

Community Group Sermon Notes November 16, 2025

Guest Preacher – Ajay Thomas, www.advanceinitiative.org

Series: *The Word of God Continues to Spread and Flourish*

Sermon Title: Proclaiming Jesus Amidst Opposition – Acts 25:1 – 26:32

Big Idea: Although the Gospel is opposed, it's still advancing.

Fall Term – Week 10 of 12



Opening Prayer & Icebreaker: When have you had to publicly appear before an important or powerful person and put your fate in his/her hands?

Read and Reflect on the full scripture from Acts 25:1 – 26:32. Some passages for discussion below:

Acts 25:1-2: Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, ² where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul.

Acts 25:7: When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.

Acts 25: 18-19: ¹⁸ When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. ¹⁹ Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.

Acts 25: 24-27: ²⁴ Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵ I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. ²⁶ But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. ²⁷ For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him."

Acts 26: 1-14: Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: ² "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. ⁴ "The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. ⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. ⁸ Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?⁹ "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities. ¹² "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴ We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Acts 26:24-32: ²⁴ At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane." ²⁵ "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do." ²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" ²⁹ Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." ³⁰ The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. ³¹ After they left the room, they began saying to one another, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." ³² Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

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Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion:

1. When Paul is wrongly accused (Acts 25:1–12), he responds with calm integrity. What helps you remain faithful and truthful when you feel misunderstood, judged, or misrepresented or a brushback baseball pitch in life's circumstances is whizzing by? How might Paul's example challenge or encourage you?
2. Festus is confused because the real issue is "a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive" (Acts 25:18–19). Why was the resurrection the central point of dispute? Do you think this the central dispute today?
3. Festus admits he has "nothing definite to write" against Paul (Acts 25:24–27). Why do you think God often allows His people to face opposition even when they have done nothing wrong? What might God be shaping in you during unjust or unclear circumstances? How has God used these times to shape you into Christ's likeness?
4. In Acts 26:1–8, Paul roots his defense in the promises of God and the hope of resurrection. Where do you see the connection between your faith and God's eternal promises? How does remembering God's bigger story influence your response to trials?
5. Paul openly confesses his past sin and violence (Acts 26:9–11). How does Paul's honesty about his past help you think about sharing your own story? Why is vulnerability often a powerful part of Christian witness?
6. Paul's encounter with Jesus dramatically reorients his entire life (Acts 26:12–14). What moments, insights, or experiences have most redirected your walk with God? How might God be calling you to further transformation right now?
7. Paul hopes that "all who are listening... may become what I am, except for these chains" (Acts 26:24–32). What does Paul's bold yet compassionate desire to persuade others teach us about sharing our faith? Is there someone for whom you are praying to come to faith—or someone God may be nudging you toward with compassion and courage?

Closing Prayer:

As we reflect on Paul standing with courage, integrity, and hope, we ask that You fill us with the same confidence in the risen Jesus. Strengthen us when we face misunderstanding, opposition, or uncertainty. Help us to walk in humility, honesty, and boldness. And like Paul, may we desire that all who cross our paths would come to know the hope, forgiveness, and new life found in Christ.

Faith in Action:

- November 20, 7 PM, Young Adult Fellowship Night, F101
- December 6, 9:30 AM, Women's Christmas Gathering (Outreach), Building A
- December 13, 4:30 PM & 7 PM, A Song for the King Concert Series, Sanctuary
- December 14, 4:30 PM, A Song for the King Concert Series, Sanctuary