

Introduction (Acts 25:1-27)

A few weeks ago Pastor Bill finished up Acts 24. We saw that Felix was conflicted in his spiritual desires. He wanted to hear more from Paul, but at the same time, he was frightened because Paul had spoken boldly to him about righteousness, self-control, and judgment. Felix was also conflicted because of his motives, hoping that Paul would give him money. Felix was also conflicted in his interests, wanting to do the Jews a favor. Therefore, he left Paul imprisoned for two years.

(Acts 24:25-27) "But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." {26} At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. {27} But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned."

As Christians, we should not be conflicted. **Our chief ambition is to live lives that are pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ.** Our chief ambition is not financial gain or favor with men, but to please God. As soldiers in active service, our ambition is to please the One who enlisted us as soldiers.

(2 Cor 5:9) "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

(2 Tim 2:4) "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

In Acts 19:21 that Paul had received a prophetic word from the Holy Spirit that he was to go to Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and Rome. It was a matter of weeks until he had been to Macedonia, Achaia, and Jerusalem. However, it has been more than two years and nothing has happened. Paul has been seemingly shelved for two years. We are not aware of any books, letters, or other things that he wrote while confined in Caesarea. Most of his prison epistles were written from Rome. We do not know what Paul did while in Caesarea. I believe that he continued to pour into his team members, strengthening them. I believe that he wrote many other letters that were not included in the Scriptures. I believe that Paul preached the gospel to the soldiers that were assigned to him. I believe that Paul spent time interceding for all the churches and leaders that he had raised up. I wonder if during these two years if Paul ever doubted if he would ever get to Rome. I think his patience and faith was tested.

(Acts 19:21) "Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

I want to make an application here. Sometimes, we have prophetic words that come to pass quickly. However, sometimes the prophetic words take time to be fulfilled. Let me give you an example. One day, when Karen and I were living in Orlando, Florida, I received an impression that the Lord was going to move us to Phoenix. Karen and I had spent a summer in Phoenix and had no desire to live there. However, we did have a desire to move to Atlanta. We looked all around for a Phoenix, Georgia, but found no such place. For many years, we laughed about how I had missed it. We all can

miss it at times. Then, almost thirty years later, I was leaving our office and waiting to turn right on Juan Tabo. As I waited for an opening in the traffic, I caught sight of the street sign. It said Phoenix. The office that I work out of is at the corner of Phoenix and Juan Tabo. God had a plan for me to manage Murchison Drilling Schools a long time ago. I did not know it. I am so focused that if I had known that was his plan, it would have distracted me, and hindered me from doing all the other things that God had for me to do before then. I had not missed it at all. God moved me to Phoenix Street. I believe God had plans for this church. I believe that the vision was fulfilled at the appointed time.

Habbakuk said that we must write down our visions, and we must wait for them. The visions are for appointed times. They will hasten toward the goal, and they will not fail, but that will happen at the appointed time. In the meantime, we must wait for it. Paul waited patiently for the vision that he had received to go to Rome to come to pass. What about you? Has God spoken to you about some things? Write them down. Hold on to the vision and wait for it. It will come to pass at the appointed time. Hold on to God's promises that He has given to you. Don't waste the time while you are waiting; use it to further the kingdom. I am sure that this is what Paul did.

(Hab 2:2-3) "Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. {3} For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay."

At the end of Acts 24, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. In our text today, Governor Festus wastes no time in trying to clean up the mess left by Felix. Paul has been left there, and he does not know much about it. The Jews have not forgotten about Paul. They are still wanting to put him to death. They plot another scheme to ambush him. They did not waste any time in going to see the Governor about Paul. They brought charges to Festus against Paul. Festus decides to hold a tribunal in Caesarea and invites the prominent Jews to attend. At the tribunal, Paul could see that he was not going to get a fair trial if they took him to Jerusalem. Paul makes his defense at the Tribunal, and eventually makes an appeal to Caesar. Next, we see that King Agrippa comes to visit Festus. They discuss Paul's case, and Agrippa tells Festus that he would like to hear Paul's case. We do not know all the reasons that God allowed Paul to be left there for two years, but perhaps the opportunity to testify before Festus and King Agrippa was the reason. Our text today ends with Festus stating the purpose of the investigation of Paul by King Agrippa. The actual investigation will take place in Acts 26, which Pastor Bill will cover next week.

