

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

Study Number Twenty-One – Acts 25:1-27

The apostle Paul was confronted with the fact that he would be going out of the will of God if he went to Jerusalem. And he felt like it was really God’s will for him to go. He did and there was a riot in the city, but he had a chance to give a great speech from the top of the stairs, remember? Then he had a chance to speak before the Sanhedrin.

But there was a plot against his life by 40 Jews who were going to kill him. As a result of that Claudius Lysias, the commander, sent the apostle Paul under armed guard with 470 men up to Caesarea.

And in our last study the apostle was there in Caesarea and Ananias the priest brought his own personal lawyer Tertullus along with a lot of others, and they began to accuse the apostle.

This all took place before a man by the name of Felix. We call him Felix the Phlegmatic, because Felix cannot make a decision. He doesn’t make a decision about Paul.

And then remember as the chapter ended, Felix and his wife Drusilla invited Paul over to have a little conversation. And they talked about righteousness, self-control and judgment.

And Felix got scared and he told him to leave. That he'd call him again another time. Felix was a man with a slave mentality who was ruling as the government. Felix was the man who had the difficult time even trying to make the decision, and he didn't.

As the end of the study came, we read this:

Acts 24:27

But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus; and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

Invariably we'll find a politician who usually will take the easy way. The easy way to go is to keep a riot from happening. And so, placate the majority. And the majority wanted Paul. So we're going to just leave him in prison as a favor to the Jews.

How do we think Paul feels as the scene of this study opens? Well, he's had a chance to visit with Felix, he's in pretty comfortable quarters, he does have all of his friends. Remember Caesarea is a strong place. It was the beginning point of Gentile salvation so Cornelius and Philip are here.

And remember the big question in the last study? Are they mature enough now to come to minister to Paul in his needs after they told him not to go to Jerusalem? We're hopeful that they did and it's been a comfortable two years for the apostle there in the city of Caesarea.

The only parallel we have to this is in the life of Joseph. In Genesis 40, after Joseph interprets the dream of the cupbearer of Pharaoh, he stays:

Genesis 40:14, 15

Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house; for I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into this dungeon.

Now that's a legitimate request. And the sad, sad thing is, Genesis 40 says this:

Genesis 40:23

The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph but forgot him.

And so when we open Genesis 41 with:

Genesis 41:1

Not it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had

a dream:

So his prison sentence is not legitimate and two more years are added to it.

Many times in our lives the hardest thing in the world is the time of waiting for the divine purpose to unfold. It is difficult to wait. And it seems at times in our lives, all we can do is trust and the Lord is working but we can't see anything happening.

And all the circumstances are contrary many times, too. And when it's like that, we have to realize that God does work in all of our delays. And the time will be right when God does the work.

Paul must have thought: "Well God, did I really make a mistake in going to Jerusalem? Would I be in this place if I'd have listened to all those people?"

The only comfort that Paul has right now is the comfort that the Lord said he was going to go to Rome. So he knows that at least the prison sentence is not going to be the end. It's just a question of when he's going to get there. And he doesn't know whether he can hold on long enough to wait that long.

Robert Foster put it this way:

It is characteristic of the best of us to be in a hurry. To wait is harder than to adventure. The hardest time of all is the time

in between. At the moment of decision there is the excitement and thrill. At the moment of achievement there is the glow and glory of satisfaction. But in the intervening time, there is necessary the ability to WAIT and WORK and WATCH, when nothing seems to be happening. It is then that men are apt to give up, lower their ideals and sink into apathy.

(source unknown)

How true this has to be to us about the coming of Jesus Christ. It is an appalling thing to see the condition of the church so apathetic and so lukewarm.

Jesus has only delayed His coming. Friends, He's coming! And it's just a question of when. And every day He waits, He gives another person another opportunity to receive His Son, Jesus Christ, as Savior before the Father allows the Son to come back again to set up His kingdom.

