

Sunday, August 16, 2026

Right Where I'm Supposed to Be

Acts 25-26

- Do you remember what you wanted to be when you grew up? How many of you, are not doing what you wanted to be doing whenever you were a kid?
- I now I'm not—you ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up, up until I was about 16 years old I was convinced that I was going to play in the NBA
 - I had it all planned out. And it's Jessie Mosely's favorite thing to make fun of me about because I was going to play for the Philadelphia 76ers, and wear Number 9 because my nickname was going to be K-9 cuz id be the top dawg on the court
 - And I didn't get where I wanted to be...but I am confident that I got where I was supposed to be

- Paul had a similar dream. Because in his day and age, the celebrities and major influencers weren't the actors, artists, and athletes—the most famous people in the world were the teachers, The Pharisees, the Scribes, the High Priests.
 - And Paul got further along into his dream than I did. He was a prodigy. A star student of the most famous teacher around. He was on pace to be the Lebron James of the pharisaical world and it was like he had Michael Jordan as his personal mentor.
- But now, we have seen over the past few chapters, he's not living out that dream—and he's actually on trial and in handcuffs before those who are living out that dream that he once had
- But he wouldn't trade places with them for anything in the world—because he might not be where he wanted to be, but he is right where he is supposed to be

- We left off in chapter 24 with Felix keeping Paul in prison for 2 years.
 - These are referred to as Paul's silent years because we don't really hear from him, he hadn't written any letters during that time that we know of, we just know that Felix would pull him out from time to time hoping that Paul would try to bribe him
 - But eventually Felix gets fired—if you weren't here last week saw that **FELIX**, the Judean Governor, holding the office that was once held by Pontius Pilot. He had at one time been a slave but his brother used his connections to the emperor to get him freed and placed as Governor of Judea—which was a job that no one really wanted
- And during these two years that Paul is kept in prison by him, it becomes apparent that he is not cut out for the job
 - He became known more and more for his corruption and bribery
 - He was extremely cruel and violent
- During his tenure there was a serious conflict between the Jews and Greeks in Caesarea and he was accused of being extremely unfair to the Jews
- He would use violence to try and squash conflicts, even going as far as to having a Jewish high priest assassinated
- Historians say that Felix was out of control and Emperor Nero would have had Felix killed if it were not for his brother's influence
- But in trying to patch up his relationship with the Jews, as his governorship comes to an end, verse 27 says: ***“When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.” -Acts 24:27 (ESV)***
- So now Felix is replaced by **FESTUS**
 - The great Jewish Historian Josephus called Festus a significant improvement from Felix

- Festus was a boy scout—he was known for being a by-the-book kind of guy
- Josephus said he was also better than his successor was—but unfortunately he would only serve about 2 and a half years as governor of Judea before he died while in office in 62 AD of reasons we do not know
- But God in His providence—once again put the right guy, at the right time, in the right position, right where he needed to be to help Paul carry out his purpose of getting to Rome
- Felix had just kept Paul in prison—so the Lord works it out to get him removed from that office, and get someone like Festus in there that will get things moving along
- ***“Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they***

were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.” -Acts 25:1-3 (ESV)

- So on his third day on the job—Festus makes his way to Jerusalem to properly introduce himself to the Jewish leaders
 - Try to establish a good relationship with them that Felix did not have
- And immediately they talk to him about Paul!
 - It had been 2 YEARS that he had been locked up and out of the way—but they are still fuming about him
 - They hadn’t let it go—and now they’re gonna try out the new guy and see if they can get him to do them a favor
 - But unlucky for them—Festus is a by-the-book, boy scout
- And he says, “Nope, he’s a Roman citizen, so he’s gotta stay in Caesarea”
- ***“Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to***

go there shortly. “So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.”

