

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ACTS 25-26

There's a political cartoon that was first published in 1889. In football, one team punts and the other team receives the punt. Yet this cartoon shows both teams trying to punt at the same time. The caption reads, "What can I do when both parties insist on kicking?"

The cartoonist was satirizing the political landscape of his day. He depicts Congress, and then President, Benjamin Harrison, both trying to kick the football simultaneously. The cartoon illustrates the chaos that results when neither side of a dispute is willing to take responsibility - when both parties blame the other - when no one steps up to make the hard choices.

You've heard the expression "a political football?" This cartoon was one of the first uses of the phrase.

A political football is defined as "A political issue that's continually debated, but never resolved." It's an unpopular topic on which neither side wants to take action. The decision ends up getting punted back and forth. No one is willing to take the ball and run with it...

This was the case in the Roman court of Caesarea. The Apostle Paul had become **a political football!**

Governor Felix had a prisoner, who was a problem. Felix knew Paul was innocent of any wrong doing, but politically speaking what should he do?

If he released Paul, he would upset the Jews who Felix wanted to placate. If he condemned Paul, Felix could get in trouble with his superiors in Rome. Paul was a Roman citizen which meant he had legal rights.

So like any good politician, what did Felix do? *He punted!* For two years he kept Paul under house arrest; then he left Paul's fate to his successor - a man named Festus. This is where we pick up the story tonight...

Acts 25 begins,, “Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.” Porcius Festus was the eleventh Roman procurator of Judea. He ruled the region from approximately 59-62 AD. Governor Festus took over the post at age 70, and would ultimately die in office.

Earlier in life, Festus co-starred in the television series, “Gunsmoke.” Of course, you have to be old enough to have watched “Gunsmoke” to get the joke.

Festus' predecessor, Felix, had been heavy-handed and corrupt. The Jews resented Felix' administration.

Festus was a better man than Felix, and knew his first priority should be smoothing out the fractured relationships with the Jews in Jerusalem. That's why three days after his arrival he goes up to the holy city...

“Then the high priest—and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem - while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.”

Remember in Acts 23, forty men had taken a vow not to eat until Paul was dead meat. *Two years later these guys must be getting really hungry!*

Once again they concoct a plot to assassinate Paul.

By now two High Priests had come and gone. The old man, Ananias, is dead. His successor, Jonathan, was murdered by Governor Felix. A priest named *Ishmael* was now in power. But it doesn't matter who the priest is, the Jew's priority is the same. They hated Christianity's chief spokesman, and wanted Paul dead.

Verse 4, *“But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly.”* Festus probably smelled a rat.

“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.”* Festus calls for a trial.

“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.” American justice has rules forbidding double jeopardy, but not the ancient Romans. Paul is back in court defending himself against the same charges.

Verse 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, 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.”* All the Jews could do was throw up lies and

false accusations. They had no evidence. Paul maintained his innocence.

“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?” Paul was politically astute. He knew that after the ruthlessness of Felix, Festus’ wanted to do whatever was necessary to win back Jewish favor.

Festus might’ve thought Paul could get a fair trial in Jerusalem, but Paul knew better. A trial in Jerusalem would be a death sentence for Paul. The priests would want to kill him. Thus, Paul throws down the trump card he’s had in his hand. He was a Roman, and it was every citizen’s right to appeal his case to the Caesar.

Verse 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. 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.” Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”

The governor seals his appeal!

When Paul was first arrested in the Temple we're told in Acts 23, "The Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.'"

As far back as Acts 19 Paul purposed in the Spirit that he "must also see Rome." He knew God's itinerary for Him included Rome, but never in his wildest dreams did he think he would make the trip in this manner...

By appealing to Caesar he would get the opportunity to preach the Gospel to the Emperor! In addition, the whole trip - *food, travel, taxes, duties, tips* - will be paid for by the Roman government. It's true, "God works in mysterious ways." And here's a good example!

Verse 13, "And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus." Two more characters make their debut in the story...

King Agrippa II was the last of the Herods. By this time, Rome had stripped his family of almost all of its royal power. Agrippa was a puppet, a mere figurehead.

Bernice was his sister. She was also the sister of Drusilla, the wife of Governor Felix. Drusilla and Bernice were both members of the Herodian family, and great-granddaughters of Herod the Great.