What do we do when everything is on hold in our life and everything we touch seems to fall apart? Well Psalm 37 is probably the greatest place to go. In Psalm 37 we have FIVE STEPS that a person needs to take when his life is in limbo:

1. verse 3—TRUST. Just trust. His time schedule has always been perfect. Just trust in Him and everything's going to be alright.
2. DELIGHT—in verse 4. "Delight yourself in the Lord and He'll give you the desires of your heart." Delighting in Him means that we know two things, even though everything is on

hold:

1. God is working and
2. there are going to be good results.

So how can we delight in the anticipation of both of those things? God is working and there are going to be good results from this. So we delight in the Lord.

3. verse 5—COMMIT. We finally just rolled it over on Him and say, “Lord, the next move is yours.”

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your care upon Him, for you are His personal concern.

Just put it on Him! Allow Him to take over all this anxiety and this frustration.

When we come to the place where we begin to worry and get anxious, we are accepting responsibility that God never intended for us to have. We have to come to that peace and contentment that He’s at work and commit it to Him.

This is the hardest one:

4. BE STILL—that’s in verse 7.

It is in the time of stillness that we'll think the clearest.
Philippians 4:6, 7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. [WHAT?] And the peace of God will prevail.

Colossians 3:15

The peace of God will act as an umpire.

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.

Isaiah 32:17

The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of it quietness and assurance.

We can't have that if we aren't still. Just stop and demonstrate that we're trusting Him by being still. If we can't be still then we aren't trusting Him.

Like one lady says: "I come and throw all my burdens on the Lord but then I sack them up and take them with me when I leave."

We're great at that. We never let go of it and let Him keep

them and be real still.

And then the fifth one's even harder yet:

5. WAIT PATIENTLY—verse 7.

Wait patiently—just keep our focus locked on the Lord.

Psalm 27:14

Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and
He'll strengthen your heart.
[And then he says it again]
Wait I say upon the Lord.

Because when we're most eager to act is when we'll make the most pitiful mistakes, right? And God has never been late yet.

“In the fullness of time He sent forth His Son.” (see Galatians 4:4, 5)

Throughout the life of Christ He said, “My hour has not yet come...My hour has not yet come.” But when we get to John 13 He says: “My hour has come. The time is here.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He makes all things beautiful in His time.

How many times it hurts and it's bad and we can't see any

purpose in it. But we have to know that God's at work.

Ron Lee Davis wrote a book called *Gold in the Making* and he sites this illustration from Leighton Ford, who was an assistant of Billy Graham:

(Gold in the Making by Ron Lee Davis)

You may know Leighton Ford as one of the leaders of the evangelical church in America, as a close associate of Billy Graham, and as a gifted teacher and communicator. Since my years in Minneapolis, I've known Leighton Ford as a friend and as one of the guiding and inspiring influences in my life and ministry. Not long ago, I received a letter from him that told about the death of his twenty-year-old son, Sandy, during surgery. This touching excerpt from that letter expresses the understanding of Romans 8:28 that we all need to have, and the kind of mature Christian character we all want in a time of trial:

We grieve deeply over Sandy's death. The loss has been unexpected and far more crushing than we can express. But we know that he is with the Lord whom he loved and served. His life was not cut short, but completed...The day before Sandy's surgery I prayed, "God, be good to my boy. God has been good, though not as we expected. We look forward to understanding more of why He chose to show His goodness in this way.

Was the loss of his son a good thing to Leighton Ford? No, of

course not. The first thing he talks about is the grief, the crushing and inexpressible sense of loss. But through this inexplicable trial, he expresses faith and confidence in God's goodness—a goodness that is difficult to understand at such times, but a goodness that is promised to us in Romans 8:28.

God is at work, weaving all the circumstances of our lives together into a purposeful, glorious pattern. He uses our joyful circumstances and our painful circumstances for one all-important purpose.

(source unknown)

“Paul, can you do it?” He has to have at least some positive expectation because there's a change of leadership. That's normal, isn't it? When the new president comes in he's going to solve all the problems. It's just going to be great now. Everything is solved—taken care of.

Under new leadership naturally Paul has to feel some positive expectations at this point. So verse 1 tells us, here comes the new leader.

v. 1 Festus therefore, having arrived in the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

“Festus therefore, having arrived in the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.”

Well, we have a new governor. We got rid of the old one. We got a new one.

Festus immediately wants to get out among the people. He wants to find out what's going on so he takes about a 50 mile trip to Jerusalem.