-Acts 25:4-5 (ESV)

- Here we go again—it’s like a re-run. The Jews come down again, accuse Paul again, of a bunch of thing that they can’t prove and we get nowhere again
- ***“When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove. Paul argued in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.” But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?” -Acts 25:7-9 (ESV)***

- So Festus doesn’t know about any assassination attempts, but he’s trying to start his tenure out on a good note with the Jews, who had a bad experience with the last Governor

- So he tries to reason that these all seem like Jewish issues, this is a Jewish conflict, so how about we take this to Jerusalem and have your trial there.
- He even tries to assure Paul that he himself will still judge his case, let’s just change the venue to fit the situation
- But Paul says, “Nah, I’m good”
- ***“But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up***

to them. I appeal to Caesar.” -Acts 25:10-11 (ESV)

- Now, this puts Festus in a tough spot
- He’s new to the job—he doesn’t want to bother Caesar, he wants to make Caesar’s life easier not more complicated—he doesn’t want to bother Caesar with this right as he’s begun!
- But he’s a rule follower—and he knows that every Roman citizen has the right to invoke “*provocatio ad Caesarem*” —provocation to Caesar
 - An appeal to Caesar himself
 - Any Roman Citizen who felt that their local trial was unfair, especially if their lives were on the line— could appeal their case to be transferred to Rome and be presented before Caesar’s court
 - Paul says, “You can see that I’m innocent, but the Jews want me killed—so therefore let’s see if Caesar himself will make that same judgement”
- Now, Caesar at the time was **Emperor NERO**
 - Nero became Emperor in 54 AD when he was only 16 or 17 years old
 - Historians say that the first 5 years of his reign were actually among the best years in all of Roman history
 - However, during those 5 years—his mother and his two top advisers were essentially the ones running the entire empire
- That is until some people started whispering in Nero’s ear that his mother was domineering him and not allowing him to truly rule
 - Around this time, his mother had promoted his younger stepbrother in the imperial ranks who Nero saw as a threat—and his brother was “coincidentally” poisoned and killed at a feast shortly after
 - His cruelty began to spiral and 4 years later he had his own mother assassinated and he would go on to be one of the most brutal and

cruel emperors in history and oversaw the bloodiest persecution of Christians of all time

- It is right around this time that this spiral starts to take place that Paul appeals to be taken to Caesar...to Nero
- And Festus knows that he was to honor that appeal: Verse 12 says—***“Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”-Acts 25:12 (ESV)***
- However, the problem is he still doesn’t even know what he would tell Caesar about this case! He doesn’t care about this religious stuff—he’s sure Nero doesn’t either. But then as he’s trying to figure it out: ***“Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus.” -Acts 25:13 (ESV)***
- So here is the final person to join the party that we need some background on: **Herod Agrippa II**

- So this is the older brother of Felix’s wife Drusilla that we saw last week
- He is going to be the last of the Herodian Dynasty
- His Great Grandfather was Herod the Great—who tried to kill baby Jesus by ordering the death of all the male boys 2 years old and under in and around Bethlehem
- His Grandfather was Herod Antipas who had John the Baptist imprisoned and beheaded after John called Herod out for being in an inappropriate relationship with his brother’s wife
- His father was Herod Agrippa I that we saw in Acts chapter 12 who imprisoned Peter and who had James the brother of John killed.
 - But then God struck him dead after the people chanted that he was the voice of a god not a man—and then the worms came and ate him

- This is quite the family legacy this dynasty has here

- And Herod Agrippa II was only 17 years old when his dad died, and Rome didn't think that he was old enough to rule the territory that his father did

- So they gave him just a small territory to get his feet wet, north of Judea in modern day Lebanon and then as he proved himself over time, his territory would grow.

- But he and the Herod's before him were what was referred to as Client Kings

- He was referred to as King of the Jews and Rome allowed various territories to have their local client kings to give them a sense of self governance

- But really, whatever a client king did had to be sanctioned by and in favor of the Roman Empire

- He was the ultimate authority over the Temple and would be the one who appointed

the high priest—but his power didn't really go much beyond that

- The one with most of the power would be the Roman Governor, in this case, Festus—but Herod was to work with the Governor to help give insight to the Jewish side of things

- Then as the Herod's proved helpful they could keep their title of so-called "king"

- So Herod and his sister Bernice—whom he had a suspect relationship with, which is a whole other thing—they make their way to Caesarea to pay their respects to the new Governor

- And Festus says, "Hey, maybe you can help me figure this situation out."

