

(Acts 24:27) But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

TWO YEARS!!! Can you imagine 2 years without TV, without radio, without internet social media!! What's a person to do? Any normal person would be driven nearly mad. But Paul is not normal – He's a Christian, a follower of Christ, the Son of God.

Paul has our triune God abiding in Him and he is fully submitted to His will. When Paul had no visitors, he was not alone! When Paul became discouraged or impatient, He had the creator the of the universe counseling him abide and bear the Fruit of the Spirit while waiting on the LORD.

Did Paul remember the following Scriptures?

Psalms 27:13-14 *I would have lost heart,* unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. (14) Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!

Micah 7:7-8 Therefore I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me. (8) Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The LORD *will be* a light to me.

Now, perhaps this is all conjecture on my part about Paul feelings, but I think there's some Scriptural evidence:

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be **content**: (12) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (13) **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

Act 16:25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Waiting is difficult for most. Especially if the waiting is a roller-coaster of action-then-waiting-then-action-then waiting.

And now we come to a time of action on the part of the LORD who is ready to get Paul to Rome. It won't be easy! But most things worth having are not easily obtained!

(Acts 25:1) Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Festus succeeded Felix. There's not much we know about the man other than what's written in these Scriptures.

FESTUS PORCIUS The Roman governor who succeeded Felix in the province of Judea. The date of his accession is uncertain. Almost nothing is known of the life of Festus before his appointment by Nero as procurator of Judea. Festus died at his post and was followed about a.d. 62 by Albinus.

(Acts 25:2) Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, (3) **asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem**—while *they* lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

Chutzpah! They had the gall to ask permission to murder a Roman citizen!

(Acts 25:4) But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going *there* shortly. (5) "Therefore," he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with *me* and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."

Reason prevails and Festus tells them that this will be resolved in court!

However, Festus was put between a rock and a hard place. Appease the Jews who could cause all kinds of trouble, or hold prisoner a Roman citizen who, as far as he knew, had no formal charges against him.

(Acts 25:6) And when he had remained among them more than **ten days**, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. (Acts 25:7) When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove,

Festus tries to sit on the fence. Not an easy task when you consider that whatever decision he came to, someone would be greatly annoyed! And in either case, the consequences would rest with him.

They could not prove:

They brought no reliable witnesses! And just like before with Felix, they felt justified to lie. After all, weren't they just trying to be obedient to God to rid the world of this new religion that seemed to be stealing Jews away from Judaism and even going to the heathen pagans whom they hated?

(John 16:2) **They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.**

(Acts 25:8) while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all."

Paul clearly states what he has stated all along! He has done nothing to deserve jail or punishment!

(Acts 25:9) But Festus, **wanting to do the Jews a favor**, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"

Like Felix before him and like Pontius Pilate years before, the governors first priority seemed to be to placate the Jews so that there wouldn't be any trouble (riots, rebellion, sedition) that would make its way back to the Emperor!

(Acts 25:10) So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. (Acts 25:11) For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, **I do not object to dying**; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. **I appeal to Caesar.**"

Paul declares as clearly as he can: I have done nothing wrong!!!! And if you could find me guilty of something deserving of death, so be it – I will accept punishment.

And, Paul, clearly sensing that he would get no where with Festus, declares his right to be heard by Emperor Nero – which would certainly get him to Rome....

(Acts 25:12) Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

Oh thank Zeus!! I'm off the hook in judging this man! Let Nero have at him! BUT WAIT! What specific charges can I lay upon this man that would legitimize his being sent to Caesar?????

Oh, thanks Zeus (sarcastically!)

Jesus' prophesy about testifying before a king is about to take place!

(Acts 25:13) And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

Festus gets a break!

