

## **In step with Jesus 152**

**May 4, 2025**

**Key Text: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8: 31)**

### **Introduction**

Last week we started reading Acts chapter 25 and the focus of our reading was Paul’s trial before Festus. From that reading we could see yet another example of leadership failure on the part of a Roman governor. Pilate failed to stand for the right when he tried Jesus because he did not want to offend the Jews or cause an uproar. Felix left Paul in prison because he wanted to do the Jews a favor. And Festus wanted to send Paul to Jerusalem, knowing they would kill him there, because he too wanted to do the Jews a favor. On the surface, the Jews were under Roman domination but at critical moments when the Roman governors were supposed to assert their authority for good, they succumbed to the manipulations of the Jews. Who was really in charge? The truth is that neither the Jews nor the Romans were in charge. They were just instruments in the hands of Satan. But despite Roman failure and Jewish manipulations under Satan, God was accomplishing His purposes, and all things were working together for the good of God’s people.

Today we will read the remaining verses of Acts chapter 25. It is a continuation of Paul’s Judgement before Festus. As you will see from our reading, Festus referred Paul to Agrippa for further investigation but this time, Festus himself was on the witness stand for Paul.

### **Acts 25:13 -27**

3 Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. 14 And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, “There is a man left prisoner by Felix, 15 and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. 16 I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. 17 So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. 18 When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. 19 Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. 20 Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.” 22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” said he, “you will hear him.”

23 So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. 26 But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore, I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. 27 For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.

## Reflections

The Jews had made a clear request of Festus. They wanted Festus to condemn Paul but, initially, Festus wanted to follow the law by not condemning a man before he had the chance to speak for himself. On examination, he found nothing for which he could condemn Paul, but he felt he had to maintain a political tie with the Jews to remain in power. However, as much as Festus wanted to take sides with the Jews, he could not see a reason to condemn Paul, neither could he find a tangible reason to send him bound as a prisoner to Rome. He could not but confess that he found Paul guiltless.

Paul’s experience before Felix is a typical manifestation of God’s mighty defense for those who serve Him. He knew firsthand, that God will always defend His own. In his letter to the Romans, Romans 8: 31 - 37, Paul eloquently expressed his confidence in God’s enduring support. He says “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul’s confidence can be our confidence too. We can trust that God will be with us, no matter what happens. Troubles may come and go. But God’s faithfulness and love will never fail.