

### A Plot Against Paul is Uncovered (Summer 55)

Acts 23:12–22

- 12 When morning came, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul.
- 13 There were more than forty of them who formed this conspiracy.
- 14 They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have bound ourselves with a solemn oath not to partake of anything until we have killed Paul.
- 15 So now you and the council request the commanding officer to bring him down to you, as if you were going to determine his case by conducting a more thorough inquiry. We are ready to kill him before he comes near this place.”
- 16 But when the son of Paul’s sister heard about the ambush, he came and entered the barracks and told Paul.
- 17 Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the commanding officer, for he has something to report to him.”
- 18 So the centurion took him and brought him to the commanding officer and said, “The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.”
- 19 The commanding officer took him by the hand, withdrew privately, and asked, “What is it that you want to report to me?”
- 20 He replied, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as if they were going to inquire more thoroughly about him.
- 21 So do not let them persuade you to do this, because more than forty of them are lying in ambush for him. They have bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him, and now they are ready, waiting for you to agree to their request.”
- 22 Then the commanding officer sent the young man away, directing him, “Tell no one that you have reported these things to me.”

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

Acts 23:23–35

- 23 Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, “Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea along with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen by nine o’clock tonight,
- 24 and provide mounts for Paul to ride so that he may be brought safely to Felix the governor.”
- 25 He wrote a letter that went like this:
- 26 Claudius Lysias to His Excellency Governor Felix, greetings.
- 27 This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, when I came up with the detachment and rescued him, because I had learned that he was a Roman citizen.
- 28 Since I wanted to know what charge they were accusing him of, I brought him down to their council.
- 29 I found he was accused with reference to controversial questions about their law, but no charge against him deserved death or imprisonment.
- 30 When I was informed there would be a plot against this man, I sent him to you at once, also ordering his accusers to state their charges against him before you.
- 31 So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him to Antipatris during the night.
- 32 The next day they let the horsemen go on with him, and they returned to the barracks.
- 33 When the horsemen came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.
- 34 When the governor had read the letter, he asked what province he was from. When he learned that he was from Cilicia,
- 35 he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive too.” Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.

### Paul’s Defense Before Felix (Summer 55)

Acts 24:1–23

- 1 After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought formal charges against Paul to the governor.
- 2 When Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, “We have experienced a lengthy time of peace through your rule, and reforms are being made in this nation through your foresight.
- 3 Most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this everywhere and in every way with all gratitude.
- 4 But so that I may not delay you any further, I beg you to hear us briefly with your customary graciousness.
- 5 For we have found this man to be a troublemaker, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

6 He even tried to desecrate the temple, so we arrested him.

7 [*this version follows NA<sup>27</sup> in omitting this verse*]

8 When you examine him yourself, you will be able to learn from him about all these things we are accusing him of doing.”

9 The Jews also joined in the verbal attack, claiming that these things were true.

10 When the governor gestured for him to speak, Paul replied, “Because I know that you have been a judge over this nation for many years, I confidently make my defense.

11 As you can verify for yourself, not more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

12 They did not find me arguing with anyone or stirring up a crowd in the temple courts or in the synagogues or throughout the city, nor can they prove to you the things they are accusing me of doing.

14 But I confess this to you, that I worship the God of our ancestors according to the Way (which they call a sect), believing everything that is according to the law and that is written in the prophets.

15 I have a hope in God (a hope that these men themselves accept too) that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.

16 This is the reason I do my best to always have a clear conscience toward God and toward people.

17 After several years I came to bring to my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings,

18 which I was doing when they found me in the temple, ritually purified, without a crowd or a disturbance.

19 But there are some Jews from the province of Asia who should be here before you and bring charges, if they have anything against me.

20 Or these men here should tell what crime they found me guilty of when I stood before the council,

21 other than this one thing I shouted out while I stood before them: ‘I am on trial before you today concerning the resurrection of the dead.’”

22 Then Felix, who understood the facts concerning the Way more accurately, adjourned their hearing, saying, “When Lysias the commanding officer comes down, I will decide your case.”

23 He ordered the centurion to guard Paul, but to let him have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from meeting his needs.

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

Acts 24:24–26

24 Some days later, when Felix arrived with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

25 While Paul was discussing righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for now, and when I have an opportunity, I will send for you.”

26 At the same time he was also hoping that Paul would give him money, and for this reason he sent for Paul as often as possible and talked with him.