- He says in the next coming verses, *"Look—there's this guy who was left in prison by Felix, and I'm trying to resolve his case. I met with the Jewish leaders and they asked if they could have him so they could try him. I told them no, that has to happen here. When we had the trial, they came and brought all of these accusations*

against him, but he wasn't being accused of anything evil. They seem just to be upset because he says that this guy named Jesus was dead, and now is alive. Being at a loss about what to do, I asked if he just wanted to take this trial to Jerusalem but then he appealed to Caesar! So now I'm just holding him until I can think of something to tell Caesar and send him there."

- ***"Then Agrippa said to Festus, 'I would like to hear the man myself.' 'Tomorrow,' said he, 'you will hear him.' 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."* -Acts 25:22-23 (ESV)**

- I love that phrase, great pomp—because the word in the original language is "*phantasia*" where we get our word for "Fantasy"
 - It's a word that they would use for a dress up party

- And Luke is throwing some shade here at Agrippa and Bernice because really they're just trying to live a fantasy
- He's not a real king, she's not a real queen—their position is honorary, he's not really needed by the Romans, but he's trying so hard to keep up his appearance that he has to go over the top with their extravagance to keep up this fantasy
- And the irony that Luke is pointing out —is that this fake fantasy of a king, is going to be presented the truth of the One True King
- And the man in chains actually has more power than the man with great pomp
- Then Festus addresses Agrippa and those gathered—saying, "This man before you has been accused by the Jews and they want him dead. But I can't find anything that he did wrong. He has now appealed to Caesar, I have to send him, but I don't know what to tell Caesar about him. So I asked you here to help me examine him because it seems

unreasonable to send him to Caesar without being able to indicate the charges against him!”

- **So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: “I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. “My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly**

worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” -Acts 26:1-8 (ESV)

- PAUL WAS ON TRIAL BECAUSE HE BELIEVED GOD

- He believed God— when He told the serpent in Genesis 3:15 that God would raise up an Offspring that would crush the head of the enemy
 - He believed God when —He told David in 2 Samuel 7 that he would have a Descendent that would sit on the throne forever
 - He believed God —when He said through the Psalmist that He would have a begotten Son that we would be blessed to take refuge in
 - He believed that God created the Heavens and the Earth and has sovereign control over everything in the universe
- And if those to whom he is speaking, claim to believe these scriptures themselves—what

makes them think that God couldn't raise Jesus from the dead?

- In the same way—people will put you on trial for believing God
 - When you believe in intelligent design—you will be accused of being uneducated or small minded
 - When you believe that Jesus is the only way, the only truth and the only life—you will be accused of being prideful, arrogant, or exclusive
 - When you believe in what God's Word says about sin, and the best way to live is according to God's standards—you will be accused of being judgmental and unloving
- And these are false accusations—because they don't understand the heart
- And Jesus said: ***“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.” -Matthew 5:11 (NIV)***

- This is exactly what is happening to Paul, he's insulted, he's persecuted, he is falsely accused-- because He believes God and what God is wanting Him to do
- And the way he carries himself—even in chains —has all of the markings of a blessed man
- He turns his trial into a testimony!
- I love the way that Paul gives us an example in sharing his story—first he expresses his belief in God, and then he shares his experience with God
- ***“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to***

foreign cities. In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen Me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that

they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.” -Acts 26:9-21 (ESV)

- So, Paul was on trial because he believed God —but:
- **PAUL WAS HATED BECAUSE HE OBEYED GOD**
- He has a personal encounter with Jesus that changed him—and his beliefs didn’t just change, how he lived changed

