



1. In chapter 25 Festus recruited King Agrippa and Bernice (Agrippa's sister) to assist him with examining Paul. Approximately how long had Festus been in Judea when Paul made his second defense before him? (25:1, 6, 13, 14, 22) Why did Paul consider himself fortunate to have Agrippa hear his case? (26:2-3)
2. What did Paul point to as the reason he was on trial (6-8)? What insight do you think Agrippa gleaned about the dispute from Paul identifying himself as a Pharisee when his accusers were Sadducees?
3. Going back into his background, Paul said he opposed the name of Jesus of Nazareth (9), then went on to say he tried to make Christ's followers blaspheme (11). What does it mean to "blaspheme"? How do you think Paul's perspective on what it meant to blaspheme changed after his conversion?
4. What was Jesus' stated purpose for Saul/Paul by His appearing to him (16)? According to verse 18, what was Paul told to do? What were the two things Paul's hearers would receive? In whom did they need to put their faith?
5. What caused the Jewish mob to seize Paul in the temple and want to put him to death? (18-21). What do you think was most significant in the minds of the Jewish leaders?
6. In verses 22-23 Paul pointed to the Law and the Prophets as support for the Messiah suffering, dying and rising again. Why do you think he said this at this point in his defense? Why did he state the light was for both Jews and Gentiles alike?
7. Compare Paul's testimony here in chapter 26 with what he said previously in 22:1-21 and 24:10-21. What key points did Paul repeatedly emphasize when he gave his testimony?
8. To what do you attribute Festus' outburst in verse 24? Have you ever had a mixed reaction when you shared the gospel with a group of people? How did you handle it?
9. Paul singled out King Agrippa from the listeners and boldly addressed him personally. How do you interpret Agrippa's state of mind from his response in verse 28?
10. Read verse 32 and consider Paul's discourse with Agrippa and the others. Who was free, and who remained in bondage? Who had the greater uncertainty about the future? Remember these things when being judged by unrighteous leaders. Consider this: Do you yearn for their souls as Paul did in verse 29?



This Man Could Have Been Set Free...  
Leader Notes for Acts 26:1-32



Little did the new Roman governor Festus know the burdens that awaited him in his new post. Three days after his arrival, Festus traveled up to Jerusalem and met with the Jewish leaders to develop cooperation. Seizing the opportunity to exploit Festus' largesse and his naiveté, the Jewish leaders asked him for a "favor": Could Paul be retried in Jerusalem? Probably unbeknownst to Festus, if he agreed, the Jews would betray his kindness and assassinate Paul.

Festus offered a compromise. They could retry Paul, but in Caesarea rather than Jerusalem. Due to the absence of evidence, the trial ended as had previous trials. Paul gave out his testimony and the gospel, and no guilt was established. Even though he occupied the tribunal seat as judge, Festus was still the least informed person in the room. Festus tested the waters with Paul for a change of venue to Jerusalem. Paul would not have it and appealed to Caesar, to which Festus consented.

In less than three weeks on the job Festus was about to escalate a matter to the highest judicial court in the empire. He was concerned about being perceived as indecisive and "passing the buck". He needed to lay out the issues clearly. Lacking Jewish cultural and religious background, he sought help from King Agrippa and his sister Bernice (siblings of former governor Felix's wife Drusilla).

Paul made another defense before Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus, as well as in front of military tribunes and prominent members of the city. Paul declared he was on trial because of his hope and belief in the resurrection. He proclaimed forgiveness of sins for Jews and Gentiles alike who put their faith in Jesus, the Christ whose sufferings were foretold by Moses and the Prophets.

This was either too much truth or too convicting for Festus, who felt compelled to shout out that this was "crazy talk" from Paul. To his untrained Roman ears this was nonsense. How could you believe a man had risen from the dead, had the power to forgive sins, and could assure both Jewish and Gentile followers eternal life?

Since this was too much for Festus to digest, Paul focused on Agrippa. He appealed to Agrippa's awareness of past and current events as well as the prophets. His presentation was exuberant and almost playful at this point. Agrippa responded in kind by saying before those assembled that Paul would convince him to become a "Christian" in short order.

When the king had heard enough, he ended the hearing by rising to his feet. Others followed, and they all adjourned for a private discussion. They concluded Paul had done nothing deserving death or even imprisonment. You can imagine the king shaking his head as he wistfully wrapped up the discussion by saying, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

You have to ask yourself at the end of the hearing who was truly free and who was still in bondage.