Now remember, the compass in the book of Acts is backwards. They go up south and down north. And he “went up to Jerusalem from”—the north—“from Caesarea.”

Felix has never taken a stand, never made a decision. Festus is not going to make that mistake. He's going to get out and find out what's going on as quickly as he arrives there.

v. 2 And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul; and they were urging him,

“And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul; and they were urging him,”

v. 3 asking a personal favor for themselves against him, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem, (all the while preparing an ambush to kill him on the way.)

“asking a personal favor for themselves against him, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem, (all the while preparing an ambush to kill him on the way.)”

Believe that? They're right back where they were two years

ago! That's the way bitterness is, by the way. When we have bitterness and hatred and resentment in our heart, it always picks up right where it left off. Isn't that something? But it does. Unless we really deal with it constructively and seek forgiveness and get it right.

And here it is, just picks right up! We can imagine those 40 guys who made that oat never to eat a bite or anything two years ago are probably starving about now. They are probably part of this group, saying "Hey, we've got to get this guy." But they didn't forget it!

They immediately, with the change of leadership, see their opportunity to jump on the bandwagon and get Paul before Festus really finds out too much about him. And to take advantage of a change of leadership.

He is different than Felix.

v. 4 Now then, Festus answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to be leaving shortly.

"Now then, Festus answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to be leaving shortly."

He's not going to be intimidated. They can make their requests and their suggestions but he says, "I'll tell you what folks. I'm on a little survey trip here and when I get through

I'm going up to Caesarea and I will treat that situation when I get there. Thank you very much sir." And just leave it like that for right now. He's not going to fall into anything.

He probably has a portfolio from Felix that had the letter from C.L. in it and it had all of the other negotiations from the proceedings with Tertullus. And so he's read it and he knows that there's not a grain of truth in any of this and so he just says, "I'll check on it when I get back to Caesarea."

v. 5 "Let those, therefore among you," he is saying, "who are vested with power, having gone down there with me assuming that there is anything amiss in this man, be bringing accusation against him."

"Let those, therefore among you,' he says to them, 'who are vested with power, having gone down there with me assuming that there is anything amiss in this man, be bringing accusation against him.'"

Well here we go—same song, second verse. Isn't that the way the wheels of justice do? We have one court appearance and they hire their lawyer Tertullus and they do their deal.

And now two years have passed and we're right back in court again. And we're going to have another hearing before another leader.

So now Paul is going to have a chance to speak before Festus.

Do we see God's unseen hand behind that?

He's talked to the Sanhedrin. He's talked to the nation on the stairs. He has now talked to Felix and gave his witness to Felix and Drusilla. Now God is going to use him to give a witness to Festus and there's going to be somebody else that's coming in. In just a minute somebody else is going to join him to give the apostle another incredible opportunity.

v. 6 And after he spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea; on the next day having taken his place on the judgment seat, he ordered Paul to be brought.

“And after he spent not more than eight or ten days among them,”—that is there in Jerusalem—“he went down to Caesarea; on the next day having taken his place on the judgment seat, he ordered Paul to be brought.”

v. 7 And after he arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove;

“And after he arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove;”

Where's Tertullus? Evidently they fired him after the last deal. They couldn't afford to pay the legal fees and retain him

for two years and so they got rid of him. Now they're just coming with a bunch of irrational, unprovable statements.

What are the statements?

1. He was profaning the temple. He took Trophimus in the temple. And of course he didn't do that.
2. He has a disregard for the Law of Moses.
3. He lacks respect for the customs and the traditions of our people.

That was basically a summary of their case. And it's a legal brief. They're just doing all of it and they're making all kinds of charges without any evidence.

Tertullus' speech basically summarized their whole thing. They just picked up from where they left off.

The speech is in Acts 24:

Acts 24:5-8

We found this man a real pest, and he's a fellow who is stirring up strife among all the Jews throughout the inhabited earth, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; who even attempted to profane the temple, who also we arrested and we wanted to judge him according to our own law. But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out

of our hands, ordering his accusers to come before you, whom you will be able, having yourself conducted an investigation concerning all these things, to come to know fully the things of which we are accusing him.