History tells us Bernice had three failed marriages and ended up living as a co-regent in the court of her brother, Agrippa II. Appearance-wise Bernice was a real *beauty*, but character-wise she was *bankrupt*.

Several ancient writers say she and Agrippa II, lived in an incestuous relationship. Agrippa II never married.

Later in life Bernice left Agrippa to have an affair with the infamous Roman, "Titus Vespasian" - the general who conquered Jerusalem and burned the Temple to the ground.

Eventually Bernice left Titus, and returned to Agrippa. Obviously, she was *fickle and flirtatious*.

She and Agrippa were like a Hollywood couple... Here Governor Festus invites them to the party...

“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, about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me , when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.

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.’ 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. When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” Paul was the Jews’ leading public enemy. Felix figured he was guilty of *violent crimes or terrorist activities*. He was surprised to hear what angered the Jews were religious matters.

And specifically Paul’s claim that Jesus was alive!

Governor Festus was the new kid on the block, and ignorant of the history. He continues, “*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. 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.”

“*Augustus*” was one of the Roman Emperor’s official titles. It meant “revered or august one.” It later became a title associated with the evil of Emperor worship.

Verse 22, “Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he said, “you shall hear him.” 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.” The “*auditorium*” Luke mentions is a highlight of our trips to Israel. The Roman amphitheater in Caesarea is a magnificent venue. It’s situated on the beach where 3000 spectators faced seaward toward the bright blue Mediterranean. Its focal point is an enormous, marble stage. Stairs lead from the stage downward into dark, stone holding rooms situated below the flooring.

About nine rows up in the seating, in the middle of the bleachers is a platform for dignitaries - “*the box seats.*” Even today you can sit where Festus and Agrippa heard Paul on-stage delivering his defense.

Imagine this stadium packed to the gills. Everybody who was anybody had gathered for the show. *Roman officials stationed in Caesarea... Jewish aristocrats from Jerusalem...* all the leading dignitaries were there!

The last to be seated would’ve been Governor Festus, followed by King Agrippa and Bernice.

I picture them prancing into the amphitheater with great pomp and circumstance. Imagine a red carpet walk at the Oscars. They strutted like three peacocks.

Finally, out of the dark recesses of the sub-stage, Paul was thrust into the blinding sunshine. He was now center-stage before a hostile crowd. *Hear the jeers and sneers!* He could barely see through his squinted eyes.

Remember the physical description tradition gives us of Paul: *bald-headed, bow-legged, a hunched-back, runny-eyes. His nose was crooked. He had bushy eyebrows. On his tiptoes Paul was barely five feet tall.*

Paul was a pitiful human specimen to behold. He was weak, fragile, small... *Now compare him to the well-dressed, and dignified crowd filling the theater...*

Festus is clothed in his Roman armor and military splendor. Agrippa wears his royal robes. His gorgeous mistress, in an elegant gown, is sitting by his side...

Most folks in Paul's shoes would be more than a little intimidated - a bit threatened - but not Paul. Here, in his speech he shows tremendous poise and courage...

In verse 24 Festus begins, **“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.**

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.” Paul’s citizen’s appeal to the Caesar had bought him a ticket to Rome.

Festus though had a problem... “I have nothing certain to write to my lord (the Caesar) 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. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”

How could Festus send a prisoner to Rome, and clog up the legal system without substantial charges?

What was Paul’s crime? Festus needs a reason to deport Paul to Rome, so he asks for Agrippa's help.

Chapter 26, “Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You are permitted to speak for yourself.” So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: “I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews...” What an introduction!

Here's a man who's been under arrest for two years. He's been a political football - *used by the Romans, threatened by the Jews* - yet he stands before this crowd and says he’s “*a happy man!*” Obviously, Paul’s joy came not from his circumstances, but from Jesus.

Verse 3, “Especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.”

Paul was happy to have King Agrippa to hear his case. Agrippa was a Herod - *a card-carrying member of the Jewish establishment*. He'd grown up in Israel. He was knowledgeable of the nation's recent events.

Paul assumes that Agrippa is the perfect person to issue a fair verdict in his case before these dignitaries.

In verse 4 Paul begins to share his testimony...