Wiersbe: About that time, Festus had a state visit from Herod Agrippa II and Herod's sister, Bernice. This youthful king, the last of the Herodians to rule, was the great-grandson of the Herod who had killed the Bethlehem infant boys, and

the son of the Herod who had killed the apostle James (Acts 12). The fact that his sister lived with him created a great deal of suspicion on the part of the Jewish people, for their law clearly condemned incest (Lev. 18:1–18; 20:11–21). Rome had given Herod Agrippa II legal jurisdiction over the temple in Jerusalem, so it was logical that Festus share Paul's case with him.

Note: The Herodians were Jews; how much they "practiced" their religion is unknown but probably not much.

(Acts 25:14) When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, (Acts 25:15) about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.

Leaving Paul to continue under house arrest, Festus finally brings up the issue to the King.

(Acts 25:16) To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.' (17) Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. (18) When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, (19) but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. (20) And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. (21) **But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar."**

Festus, knowing of Agrippa's Jewish background tells him about the case.

"decision of Augustus": this is a title, not a name

(22) Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

(Acts 25:23) So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

(Acts 25:24) And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. (25) But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. (26) I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something

to write. (27) For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

Festus all but declares Paul innocent but because of his lack of a backbone, he appeals to Agrippa to find something with which to charge him.

So, the Roman denarius is once again passed, like a hot potato (how's that for a mixed metaphor!!!)

Paul is clearly innocent. But God had yet another opportunity for Paul, one which he always loved to do: give his testimony of his encounter with Jesus, the Messiah which we will read about next week.

I said at the start:

Paul is not like non-believers. Paul has our triune God abiding in Him and he is fully submitted to His will.

But Paul is not like most believers either. Most will put Paul up on a high pedestal and lament "oh, I wish I could be like Paul", knowing in their hearts that they would not like it much given the life he had.

Remember what he wrote to the Church in Corinth?

2 Corinthians 11:23-27 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. (24) From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; (26) in journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; (27) in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—

But, while we are all ministers and witnesses to our Messiah Jesus, not all are called to such suffering. And to be fair, most of us would still love to have the faith of Paul, the courage and strength of Paul, the knowledge of Paul.

In the last analysis, Paul is just a man! I wrote of this when we were in Acts Chapter 18:

With all his "credentials", we must remember that he was just a man. He was a

man who made mistakes. He was a man who, near the end of his life would declare to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:15 This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

But let me make it clearer: , Paul is just a person **just like us!**

- Are we not all believers in the Living God and Savior?
- Do we all not have a measure of faith given to us? Such that the smallest bit is able to move a mountain!
- Do we all not have the Spirit of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit living in our hearts?
- Do we not all have gifts of the Holy Spirit which he has given us according to His perfect will?
- Which one of us cannot say:
 - **2 Corinthians 12:9** And He said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**" Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
 - **Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

So, what is keeping us from using the gifts that God has given to each of us?

We ALL need to live the spirit-filled life. It's a fearful thing to think that you might "lose control" by allowing the Holy Spirit have more access to our hearts by submitting to His will in everything! But the Spirit of the Living God honors what he created – a person, created in His image who was granted the "gift" of free-will. Make no mistake, we get to choose; we also get to lay our will aside for His will to be accomplished! Easy??? Absolutely NOT! Necessary??? Absolutely YES!

Hear from Paul himself as he teaches those he loves:

Ephesians 3:14-21 For this reason **I bow my knees** to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **(15)** from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, **(16)** that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be **strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man**, **(17)** that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **(18)** may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— **(19)** to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; **that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.** **(20)** Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the power that works in us**, **(21)** to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a **living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.*** (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Yes, Paul is a person like us! We are all reminded today that we too can be a person like him! This isn't a pep-talk; this isn't pie-in-the-sky. You may not have ever seen the power of God at work in your life or in the lives of those who you know. But that doesn't make it so! The reality is not based on our physical eyes; the reality is based on our spiritual eyes! And with those eyes we see the TRUTH of a LIFE He wants us to live as we see that we have been given everything we need to do His bidding because His WAY is infinitely better than our way.