

After 3<sup>rd</sup> journey Paul returned to Jerusalem for Pentecost (20.16)

When he arrives he gives a favourable report to “the brothers” and was received gladly (17-20), but they are aware that there are Jewish zealots for the Law who will be opposed to Paul. This proves correct, with the Jews from Asia stirring up the crowd against Paul for “teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place (temple) (21.27f.)

They drag Paul from the temple to lynch him, but the Roman tribune Claudius Lysias steps in and arrests Paul, binding him with two chains.

Paul surprises the tribune by speaking to him in good Greek, revealing he is a Jewish citizen of Tarsus, and asks to speak to the crowd. He does so in Hebrew. He recounts his conversion and has their attention, until he says that Jesus told him “Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.” They erupt and call for his death.

The tribune orders him to be examined by flogging, but Paul reveals he is a Roman citizen, making the tribune afraid (for having bound him).

Next day, tribune unbinds Paul and calls the Jewish Council so he might find out what the problem really is.

Paul gives a clever defence, dividing Pharisees and Sadducees over the resurrection, claiming “It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial” (23.6).

Again the tribune has to step in and take Paul to the barracks for fear that he will be torn apart amidst the dissension which arose between Pharisees and Sadducees.

The following night the Lord stood by him and said: **“Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”** (23.11)

The Jews made a plot to kill Paul, but his nephew hears of it and on Paul’s advice goes to the tribune and warns him. The tribune sends Paul to governor Felix at Caesarea under a mounted, armed escort (23.23ff.), with a letter explaining that he had rescued him from the Jews who sought to kill him over “questions of their law, but saying he had done “nothing deserving death or

imprisonment". He advises Felix that has told Paul's accusers to appear before him in Caesarea to state before him what they have against Paul.

5 days later the HP Ananias and some elders and a spokesman (Tertullus) arrive and lay their charges against Paul before Felix – has stirred up riots among all the Jews throughout the world, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, profaned the temple. Paul denies these charges and again asserts that it is because he has proclaimed the resurrection that he is opposed. He is a faithful Jew, a worshipper at the temple, and teaches the fulfilment of what is prophesied in the Hebrew scriptures. Furthermore, he brought alms and offerings for his nation (from Asian Christians).

Felix has a "rather accurate knowledge of the Way and delays judgment until Lysias the tribune's expected arrival. But 2 years pass, during which Felix and his wife hear more, but also hope will receive money from Paul. Finally, after 2 years, Felix is succeeded as governor by Porcius Festus. Luke notes that Felix left Paul in prison "desiring to do the Jews a favour" (24.27).

3 days after Festus arrives in Caesarea he goes up to Jerusalem and hears the charges against Paul. They want him to bring Paul up to Jerusalem so they ambush and kill him, but Festus insists they must come down to Caesarea to lay their charges there. They do so. Second trial before a governor, with Sanhedrin prosecuting. Paul's defence is "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense." But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favour asked him if he wished to go up to Jerusalem to be tried before him. Paul refuses, saying he has done nothing against the Jews. He stands before Caesar's tribunal: If he has offended against Rome, he needs to be heard there. **"I appeal to Caesar"** (25.11).

Festus' response: To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.

Meanwhile king Agrippa and Bernice arrive at Caesarea. Festus laid Paul's case before him, saying he could find no offence. Agrippa asks to hear Paul himself. Festus asks that, having heard Paul, Agrippa helps him formulate the charges against him which will be conveyed to Caesar.

## 26.1-32

Paul shares his testimony before Agrippa (26.1-23).

- 4-5 His life as a strict Pharisee
- 6-7 His belief that Jesus and his resurrection is the fulfilment of the Scriptures and therefore thoroughly Jewish – yet it is what has roused such opposition from Jews
- 8 – as if there should be any problem for a Jew to believe God can raise someone from the dead!
- 9-12 But Paul can identify with this rejection of the risen Jesus: he was once a persecutor.
- 13-16 But an extraordinary heavenly appearance while he was on his way to Damascus changed everything!
  - Paul found out who he was opposing – Jesus the Lord (14-15)
  - Received a new commission: arise – go – to open the eyes of your people and Gentiles, so that they may turn from darkness to light, the power of Satan to God, receiving forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus
- 19-23 Paul obeyed and went to Jew and Gentile, preaching repentance and turning back to God, and performing deeds in keeping with new life.
  - He preached “nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and the Gentiles.
- 24-25 Festus interjects telling Paul he is out of his mind. Paul responds courteously but firmly: I’m not out of my mind but I am speaking true and rational words.
- 26-29 appeals to Agrippa’s knowledge of his teaching ministry. He speaks directly to Agrippa: Do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.

Agrippa’s response: In a short time/with so little/few arguments would you persuade me to be a Christian?

Paul: Whether short or long, I would that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am – except for these chains.

- 30-32 Agrippa, Bernice Festus et al arise, withdraw, and agree that Paul has done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.

Agrippa tells Festus **Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar (26.32). Fulfilment of 9.15.**

## Main points

1. The end of his life echoes that of his Lord and Master  
Jews' charges prove baseless  
Affirmation of Paul's innocence by Festus and Agrippa parallels Herod and Pilate's conclusion of Jesus' innocence  
Cf. Jesus' words: no servant is greater than his master; if they hated me they will hate you... (Jn 15.20)
2. Paul never stops being a pious, faithful Jew: indeed Christianity and the Jesus it proclaims as the crucified, risen and ascended Messiah is entirely consistent with Moses and the prophets, exactly the hope they point to.  
Darkness -> light Isa 42.6-7; 49.6  
Israel -> Jesus -> Paul as the servant
3. Paul works to God's timetable and itinerary to fulfil his purposes.  
God had always made clear these final chapters of Acts and Rome were in his plan:  
9.15-16  
23.11 Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.  
It's a tough call – 2 years under house arrest in Caesarea...
4. Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? Esp. for Jews
  - a. *widow of Zarephath's son* ([1 Kings 17:17-24](#)). Elijah
  - b. *the Shunammite woman's son* ([2 Kings 4:18-37](#)) Elisha
  - c. *the Pharisees believed in a resurrection of the dead on the last day*And why, if God did raise Jesus from the dead, do people ignore the significance of this – for religion and humanity??
5. The responses of Festus and Agrippa are typical of many  
Festus – Roman unfamiliar with Jewish scriptures or Jesus => ignorant  
Agrippa II – no rational reason for rejecting Jesus: simply unwilling to repent and believe. Pride? Great grandson of Herod the Great – grandson of Herod Antipas (who had killed John) – Son of Herod Agrippa I who had killed James son of Zebedee. Bernice = both wife and sister, => incestuous.

6. The evangel/"good news" – darkness to light, power of Satan to God
- Believe that Jesus is the Messiah/have eyes opened
  - Repent
  - Receive forgiveness of sins
  - Receive a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ
  - Perform deeds in keeping with their repentance
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#### Storeys

1. When did you get back to Aotearoa NZ and what have you been up to since you arrived back?
2. Briefly recap the main areas of work each of you has have been involved with in Nepal?
3. What are your hope for the remainder of your time in A-NZ?