

A Plot Against Paul is Uncovered (Summer 55)

Acts 23:12–22

- 12 When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.
- 13 There were more than forty who formed this plot.
- 14 They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.
- 15 Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near *the place*.”
- 16 But the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul.
- 17 Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, “Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him.”
- 18 So he took him and led him to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you.”
- 19 The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, *began* to inquire of him privately, “What is it that you have to report to me?”
- 20 And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him.
- 21 So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you.”
- 22 So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, “Tell no one that you have notified me of these things.”

Paul Taken to Caesarea and Presented to Felix (Summer 55)

Acts 23:23–35

- 23 And he called to him two of the centurions and said, “Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen.”
- 24 *They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor.
- 25 And he wrote a letter having this form:
- 26 “Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings.
- 27 When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.
- 28 And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council;
- 29 and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment.
- 30 When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you.”
- 31 So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.
- 32 But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks.
- 33 When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.
- 34 When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,
- 35 he said, “I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also,” giving orders for him to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.

Paul’s Defense Before Felix (Summer 55)

Acts 24:1–23

- 1 After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney *named* Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul.
- 2 After *Paul* had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying *to the governor*, “Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation,
- 3 we acknowledge *this* in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.
- 4 But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.
- 5 For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.
- 6 And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law.
- 7 But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,

8 ordering his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him.”

9 The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.

10 When the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense,

11 since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

12 Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city *itself* did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot.

13 Nor can they prove to you *the charges* of which they now accuse me.

14 But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;

15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

16 In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men.

17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;

18 in which they found me *occupied* in the temple, having been purified, without *any* crowd or uproar. But *there were* some Jews from Asia—

19 who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me.

20 Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council,

21 other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.’”

22 But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.”

23 Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and *yet* have *some* freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.

Paul Under Felix’s Custody (Summer 55 to Summer 57)

Acts 24:24–26

24 But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him *speak* about faith in Christ Jesus.

25 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.

Paul’s Appeal to Caesar Before Festus (Summer 57)

Acts 24:27–25:12

24:27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

25:1 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).

4 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.”

6 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,

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.”

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*?”

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.

11 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.”

Festus and Herod Agrippa II Discuss Paul’s Case (Summer 57)

Acts 25:13–22

13 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;

15 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.

17 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.

20 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.”

22 Then Agrippa *said* to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he said, “you shall hear him.”

Paul’s Defense Before Herod Agrippa II and His Sister Bernice (Summer 57)

Acts 25:23–26:32

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.

24 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.

26 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.”

26:1 Agrippa said to Paul, “You are permitted to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and *proceeded* to make his defense:

2 “In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today;

3 especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among *the* Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4 “So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and at Jerusalem;

5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

6 And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers;

7 *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.

8 Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead?

9 “So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.

11 And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

12 “While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.

14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

15 And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

16 But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

17 rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,

18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’

19 “So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,

20 but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

21 For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.

22 So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place;

23 that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

24 While *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad.”

25 But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth.

26 For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.”

28 Agrippa *replied* to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”

29 And Paul *said*, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

30 The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,

31 and when they had gone aside, they *began* talking to one another, saying, “This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment.”

32 And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

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