That's basically what took place.

v. 8 while Paul was saying in his own defense, “I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”

“while Paul was saying in his own defense, ‘I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.’”

Is he intimidated a bit? He stands there before Festus and he says, “Listen, I am innocent on all three counts! I haven’t done a thing against the Law of the Jews. I haven’t done anything against the temple. And I am not guilty of anything against Caesar! You can just count on it. I’m innocent.”

Now we need to remember what Jesus taught about relationship to Caesar. In Matthew 22 we read this:

Matthew 22:17-21

“Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?” But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, “Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the poll-tax.” And they brought Him a

denarius. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.”

Paul says, “I have rendered unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. I’m not guilty of tax evasion. I’ve been an upright Roman citizen. I haven’t done anything in the temple and I haven’t violated the Law. I’m innocent as I stand before you.”

Now look at verse 9. Does that sound familiar?

v. 9 But Festus, desiring to do the Jews a favor, when he answered Paul said: “Are you willing, having gone up to Jerusalem, there to be judged concerning these things in my presence?”

“But Festus, desiring to do the Jews a favor,”—don’t want to start a riot—“when he answered Paul said: ‘Are you willing, having come up to Jerusalem, there to be judged concerning these things in my presence?’”

So always leaning toward those that might create a problem. Now Festus knows full well that it is certain death for Paul if they go to Jerusalem. And so he asks Paul this unfair question in the hearing: “Are you willing to go up there and stand on the charges?” It’s like he didn’t even hear him when he said, “I’m not guilty of any of these things.”

“Will you go up there and stand for the charges?”

Look at verse 10. Oh, what courage.

v. 10 But Paul said: “I have taken my stand before the judgment seat of Caesar, and here I am standing where I ought to be judged. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know.

“Paul said: ‘I have taken my stand before the judgment seat of Caesar, and here I am standing where I ought to be judged. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know.’”

Talk about putting the ball in his court! He said, “You are funnin’ me! You are placating some people at my expense! You know I’m not guilty! And I am to be judged here at the judgment seat of Caesar.”

Is he saying with Martin Luther: “Here I stand; God help me!”

“I’m going to stand steadfast, unmoveable.”

There comes a time in our Christian life where we desperately need to stand.

In this situation, Paul is not a Caspar Milquetoast little Christian guy who’s scared. He stands right there and he says, “This is it! This is where I’m standing!” And he makes his rights very well-known, and he says, “I am not guilty.” And he adds to that, as we very well know. And he knows that he talked to Felix and he read the letter.

v. 11 **If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I am not refusing to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men are accusing me, no one is able to hand me over to them. I am appealing to Caesar.”**

“If then”—he even adds to it—“if I am a wrongdoer and I have committed anything worthy of death, I am not refusing to die; but if none of these things is true of which these men are accusing me, no one is able to hand me over to them. I am appealing to Caesar.”

Why? Well he knows that’s the free ticket to Rome and that’s the next part of God’s program for him so why not! Go for all of it!

If we can’t get any satisfaction in the lower court, go to the Supreme court! So he is! He says, “I’m going to Caesar.” And that’s the ultimate step in the Father’s program for him.

v. 12 **Then Festus after he conferred with his council, answered: “You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go.”**

“Then Festus after he conferred with his council, answered: ‘You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go.’”

We have the first decision made by a governor in the last two episodes, haven’t we? Felix never did make one. Festus says,

“Alright, you appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you’re going to go. That’s where we’re going to send you.”

At least we have a decision being made.

Now we know that Paul is going to Rome. And the rest of the book of Acts is so exciting because he’s going to leave. We’re going to see him on the ship and then we’re going to see him in the last chapter—home in Rome really, where God had said he was going to go. And how faithful God is to get him to Rome.

Now these last few verses in the chapter set the stage for something really exciting in the next study. We’re going to get to hear the greatest address that the apostle ever gave. It’s his greatest opportunity. It is a tremendous witness to this whole city of Caesarea.

And it’s all been set up by the fact that Festus is now the leader. And Herod is going to drop into town and all of that combined is going to give Paul the one great opportunity to witness to an incredible audience. And that’s the stage we’re setting.

