Lysias Circumvents the Plot by Sending Paul to Caesarea.—Lysias, the tribune, promptly took measures to safeguard Paul, the Roman citizen, by calling centurions to make ready two hundred foot soldiers, together with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen, to march to Caesarea starting at nine o'clock that night. Beasts of burden (generally, horses or mules) were to be provided on which to mount Paul, in order to bring him safely to Felix, the Procurator or Governor. (Acts 23:23-24)

The tribune also dispatched a letter to Felix containing this explanation:

Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell. (Acts 23:26-30)

It will be noticed that Lysias omits in the letter his initial error in sentencing Paul, a Roman citizen, to the scourge, trusting that the Apostle would say nothing about it. The sympathies of the tribune seem to be with Paul.

That night, the soldiers conducted Paul as far as Antipatris, about twenty-five or thirty miles distant. The next day the infantry returned to the barracks, leaving the horsemen to fetch him safely to Caesarea. Felix, after reading
the letter, inquired of Paul from what province he hailed; and being told that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear thee when thine accusers are also come." (Acts 23:34-35) The governor then gave command that Paul be detained in custody in Herod's judgment hall.

Thus we see Paul back in Caesarea after only nine days' absence, having been in the hands of the Jews, and now being in the custody of the Gentiles, as Agabus had prophesied. (Acts 21:11)

Paul Before Felix.—So important did it seem to the Jews to get rid of Paul that Ananias the High Priest came down to Caesarea within five days with a number of Elders and a rhetorician or lawyer by the name of Tertullus, to formally present the case before the Roman court. (Acts 24:1) Felix, whose rule had been clouded by lust, cruelty, and tyranny, was a brother of Pallas, the notorious favorite of Emperor Claudius, and was the first freedman ever to be appointed to a procuratorship. He had been governor, so far as we can determine, since A.D. 52, and now held in his hands the future of Paul. Even so, the Apostle had on his side the powerful safeguard of Roman law.

Tertullus opened the trial with a clever speech against Paul. He paid a servile tribute to Felix and then brought three charges against the Apostle. The first was treason, for Paul had been found a source of mischief and an insurrectionist among the Jews throughout the Empire. The second was heresy, because Paul had been a ringleader in the sect of the Nazarenes. And the third was sacrilege, for it was alleged that he attempted to profane the Temple. The Jews in the audience joined in the charge, maintaining that the facts had been presented. (Acts 24:2-9)

At a sign from the governor, Paul began his defense, without the flattery used by the opposition, and continued in these words:
Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge
unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:
because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but
twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And
they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man,
neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor
in the city: neither can they prove the things whereof they now
accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which
they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing
all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:
and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow,
that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just
and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a
conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. Now
after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offer-
ings. Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in
the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought
to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought
against me. Or else let these same here say, if they have found
any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, except it
be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touch-
ing the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you
this day. (Acts 24:10-21)

At this point Felix, who was fairly well acquainted
with Christianity, adjourned the trial, telling the Jews that
when the tribune Lysias came down, he would finally de-
cide the case. (Acts 24:22) And he gave orders to the cen-
turion to keep Paul in custody, to treat him with indulgence,
and not prevent his personal friends from showing him kind-
ness. (Acts 24:23) Actually, Felix should have freed the
Apostle; but the governor seems to have kept in mind the
charge of treason made by Tertullus, and resolved to keep
Paul in custody until he could be made sure of his ground
by conferring with Lysias.

Paul Before Felix and Drusilla.—Shortly after the
other hearing, Felix brought along his wife Drusilla, a Jew-
ess, sent for Paul, and listened to his presentation concern-
ing faith in Christ Jesus. Drusilla, the youngest daughter
of Agrippa I, was the third wife of Felix. She had been the
wife of Azizus, King of Emesa, but had been persuaded by
the governor to leave her husband and throw her fortunes
with him, a Gentile and an idolater. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment, the guilty Felix became frightened and said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” (Acts 24:25) At the same time, like so many disgraceful imperial administrators in the provinces, he hoped that Paul would pay him money as a bribe for his release. Luke tells us that for this reason he sent for him the oftener to converse with him. Thus the time passed until Paul had spent two years in custody. Then, because of a formal complaint lodged by the Jews with Nero, Felix was recalled to stand trial, and Porcius Festus succeeded him. Balked in his attempts to obtain a bribe from Paul, who must have had a considerable sum of money with him, Felix left Paul in prison, hoping to curry favor with the Jews. (Acts 24:26-27)

