.
Two years passed Festus succeeds Felix as the Roman Gov,
Festus keeps Paul jailed to foster some Jewish Love.
Leaders in Jerusalem want Paul brought There,
Festus says come to Caesarea, Paul's life he will Spare.
Once again attempting charges they could not Prove,
Paul appealed to Caesar, a wise legal Move.*

*Now Festus and King Agrippa discuss Paul's Case,
The King was intrigued wanting to meet Paul face to Face.
Festus didn't admit his motives were actually Weak,
Then Agrippa met Paul giving him permission to Speak.*

*So Paul shared his hope founded in ancestral Pride,
The promise made to the 12 tribes their accusations Abide.
He described the persecution he brought about the Church,
Then how Jesus changed him and stopped his zealous Search.*

*Forced to ask who are you Lord? Not knowing what to Say,
I am sending you to Gentiles to be included in the Way.
At this my life changed and I began to preach the Word,
A message of faith in Jesus, and this they never Heard.*

*This is why they seized me, not wanting these things Said,
And now I stand on trial, they would rather have me Dead.
Then Festus shouted loudly, You are out of your Mind,
Agrippa asked if he was persuading him to be of Christian Kind.*

*With that the long case ended, tension thinned from the Air,
Paul expressed his hope they would yield to Jesus' Care.
The King then stated, this man has done no Wrong.
God succeeded in rescue, Paul's faith remaining Strong.*

Communion and Closing prayer