- He had to repent, he had to turn to God, and the change was evident by how he lived in obedience to what God was calling him to do
- And that was what he was hated for:
- He was the most hated Christian by the Jewish elders because he used to be one of them!
 - He used to think and believe just like them, but he changed, and what they hated the most is that he says that they should change too
- In the same way today—we will be hated by many when we are obedient to the Word of God
 - And we've been warned about this is Scripture:
 - Jesus said in Matthew 10: ***“you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” -Matthew 10:22 (ESV)***
- Then John tells us: ***“Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life” -1 John 3:13-14 (ESV)***
- We don't have to be surprised because Jesus was hated first— He told His disciples: ***“If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” -John 15:18-19 (ESV)***
- The number 1 reason why so much of the world will hate Christians is because Christianity tells us that we're wrong
 - Christianity says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
 - We're stuck in darkness and we need the light—we need to get out of the clutches of

the power satan and become safe in the Power of God

- But the world will tell you that that's not the case—but the message of Jesus opposes the natural inclinations of sinful humanity:
 - *The world tells you to follow your heart—but God says that the heart is deceitful and you should follow Him, not your heart*
 - *The world says you just need to be true to yourself—but Jesus says, no you are to deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow Me*
 - *The world encourages you to make your own way to God, define your own truth, live your own life—but God says there is only One Way, One Truth, and One Life, and that's Jesus*
 - *The world says, "All you need is you!"—God says, "All you need is a Savior. And I sent my Son, to save you from you."*
- And you can see the irrational hatred all over our modern society when people stand for and

obey the Word of God—His Design—His Standards—His Will and His Way

- And they don't hate you for believing it—they hate you for saying something about it, and saying that they should believe it too
- Like those Jewish elders, the majority of humanity thinks so highly of themselves, that no one should ever dare to tell them what to believe, or that they should change—or that what they do, say, or think could be wrong
- But that's what we're called to do! We're called to share our belief in God, our experience with Jesus, and invite them to join us in following Him—and we are to be obedient to that calling
 - Like Paul—he believed, he experienced, and he shared
 - Or like in his words—he testified, look in verse 22:
- ***"To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but***

what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” -Acts 26:22-27 (ESV)

- Paul says, don't you believe the scriptures that you have read, studied, and had taught to you your entire life King Agrippa?? Of course you do!

- And no one talked about the coming Messiah more than the prophet Isaiah did
 - And most notably in Isaiah 53, when the prophet describes the coming Messiah as a Suffering Servant, a Man of Sorrows, that will be led as a Lamb to the slaughter
 - He would be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities—yet He shall prolong His days
 - And verse 11 says: ***“After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge My righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities.” -Isaiah 53:11 (NIV)***
 - He would go on to refer to Him as a light to the nations!
- So Paul says, “Look, its plainly been right there in scripture for us, all of this time! And Jesus has fulfilled it all!”

- And he says my favorite phrase of this passage and that is— “For this has not been done in a corner”
 - It’s been public, its been in plain sight out there for all to see!
 - And again, this is why so many will hate and oppose Christianity, because they don’t care what you believe as long as you keep your beliefs and your faith in a corner—keep it to yourself, don’t “force” it on other people
 - And Christians who buy into that ideology only do so if they’re completely fine and unfazed with people going to hell
- True Christianity is never done in private
 - Jesus’ birth was public, His ministry was public, His death was public— *His resurrection was public!*
 - Not only did he publicly appear to the the disciples on multiple occasions, He appeared to Mary at the tomb, He appeared to the guys on the road to Emmaus, all those

who were present when He gave the great commission and ascended into Heaven—but also, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that He appeared to more than 500 people at the same time! Then he tells the Corinthians that most of them were still alive and you could ask them!

- Hundreds and hundreds of people physically saw Him publicly die—and then they physically saw Him publicly alive
 - And Paul explains that the scriptures had plainly been telling us to anticipate this—we just missed it for so long!
 - Why do you think this movement has gotten so much traction?
 - Why do you think so many have died for this faith already?
 - Why do you think 10’s of thousands—if not more—have renounced their paganism and classic Judiasm to follow Jesus??
- Because none of this was done in a corner!

