

February 15, 2026

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of Acts Chapter 25,26

***Passing the Torch: Paul's Farewell Tour Pt. 4
Turning Trials into Testimonies***

Today, we pick up where we left Paul at the end of Chapter 24. We've been tracing Paul's "Farewell Tour"—his final journey, marked by goodbyes, hardship, and the relentless advance of the gospel. Paul's "Farewell Tour" is not just a journey to Rome, but a masterclass in leadership, faithfulness, and legacy. He takes a bold stand for Jesus with fear and with a sense of Integrity, Courage and Conviction. He faces threats of death with courage and conviction.

It is extremely disturbing to think that the so-called 'religious leaders' who were supposed to be acting on God's behalf, turned into Killing Machines full of Hate.

Some of you may remember the 2003 and 2004 Kill

Bill two-part action film series directed by Quentin Tarantino, starring Uma Thurman as "The Bride." The story follows The Bride, a former assassin who is betrayed by her team and left for dead on her wedding day by her boss, Bill, and his Deadly Viper Assassination Squad. After waking from a four-year coma, she embarks on a quest for revenge against those who wronged her.

With almost the same insane obsession the Jewish **Religious Leaders** were seeking to 'Kill Paul' every chance they could. Thankfully God had His hand of

protection over Paul wherever he went and whatever trials came his way. Paul then showed his Integrity, Courage and Conviction by **"Turning Trials Into Testimony"**. (Map of Caesarea @64 miles from Jerusalem)

Let's listen to a first-person account from Paul's perspective, reflecting on the events of Acts 25 and 26:

Two years I have spent in chains in Caesarea, yet my hope has not faded. When Festus became governor, the Jewish leaders wasted no time in pressing their accusations against me, hoping to have me tried in Jerusalem. I knew their intentions were not for justice, but for my life. The Jewish leaders from Jerusalem had come down, their faces set with determination. They pressed Festus to send me back to Jerusalem for trial, but everyone knew there was more to it—they wanted me out of the way. Festus, new to his post and eager to do things by the book, refused. Instead, he invited them to present their charges against me here in Caesarea.

The accusations flew, but none stuck. I defended myself calmly, denying any wrongdoing against Jewish law, the temple, or Caesar. Festus, perhaps hoping to appease the Jews, asked me if I'd be willing to go to Jerusalem for trial. My answer was firm—I appealed to Caesar, invoking my right as a Roman citizen. I would rather stand before the emperor himself than fall victim to a secret plot. Festus had no choice but to agree. Standing before Festus, I declared my innocence—neither against the law of my people, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended.

Not long after, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice arrived with great ceremony. Festus, still unsure what to write to Rome about my case, sought Agrippa's counsel. The hall was packed—dignitaries, soldiers, townsfolk, all eager to hear what would happen. King Agrippa invited me to speak, and I seized the moment. I told them of my upbringing as a Pharisee, my zeal for the traditions of our ancestors, and how I once persecuted those who followed Jesus of Nazareth. Then I recounted the day everything changed: on the road to Damascus, a light brighter than the sun shone around me, and I heard the voice of Jesus himself. He called me to be a servant and witness, to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to both Jews and Gentiles. I spoke boldly of the resurrection, the hope of Israel. Festus interrupted, thinking I was mad, but I insisted I spoke the sober truth. I turned to Agrippa, challenging him directly about his belief in the prophets. Agrippa, half-amused, half-moved, replied, "Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?" " I answered, "Whether quickly or not, I pray that all who hear me today might become as I am—except for these chains." Afterward, I heard them say I had done nothing deserving death or imprisonment. Yet, because I appealed to Caesar, I must go to Rome. I do not know what awaits me there, but I trust the Lord, who has been faithful to me through every trial.

This account of Paul's life may not be exactly what we will ever face, but we can all identify with times in our lives that we have come under pressure or questions about our faith and life choices.

Let's look over some spiritual and practical lessons from Paul that we can incorporate into our own Testimony and Sharing the Good News.

1. **Stand Firm in your Integrity, Courage & Convictions.**

Acts 25 recounts highlights the importance of standing firm in our convictions and using wisdom when facing opposition. For our personal testimonies, Acts 25 teaches us to trust God's sovereignty in difficult circumstances, to be courageous in defending our faith, and to use the opportunities we are given—no matter how challenging—to witness to the truth of the gospel.

2. **Share Your Faith Respectfully and with Clarity.**

Paul was respectful and generous in his conversation.

Listen to what he said to other churches on this topic...

Colossians 4:6... *Let your speech at all times be gracious and pleasant, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to answer each one [who questions you].*

1 Peter 3:15,16... ¹⁵ *but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.* ¹⁶ *Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame.*

WHAT you say is important, but
HOW you say it is also important.

3. Present a Clear, Compelling and Personal Delivery.

Paul's testimony provides a classic "before, how, and after" paradigm that is easy for listeners to follow:

- **Life Before Christ (vv. 4–11):** Paul describes his religious background and his "raging fury" against Christians. He identifies with his audience's culture while honestly acknowledging his past without glorifying his sin.
- **The Conversion Experience (vv. 12–18):** He details the specific moment he encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, focusing on the "heavenly vision" that changed his trajectory.
- **Life After Christ (vv. 19–23):** He explains his new mission to "open the eyes" of others and his obedience to God's call, showing the tangible change from persecutor to preacher.