**Festus Becomes Governor and Paul Again Stands Trial.**—It was probably about July 1, A.D. 60, when Festus entered upon his duties as governor of the province. With a friendly attitude to the Jews, he went up to Jerusalem; whereupon the Jewish authorities immediately made representations to him against Paul and asked as a favor that he be brought to Jerusalem. They were planning an ambush and hoped to kill him on the way. But the prudent and honorable Festus replied that Paul was in custody in Caesarea; he himself would shortly go back, he said, and he assured the Jews that their influential men could accompany him and impeach the Apostle, if there was anything amiss in him. (Acts 25:1-5)

After spending about ten days in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea. The next day, taking his seat on the tribunal, he ordered Paul to be brought in. The Jewish deputation from Jerusalem brought against him many weighty charges which they were not able to substantiate. Paul assured Festus that he had committed no offense what-
ever against the Jewish Law, the Temple, or Caesar. (Acts 25:6-8)

But the harried governor, relatively unacquainted with Jewish customs and institutions and wishing to do the Jewish leaders a favor, asked Paul whether he would be willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before him on the charges as preferred. (Acts 25:9) Festus doubtless felt that his proposal of referring the case to Jerusalem—or was it to the Sanhedrin itself?—with himself sitting in at the trial was eminently fair. But Paul, knowing the dangers involved and also knowing that the Jews would not give him a fair break at any trial, not to mention the fact that the question of Festus implied a possible deprival of his rights as a Roman citizen, refused to go.

Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. (Acts 25:10-11)

Paul's firm decision to invoke his right as a Roman citizen was probably an unpleasant one to Festus. It was embarrassing enough for a procurator ever to have his decisions appealed to Caesar, but to have his first administrative decision thus appealed was to prejudice the imperial government against him. But after conferring with the Council, composed of administrative legal advisers, Festus decided that Paul's appeal was a valid one. He turned to the Apostle and said, "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go." (Acts 25:12)

**Festus Confers With Agrippa Concerning Paul.**— Although Paul had appealed to Caesar, it was still up to Festus to forward to Rome all the documents dealing with the trial, together with his own judgment in the case. But unacquainted as he was with Jewish theology and institutions, Festus felt himself incompetent in the matter and
wondered how he would state the charges against Paul (see Acts 25:27), not to mention what kind of a recommendation he ought to make regarding the final disposition of the Apostle.

Fortunately for Festus, as the new procurator he was paid a formal visit by King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice, who came from the region of Galilee. The pair were Drusilla's brother and sister, being children of King Agrippa I and great grandchildren of King Herod the Great, the tyrant of Judea when the Christ was born in Bethlehem. Agrippa II was king of the region about the Sea of Galilee, a position which he was to retain until near the close of the first century. Agrippa had been given the right by the Emperor Claudius of appointing the high priest in Jerusalem and was well versed in matters pertaining to the Jews. Not only was he a Jew himself, but through his great-grandmother Mariamne he was a descendant of the Maccabean family. Festus took advantage of King Agrippa's stay to lay Paul's case before him. (Acts 25:13-21) Agrippa expressed his interest in hearing from Paul, and Festus assured him that he should do so on the morrow.

Paul Before Agrippa.—The next day, Agrippa and Bernice came in state into the Audience Hall and took their seats, attended by the tribunes and men of high rank in the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. The governor then gave this explanation:

King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him. (Acts 25: 24-27)
The explanation of Festus completed, King Agrippa told Paul to speak for himself. (Acts 26:1) In his preliminary statement, Paul expressed himself as fortunate in being able to defend himself before one like King Agrippa, who was so conversant with Jewish customs and questions. (Acts 26:2-3) He then launched eloquently into the story of his life, of his early Pharisaic training, of his hostility to the Christians, of his conversion, and of subsequent events. But when Paul began to speak of Christ rising from the dead (Acts 26:23), the Roman Governor was so far beyond his depth that he cried out in a loud voice, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.” (Acts 26:24)

Let us continue the account:

I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. (Acts 26:25-29)

With these words of Paul's, the hearing was over, and so the King, the Governor, Bernice, and the others arose. They retired and discussed the case, agreeing that Paul had done nothing for which he deserved death or imprisonment. Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Caesar.” (Acts 26:32)
PAUL'S LIFE
AND
LETTERS

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