

Lesson 31 – Acts 25:1-27

Another Governor

All of us make promises, all of us make plans. Sometimes we don't keep our promises, sometimes our plans fall apart. Not so with God. He always keeps His promises, and His plans are always accomplished.

God promised Paul in Acts 23:11 that he would go to Rome. Now Paul has been in prison in Caesarea under Governor Felix for two years. A new governor, Festus, has come. What next? How and when will God's promise be fulfilled?

Caesarea Maritima

The city of Caesarea Maritima was built by Herod the Great, a noted builder of grandiose structures who began rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem during his reign. Herod was the king who ruled Judea at the time of Jesus' birth. [TM note: When Herod the Great heard about the baby who had been born King of the Jews (Matthew 2), he ordered the "massacre of the innocents"—the slaying of all baby boys two years old and under in the region of Bethlehem.]

Caesarea Maritima boasted a large port and a huge palace. It became the center for the Roman leaders while serving in the Judea region as it provided many of the familiarities of Rome. The city had an amphitheater to host competitive games and entertainment. In 1961 a stone seat was discovered in the theatre with the etched name of Pontius Pilate, one of the Roman rulers during Jesus' trial.

The Apostle Paul spent more than two years in Caesarea Maritima under guard in Herod's palace when King Herod Agrippa II ruled the region. Seventy miles away from Jerusalem, Paul was safe from his original accusers who wanted him dead.

[TM note: For the dates of the Herods refer to previous lesson with information on the Herods.]

Into the Word: Acts 25:1-27

When Governor Festus replaced Felix, he is faced with the same problem that Felix dealt with—the hatred of the Jews toward Paul. It's been more than two years since Paul was taken into custody, but the Jewish leaders have not forgotten about Paul. They immediately appeal to Festus to reopen Paul's case.

1. What did the Jews plan to do? v.3 *They want Paul to be transported to Jerusalem and intend to ambush and murder Paul along the way.*
2. Festus told the Jews his plan to meet Paul in Caesarea where he will hear their case (vv.4-5). The leaders brought many serious charges against Paul. What was the problem with their accusations? v.7 *They couldn't actually prove that Paul had done anything against the law.*
3. What was Paul's defense? v.8
I have committed no offense either against the *Law* of the *Jews*, or against the *temple*, or against *Caesar*.
4. Festus wanted to please the Jews, so he suggested moving the trial to Jerusalem to satisfy his new subjects. Of course, these same Jews intended to murder Paul along the way. Paul knew he was innocent so he (vv.10-12) *appealed to Caesar in Rome which was his right as a Roman citizen.*

Several days passed, and the palace in Caesarea prepared to host King Herod Agrippa and Bernice who arrived to pay respects to the newly appointed Governor Festus. The king's family had a long history. His father killed James and put Peter in prison. His grand-uncle killed John the Baptist and had Jesus beaten before His crucifixion. His great-grandfather had all the babies of Bethlehem killed at the time of Jesus' birth.

5. Governor Festus knew of the King's deep roots in the area, so what did he do? v.14 *Governor Festus told the Jewish*

King Agrippa about Paul's situation

It was clear that the new Roman governor had no idea what the problem was between Paul and the Jews. He described it as a disagreement about some religious points and about "a certain dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive" (v.19).

6. What did Agrippa want? v.22 *King Agrippa wanted to hear Paul.*
7. Describe the great ceremony with which Paul was brought before the King (v.23). *A king and a governor and all their aides and attendants along with the military commanders and leading men of the city are all assembled in an auditorium with "great pomp."*
8. Festus introduced Paul as the man whom all the Jews wanted dead. What was Festus' decision about Paul? v.25
 - *He didn't think Paul had done anything wrong.*
 - *He was sending him to the emperor for trial.*
9. Festus was going to send Paul to Caesar in Rome for trial. However, what was the dilemma facing Festus? v.27 *"For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."*

As far as the governor could tell, Paul had not done anything wrong, but the entire Jewish nation seemed to want him dead. Now Festus gave Paul to King Herod Agrippa in hopes that some evidence of a crime might be determined and then he could write the charges to send to Rome.

New Ideas: Making an Appeal

In our current legal system, we have procedures set up for appeals *after* a verdict is delivered in court. When an appeal is made, a court with higher authority is given the task of determining if the lower court was correct in its decision. Various reasons may be given to appeal a decision. For example, if something was incorrectly done by a lawyer or juror or if new evidence has been discovered an appeal can be made for another trial so that the verdict can be reexamined.

The Apostle Paul was aware of his rights as a Roman citizen. The Romans also had a system for making appeals. However, their system had major differences from our system. A Roman citizen had the right to appeal to a higher court *before* the verdict was made. During Paul's trial in front of Festus, he had not yet been given a verdict but had determined that he was being treated unjustly and appealed to Caesar, to a higher court.

Festus answered that Paul would indeed be sent to Caesar for his trial. Ultimately, because of God's promise given to Paul in Acts 23:11, he knew that he would testify in Rome.

Memory Verse

But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.
Psalm 3:3

Extra Memory Challenge *Ephesians 6:13*

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. As you think about Paul's trial in today's lesson, think back to his previous trials in the book of Acts (22:30-23:9 and 24:1-27). What are some similarities between these trials?

Some of the similarities between these trials are: Paul was familiar with the regional laws and knew his rights, Paul does not deny his faith, the charges brought against Paul are not proven, the officials that hear his defense are susceptible to outside influences, and the officials cannot reach a verdict or are split in their decision. In our next lesson, we will read another account of Paul defending himself before an official. Keep in mind these similarities and see if they will apply in Acts 26.

2. While our lives often seem chaotic or difficult, we can find comfort in the many promises of God. As you read about God's fulfilled promises in Paul's life, can you see some of God's promises fulfilled in your own life? In the lives of your friends and family? Read Deuteronomy 31:6, I John 1:9, and John 14:1-3 and rest in God's promises.

Answers will vary. Students could also read Romans 8:1-2, Isaiah 40:31, Isaiah 41:10, John 3:16, and Philippians 4:19.

Daily Devotions

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| Sunday: | Psalm 1:1-6 |
| Monday: | Psalm 2:1-12 |
| Tuesday: | Psalm 3:1-8 |
| Wednesday: | Psalm 4:1-8 |
| Thursday: | Psalm 5:1-7 |
| Friday: | Psalm 5:8-12 |
| Saturday: | Psalm 6:1-10 |

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

* What is the significance of Lent?

Lent comes from an old word referring to the "lengthening" of daylight, in other words, springtime. Historically, the church set aside forty days (not counting Sundays), similar to the forty days of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, to remember the suffering and death of Christ. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. It reminds us that we are "dust and ashes" as sinners who need the Savior. So Lent is to be a time of repentance for Christians as they look to the cross for forgiveness.

1. Jesus' suffering and death is often referred to as "the passion of Christ." What does the word "passion" mean in relation to Jesus? (see I John 4:10; Isaiah 53:3-6)

"Passion" refers to the overwhelming desire of Christ to save sinners, to the point that He was willing to suffer and die for them.

2. How did Jesus explain His suffering to the disciples? (see Matthew 20:17-19a)

Jesus explained to His disciples that He would be betrayed to and condemned by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, and mocked, beaten, and crucified by the political leaders.