We’re going to come right up to the time that Paul opens his mouth and we’re going to have to continue studying to hear what he’s going to say.

v. 13 Now when several days elapsed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea, greeting Festus.

“Now when several days elapsed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea, greeting Festus.”

Caesarea is a sea coast town. And Agrippa and Bernice had a condominium there and they were coming down to spend some time at the beach. And while they're there, they're going to check in and visit with Festus the new Roman governor over the region.

Now understand the Herods? Herod Agrippa II and how does that all fit together?

Here's a little morbid story. We're going to think this is actually “Dynasty” or something else when we get through—or “As the World Turns.” But here's the story.

The Herods were the descendants of Esau. They're Edomites. But they ruled in the Jewish community. There were four of them.

There was Herod the Great. Remember him? He's the one that had all the little babies killed who were under two years of age in order to hopefully wipe out Jesus Christ.

Then there was Herod Antipas, his son, that took over. And it was Herod Antipas that was ruling when John the Baptist was beheaded. So he was responsible for that.

Every one of these guys killed somebody religious basically.

Then Herod Antipas' son was Herod Agrippa I. And he's the one that made that deal in Acts 12 about having James beheaded and Peter put into prison. And remember he was miraculously delivered through the prayers of the saints.

Now this is Herod Agrippa II. This is Herod the Great's great grandson. And he is the last of the Herods—he's number four. And he is a pleasure-loving mad man. He is totally immoral.

Let's introduce the family tree so we can be repulsed for just a second. Herod Agrippa II and Drusilla—Felix's wife from our last study—are brother and sister. They have one other sister. It is Herod Agrippa II, it's Drusilla and the other sister is Bernice. He's living in incest with his sister Bernice.

So as he comes he plays this immoral lifestyle before the whole nation. And he's highly respected by the Jewish community, to give us an idea of how far they've departed from the moral teachings of the Scripture.

So this is brother and sister. Mix in Drusilla we have the three of them all part of the family. Now these are the people that are coming to Caesarea right here.

v. 14 And while they were spending many days there, Festus laid the things concerning Paul before the king, saying: "There is a certain man who has been left behind a prisoner by Felix;

“And while they were spending many days there,”

See they were there for quite a while. Probably had a two week time there.

“Festus laid the things concerning Paul before the king, saying: ‘There is a certain man who has been left behind a prisoner by Felix;’”

We can't get two politicians together very long before they start talking politics. And he just visits with him. He says, “I want to tell you something, Felix left this guy behind by the name of Paul and he didn't do anything about him.”

Now he's going to tell him—verse 15.

v. 15 concerning whom when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation upon him.

“concerning whom when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation upon him.”

Why does he mention that to Agrippa like that? He's an authority on Jewish affairs.

Festus is a Roman governor. Herod is an authority on Jewish affairs. So he gives him all of this information hoping that he's

going to get some help from him on this.

v. 16 To whom I answered that it is not a custom with Romans to be handing over any man before the one who is being accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.

“To whom I answered that it is not a custom with Romans to be handing over any man before the one who is being accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.”

Do we think Herod Agrippa knows all about this? Oh they do! They’re the ones responsible for all of these deaths and they know about Paul. And he knows all about him. He’s just never met him or heard him.

v. 17 Therefore after they assembled here, having made no delay, the next day, having sat down on the judgment seat, I ordered the man to be brought.

“Therefore after they assembled here, having made no delay, the next day, having sat down on the judgment seat, I ordered the man to be brought.”

v. 18 Concerning whom after the accusers stood up, they were bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting;

“Concerning whom after the accusers stood up, they were bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting;”

In other words, they did something different than he really expected from him.

v. 19 but they were having certain questions against him concerning their own religion and concerning a certain Jesus who was dead, whom Paul was saying to be alive.

“but they were having certain questions against him concerning their own religion and concerning a certain Jesus who was dead, whom Paul was saying to be alive.”

What’s that tell us about Festus? He’s not a Christian.

He says it’s “religion,” and he says they said he was alive but he’s dead. So he doesn’t believe in the resurrection.

v. 20 And being at a loss with reference to an inquiry concerning these things, I was asking if he would desire to be going to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these things.

