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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**I REFUSE NOT TO DIE**

**Acts 25:1-27**

***Acts 25:1 "Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem."***

In the last chapter Paul had been imprisoned two years in Caesarea by Felix. He unjustly left Paul in prison hoping to receive a bribe and appease the Jews.

***Acts 24:26-27 King James Version (KJV)***

***26He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.***

***27But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.***

Now Festus has come to power as procurator. In verse 1 above, we see Festus going up to Jerusalem he had something to prove, being newly in office. Procurators governed troublesome provinces under the authority of the emperor rather than the roman senate. Felix had been greedy and cruel leader, where Festus wanted to be just and fair.

***Acts 25:2 "Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,"***

***Acts 25:3 "And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him."***

When the new governor arrived in Jerusalem, the Jewish religious leaders appealed to Festus to grant them a favor: transfer Paul to Jerusalem. The Jew's hatred for Paul had not diminished at all these two years. The Jews (God's chosen people) who actually had been given the law and knowledge of God, seemed to know less about the Lord than the unlearned. They lost no time in going to Festus and asking for Paul. These Jews were trying to trick Festus into sending for Paul. They would lay wait for him and murder him. Their secret plan was to ambush and kill Paul when he was moved—a plot they had devised two years ago that had resulted in Paul being transferred to Caesarea in the first place (Acts 23:12-30).

***Acts 25:4 "But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly [thither]."***

***Acts 25:5 "Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with [me], and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him."***

Festus was probably wise enough to see through their plot to kill Paul. Perhaps, Felix had filled him in on some of the details. We are not told one way or the other. We were not told what happened to the forty Jews who made the vow not to eat or drink, until they killed Paul either. There was a way to get out of such a vow, but there were severe consequences. The Lord had said not to make vows. We are sure they were not fasting after two years. We see, here, that Festus invites them all who have any accusation to place against Paul to come to Caesarea and file their complaint. Festus says, if there be any wickedness in him. Thanks to the fact, that Festus has not already made his mind up as to Paul's guilt or innocence. Once again, then, God was working behind the scenes to protect Paul from the murderous plans of the Jewish leaders. They were scheming to have Paul returned to Jerusalem. But God was working to take Paul far from their grasp—to stand before Caesar. No matter how grim your circumstances appear, do not forget the glorious truth that God is in control, whether directly or indirectly. Submit to his kingdom agenda in Scripture and trust him to accomplish his will for your life as he sovereignly directs your path.

***Acts 25:6 "And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought."***

***Acts 25:7 "And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove."***

When Festus did get back to Caesarea after ten days in Jerusalem, he had Paul brought to him. It seems, even here, that Festus would not be rushed into anything by these Jews. Here, again, we see that these Jews really did not have anything against Paul that they could prove. Even the accusations had nothing to do with civil law. The Jews also came forward and accused Paul of serious charges that they were not able to prove.

***Acts 25:8 "While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all."***

As he had been in the habit of doing, Paul denied the unsubstantiated charges. He was not guilty of anything against the Jewish law, the Jewish temple, or Caesar. Paul gives an encompassing defense of himself here. He truly had not gone against the law of the Jews. He had kept their feasts and their customs when he was at the temple. He had not really broken any religious law, or any civil laws. He had not even spoken out against Caesar.

***Acts 25:9 "But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?"***

Like his predecessor Felix, Festus could find no reason to condemn Paul. Nevertheless, he had a province to run, and he wanted his constituents to be peaceable citizens. So as a favor to the Jews, he asked Paul if he’d be willing to stand trial in Jerusalem. Festus was playing politics here. He knew that it was wrong to turn Paul over to these Jews. His wanting to be in good standing with the people of his area, is the only reason he made such a suggestion.

***Acts 25:10 "Then said Paul, 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 knowest."***

***Acts 25:11 "For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar."***

***Acts 25:12 "Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."***

As a Roman citizen, Paul has every right to be judged by a Roman court. Paul reminds Festus of that in the verse above. He is saying to Festus, you know how difficult these Jews can be, and you, also, know that I am innocent of all they have charged me with. The expression “as thou very well knowest” shows us that. Paul had had enough. He had not wronged the Jews, so he argued that he shouldn’t be given over to them. The question before Festus was, “Is Paul guilty of wrongdoing against Rome?” Although Paul was standing at Caesar’s tribunal, being tried before Caesar’s representative, Felix was unwilling to render a verdict. Paul gets really bold here in telling Festus that no man (including Festus) has a right to turn him over to these Jews. As a Roman, he has the right to appeal to Caesar, and that is just what he does. Paul had been exercising every legal right available to him. He wanted to make it clear to all that neither he nor Christianity was guilty of subverting the empire. Moreover, he wanted to go to Rome, the highest level of earthly authority, with a message from the supreme authority: Believe in the Lord Jesus and submit to his kingdom agenda. Paul has no fear of death. He says, if a fair court judge him guilty, he is willing to die for what he has done, but he is not willing to be turned over to the Jews. Paul's request to be tried by a higher court cannot be denied. Festus will get this whole mess out of his hands and let Caesar decide this impossible case.

***Acts 25:13 "And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus."***

Festus was a governor and Agrippa a king. King Agrippa (Herod Agrippa II) was the son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-5, 20-23) and the last member of the Herodian dynasty to rule. This Agrippa was Herod Agrippa II who was king over about a third of Palestine. The Romans had put him in charge of a few territories that did not include Judea. Agrippa was, perhaps, seeing how well Festus was doing with his new job. Agrippa was a descendent of the Edomites and was a Jew. It seems he was not a really faithful Jew but was nevertheless a Jew. This Bernice was Agrippa’s sister, with whom he was rumored to be in an incestuous relationship. She was known as a princess.