Paul's Appeal To Caesar

1. The Need For An Appeal (Acts 25:1-9)
2. Paul's Appeal To Caesar (Acts 25:10-12)
3. Charges For Caesar's Court (Acts 25:13-27)

1. The Need For An Appeal (Acts 25:1-9)

(Acts 25:1-3) "Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. {2} And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him, {3} requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way).

A. The Intent of the Jews (Acts 25:1-3)

Felix has just been replaced by Porcius Festus. Felix had been a corrupt and conflicted governor. He had kept Paul in bonds with the hope of being paid off. Justice for Paul was not his primary concern; it was personal gain. On a trip to Rome, he was accused of using a dispute between the Jews and Syrians as a pretext to slay and plunder the inhabitants. His brother, who had great influence with the Emperor Nero, was able to get him free from punishment. Even though free from imprisonment or death, he was removed from the office of procurator of Judea, and he was replaced by Porcius Festus. If Felix had done what was right to do, he would have released Paul two years earlier. He did not have a legitimate reason for keeping him imprisoned.

Now that he has been removed from office, Festus is now responsible for Paul. After three days, he went up to Jerusalem, and met with the chief priests and leading men. They brought charges against Paul, and were urging Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem. Luke makes it very clear why they wanted Paul brought back to Jerusalem. They wanted to set up an ambush to kill him on the way. **The intent of the Jews was to kill Paul.** Their intent was not to give Paul a fair trial in Jerusalem; they wanted to put him to death before he even arrived in Jerusalem.

B. The Intent of Festus (Acts 25:4-5)

(Acts 25:4-5) “Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly. {5} "Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him.”

Festus answered the Jews and told them that he was keeping Paul in custody at Caesarea and that he was about to leave shortly. He encourages the influential men among them to go to Caesarea with him, and to prosecute Paul there. Festus shows the intent of his heart. He wanted to gain favor with the influential men from Jerusalem. He has just assumed command as the Procurator of Judea, and he is looking for political favor with the influential people. Festus' intent is not to have a tribunal in Caesarea to give Paul a fair trial. His intent is not justice. **The intent of Festus was to gain favor with the influential leaders of the Jews.**

C. The Failure of the Tribunal Court (Acts 25:6-9)

(Acts 25:6-7) “After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. {7} After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove,”

After Festus had spent eight to ten days in Jerusalem with the Jews who were bringing charges against Paul, he went down to Caesarea. The next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. The tribunal is the regional court for Judea, and the governor presided over it. After Paul had been brought into the court, the influential Jews from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him. Notice that Luke records that they could not prove any of the charges that they brought against him.

(Acts 25:8) “while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”

Paul states he is innocent of all charges. He said that he has not committed an offense against the Law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar. Since Paul was a Roman citizen, and they were not able to prove any of the charges against Paul, he should have been released. This should be the end of the story, but it is not.

(Acts 25:9) "But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?"

We already saw that Festus' intent was to gain favor among the Jews, particularly among the influential and powerful Jews. Because of this, he asks Paul if he is willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before him on these charges. **Festus should have given an innocent verdict after the tribunal trial.** There was no need to go any further. His intent was to do the Jews a favor and have him tried in Jerusalem. Therefore, Festus had to ask Paul if he was willing to be tried in Jerusalem. As a Roman citizen, Paul had some legal rights, and the tribunal court failed to protect his rights.

I want to make a quick application here about desperate situations. From Paul's perspective, the deck was stacked against him. The Jews had evil intents and wanted to put him to death. The Governor was playing politics instead of making a righteous and just decision. He was willing to sacrifice Paul's life to gain favor with the most influential Jews. The Tribunal court system, which was supposed to be a pillar of truth and justice had failed in its job of protecting Paul, who was innocent of all charges. Everything was stacking up against Paul. The situation was desperate.