“My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know.” Saul had been a familiar face in the Temple. His credentials were well known. Before his conversion he was a leading rabbi.

He says, **“They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”** Saul was a loyal Jew and devout legalist. *Pharisees were legalistic about their legalism*. No one was stricter than Rabbi Saul.

“And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.” Paul hoped for nothing more than what every Jew before him had hoped - *for salvation!* Paul wanted to be made right with God and live forever. This is every man's hope.

Thus Paul asks in verse 8, **“Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?”**

The bottom line to Paul's belief, and the core principle of Christianity is **Jesus' resurrection**. And to Paul it made sense.

If God can provide eternal life to all men; then surely he can raise His own Son from the dead. If God is God, why doubt Jesus' resurrection?

Sometimes we're slow to believe a miracle, because we forget who it is that's performing the task... Ask me to lift a 300 pound barbell and you'll have your doubts, but ask a NFL lineman to lift that barbell and you'll assume, "Sure, no problem." Likewise, miracles that are difficult for us, become easy for an almighty God.

Take for example Isaiah 40:12. The Prophet Isaiah makes some astonishing statements about God...

First, "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand..." The 21 major oceans that spread across the Earth cover a total area of 138 million square miles.

The combined average depth of those oceans is 4,200 feet. That's a lot of water. Yet Isaiah declares, *God holds the oceans in the cup of his hand.*

And the **second** statement Isaiah makes is that God has "measured heaven with a span..." An ancient "span" was the distance between the king's thumb and pinky. Now think of the 100 billion stars that dot our galaxy - and then the 100 million more galaxies. Our universe is enormous, yet it all fits into God's palm.

It's been said, "If you believe Genesis 1:1, '*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*', then you should have no problem believing the remaining 31,102 verses." If God created all things; then He can do with all things

whatever He pleases, *including raising His Son, Jesus, from the dead.*

This is why Paul asks the crowd, *“Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?”*

Verse 9, *“Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”*

At one time *“Saul”* had been on the opposing team. He was the leading antagonist against Christianity.

“This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.” Paul was the official henchman.

He did the High Priest’s dirty work. He rounded up Christians and threw them into prison - and often oversaw their execution. Case in point was Stephen.

When Paul says, *“I cast my vote against them,”* scholars believe this implies that he was an official member of the Jewish Sanhedrin or Supreme Court.

The Apostle Paul not only arranged executions, he provided legal justification for carrying them out.

Verse 11, *“And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”* Rabbi Saul was vicious. He was on the warpath. I’m sure Paul was particularly ashamed of the fact that he had threatened believers in Jesus with death unless they recanted their faith. He had *“compelled them to blaspheme!”*

Did he ever put a knife to a child's throat, and give the dad the option - *renounce Jesus or your boy dies?*

What horrors did he devise to torture Christians?

Rabbi Saul was a first-century terrorist. But here's the provocative point, if God was willing to forgive a man like Saul of such unspeakable crimes, don't you think He'll forgive you of your sin? Here's grace in action. **If God can forgive a Saul, He can forgive us all!**

Verse 11 says an angry Saul not only ran Christians out of Jerusalem, he tracked them to *"foreign cities."*

And it was on one such warpath to Damascus that Saul got intercepted. Verse 12, **"While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king..."**

Notice, like the storyline out of a typical western, God's showdown with Paul occurs at high noon!

And **"along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language..."** The risen Lord spoke to Paul. And He spoke in Hebrew. Remember, Jesus is a Jew! He wasn't against Judaism. He was its fulfillment.

In fact, what language does God speak? Here He spoke Hebrew. And He said, **'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'** I love the Lord's analysis. Saul was persecuting Christians, but Jesus took it personally.

He asks Saul, **"why are you persecuting Me?"**

Rest assured, whenever the Church encounters persecution, Jesus takes it very, very personally!

And then the Lord said, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” Goads were sharp pointed sticks used to prod cattle. Today hi-tech cowboys use electric shockers to maneuver and *steer their steers*.

The witness of Stephen had *prodded* Saul...

The faithfulness of the saints had *shocked* his conscience... The growth of the Church despite his best efforts had *goaded* him into reconsidering...