“And being at a loss with reference to an inquiry concerning these things, I was asking if he would desire to be going to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these things.”

v. 21 But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the decision of the Emperor, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I should send him up to Caesar.”

“But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the decision of the Emperor, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I should send him up to Caesar.”

Now watch how Agrippa responds.

v. 22 And Agrippa said to Festus, “I also was wishing to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he is saying, “you shall hear him.”

“And Agrippa said to Festus, ‘I also was wishing to hear the man myself.’ ‘Tomorrow,’ he is saying, ‘you shall hear him.’”

Do we like Festus? He’s made two decisions now.

The first one was that he’s going to Rome. And the second one was, “tomorrow you’ll have your chance to hear this man.”

Oh man. We can just see God’s hand working behind that. Here’s the governor in Caesarea and Herod getting a chance to hear the Gospel from this man.

v. 23 Therefore on the next day when Agrippa came and Bernice amid great pageantry, and having entered the auditorium both with commanders and the

outstanding men of the city, and Festus having given the order, Paul was brought in.

“Therefore on the next day when Agrippa came and Bernice amid great pageantry,”

We can see they probably reserved the Titus County Civic Center and they’re going to have a big crowd and a “great pageantry.” It’s Hail to the Chief and the military and the flags and the secret service and the press—all of the pageantry that goes with bringing great leaders like this to an event.

“and having entered the auditorium both with commanders and the outstanding men of the city,”

See they’re going to have a distinguished men’s luncheon following all these so there’s lots of people there—city councilmen, the mayor and the rest of them.

“and Festus having given the order, Paul was brought in.”

What do we think Paul did all night? He prayed like crazy. He got together all of his notes and decided this is his great opportunity. “How am I going to handle this? I certainly don’t want to do what I did at the Sanhedrin. I want this to be the very best thing I’ve ever done.”

And here he comes in and here they all are. Now see how God has worked all that? Through all the denials and the trauma,

to get the word out, he now is ready to speak. And the timing is so perfect.

In his devotions in the morning he probably sang:

We rest on Thee, our shield and defender.
We go not forth alone against the foe,
Strong in Thy strength,
Safe in Thy keeping tender.
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.
(source unknown)

Now Festus is the master of ceremonies. It's altogether fitting that as the governor he would be the one who would make the announcements to the crowd that's gathered.

v. 24 And Festus is saying, “King Agrippa, and all those men who are present with us, you are seeing this man concerning whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both in Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought no longer to be living.

“And Festus is saying, ‘King Agrippa,’—and that’s the right way to address the king first—“and all those men who are present with us, you are seeing this man concerning whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both in Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought no longer to be living.”

He's introduced as a man who deserves to die, in the speech on the stairs and everything else. That's what they've been

saying.

v. 25 But when I found that he had done nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, decided to be sending him.

“For when I found that he had done nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to be sending him.”

Now notice this next verse because this really raises Paul’s stock a mile.

Festus admits this.

v. 26 Concerning whom I am having nothing definite to write to my lord. Because of this I brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.

“Concerning whom”—that is, Paul—“I am having nothing definite to write to my lord.”—that is the emperor—“Because of this I brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa,”

“Because you’re an authority on Jewish affairs.”

“so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.”

He says the whole purpose in this gathering is, “After you hear him yourselves, I want you—especially King Agrippa—to draw up a letter of charges that I can send with this prisoner. Because how ridiculous to send a prisoner all the way to Rome and not have a charge against him?”

Now is that consistent with what Paul said in Acts 24? He says, “I’m exercising myself to always have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.” (ref. Acts 24:16)

He knows that man is right. He knows his heart’s right. He knows his spirit’s right. And he doesn’t have a thing to do with this.

But we can see back of it, can’t we? That God is working out His purpose and through this governor Paul is going to Rome. And so back of it, Festus has a problem.

“What charges could I bring?” And he admits it in verse 27.

v. 27 For it is seeming absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him.”

“For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him.”

We’ve come to the end. We have to leave Paul standing there ready to speak before this crowd. And what a fabulous

message he gives.

We got several lessons before we close.