I remember playing the first round of the PGA Tour school finals in 1992. I was one of the first to tee off that morning, and it was 30 degrees and blowing 20-30 miles and hour. It was brutal, and I had lost all feeling in my fingers. I knew that it was going to take several under par for the six rounds to qualify. After nine holes, I was four over par. Things were not looking good for me. But, the Holy Spirit reminded me of two things. First, God had given me a prophetic word that He was going to put me back on the PGA Tour. So, I reminded God of that word He had spoken to me. Second, the Holy Spirit reminded me of a promise in 2 Chronicles 16:9 that I had memorized many years earlier. It says, "the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth to strongly support those whose heart is completely His." I reminded God of that promise and asked for His strong support. God gave strong support and somehow I was able to play the next nine holes in four under, despite the difficult playing conditions. Whatever situation you are in, no matter how cornered or desperate you feel, look to God for prophetic word, His provision and His specific plan for your life.

(2 Chron 16:9a) "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His..."

When everything is coming at us, we have to look to God for His strong support. When the Israelites were being pursued by Pharaoh and came to the Red Sea, the situation looked desperate. But, God had already told them that He was taking them to the Promised Land. That was a promise. He had not led them to the Red Sea to put them to death. This was just a test of their faith. When things do not look good for you, look to what God has promised you through a prophetic word or through Scripture. In times like this, you will be glad that you took time to memorize Scripture. As the Israelites cried out to God, He instructed Moses what to do. He told them to go forward, and for Moses to lift up His staff and stretch out his hand over the sea and divide it. They obeyed God, and He parted the waters so that they could cross.

(Ex 14:10, 15-16) "As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD.... {15} Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. {16} As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land."

One time Jesus told the disciples to get into the boat and that they were going to cross over to the other side. While they were en route, Jesus was fast asleep at the stern while a storm came up. These experienced fishermen, who had spent their lives in a boat, were scared that they were going to perish. Things were looking desperate. They woke Jesus up and said, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" But, what had Jesus told them? What was the word that He had spoken to them. They were going to go over to the other side of the lake. They needed to be reminded of that word. Then, Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped.

(Luke 8:22-24) "Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. {23} But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. {24} They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm."

The Jews were like Pharaoh, and were pursuing Paul. The circumstances in his life were like the wind and waves, trying to swamp Paul's boat. But, he did not lose courage. As Paul looked to God, I believe that the Holy Spirit reminded him of the prophetic word in Acts 21, that he was to go to Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and Rome. Paul knew that he was to go to Rome, not to Jerusalem. Paul was going to the other side of the lake; he was going to Rome. Like the Israelites, he was to go forward to where God told him he was to go. **When things look desperate, look to God for His prophetic direction, His provision, and His protection.**

2. Paul's Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12)

The Holy Spirit did one other thing for Paul; He filled Paul with boldness to confront Festus. Paul tells Festus that he is before Caesar's tribunal, where he ought to be tried. Paul again states his innocence, that he has done no wrong to the Jews. He boldly calls Festus out, telling Festus that he knows that he is innocent. If Festus would have done what was right, he would have pronounced an innocent verdict and released Paul. But, Festus is more interested in gaining favor with the influential Jews of Jerusalem than doing what is right.

(Acts 25:10) "But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know."

Next, **Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen, and appealed to Caesar.** This is the second time that Paul has exercised his right as a Roman citizen. When the commander was going to have him examined by scourging, he had asked the centurion if it was legal to scourge a Roman citizen who is uncondemned. Now, he appeals to Caesar for a verdict in his case. Paul was led by the Spirit to exercise his right to a fair trial.

(Acts 25:11-12) "If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar." {12} Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."

(Acts 22:25) "But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"

Let me make a few comments about rights. We have rights as citizens of the United States. We have a right to a fair trial. We have a right to purchase property, and own a business. We have a right to freedom of speech. We have a right to bear arms. We have a right to vote. In America, even though some of our rights are being threatened, we have a lot of rights. There is nothing wrong with exercising our rights. I encourage you to exercise your rights. **The Scriptures tell us that we have a responsibility to protect the rights of others**, which would include the rights of the unborn.

(Pr 31:8-9) "Open your mouth for the mute, For the rights of all the unfortunate. {9} Open your mouth, judge righteously, And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy."