Paul uses his own life story—his past as a persecutor, his conversion, and his current mission—as his primary defense. He shows that the Gospel is a transforming fact, not just a set of religious rules. Remember your story is one of the most powerful tools for persuasion.

But don't forget that your testimony needs to be centered in the Facts of the Gospel. It must aim to exalt Jesus and show that He is the one who has brought the changes in your life. The truth about the Crucifixion and Resurrection should be included.

Also, don't shy away from the fact of sin and the need for repentance and surrendering to God through Jesus.

4. Expect Negative Feedback or Opposition

We are called to share the Good News and our testimonies. It is not an option. Jesus calls us, commands us and empowers us to share. Even with that assurance we can and should expect that some people will respond in a negative or hostile manner.

Remember what Jesus said in

John 16:33...*I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world.* [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.] Amplified Bible

Practical Tips for Crafting Your Testimony:

- **Keep it Succinct:** Aim to share your story in three to five minutes to maintain engagement.
- **Avoid "Christianese":** Use accessible language rather than religious jargon (like "saved" or "sanctified") that might confuse unchurched listeners.
- **Focus on a Theme:** Identify a central theme like "finding peace" or "discovering purpose" to make your story more relatable and memorable.

Closing Takeaway

Paul's example reminds us that our circumstances—no matter how difficult—are often the very platforms God uses for His glory. Like Paul, we are called to be bold in our witness, trusting that the same God who protected Paul in the past, will strengthen us to stand firm in our own "courtrooms" and trial today.

Paul before Festus

Acts 25... ¹Festus, then, after arriving in the province, went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea three days later. ² And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were pleading with Festus, ³ requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (*at the same time*, setting an ambush to kill him on the way). ⁴ Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody in Caesarea, and that he himself was about to leave shortly. ⁵ “Therefore,” he *said, “have the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, have them bring charges against him.” ⁶ After *Festus* had spent no more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered that Paul be brought. ⁷ After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many, and serious, charges against him which they could not prove, ⁸ while Paul said in his own defense, “I have not done anything wrong either against the Law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar.” ⁹ But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, replied to Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these *charges*?” ¹⁰ But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done nothing wrong to *the* Jews, as you also very well know. ¹¹ If, therefore, I am in the wrong and have committed something deserving death, I am not trying to avoid execution; but if there is nothing to the accusations which these men are bringing against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.” ¹² Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, “You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.”

¹³ Now when several days had passed, King Agrippa and

Bernice arrived in Caesarea, paying their respects to Festus. ¹⁴ And while they were spending many days there, Festus presented Paul’s case to the king, saying, “There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix; ¹⁵ and when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. ¹⁶ I replied to them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any person before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges. ¹⁷ So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered that the man be brought. ¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they did not *begin* bringing any charges against him of crimes that I suspected, ¹⁹ but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. ²⁰ And being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these matters. ²¹ But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor’s decision, I ordered that he be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar.” ²² Then Agrippa *said* to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he *said, “you shall hear him.”

Paul before Agrippa

²³ So, on the next day when Agrippa and Bernice came amid great pomp and entered the auditorium, accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought *before them*. ²⁴ And Festus *said, “King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

²⁵ But I found that he had committed nothing deserving death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶ Yet, I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore, I have brought him before you *all* and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write. ²⁷ For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him as well.”

Paul’s Defense before Agrippa

Acts 26... ¹Now Agrippa said to Paul, “You are permitted to speak for yourself.” Then Paul extended his hand and *proceeded* to make his defense:

² “Regarding all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that I am about to make my defense before you today, ³ especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among *the* Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴ “So then, all Jews know my way of life since *my* youth, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and in Jerusalem, ⁵ since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. ⁶ And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; ⁷ *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. For this hope, O king, I am being accused by Jews. ⁸ Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God raises the dead?

⁹ “So I thought to myself that I had to act in strong opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, after receiving authority from the chief priests, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being put to

death. ¹¹ And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and since I was extremely enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

¹² “While so engaged, as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³ at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵ And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet; for this *purpose* I have appeared to you, to appoint you as a servant and a witness not only to the things in which you have seen Me, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’

¹⁹ “For that reason, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but *continually* proclaimed to those in Damascus first, and in Jerusalem, and *then* all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they are to repent and turn to God, performing deeds consistent with repentance. ²¹ For these reasons *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to murder me. ²² So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place, ²³ *as to* whether the Christ was to suffer, *and* whether, as first from the resurrection of the dead,

He would proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”²⁴ While Paul was stating these things in his defense, Festus *said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you insane.”²⁵ But Paul *said, “I am not insane, most excellent Festus; on the contrary, I am speaking out *with* truthful and rational words.”²⁶ For the king knows about these matters, and I also speak to him with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you believe.”²⁸ Agrippa *replied* to Paul, “In a short *time* you *are going to* persuade me to make a Christian *of myself*.”²⁹ And Paul *said*, “I would wish to God that even in a short or long *time* not only you, but also all who hear me this day would become such as I myself am, except for these chains.”³⁰ The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,³¹ and when they had gone out, they *began* talking to one another, saying, “This man is not doing anything deserving death or imprisonment.”³² And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”