One commentator writes, “The lightning of Damascus struck no empty void, but found plenty of flammable material in the soul of Paul.” Even before this divine encounter on the Road to Damascus, *God had been prodding, and Saul had been bucking...*

And God continues to prod people even today.

We call it *conviction*. God shines the light of His truth on our sin. He exposes our need for a Savior.

He wrestles with us over our stubbornness...

On the Road to Damascus God finally pins Saul. It’s a takedown. He humbles Rabbi Saul with His glory and grace, but He’d been working on his heart for years.

Verse 15, “So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet...’” I love this... God knocks him down. Jesus forces a stubborn Saul to his knees. Then the same God stands him

back on his feet. This is how God treats us. He *knocks us down*; then He *lifts us up*!

Jesus turns Sauls into Pauls. The word "Saul" means "*requested one*." The name "Paul" means "*little*."

Rabbi Saul thought he was big stuff - a religious celebrity - *the man in demand*. But the Apostle Paul learned he was nothing but a little guy - *a simple servant* employed and empowered by *a big God*.

Jesus adds, "For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you." Jesus appeared to Paul for this purpose - to make him "*a minister and a witness*."

The Greek word translated "*minister*" means "*under rower*." It referred to the slaves who manned the oars in the belly of a Roman ship. Paul threw away his celebrity status to row for Jesus. He was a servant.

And he was also called to be a "*witness*." A witness is not a *judge* who renders the verdict... Nor a *clerk* who keeps records... Neither is a witness a *lawyer* who argues cases... *A witness simply tells his story!*

And this is a good reminder for us. It's not our job to *cast judgments*, or *keep score*, or *argue cases* - we're just the witness. It's our job to simply tell people what Jesus has done for us. I believe all Christians have been called to be "*a minister and a witness*." All of us should be willing to *grab an oar and share our story*.

In verse 17 the Lord also told Paul, “I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them 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 are sanctified by faith in Me.” Remember at that particular moment Paul was sitting on the curb as blind as a bat.

Jesus had blinded him with a bright light. Yet now the Lord tells Paul he’ll be used to open the eyes of Jews and Gentiles - to turn people from darkness to light.

Soon Paul will recover his physical sight, but he’ll spend the rest of his life helping people see spiritually.

And there’s no greater joy than *to help someone see.*

I once watched a documentary about a group of ophthalmologists who were removing cataracts in Africa. This is a relatively simple procedure, but it makes the difference between blindness and sight.

It was a joy to watch the reactions of those people who benefited from the surgery. They had gone from darkness to light. They were elated. It was so rewarding and life-changing for them and the doctors.

And the same is true when you help open someone’s spiritual eyes. You show them a Scripture, help them understand its meaning, *apply it to their lives - watch them get it – see it sink in.* What could be more thrilling than to lead someone out of darkness into light?

Paul continues his address in verse 19, “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.” Paul was knocked down and humbled - *as an example to others.*

Now all men, Jews and Romans, need to “Repent. Turn to God. Not just make empty promises, but really show in their behavior that they’re willing to change.”

And Paul was adamant we repent. *He paid a steep price for this insistence.* He adds, “For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.”

Remember, Noah wasn't ridiculed and mocked for standing on the deck of the Ark, and shouting, “Something good is going to happen to you today...”

Jeremiah wasn't thrown in the dungeon for preaching “Your Best Life Now...” Daniel wasn't heaved to the lions for chanting, “Smile. God loves you.” Amos didn't confront the wicked priests with, “I'm okay, you're okay...” John the Baptist wasn't beheaded for having a “Honk if you love Jesus” bumper sticker on his Audi.

And Paul wasn't arrested for encouraging people to “Look Great, Feel Great.” All these people preached “*repent!*” This was the reason they were persecuted.

In verse 22 Paul continues, “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great (and there were both types in the crowd that day -

from the average Jew to Agrippa and Bernice), saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come - that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” Paul affirms all he had done was repeat what Moses and the prophets had spoken. The truth he’d preached had been foretold in the OT. Paul’s accusers needed to read a Bible.

Everything Paul believed and preached about Jesus had been predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Verse 24, “Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” Festus interrupted Paul. He thought Paul had gone nuts - that his study of Scripture had forced him into an absurd conclusion.