We are in a political season, where you and I have the responsibility of voting in a new President, Congress and Senate. It is an important election, particularly because the new President will get to choose several new federal judges. We need a President that is not conflicted. We need a President that does not use political position for his/her own financial gain. We need a President that will not do things for the sake of political correctness. We need a President that will surround himself/herself with wise and god-fearing people. We need a President that will do what is right before God, even if it does not sit well with some constituents. We need a President that will appoint righteous federal judges. We need a president that will open his mouth for the mute, for the unfortunate, and will defend the rights of the afflicted and needy. Felix was a corrupt Governor, and we are reminded of the importance of electing the right leaders. I encourage everyone to vote. We need Christians to vote in this election, and in every election. Christians have not exercised their rights to the degree that they should have.

We have rights as citizens of heaven. Paul spoke about some of his rights. In 1 Corinthians 9, he asked the Corinthians several rhetorical questions about eating, drinking, taking a believing wife, and getting paid as a minister of the gospel. He said, "if we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?" **Paul had rights as a Christian and as minister of the gospel.**

(1 Cor 9:4-7, 11) "Do we not have a right to eat and drink? {5} Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? {6} Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? {7} Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?... {11} If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?"

But Paul did not use these rights. He goes on to say, "nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." **Paul was more concerned about the furthering the gospel than his own rights.** He did not use his rights to take along a believing wife like many of the other apostles. He did not always use his right to receive

money from the churches he was planting. He preached the gospel without charge. He did not use his right to eat meat if it caused his brother to stumble.

(1 Cor 9:12b, 23) "...Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.... {23} I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."

I believe that Paul is a great example for us to follow. He used his rights to further the gospel. We have lots of rights, but we should base our decision about exercising those rights on how it will impact the gospel. How will this impact the kingdom of God? Will this strengthen those around me, or could this cause someone to stumble? Will this cause division or strife, or will this promote peace? Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul talked about law suits between Christians in the church. He said that sometimes it is better not to exercise your rights to go to court, because our law suits before the unrighteous is a bad testimony. Like Paul, we need to ask ourselves how this will further the gospel.

(1 Cor 6:5-7) "I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, {6} but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? {7} Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?"

3. Charges For Caesar's Court (Acts 25:13-27)

A. Festus' report to King Agrippa (Acts 25:13-22)

Paul was not going to get a fair trial with the Jews; they intended to kill him. His tribunal trial was an injustice. Festus was more interested in gaining favor with the Jews than rendering a just decision. He was willing to sacrifice Paul's life to gain that favor. After Paul appealed to Caesar, Festus met with his council and agreed to his appeal. But, Festus did not really have a justifiable case to send to Caesar. After several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus. While they were there, he laid Paul's case before the king.

(Acts 25:13-14) "Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus. {14} While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix;"

He told King Agrippa all that he had done, how he had met with the chief priests and elders of the Jews, and how they had brought charges against him, and how they asked for a sentence of condemnation against Paul. He told Agrippa that he had upheld the Roman custom of not handing over an accused person before the accused can meet face to face and make a defense.

(Acts 25:15-16) "and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. {16} "I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges."

He also told Agrippa that he had taken his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought before

him and face his accusers. He told him that they had brought charges against Paul about some disagreements with him in their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. Both Festus and Agrippa were hearing the gospel through the proceedings.

(Acts 25:17-19) "So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me. {18} "When the accusers stood up, they began bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting, {19} but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive."

He also told Agrippa that he asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these matters, and how Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision. He also told him how he ordered Paul to be kept in custody until he could send him to Caesar. What he does not tell Agrippa is how he asked for the influential men to come. He does not tell him about his motive of doing a favor for the Jews. He does not tell them of his willingness to sacrifice the life of a Roman citizen for favor with the influential men of Jerusalem. He leaves out all these details in his report. **The word for truth in the New Testament is aletheia, which means nothing concealed or hidden.** When we communicate with people, it is important to be truthful, and not to leave out things to make things look differently than they really are. **We must speak truth to one another in love.**

(Acts 25:20-21) "Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters. {21} "But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar."

