

Acts 23:25-26:32 Trial Upon Trial

In 1998 a mate of mine was living along way from him in Vancouver. It was the year of the World Cup and soccer was something he loved. He was passionate about it. Australia was to play Iran to qualify for the World Cup. He wanted to watch the game.

He rang every Aussie pub, sports networks and radio station to find out who was televising it live. A radio station sports journalists told him that a Iranian diner on the north side of town was showing it and that he'd pick him up at midnight. He hadn't been in Vancouver long so he didn't know many people well so he agreed to meet the guy. It was about zero degrees and raining. When he got to the diner it was packed. He stood outside in the rain looking through the window.

He didn't feel sorry for himself or complain about his circumstances. He did what he needed to do because he was passionate about and loved soccer.

How often I know we find ourselves in difficult circumstances and we fell sorry for ourselves and complain about our circumstances.

In this passage today we see Paul again in terrible circumstances. He doesn't feel sorry for himself or complain. He does what he needs to do because he is passionate about and loves Jesus.

We're picking up where we left off last week. Another *trial* for the Apostle Paul. He's gone to Jerusalem and been falsely accused. He's been in front of a lynch mob, he's been slapped around by the Jewish Sanhedrin; and because Jerusalem is under the Roman empire, he's passed on for trial to the Roman governor. First Felix. Then when two years later Felix moves on, Governor Festus. And Festus is *perplexed*. Because for the life of him, he can't see the problem.

Festus wants to hand him back to the Jews. But Paul plays his ace. He's a Roman Citizen. And that means he's got the right to appeal to *Caesar*. Which is what he does.

But Festus needs some help. Because before he can send him to Caesar, he's got to figure out exactly what Paul's done wrong.

King Agrippa's in town. Ruler of Palestine. With his wife Bernice. It's a social call. But as you do when you're talking shop over a few drinks, Festus wants to get some advice on the strangest case he's had all year. The case of *Paul*.

And King Agrippa's keen to hear first hand.

1. Paul accused of doing wrong

Read: 24:1-2, 5-7

Paul is accused of being a troublemaker, ringleader of a sect and trying to desecrate the Temple.

In 25:8 Paul sums up the accusations as being against the law of the Jews, against the Temple and against Caesar.

In 25:19 Festus says it is about their Jewish religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed to be alive.

These are all serious charges.

Not only was he accused he was treated as if he was guilty.

Listen to some of the things that happen to Paul

We already no Paul is in prison. Over the course of these chapters he is there for 2 years.

In Chapter 25 - The whole Jewish community petitioned Festus that he ought not live any longer.

In Chapter 26 - He was accused of being out of his mind. You are insane. Festus said. Ultimately want to kill him

Why did these rulers keep Paul in prison? Why did they continue to treat him in the way they did?

Typical marks of politics. Bribery and corruption.

Felix – 24:26-27

Festus – 25:1-3,9a

The response is unreasonable.

Paul was accused of wrong but was as he guilty?

2. Paul is innocent

At no point was Paul found guilty of any of the charges made against him.

Read: 24:12-13

See these verses:- 25:7-8; 10; 25:22ff; 25:25, 26; 26:31-32

Whole section points to Paul being innocent

Felix, Festus or Agrippa never found him guilty.

How did Paul respond when he was accused of wrong?

3. Paul's response

You could say that to this point in Acts Paul has been on the offensive or on the attack. He has been a man with a mission and nothing would get in his way. Things change in this section. This is reflected in the fact that he faces 3 trials. He stands to defend himself 3 times.

He calls his speeches defences.

See 24.10, 26:2

Let's look at one in Chapter 26 as an example of one his defences.

Look at his reasoned argument. Hey guys. Jews. Look at my life as a **Jew**. I am a Jew. I was born a Jew. V.4 In fact my whole life I have lived as a Jew. I hope I the God of our fathers. Our fathers.

Look at Like at my life as a **persecutor**. You know I was so convinced to oppose Jesus. I showed this by killing Christians. Vv.9-11

It was when I was doing this God intervened. He stopped my in my tracks.vv.12-14

He says look at my **conversion** and **commissioning**.

See 17-18

Jesus spoke to me. He was alive and it was him I was persecuting when I was killing the Christians. So then he was converted.

He was also commissioned by the risen Jesus. Sent to take the news of Jesus to the Gentiles and to suffer for Jesus.

Here is the key verse of the defence

Read: v. 22b-23

As we have seen before. Paul's message about Jesus is nothing new. He is not making up anything.

He is not speaking his version. No it is what has been spoken about in the Old Testament. For 100's of years before Jesus came to the Jews. They missed it.

It is true what Paul says in v.25 this is **true and reasonable**. Unlike the charges that are against me that cannot be proved because they aren't based on facts his defence is.

Paul's life has been turned around.

Galileo thought the earth was at the centre of the universe. Then Copernicus came along and showed the sun is at centre of universe.

This is the kind of turn around Paul has in his life. He turned from having himself at the centre of the universe to having Jesus at the centre of all things.

Paul's defence becomes a challenge

See 26:28-29

Paul is experiencing what Jesus spoke about in Luke 21:12-15.
He is acting with the courage commanded him to have in **Acts 23:11**.
Paul is a good example for us.

The Gospel continues to be under attack.
Are you ready to give a defence?
How can you be ready to give a defence?
Know your story. Know your testimony.
Write it down so you're prepared when you have the opportunity.

Paul is accused and his circumstances look like he is guilty when he is innocent. He doesn't feel sorry for himself or complain about his circumstances but he sees them as an opportunity to speak about what is the passion of his life. What he loves most about life – JESUS.