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

Acts 24:27–25:12

24:27 After two years had passed, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix, and because he wanted to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

25:1 Now three days after Festus arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

2 So the chief priests and the most prominent men of the Jews brought formal charges against Paul to him.

3 Requesting him to do them a favor against Paul, they urged Festus to summon him to Jerusalem, planning an ambush to kill him along the way.

4 Then Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea, and he himself intended to go there shortly.

5 “So,” he said, “let your leaders go down there with me, and if this man has done anything wrong, they may bring charges against him.”

6 After Festus had stayed not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he sat on the judgment seat and ordered Paul to be brought.

7 When he arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges that they were not able to prove.

8 Paul said in his defense, “I have committed no offense against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”

9 But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, asked Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried before me there on these charges?”

10 Paul replied, “I am standing before Caesar’s judgment seat, where I should be tried. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you also know very well.

11 If then I am in the wrong and have done anything that deserves death, I am not trying to escape dying, but if not one of their

charges against me is true, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”

12 Then, after conferring with his council, Festus replied, “You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you will go!”

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

Acts 25:13–22

13 After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus.

14 While they were staying there many days, Festus explained Paul’s case to the king to get his opinion, saying, “There is a man left here as a prisoner by Felix.

15 When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me about him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him.

16 I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to hand over anyone before the accused had met his accusers face to face and had been given an opportunity to make a defense against the accusation.

17 So after they came back here with me, I did not postpone the case, but the next day I sat on the judgment seat and ordered the man to be brought.

18 When his accusers stood up, they did not charge him with any of the evil deeds I had suspected.

19 Rather they had several points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a man named Jesus who was dead, whom Paul claimed to be alive.

20 Because I was at a loss how I could investigate these matters, I asked if he were willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these charges.

21 But when Paul appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of His Majesty the Emperor, I ordered him to be kept under guard until I could send him to Caesar.”

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

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

Acts 25:23–26:32

25:23 So the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience hall, along with the senior military officers and the prominent men of the city. When Festus gave the order, Paul was brought in.

24 Then Festus said, “King Agrippa, and all you who are present here with us, you see this man about whom the entire Jewish populace petitioned me both in Jerusalem and here, shouting loudly that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But I found that he had done nothing that deserved death, and when he appealed to His Majesty the Emperor, I decided to send him.

26 But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this preliminary hearing I may have something to write.

27 For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without clearly indicating the charges against him.”

26:1 So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul held out his hand and began his defense:

2 “Regarding all the things I have been accused of by the Jews, King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that I am about to make my defense before you today,

3 because you are especially familiar with all the customs and controversial issues of the Jews. Therefore I ask you to listen to me patiently.

4 Now all the Jews know the way I lived from my youth, spending my life from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem.

5 They know, because they have known me from time past, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.

6 And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors,

7 a promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain as they earnestly serve God night and day. Concerning this hope the Jews are accusing me, Your Majesty!

8 Why do you people think it is unbelievable that God raises the dead?

9 Of course, I myself was convinced that it was necessary to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus the Nazarene.

10 And that is what I did in Jerusalem: Not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons by the authority I received from the chief priests, but I also cast my vote against them when they were sentenced to death.

11 I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to force them to blaspheme. Because I was so furiously enraged at them, I went to persecute them even in foreign cities.

12 “While doing this very thing, as I was going to Damascus with authority and complete power from the chief priests,

13 about noon along the road, Your Majesty, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining everywhere around me and those traveling with me.

14 When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? You are

hurting yourself by kicking against the goads.’

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

16 But get up and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason, to designate you in advance as a servant and witness to the things you have seen and to the things in which I will appear to you.

17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you

18 to open their eyes so that they turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

19 “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

20 but I declared to those in Damascus first, and then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds consistent with repentance.

21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple courts and were trying to kill me.

22 I have experienced help from God to this day, and so I stand testifying to both small and great, saying nothing except what the prophets and Moses said was going to happen:

23 that the Christ was to suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, to proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

24 As Paul was saying these things in his defense, Festus exclaimed loudly, “You have lost your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane!”

25 But Paul replied, “I have not lost my mind, most excellent Festus, but am speaking true and rational words.

26 For the king knows about these things, and I am speaking freely to him, because I cannot believe that any of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner.

27 Do you believe the prophets, King Agrippa? I know that you believe.”

28 Agrippa said to Paul, “In such a short time are you persuading me to become a Christian?”

29 Paul replied, “I pray to God that whether in a short or a long time not only you but also all those who are listening to me today could become such as I am, except for these chains.”

30 So the king got up, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them,

31 and as they were leaving they said to one another, “This man is not doing anything deserving death or imprisonment.”

32 Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

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