

## **Acts 25b-26a** verses 25:13-26:15

13 Last week we covered the intricacies of the family of Herod and saw that Agrippa II and Bernice were brother and sister. Agrippa II was king over all of Israel except this Judean region. They had come to welcome the new procurator.

14 –15 This was a chance for Festus to gain Jewish insights into the case by asking the king who was more familiar with Jewish squabbles. Luke must have had an informant in the court that overheard the conversations and relayed them to him.

16-18 Roman law required the accused to be present when the plaintiffs made their accusations to a judge. A citizen of Rome had the right to defend himself in court before judgment could be passed on him.

19 religion – not the typical Greek word, but one that is used often in a derogatory way i.e. “superstition”. In the hearing before Felix, Paul spoke of the resurrection. Here we find that Festus understands it to be specifically the resurrection of Jesus, the cornerstone of the Christian faith. 1Corinthians 15:3-4

20 Festus neglected to relay that there was a previous plot on his life in Jerusalem, something he surely knew about, an obvious reason Paul would not want to go to Jerusalem. Festus may have been hiding his political shenanigans from Agrippa II.

21-26 Agrippa and Bernice have no legal say in what happens to Paul. They are merely hearing the case out of curiosity and giving Festus some help in what to present to Caesar as the charges. “The whole Jewish community” is certainly an exaggeration unless it refers to the Sanhedrin. God is fulfilling the prediction He gave to Paul at the time of his conversion. Acts 9:15

## Chapter 26

1-3 This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> recounting of Paul’s testimony. It is surely a summary of what Paul said. Each time Paul shares it he does so in a way so as to speak to the heart of his audience. This is not a legal defense, but a chance to witness to Agrippa and his sister, both of whom are familiar with Judaism of the time. He politely asks to be heard until he has finished. I think Paul wanted to be sure he could relay his whole conversion story to Agrippa.

4-5 His testimony begins with the fact that he is a devout Jew. He was well known for his adherence to the Law and none could testify that he failed to observe the Law. Paul was Judaism’s up and coming star. That is one reason the Sanhedrin is so upset with him. Agrippa would have known how observant Pharisees were. Philippians 3:5-6

6-7 Paul pinned the case against him on the interpretation of the promises in the Old Testament. He didn’t deny that Jews earnestly sought to serve God and

believed the prophets. The same is true for many today. The difference was that he saw those prophecies fulfilled in Jesus. The hope – Genesis 3:15; 49:10; Isaiah 9:6-7

8 Paul didn't waste time getting to the issue. Was Jesus resurrected? The Jews saw resurrection as part of a new age. If Jesus rose from the dead, it was the ultimate proof that He was indeed the fulfillment of the hope the prophets wrote about. (1 Corinthians 15:4) Pharisees believed in resurrection. Of all Jews, they should be the least surprised that Jesus rose from the dead. Acts 4:2

9-10 Paul shares how at first he did not recognize that Jesus is Messiah and so he joined in the persecution against saints (holy ones) even putting them to death. We only have a record of Stephen, but there must have been others. Paul saw Christianity as a poisonous doctrine invading Judaism. Galatians 1:13 It did change everything! The role of the Temple, the law, sacrifices, all are redefined in Christ. "Cast his vote" does not mean he was part of the Sanhedrin, but that he approved. He was too young at that time or he probably would have been part of the Sanhedrin.

11 The Christians were often still worshiping with Jews. Paul would encourage the synagogue leaders to find those in the congregation who were following Jesus. The synagogue could inflict 39 lashes for leading others astray from the faith. Paul attempted to extradite some to Jerusalem where they could be tried, imprisoned and even stoned. Paul considered the first Christian expression of faith blasphemy, "Jesus is Lord."

12-14 Paul explains why everything changed. While on a Sanhedrin sanctioned mission to persecute Christians, he personally encountered Jesus. A bright light-Matthew 17:2 Psalm 104:2 Some later manuscripts have "Hebrew" instead of "Aramaic" – the name Saoul was in the Aramaic form. The Lord can speak to us in whatever language we learned.

A goad was a long pointed stick that was poked into animals to get them moving. The animals would kick to no avail. Jesus was telling Paul that his God prodded conscience was like a goad, OR perhaps it was useless to resist what Christ had accomplished and what He was doing in and through the church. His kicking against either was useless. (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

15 Did Paul really not know? I see it as his training resisting his conscience and wanting to be sure. Have you had a similar experience when the Lord had to get through to you in a way that would break through the walls you had built up?

What follows is the most complete record of what Jesus said to him. We'll look at that next week. Are you kicking against any goads in your life? Paul is using the opportunity to share with those in authority. Are you using your opportunities? Paul was convinced he was serving God. How should that affect our attitude toward Christian antagonists that think they are doing the right thing?