***Acts 25:14 "And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:"***

***Acts 25:15 "About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed [me], desiring [to have] judgment against him."***

We see that Festus is telling Agrippa (an expert on Jewish law) about the problem with Paul and the Jews at Jerusalem. Festus is quick to tell Agrippa that this is a problem he inherited from Felix. It was a custom of the king to come and show respect for the new governor, but Agrippa had stayed longer than the normal visit of state, perhaps to help with any pending problems. Since Agrippa was Jewish, Festus hoped he could help him make sense of Paul’s case so that he would know what to communicate to Caesar when he sent him.

***Acts 25:15 "About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed [me], desiring [to have] judgment against him."***

***Acts 25:16 "To whom I answered, 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 licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him."***

The Jew had so much hate built up of Paul, that after two years they were still wanting to kill him. Festus wants Agrippa to know that he has not gone beyond the Roman law in this matter. He is trying to make a good impression on Agrippa the king. He recites to Agrippa the law of the Romans pertaining to this situation. He is saying, I know the Roman law and I stick to it.

***Acts 25:17 "Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth."***

***Acts 25:18 "Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:"***

***Acts 25:19 "But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."***

***Acts 25:20 "And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked [him] whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters."***

***Acts 25:21 "But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar."***

Here, we see that Festus is explaining to Agrippa that he had not avoided this problem but had fully done his job. It appears that Festus knows very little about Christianity or Judaism. He even calls their religious belief "superstition". He was telling Agrippa, I thought they would accuse him of breaking some civil law, but the law they were accusing him of breaking was their religious law. Festus wants Agrippa to know that he did not overlook the wishes of the Jews either. Here we hear an apology by Festus to Agrippa for holding Paul over. He is just explaining why he kept Paul over.

***Acts 25:22 "Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him."***

After listening to the explanation, Agrippa said, I would like to hear the man myself. All of this has stirred an interest in Agrippa. Agrippa, being a Jew, and a king, feels that he might be able to settle this matter himself. He is the superior here and tells Festus that he wants to question Paul the next day. Festus tells him that he will see to it. Paul was about to have an opportunity to talk to a human king about King Jesus.

***Acts 25:23 "And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth."***

The next day, Paul appeared before Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice. All the men of the city, who had any position of rule, came to sit in on this meeting. There was much show of world power. This show was put on for Bernice and Agrippa. This was probably a large room where trials were generally held. This outward show of world importance is done in honor of visiting dignitaries. Festus, being in direct charge of Paul, commanded him to be brought forth to be examined by Agrippa.

***Acts 25:24 "And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye 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."***

Festus had just been in power a few days and had made his first trip as ruler to Jerusalem, when the Jews came to him and asked him to turn Paul over to them. They wanted to kill Paul, but they were not able to convince Festus that he had done anything worthy of death. Now Festus has explained to all of those present who this Paul is who will stand before them. The Jerusalem Jews were not present at this meeting.

***Acts 25:25 "But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him."***

Festus explained that the Jewish community wanted Paul dead, that he (Festus) had not found him guilty of anything, and that Paul had appealed to the emperor. Remember, Festus must defend his own decisions at this time, because he has just been in power a very short time. He says here that his decision to send Paul to Augustus Caesar was because Paul had requested that, as a Roman citizen.

***Acts 25:26 "Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write."***

***Acts 25:27 "For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes [laid] against him."***

Here, we see Festus, in front of all these witnesses, shifting the responsibility of deciding about Paul over to Agrippa. Festus described his dilemma: I have nothing definite to write to my lord (Caesar) about him. The name lord (not capitalized) was many times used in speaking of someone who had rule over you. That’s why he wanted Agrippa to listen to Paul and to offer some advice. Festus was understandably embarrassed to send a prisoner to Caesar without indicating the charges against him. Doing so was no small matter. This is almost a plea by Festus. He says, how can I send a man to Rome to be tried, when I really have not heard any charges placed against him that would be of interest to a Roman court? In essence Festus was saying, “Help me out, Agrippa. Don’t let me look like a fool in front of the emperor!”

**QUESTIONS**

1. After Festus was in Caesarea (as ruler) three days, where did he go?
2. Who looked him up and brought charges to him against Paul?
3. Who had imprisoned Paul for over two years?
4. Who was Felix replaced with, as ruler?
5. What did they ask Festus to do to Paul?
6. What would they have done to Paul, if Festus had granted their wish?
7. What answer did Festus give them?
8. What did Festus invite Paul's accusers to do?
9. Who had Paul appealed his case to?
10. Who was Festus visited by, soon after taking office?
11. Who had tried to get judgment against Paul?
12. What was the right of a Roman to do, before he was delivered to die?
13. In verse 19, he called their religious beliefs what?
14. When Paul appealed to Caesar, what did Festus do?
15. In verse 22, what does Agrippa tell Festus?
16. How did Agrippa and Bernice come to the hall?
17. In verse 25, Festus says that he found Paul not worthy of \_\_\_\_\_\_.
18. Who is Festus calling lord in verse 26?
19. Why did Festus say he brought Paul before these men and Agrippa?
20. In verse 27, Festus said it seemeth unreasonable to do what?