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ACTS

## POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE ACTS 25

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Paul arrested in Jerusalem

1. Paul wasn't only facing prison time; his life was in danger – people were plotting to kill him (oath)
2. Chapter 24 Paul appeared before Felix to defend the charges brought against him by an attorney named Tertullus
  - a) Accused of creating dissension among all the Jews, being the ringleader of a Nazarene sect, and profaning the temple
  - b) Paul denied any wrongdoing (clear conscience), pointed out there was no evidence against him, and that the witnesses who had brought the original accusation were absent.
    - (1) He was worshipping the same God of his fathers
  - c) The real reason he was on trial was because Jesus lives
3. Felix refused to take any action – there wasn't enough evidence to convict but he also wanted to keep Paul around in hopes that Paul would bribe him
  - a) Felix and Drucilla would meet with Paul and Paul would share with them about his faith in Christ, about righteousness, self-control, and the judgement to come
  - b) This made Felix afraid – for two years he conversed with Paul until Felix was called back to Rome and replaced by Porcius Festus
  - c) As a parting gift to the Jews Felix left Paul in prison

#### B. Acts 25 – often overlooked, easy to move past

1. Especially with Acts 26 being the pinnacle of Paul's defense
2. Chapter 25 sets the stage – setting the table before enjoying the meal
3. Easy to look at an event and look past the history behind it
  - a) Easy to look at Paul's courage and miss what shaped it
  - b) How was Paul so consistently bold in the face of powerful men?
  - c) We can often focus on the destination without providing the directions
4. ***1 Peter 1:13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.***
  - a) Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts – set Him apart, set Him above

**Acts 25:1 Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, 3 asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.**

## **II. DIFFERENT GOVERNOR, SAME CHARGES**

- A. Festus has only been in office for three days and he immediately goes down to Jerusalem
  - 1. The high priest and chief men of the Jews still have Paul on their mind
  - 2. It's not enough that he is in prison – from the enemies' perspective as long as Paul is alive the gospel is being preached – and he's right
  - 3. They don't want to try him, they want to kill him – it is not about justice

**4 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly. 5 "Therefore," he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him." 6 And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. 7 When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, 8 while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all."**

- B. Festus refused their request to transport Paul back to Jerusalem – “you can come to me in Caesarea”
  - 1. Different governor, same baseless charges – which they could not prove – they couldn't prove their charges two years ago and nothing had changed
  - 2. Paul's response is the same – neither against the law of the Jews, nor the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all
    - a) Seems that things are moving in Paul's favor – man of action in power, not willing to give into the demands of the Jews

**9 But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?" 10 So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. 11 For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"**

- C. Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor – his convictions certainly didn't last long
  - 1. Reminder that Tuesday's convictions are not always Thursday's convictions
    - a) Sunday morning's promises don't always last until Sunday afternoon
    - b) I will never deny you Jesus turns into "Jesus, I don't know the guy"
    - c) Faithfulness – prolonged obedience, consistently doing the right thing even when it is not easy

- (1) In a culture of comfort our faithfulness is often only as good as our comfort level
- (2) The right thing is still the right thing even when things get hard – a marriage covenant is still covenant in the challenging years, fellowship is still important even when it costs something, speaking truth is essential even when it hurts
- (3) God’s way, the right way, is the only way even when it is incredibly difficult or uncomfortable or costly
- d) Festus’ convictions lasted for 10 tens
- 2. But Paul buys himself more time and more audiences to hear the gospel
  - a) To Rome’s credit they had a judicial system, as imperfect as it was, that sought out justice
  - b) And one of the mechanisms in their judicial system was the right for a Roman citizen to appeal against a magistrate’s conduct during their trial
  - c) After conferring with his counsel, Festus said “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”
- 3. Before traveling to Rome, Paul has one more divine appointment

***13 And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. 14 When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying: “There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, 15 about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. 16 To them I answered, ‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.’ 17 Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. 18 When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, 19 but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. 21 But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could 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.” 23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus’ command Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said: “King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. 26 I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. 27 For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”***

### III. KING AGRIPPA

#### A. Herod Agrippa II

- 1. Rome had granted him territories in Palestine, and he ruled over them with the title of king

