

## Acts 25:1-12

The election of a new President, Governor or Mayor often raises expectations with regard to moving forward issues left unresolved by a previous administration. So it was that the arrival of a new procurator to govern Judea raised hopes that undecided cases, stalled under Felix's corrupt administration, would receive closure.

### Summary

**In Acts 25:1-12, in handling Paul's case, a legacy of his predecessor, Felix, the new Governor, Festus, tries to balance the competing demands of justice and political expedience, in response to which Paul appeals to Caesar.**

#### 1. Frowning Providence 24:24-27

Procurator Felix governed by the rule of political expediency (**Acts 24:27**). God's ways are not our ways (**Isa. 55:8-9**), and there is a yet-unseen purpose behind this "frowning providence" of Paul's continued detention. We often find ourselves questioning God's providence. By contrast, Paul insisted he was precisely where God wanted him to be. His task was to glorify God in these circumstances, utilizing every opportunity to be a shining light in a dark place.

#### 2. New Governor vs. 24:27

Felix was replaced as procurator by Portius Festus (**Acts 24:27**). His rule would last barely two years (he died in A.D. 62) and would be filled with the difficulties resulting from his predecessor's maladministration. The direction of this region was inevitably heading toward the disastrous war of AD 66-70, when the Romans destroyed both Jerusalem and the temple.

#### 3. Denied Request vv. 25:1-5

Festus travelled inland to meet face-to-face with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. He could show his good will by transferring Paul back to Jerusalem for further investigation or a new trial. Behind their request, however, was a new conspiracy to assassinate Paul. Festus proposed an alternate plan. The Jewish leaders could select some of their number to accompany him to Caesarea and press their charges against Paul there. Whatever his reason, Festus' decision to keep Paul at Caesarea was part of God's invincible plan and sovereign providence to bring Paul to Rome (**23:11**).

#### 4. Repeated Groundless Accusations vv. 6-8

The morning after returning to Caesarea, Festus took his seat at the imperial judgment bench and summoned Paul to face his accusers. The accusations were the same as before (**Acts 25:8**): Paul had attacked the Jewish law (**Acts 21:21**), defiled the temple (**Acts 21:28-29; 24:8**), and dishonored Caesar (by fermenting civil unrest, **Acts 24:5**).

The accusers could not prove their charges, however.

### 5. Declined Option vv. 9-12

Although Festus had denied the chief priests' earlier request for a change of venue, he had no wish to alienate these local power brokers in the early days of his administration. In the end, political expediency gained won out.

Festus asked if Paul was willing to have the trial moved to Jerusalem, giving his assurance that as governor he would continue to preside and adjudicate the case. Paul's reaction was immediate and adamant. As a Roman citizen, he had a right to stand before Caesar's judgment seat, to be judged by Caesar's delegate (**Acts 25:10**). Since the new governor valued his own political survival above the claims of justice, Paul claimed his right as a citizen to appeal to Caesar himself to judge his cause. Festus consulted his circle of advisors, who agreed that Paul's was such a case. Consequently Festus issued the declaration: 'To Caesar you shall go' (**Acts 25:12**).

### 6. Important Lessons

**First**, we learn something about facing difficult choices, particularly when none of them offer any assured prospect of personal gain.

Paul made the wisest choice based on rational reflection from what information he had at the time. We are to do the same in similar circumstances.

**Secondly**, we learn something regarding our expectations and the Lord's will.

Paul must reckon with the providence of God and come to terms with the fact that the Lord had a plan that was different from his.

**Phil. 4:11** "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content."

This suggests that it was not something that came naturally to him by reason of temperament and disposition.

**Thirdly**, we learn something regarding humility in the Christian life.

Over the next few years, as Paul continued a life of incarceration in Rome, having already spent two years in prison in Caesarea, he learned humility.

Perhaps this is why he emphasizes humility in **Phil 2:5-8**.

Hence Paul exhorts: "Do all things without grumbling or questioning" (**Phil. 2:14**).

This is what Paul learned during these years in prison.

We might find ourselves in similar circumstances. We may find them irritating and pointless. We may ask: 'What possible purpose could there be in this?'

To this question we are driven back to the sovereignty of God and His loving care for His people