Romans were naturalists. The idea of a corpse coming back to life was completely foreign to Festus’ thinking... The governor assumed Paul was certifiably crazy, *yet Paul was the sanest person present that day.*

Once an inspector was reviewing procedures at the State Insane Asylum. He asked how the hospital evaluated if a person should be institutionalized.

The director of the asylum took him to a bathroom and pointed to the tub. He explained, “We fill up this tub, and show the person a teaspoon, a teacup, and a bucket. Then we ask him or her to empty the tub.”

The state inspector said, “Oh, and if they don’t ask for the bucket you admit them?” The director replied, “No, if the

person doesn't pull the plug we admit him... **Do you want a room on the first or second floor?"**

Festus thought Paul needed to be institutionalized, but Paul was the only person in the arena with the courage and honesty to embrace the obvious.

Paul replies to Festus, **"But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason."** Paul wasn't *crazy*, and the truth isn't *hazy*.

Paul points out that Christianity is a reasonable faith.

The truths we believe - *from creation, to the resurrection, to the second coming* - are based on rational, historical, and verifiable facts! All Paul had done was to **"*speak the words of truth and reason.*"**

Verse 26, **"For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner."** Suddenly, Paul turns the conversation from *the Roman* to *the Jew* sitting next to him. He puts King Agrippa on the spot.

Festus was the new kid on the block, but Agrippa and Bernice were Hebrews. They had been alive, living in the land, 27 years earlier when a carpenter from Nazareth preached in the streets and worked miracles.

Agrippa and Bernice read the headlines in the Jerusalem Post. The resurrection of Jesus had been big news. They knew the stunning evidence. As Paul reminds him, **"*This thing was not done in a corner.*"**

In 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 Paul reels off a list of numerous eyewitnesses who saw firsthand the risen Christ. He did so to challenge all doubters to visit these people and verify their stories. Early Christians weren't afraid to put the truth of the resurrection to the test.

It's vital to realize, Christianity is not just a list of dogmas or philosophies - it's more than abstract ideas. Christianity is a set of truths based on falsifiable facts.

If the Jews had only produced Jesus' corpse, Christianity would've been stopped before it launched. A body would've *shot it down* before it ever *started up*.

Paul reminds Agrippa that the foundation of Christianity is not some clandestine, mystical act performed in a secluded room in a secret location.

No, God invaded time and space - and on a hill just outside of Jerusalem - in full view of the entire world - God's only Son was brutally nailed to a Roman cross.

To this day, 2000 years later, you can go to the land where His body laid, and discover for yourself that the tomb is empty! *"This thing was not done in a corner."*

And Agrippa knew Paul was telling the truth.

The Apostle grows bolder in verse 27, *"King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."* Paul doesn't even give him time to answer.

Of course, Agrippa believes. All Jews believed what was written by the prophets! Paul has Agrippa on the ropes, and he refuses to let Agrippa off the hook.

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” Here's one of the saddest verses in all the Bible. He was “almost” persuaded.

Yet as the old saying goes, “Almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.” Surely not salvation.

Recall, *Governor Felix* looked for a more “convenient time...” while *King Agrippa* was “almost persuaded.”

God had tugged on both men’s hearts, but they failed to promptly respond to God’s call. And sadly, there’s no evidence either man got another opportunity.

In verse 29 Paul answers Agrippa, “And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.” In his defense Paul had zeroed in on Agrippa, but now he expands the invitation to all men. His goal was to persuade everyone in the theater that day to become a Christian.

And you and I should have the same ambition.

We can’t force people to be Christians - nor would we want to - but we can seek to *persuade* people with the truth. Let’s make it our goal to be as persuasive as possible. Let’s seek to convince them to follow Jesus.

Whenever we present the Gospel, our listeners need to understand that the Gospel necessitates a decision.

The Gospel always invokes a decision...

It’s a reasonable decision. It’s a consequential decision. It’s a pressing decision. It’s a personal decision. And realize that

no decision - or simply delaying your decision - is a *decision to say no*.

But a positive decision is never regretted. “Yes” to Jesus is the greatest decision you’ll ever make.

Verse 30, “When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.”

Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

It’s interesting, when these proceedings started it was Paul on trial before King Agrippa. But in the course of events the tables were turned. In the end it was Agrippa who was on trial before Paul, and His Lord!