2. Herod was the son of Herod Agrippa the I who in Acts 12 harassed the early the church – executed James the brother of John and arrested Peter and threw him in prison
  3. Acts 12 also speaks of his violent death –And the people kept shouting, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.
  4. Bernice was not his wife but his sister – she was originally married to her uncle but when he passed, she moved in with her brother which invited all kinds of accusations that may have been well founded
- B. As these powerful men sit around and talk shop, the subject of Paul comes up
1. Considering King Agrippa’s family history (what he understood from about the death of his father is unclear) he wants to meet this Paul character for himself
  2. Festus says “Tomorrow you shall hear him”

#### IV. POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

- A. *Pomp and Circumstance* — the title comes from a line in Shakespeare's *Othello* ("Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!") — in 1901. But it wasn't originally intended for graduations. Elgar's march was used for the coronation of King Edward VII.
1. The word Luke uses for pomp or pageantry is the Greek word “phantasia” – only timed it is used
  2. Borrowed from the Latin word meaning “fantasy or imagination”
  3. Greek it carries a lot more meaning – display, presentation, perception, image
  4. Image-making powers, projecting a thought or an idea into something tangible - writer's capacity to visualize what he is describing and to recreate such visualization in the audience - the ability of a sculptor like Phidias to portray gods he had never seen
    - a) Telling a story - sending a message - communicating the unspoken - saying it without saying it
- B. 1940's limited theatrical release of Disney's – Fantasia
1. Disney settled on the film's concept in 1938 designed as a comeback role for Mickey Mouse, who had declined in popularity. The soundtrack was recorded using multiple audio channels and reproduced with Fantasound, a pioneering sound system developed by Disney and RCA that made Fantasia the first commercial film shown in stereo and a precursor to surround sound.
  2. All the music, all the spectacle – send a message about Disney’s mascot – and it worked
- C. As King Agrippa and Bernice arrived with their procession of servants and soldiers and musicians dressed in royal purple robes
1. All of these theatrics were telling a story, sending a message – we are important, we are powerful, we are due your honor and praise
  2. These kinds of theatrics are as old as time
  3. ***1 Kings 10:1 NET When the queen of Sheba heard about Solomon, she came to challenge him with difficult questions. 10:2 She arrived in Jerusalem with a great display of pomp, bringing with her camels carrying spices, a very large quantity of gold, and precious gems. She visited Solomon and discussed with him everything that was on her mind.***

## V. AND THEN THERE IS PAUL

- A. King Agrippa and Bernice in their purple robes, Festus in his scarlet robe – and you have Paul standing before the wall of pageantry
1. Early church tradition described him as bald headed, bowlegged, short man with a crooked nose, watery eyes, and a unibrow
  2. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 10 – his critics said “his letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive”
- B. Paul may not have been much to look at, but he was also appearing before Agrippa with pageantry
1. He was telling a story, putting forth an image – not of himself, Paul wasn't representing himself
  2. God had orchestrated these events – God had placed Paul before these leaders – Agrippa and Bernice had their robes and servants and soldiers to tell their story – God had Paul
  3. Why Paul of all people? Why use someone who was so physically unremarkable to tell the story of the one who truly is remarkable?
- C. This certainly isn't out of character for God
1. ***John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.***
  2. ***John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.***
  3. ***Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.***
  4. Jesus, born into an animal trough, brought up in obscurity, no recognizable qualities to set him apart, no beauty that we should desire Him, followers were fishermen, traitors, and thieves – they didn't serve Him, He served them – suffered a criminal's death on a tree – that is the image God put forward of Himself
    - a) He also healed the sick, resurrected the dead, fed the hungry, forgave the sinner, freed the captives, and defeated death, and to this day rescues the lost one by one
    - b) Why are we impressed by superficial things? God's not.
- D. Old Testament pomp and pageantry
1. Psalm 49 – The confidence of the foolish - Man in his splendor will not endure, he is like the animals that perish - Mankind in its splendor, yet without understanding, Is like the animals that perish.
  2. ***Isaiah 5:14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself And opened its mouth beyond measure; Their glory and their multitude and their pomp, And he who is jubilant, shall descend into it.***

3. ***Isaiah 14:11 Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, And the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you.'***

## **VI. PAUL STANDS IN CONTRAST**

- A. Paul's courage in the face of worldly power and influence
  1. Paul has spent more time in awe of God than in awe of man – He has sanctified God in heart
  2. In awe of what He has done through Jesus Christ – Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ
  3. And it is with this heart the God sends Paul forward to represent Him and it is with the same heart God desires to send His church forward as His representatives
    - a) When you have seen and experienced true power, the worlds power loses its luster