

“Responding to the Gospel - Festus”
Acts 25:13 – 26:32
(Preached at Trinity, August 6, 2008)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I stated last time, these final chapters in Acts cover Paul's experience as a captive in Caesarea and his journey to Rome. In this narrative I hope to lay before you several observations from the text.
2. As we come to this section of Acts we arrive at Phase III of Paul's trial. He has stood before two Roman governors, Felix and then Festus. Now he will stand before King Agrippa.
3. King Agrippa is actually King Herod Agrippa II, the last in the line of Herods. The name Herod is familiar but it is a name shared by many in this family. Let me give you a brief rundown of the Herods of Scripture:
 - Herod the Great – reigned from 41 B.C. to 1 B.C. He was the Herod of Matthew 2 who met with the wise men and who sought to kill Jesus as a child. He was married 10 times and was the head of the Herod family.
 - Herod Philip the First – He was the first husband of Herodias who was responsible for the death of John the Baptist. He is mentioned by the name of Philip in **Matthew 14:3**. He held no official office.
 - Herod Antipas – the second husband of Herodias. He consented to the death of John the Baptist. He was also the Herod to whom Pilate sent Jesus for trial.
 - Herod Philip the Second – He was the founder of Caesarea Philippi which was named after him. He was also called Philip in the Luke 3:1.
 - Herod the Great had another son, Aristobulus whom he murdered. Aristobulus, however, had a son, Herod Agrippa who was the Herod in **Acts 12**. He was responsible for the death of James.
 - Herod Agrippa II in our present passage is the son of Herod Agrippa I who killed James and was eaten with worms. He is also the great grandson of Herod the great under whom Christ was born.
4. In this passage we find King Agrippa paying a friendly visit to the newly appointed Festus. He brings with him his sister Bernice whom most believe he had improper relations with.
5. After some time the subject of Paul was told by Festus. It would have been interesting to Agrippa not only because he was a judge interested in points of law, but because he was a Jew interested in points of religion. Intrigued, Agrippa wanted to hear Paul personally. **Acts 25:22** – “Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself.”
6. This was somewhat of a relief to Festus because he really didn't have any charge against Paul to send to the emperor. Perhaps Agrippa would have a better understanding of the case against Paul.

Acts 25:25-26 – “But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. ²⁶ Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.”

7. As **Chapter 26** opens we find Paul happily giving his defense. (read chapter)
Technically, Paul was not required to attend this gathering. He had already appealed to Caesar which took him out of the jurisdiction of both Festus and Agrippa. But Paul never passed up an opportunity to speak of Christ.
Paul’s primary motive was not to exonerate himself but to convert his listeners.
8. In **Verses 24 & 28** we find two distinctly different ways men respond to the Gospel of Christ. We’ve already examined the response of Felix. His was one of protracted delay.
Acts 24:25 – “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”
 - A. Many people continue to postpone dealing with Christ because the affairs of today are more important.
 - B. Unfortunately, tomorrow is just as distracting and they delay to the destruction of their soul.
9. Tonight I want to examine the response of these other two government officials, Festus and Agrippa.
 - I. The response of Festus was one of absolute unbelief
He said, “Paul, you’ve got to be out of your ever-loving mind.”
Acts 26:24 – “And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.”
 - A. To Festus Paul’s words were too incredible to be believed
 1. Paul was speaking about one dying and coming back from the dead
He was talking about sin and forgiveness
 2. Festus could no longer contain himself.
 - a. His actions were out of place. Paul was speaking before King Agrippa, not Festus – but Festus became enraged
 - b. He jumped up and shouted with a great voice - μεγάλη τῆ φωνῆ
 - c. He declared Paul to be insane
 - B. The problem was not with Paul’s clarity of speech
 1. Festus admits Paul to be a scholar.
 - a. Paul had impeccable credentials. He studied under Gamaliel.
He was well-educated.
 - b. Paul spoke as an educated man – with precision and clarity.
 2. In fact, Paul is accused of having too much learning.
 - a. It is true that some study themselves into unbelief
 - b. This isn’t the problem with Paul
 - C. The problem was not with Paul’s sincerity and passion
 1. Paul spoke with passion, pleading for the souls of men
 2. You can hear the passion in Paul’s words
 - D. The problem rested solely upon the hardness of Festus’ heart
 1. First, Paul was speaking of the resurrected Christ. He was speaking of spiritual matters. Festus could not receive it.

1 Corinthians 2:14 – “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

2. Second, Paul was preaching on sin and judgment
No man readily accepts that he is a sinner in need of mercy
 3. According to Festus, no man with any degree of intellect could ever accept such nonsense.
- E. The world often looks at us as fanatics – over-crazed by religion
1. God’s people have always been considered strange and peculiar by the people of this world.
 - a. They dismissed the prophets as madmen
 - b. They dismissed John the Baptist as a madman
 - c. They accused Christ of being mad – even His own family
 - d. They will also find us easy to dismiss.
 2. Worldly people can’t understand why anyone would become so obsessed with religion.
 3. Religious people are fine with cultural Christianity – a Christianity that doesn’t threaten or make demands. They will despise genuine Christianity.
 - a. They think we have gone too far.
(Example of our own church – high emphasis on doctrine, preaching, worship, holiness – regenerate church membership, covenant community, etc.)
 - b. Why can’t we just try to get along.
 4. Most will see the cross as nonsense.
1 Corinthians 1:18-19 – “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”