

### *Witnessing before Kings and Rulers*

***Bow in Prayer:*** “Glorious Father, make us keenly aware of the power of our own story as we share the Gospel boldly with those around us. Enable us to see the opportunities You have sovereignly prepared for us.”

1. As we open Acts chapter 25, where is Paul and how long has he been there? Describe his present situation.

#### ***Life Lesson***

The great apostle had to endure several years of Felix's refusal to decide his fate. Paul was subjected to other long stretches of time during which he could do little but trust God and wait for Him to act. *What do you do when it comes to the issue of waiting on God? Do you become anxious? Angry? Discouraged? Few things test our patience and faith like being forced to wait—which perhaps explains why our sovereign God often puts us in situations where we have no other choice.*

2. Are you currently in “God's Waiting Room” not knowing how long you will be there? Are you actively persevering or passively enduring? Or struggling with some of the attitudes mentioned above? What is God teaching you about *yourself* and about *waiting* through your own experiences?

*Ask God to bring you to a new level of understanding of what it means to actively “wait on Him.” Praise God daily for the “waiting room” you are in and for what God is teaching you through it.*

***Read*** and carefully observe Acts 24:27-25:12.

By now the Jews had abandoned all hope of a conviction of Paul by the Romans, so they decided to take matters into their own hands.

3. Summarize the dialogue between Festus, the chief priests and the Jewish leaders from Acts 25:1-5.

4. What evidence is there in this passage that Festus knows Paul is innocent?

5. What was still lacking in the Jews' accusations before Festus (Acts 25:7)?

Luke's use of the words "stood around him" (verse 7) have led some to believe that Paul was surrounded by his attackers. From their perimeter positions and their superior numbers, they hurled their vicious accusations at him. The apostle, standing in the middle alone, was left to answer their attacks.

6. What do you think of Paul's response in verses 8-12?

7. Describe a time when you have been falsely accused because of your faith.

8. What do you learn about how to respond to accusers from the way Paul responded to his accusers?

9. Both Felix and Festus knew that Paul was innocent. Why didn't they take a stand and release him?

**Read** Acts 25:13-22. This was the perfect opportunity for Festus to discuss Paul's case with someone far more knowledgeable about Jewish affairs than he. In the next eight verses, Luke summarizes Festus' presentation of the case to Agrippa II. (*Refer to "Understanding Jewish Leadership" to acquaint yourself with Agrippa II.*)

10. a. Describe the nature and content of Festus' report to Agrippa.

b. What truth about Christianity does Festus see as a pivotal point in this case, even though he does not understand Jewish theology (verse 19)? Explain your answer.

c. What do you think people most remember about Christianity from your witness?

11. **Read** Acts 25:23-27. Observe verses 23-24 carefully. Try to picture what this scene must have looked like. What feeling was this pomp intended to convey to a person who is brought before the king and queen for interrogation?
12. Why is Paul appearing before them (verses 24-27)?

**Stop and Think:** *How would you fare if your life were put under a microscope? Would your enemies be able to list various failures and inconsistencies in your life? Or would they conclude that the only chance for finding grounds for accusing would be in connection with your spiritual beliefs?*

13. **Read** Acts chapter 26 in its entirety. Who was present on this occasion? Who was absent?
14. a. How does Paul start his defense in verses 2-3? How would this draw the whole crowd into what he was about to say?
- b. With great poise and dignity, Paul once again tells his story (verses 4-15). What is so powerful about his testimony from your perspective?
- c. What does Paul emphasize about Jesus' commands to him in verses 16-18?
- d. To what does Paul appeal in verses 19-23? How does he summarize the Gospel?
15. Finally, Festus could contain himself no longer—all of a sudden he blurted out \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_!

16. Why would Festus have thought that Paul was irrational?

Paul respectfully disagreed with his host, assuring Festus of the truth of the Gospel. In fact Paul implied that even if his arguments had not been understood by the governor, they were certainly grasped by King Agrippa. **Reread** Acts 26:25-27.

Consider the implications of the question Paul asked Agrippa: “King Agrippa do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

17. What dilemma did Paul’s question and comment pose for Agrippa? How did he deal with the issue? What feeling do you think Agrippa was expressing?

18. How do you see Paul’s passion and vision for the Gospel revealed in his heartfelt statement in verse 29? How does this compare with your passion for those who do not know Christ?

After declaring that Paul is innocent of the charges, Agrippa observes that it is too late to dismiss the charges because of Paul’s appeal to Caesar.

19. Why might this turn out to be an advantage for Paul?

Through the trials of the apostle Paul it is as though Luke is saying to us: “Watch how the apostle engages in his defense and learn from it!” You, too, may find yourself in similar circumstances, called to witness to the Gospel when your life, or that of others, depends on it.

20. a. How does Paul’s witness before kings and rulers instruct us?

b. Despite Paul’s impassioned pleas, what stunning conclusion are we left with?