Lesson #1: How long and lonely seems the road of His will at times.

It's rough. It's lonely and long while we wait.

Lesson #2: The Lord's timing is always perfect, even if it does seem slow from our perspective.

If it hadn't been two years for Joseph, he would have never had the privilege of interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and becoming second in command of the land. That was God's perfect timing. If he'd gotten out of prison by the cupbearer he would have never had the privilege of interpreting Pharaoh's dreams.

If Paul had been delivered under the leadership of Felix, he would have never got this shot to speak to Festus and to Agrippa and Bernice—all of them in this great witness that he's going to get to have.

It all makes sense to us now because we have the privilege to look back and see what happened to Paul. But we can't believe that it's the same God working in our life. And the circumstances we're facing and the wall we bumped up against is God waiting for His perfect time. Don't get discouraged and depressed. Just wait and it'll be perfect and

we'll understand it the further we go.

The further we walk with Him the more we're aware of that. He is at work and His timing is perfect."

Lesson #3: God is providing an opportunity for Felix, Festus, Agrippa and Bernice to hear the gospel message.

And we can put Drusilla in there too.

God is providing an opportunity for Felix, and Drusilla, for Festus, for Agrippa and Bernice each to hear the gospel message.

Lesson #4: Paul takes a stand because he is innocent of all the charges.

Or if we want to have confidence, just be innocent. And when the charges come, we can stand. And Paul does.

Lesson #5: God's unseen hand is leading Paul to Rome.

And that helps us too to know that the Lord's working behind all this.

Lesson #6: Paul is having a great opportunity and great exposure for the gospel.

Lesson #7: "The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Even Felix, Drusilla, Festus, Agrippa and Bernice.

Lesson #8: When things are on hold in your life, learn to trust, delight, commit, be still and wait patiently.

Our greatest witness is going to be in the midst of all that.

How many of these people Paul witnessed to responded? Not one of them.

We have no record that Felix, Drusilla, Festus, Agrippa or Bernice ever responded.

And Paul could say, “What’s wrong with me? Nobody’s responding to my message!”

When we get the focus on ourselves then Satan can really do a number on us, bringing us into depression, despair—thinking something’s wrong with us.

This great apostle witnesses forthrightly and faithfully that God’s at work but none of them ever respond to his message.

Ruth Harms Calkin wrote a little poem called “Thank You for Waiting.”

(Tell Me Again, Lord, I Forget by Ruth Harms Calkin)

Thank You for Waiting

Had You given in to me, Lord
On the thing I wanted so much,
My life today
Would be a sorry mess.

I tell You nothing new—
I simply repeat
What You told me
Long, long ago.
Finally today I see it—
From Your point of view.
Thank You for not giving in to me.
Thank You most of all
For patiently waiting
For me to give in to You.
(source unknown)

God is working in our life and as we take those steps in walking with Him, Psalm 37 says:

Psalm 37:23, 24

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,
And he delights in his way,
though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down,
for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

Edgar Guest in his little book *Just Folks* talks about first steps. It describes a lot of us when we're really trying to learn

to walk with the Lord and to wait patiently for Him to lead.

(Just Folks by Edgar A. Guest)

The First Steps

Last night I held my arms to you
And you held yours to mine
And started out to march to me
As any soldier fine.
You lifted up your little feet
And laughingly advanced;
And I stood there and gazed upon
Your first wee steps, entranced.
You goood and gurgled as you came
Without a sign of fear;
As though you knew, your journey o'er,
I'd greet you with a cheer.
And, what is more, you seemed to know,
Although you are so small,
That I was there, with eager arms,
To save you from a fall.

Three tiny steps you took, and then,
Disaster and dismay!
Your over-confidence had led
Your little feet astray.
You did not see what we could see
Nor fear what us alarms;
You stumbled, but ere you could fall

I caught you in my arms.

You little tyke, in days to come
You'll bravely walk alone,
And you may have to wander paths
Where dangers lurk unknown.
And, Oh, I pray that then, as now,
When accidents befall
You'll still remember that I'm near
To save you from a fall.
(source unknown)

The Lord is there and it's going to be alright. Paul is going to be a good witness for the Lord.

