

# 12

## "I APPEAL TO CAESAR"

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### ACTS 25-26



Sometimes when we pray and wait for God to act, his answer involves us! There are times when God's answer is, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today . . . the LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent" (Exod 14:13-14). At other times, the answer is, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them" (Josh 1:6). Discerning and discovering which applies in which case is a major part of the life of faith to which all Christians, and especially all Christian leaders, are called. At this point in Paul's life, he has been promised by God through a sense of vocation (Acts 19:21) and by Jesus through a vision (Acts 23:11) that he will get to Rome. Now Paul himself has to take responsibility and take responsibility for the part God has for him to play.

### WHEN TO DIE & WHEN TO TRY (25:1-27)

1. Read Acts 25. Paul has been in custody in Caesarea, out of the Jewish leaders' sight, for two years (Acts 24:27). What new threat to Paul do the Jewish leaders plan as soon as the new governor Festus arrives? According to verses 1-6, how is this threat thwarted?
2. What does Paul apparently hope to accomplish by appealing to Caesar?<sup>1</sup>
3. We've already met Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12. This is his son Herod Agrippa II, a great grandson of Herod the Great and popular with both Romans and Jews. It is fascinating to

<sup>1</sup>The **APPEAL TO CAESAR** was not like an appeal today, when a verdict has already been reached. The case against Paul has still not been tried and has still not reached a verdict. What Paul is appealing for is for the case to be tried elsewhere, in the highest court in the Roman empire.

see Paul and his beliefs and preaching through the eyes of a Roman official. Festus's summary shows how the Christian faith appeared to one pagan outsider. How is Paul's case explained to Agrippa from Festus's point of view?

4. In what ways do you think nonbelievers misunderstand your Christian beliefs? How can you make things clearer for them?

## BEFORE GOVERNORS AND KINGS (26:1-32)

Luke's purpose in describing the three court scenes of Paul is both apologetic and evangelistic. He wants his readers to remember that God had commissioned Paul to be Christ's servant and witness. Jesus had warned his disciples that they would face rulers on account of him (Luke 21:12-15). Jesus also told Ananias that Paul would represent him before Gentiles and kings (Acts 9:15). Now Paul is living out these predictions by God's grace and for the sake of his name.

5. Read Acts 26. As Paul begins his defense in 1-11, what connections does he make between Christian faith and Judaism?
6. For a third and final time in Acts, we hear the story of Paul on the road to Damascus. What are the distinct elements of his mission and message to the Gentiles that Jesus gives to Paul, as recounted by Paul in verses 12-18?
7. In verses 31-32, yet again an official appointed by Rome vindicates Paul of wrongdoing against Rome. Now Paul is heading to Caesar for his final trial, a trial which is itself not recounted in Acts. What may all this indicate about who Luke hoped would read his book?