Then, Agrippa replied to Festus and said he wanted to hear Paul himself. So, Festus told him that he will get to hear him the next day. Paul's prophecy that was given by Ananias was that Paul was going to bear Christ's name before Kings. God is sovereign, and He was working out all these details to give Paul and opportunity to share the gospel with King Agrippa.

(Acts 25:22) "Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he *said, "you shall hear him."

(Acts 9:15-16) "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

B. Purpose of Investigation (Acts 25:23-27)

On the next day, Agrippa and Bernice entered into the auditorium with great pomp. This was not just a routine hearing; they made it into a big affair. Again, I believe this shows Festus' motives. He wanted to gain favor with the influential Jews. Now, he organizes this impromptu meeting to have great pomp. The Greek word is phantasia, which we get our English word fantasy from. Strong's says that it means a vain show, fantasy, or pomp. Festus wanted to impress Agrippa and gain favor with him. He also invited the prominent men of Caesarea. Luke is careful to say that this was done at the command of Festus. He was a real "men pleaser."

(Acts 25:23) "So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in."

After everyone had arrived, Festus addresses King Agrippa and the other gentlemen present. He tells them that Paul is the one whom the Jews had made an appeal to have put to death. He goes on to say that he found that Paul had not committed anything worthy of death. This may be true in his heart, but it is not true in his actions. Festus was willing to send Paul to Jerusalem and let the Jews put him to death. Festus had not declared Paul innocent and set him free. It was Paul who declared his own innocence before Festus. Paul told him that he had not done anything against the Jews, the temple, or against Rome. Once again, **Festus had not spoken truth. He made himself look good** in front of King Agrippa and the rest of the influential men. Festus goes on to say that since Paul had appealed to Caesar, he had decided to send him to Caesar.

(Acts 25:24-25) "Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer. {25} "But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him."

Finally, Festus told Agrippa that he has nothing definite about Paul to write to Caesar, and that is the reason that he has brought Paul before King Agrippa and the rest of those present. He tells them that he hopes to have something to write after the investigation has taken place. Finally, he said something that was truthful. He said it is absurd to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him. There are not really any valid charges against Paul. King Agrippa addresses Paul and gives him an opportunity to speak. Pastor Bill will be covering that in Acts 26 next week.

(Acts 25:26-27) "Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have 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. {27} "For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."

Applications

As we come to a close this morning, I want to close with a couple thoughts. First, we saw that when things were looking bad for Paul, God was still in control. He had told Paul that he would be going to Rome. The Holy Spirit gives us prophetic words and leads us. God will accomplish the things that concern us. He promises us that in Psalm 138. **When you are in a tough spot, look to the prophetic words that God has given to you.** He had told Paul that he was going to Rome. Trust God to fulfill His words in our lives. When God tells you that you are going to the other side of the lake, trust Him when the storms come up. Be strong and stand firm in your faith.

(Ps 138:8) "The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting; Do not forsake the works of Your hands."

Second, the main point of this passage is Paul's appeal to Caesar. Paul had rights as a Roman citizen. We have rights as American citizens, and we have rights as a citizen of heaven. The Roman soldier had become a Roman citizen with a large amount of money. Paul told the soldier that he was born a citizen. Paul exercised his rights as a Roman citizen. I encourage you to exercise your rights as

American citizens in the coming election.

(Acts 22:28) "The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."

There are two realms of kingdoms. There are kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. Jesus went about preaching the kingdom of God. For us to become citizens of the kingdom of God, we cannot purchase it with a large sum of money like the Roman soldier. **The only way to become a citizen of the kingdom of God is to be born into it.** Listen to what Jesus tells Nicodemus. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He goes on to say that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Jesus clarifies what is meant by that in the next verse. He says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." When we are born in the flesh, we are born of water. A pregnant woman's water will break, signifying she is in labor. That is how we are born of the flesh. But, when we are born of the Spirit, we receive the Spirit of God. There is a spiritual birth, and we are born into the kingdom of God. We become citizens of God.