Father, we pray if there's somebody who is really struggling with circumstances in their lives that seem so inconsistent with Your love and Your grace, that they'll withhold judgment for the time. They will learn to trust, to delight, to be a person who waits patiently upon You, to seek Your face afresh, and to find the peace that comes from just turning it over to You and letting You work. Thank You that Paul did that. Thank You that he was such an effective witness in certainly human intimidating circumstances. And thank You that he could also see Your plan unfolding in the appeal which he made to Caesar in Rome. Now Father we pray that as we have a chance to study further, there will be blessed times of just being aware that You're ministering to our needs. if there's someone without Christ, our Father, we just pray they'll discover the joy of inviting Christ into their lives as their own

personal Savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-ONE – ACTS 25:1-27 NOTES

v. 1 Festus therefore, having arrived in the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

v. 2 And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul; and they were urging him,

v. 3 asking a personal favor for themselves against him, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem, (all the while preparing an ambush to kill him on the way.)

v. 4 Now then, Festus answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to be leaving shortly.

v. 5 “Let those, therefore among you,” he is saying, “who are vested with power, having gone down there with me assuming that there is anything amiss in this man, be bringing accusation against him.”

v. 6 And after he spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea; on the next day having taken his place on the judgment seat, he ordered Paul to be brought.

v. 7 And after he arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove;

v. 8 while Paul was saying in his own defense, “I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”

v. 9 But Festus, desiring to do the Jews a favor, when he answered Paul said: “Are you willing, having gone up to Jerusalem, there to be judged concerning these things in my presence?”

v. 10 But Paul said: “I have taken my stand before the judgment seat of Caesar, and here I am standing where I ought to be judged. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know.

NOTES

v. 11 If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I am not refusing to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men are accusing me, no one is able to hand me over to them. I am appealing to Caesar.”

v. 12 Then Festus after he conferred with his council, answered: “You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go.”

v. 13 Now when several days elapsed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea, greeting Festus.

v. 14 And while they were spending many days there, Festus laid the things concerning Paul before the king, saying: “There is a certain man who has been left behind a prisoner by Felix;

v. 15 concerning whom when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation upon him.

v. 16 To whom I answered that it is not a custom with Romans to be handing over any man before the one who is being accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.

v. 17 Therefore after they assembled here, having made no delay, the next day, having sat down on the judgment seat, I ordered the man to be brought.

v. 18 Concerning whom after the accusers stood up, they were bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting;

v. 19 but they were having certain questions against him concerning their own religion and concerning a certain Jesus who was dead, whom Paul was saying to be alive.

v. 20 And being at a loss with reference to an inquiry concerning these things, I was asking if he would desire to be going to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these things.

v. 21 But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the decision of the Emperor, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I should send him up to Caesar.”

v. 22 And Agrippa said to Festus, “I also was wishing to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he is saying, “you shall hear him.”

v. 23 Therefore on the next day when Agrippa came and Bernice amid great pageantry, and having entered the auditorium both with commanders and the outstanding men of the city, and Festus having given the order, Paul was brought in.

NOTES

v. 24 And Festus is saying, “King Agrippa, and all those men who are present with us, you are seeing this man concerning whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both in Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought no longer to be living.

v. 25 But when I found that he had done nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, decided to be sending him.

v. 26 Concerning whom I am having nothing definite to write to my lord. Because of this I brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.

v. 27 For it is seeming absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him.”

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 25:1-27 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What did the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews try to do when Festus arrived?

3. How does Paul answer the accusations of the Jews in verse 8?

4. How does Paul respond to the question of Festus in verses 10 & 11?

5. What decision does Festus make in verse 12?

6. How does Agrippa respond to the account of Festus in verse 22?

7. Describe the arrival of Agrippa and Bernice, according to verse 23.

8. Summarize Festus's opening remarks.

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: How long and lonely seems the road of His will at times.

LESSON #2: The Lord's timing is always perfect, even if it does seem slow from our perspective.

LESSON #3: God is providing an opportunity for Felix, Festus, and Agrippa each to hear the gospel message.

LESSON #4: Paul takes a stand because he is innocent of all the charges.

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