- Then look at verse 28: ***“And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.” -Acts 26:28-29 (ESV)***
- So Paul is on trial because he believed God, he’s hated because he’s obedient to God, and finally:
- **PAUL IS CONFIDENT BECAUSE HE HAS THE PROMISES OF GOD**
- Paul even tells Festus early that he is speaking boldly to King Agrippa
- This is crazy, because Paul is on trial, so many people want him killed, he’s appealing to the most blood crazed Emperor in Rome’s history—and he’s actively trying to evangelize to a guy whose family has killed some of the most prominent Christian figures in history
- And it’s working!
- In the NKJV verse 28 says: ***“Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” -Acts 26:28 (NKJV)***
- But Paul can so confidently and boldly share his belief in God, his experience with Jesus, the truth of the Gospel—because he has the promises of God
 - Not only does he have the promise of eternal life that makes him unafraid to see death
 - But Remember what God told him in chapter 23?: ***“The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.” -Acts 23:11 (ESV)***
- He believes and has trust in the universal promises of God, that He has prepared a place for him when this life is over, that He has the Holy Spirit, and will be with him and for him even to the end of the age—the promises that apply to all who believe

- But he also has a personal promise and calling from God—one that the Lord has confirmed to him that he will carry out
- He feels a stirring within himself that he must see Rome in chapter 19, and then in chapter 23 the Lord confirms that stirring within him
 - And if God said that he would get to Rome—he's not going to be worried about what chains or what accusations anyone in Caesarea are going to have against him, because he's just passing through!
 - God's promise means so much more than any man's threat!
- He wasn't where he wanted to be—but he was confident that he was where he was supposed to be
 - His dream wasn't to be in handcuffs, in and out of jail, hated by those he used to look up to and go to school with
- But what God had used him for was so much greater
- Because God redirected his dream—he was able to start personally upwards of 20 different churches across the Roman Empire, with dozens more that were started not by him, but thanks to his influence
- 10's of thousands went from darkness to light and would spend eternity in heaven because of the way the Lord used him—and it would effect generations to come and literally change the world
- And he's still not done—he's still got to go to the most influential place in the world with the most influential message in the world (The Gospel of Jesus Christ)
- And like we said last week—no opposition can ever stop the purposes of God
- That's why he was able to speak of freely, with so much conviction, with so much boldness
- Because the reality was—he may have been the one in chains, but he was the freest man in the room!

- He didn't have any of the chains of fear that everyone else in the room was held by
- He wasn't afraid of how the public was going to view him
- He was afraid of what he was going to say to Caesar
- He wasn't afraid losing any of his status or position
- He was so free —that he wasn't even afraid of losing his life
- And the reality was—that as they listened to Paul speak, they were actually seeing a visual representation of their spiritual condition
 - As Paul was in chains physically, they were in chains spiritually
 - Just awaiting their sentence and eventual death
 - But there is freedom available and its found in the believing in the Name of Jesus
- And Paul says, "I wish you had what I have! Not just you—King Agrippa—but everyone here! Even those who hate me! I would do whatever to took for however long it would take to persuade each and every one of you to become as free as I really am"
- ***"Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." -Acts 26: 30-32 (ESV)***
- It's like Agrippa said, "Sorry Festus, I don't know what to tell you bud—he's definitely innocent. And if he had just kept his mouth shut about Caesar he could have just been set free!—but good luck with coming up with something to tell Nero bro!"

- And its funny, because Paul has spent to much time and energy, money and resources traveling all over the world
 - And he's got one last trip he needs to embark on—and he's going to make the Roman Government foot the bill for the trip
- And he never would have dreamed in million years that this is where he would be—but he's exactly where he is supposed to be, and he can't wait to see how the Lord plays all of this out.