(John 3:3-6) "Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." {4} Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" {5} Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. {6} That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

How are we born spiritually? Turn to Ephesians 2 and let us take a quick look at how we are born into the kingdom. There are several things that we learn from this passage. First, Paul tells us that we are dead in our trespasses and sins, and we walked according to the course of this world.

(Eph 2:1-2) "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, {2} in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience."

Second, we learn that because of our sins, we were by our sinful nature, children of wrath. There is a judgment that all will face, and because of our sins, we will face judgment and wrath. Paul tells us in Romans 6 that the wages of sin is death. What we earn by the sin in our lives is death.

(Eph 2:3) "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

(Rom 6:23) "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Next, Paul writes that God is rich in mercy, and has a great love for us. God does not want us to face judgment and wrath. He wants to extend mercy to us. God, being rich in mercy, had a plan to spare us the wrath. Because of His love for us while we were yet sinners, God sent His son to die for us. So, God has made us alive together with Christ. He raised us up with Him and seats us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That is, He seats us in the kingdom of God. It is in Christ that we

receive the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness.

(Eph 2:4-7) “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, {5} even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”

Spiritual birth does not just happen. As Jesus told Nicodemus, we must be born into the kingdom. How are we born into the kingdom? We receive the kingdom of God by faith. Paul writes that it is by grace that we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves. It is a gift of God, not as a result of works. We can't earn our way into heaven by good works. We can't pay a large sum of money like the soldier and become citizens. Citizenship in heaven is a free gift, because Christ paid the price for our citizenship. Our part is to receive Christ by faith.

(Eph 2:8-9) “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; {9} not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Jesus said in John 1 that as many as received Him, He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. We must believe that Jesus came to earth, died for our sins, and was raised from the dead. We must also receive Jesus into our lives. When we believe and receive Christ, we are born into the kingdom of God. We become citizens of heaven.

(John 1:12) “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,”

Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:19 that we are then no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household. When we have received Christ, we are born into the kingdom of God, and become citizens of heaven. This morning there may be someone who has never received Christ into your life. If that is the desire of your life, you can do this very simply by asking Christ into our heart with a prayer like this.

(Eph 2:19) “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,”

“Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and separated from You. I believe that You came and died for my sins, and that You were raised from the dead. I ask You to forgive me for my sins, and to come into My life. I now confess You to be the Lord of my life. Amen.”

As citizens of heaven, one of the rights and duties is to show gratitude and give praise to God.

(Heb 12:28-29) “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; {29} for our God is a consuming fire.)

Introduction (Acts 24:25-27, 25:1-27, 2 Cor 5:9, 2 Tim 2:4, Acts 19:21, Hab 2:2-3)

- Our chief ambition is to live lives that are _____ to God.

1. The Need For An Appeal (Acts 25:1-9)

- The intent of the Jews was to _____ Paul.
- The intent of Festus was to gain _____ with the influential leaders of the Jews.
- Festus should have given an _____ verdict after the tribunal trial.
- When things look desperate, look to God for His _____ direction, His provision, and His protection. (2 Chron 16:9, Ex 14:10, 15-16, Luke 8:22-24)

2. Paul's Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12)

- Paul exercised his _____ as a Roman citizen, and appealed to Caesar. (Acts 22:25)
- The Scriptures tell us that we have a responsibility to _____ the rights of others. (Pr 31:8-9)
- Paul had _____ as a Christian and as minister of the gospel. (1 Cor 9:4-7, 11)
- Paul was more concerned about the furthering the _____ than his own rights. (1 Cor 9:12b, 23, 1 Cor 6:5-7)

3. Charges For Caesar's Court (Acts 25:13-27)

A. Festus' report to King Agrippa (Acts 9:15-16, 25:13-22)

- The word for truth in the New Testament is aletheia, which means nothing _____ or hidden.
- We must speak _____ to one another in love.

B. Purpose of Investigation (Acts 25:23-27)

- Festus had not spoken _____. He made himself look _____.

Applications (Eph 2:1-9, 19, John 3:3-6, Rom 6:23, John 1:12)

- When you are in a tough spot, look to the _____ words that God has given to you. (Ps 138:8)
- The only way to become a citizen of the kingdom of God is to be _____ into it. (John 3:3-6)

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