



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 25:1-27

“Paul Before Festus”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we are thankful to Thee for the privilege that is ours and as we reflect upon the fact that so many do not have the opportunity that we have, we are indeed grateful to Thee, as we look out over the city of Dallas, and realize that there are so few who have the opportunity to study the Scriptures and to learn of the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, it seems Lord that in this great city, where there are numerous believers in Christ, that there is little responsiveness to the deeper things of the word of God. We know Lord that we fail in so many ways. And we pray that Thou would give us a deeper desire to have fellowship with Thee through the ministry of the word of God through our reading, and pondering and meditating, over the things that are found in holy Scripture. And we pray that in our study tonight we may profit, not only for ourselves and our own spiritual lives, but make us Lord more effective servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, with our family, and with our friends, and with those with whom we come in contact. We commit our time of study to Thee for spiritual blessing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We're turning to Acts chapter 25 and our subject for tonight is Acts chapter 25, verse 1 through verse 27 and the topic's title is "Paul and Festus". A single

statement will sometimes immortalize an individual. About fifteen or twenty years ago there was a president of General Motors whose first name was Charlie, his last name escapes me for the moment, who made a memorable statement for which he is remembered. One might think that a president of General Motors, the largest corporation I guess in the country at that time, would have been known for other things. But the only thing that anyone can think about him now, in fact this statements that he made is in books on quotations, was “What’s good for General Motors is good for the United States of America”. Of course the liberals pounced upon that and thought that was a terrible thing to suggest, that what was good for General Motors was good for the country, and it was discussed in the newspapers by the media for a lengthy period of time afterwards, and he is forever known by that statement that, “What’s good for General Motors is good for the United States.”

I was, when I was growing up, was quite interested in boxing, that is as an observer you understand. But I was interested in boxing and used to follow all of the particular weight limits and read everything on the sport page and there was a whole lot about boxing in those days. And I remember one manager of boxers who had a most unusual command of the English language. His name was Joe Jacobs, and he was a well known manager. Not the Mike Jacobs who became also a promoter and a manager, but Joe Jacobs was a well known manager of boxers, very good boxers. But when his man went into the ring at night and lost, he used to say, “He should have stood in bed.” And what he meant of course was he should have stayed in bed, but the past participle of the verb stay had lost him and so “He should have stood in bed” that was his, the remark for which he was known.

Now some of you in the audience are old enough to remember when Dizzy Dean used to broadcast baseball games, the big league games, and every Saturday afternoon the men around this part of the country would go into their family rooms and dens and they would sit and listen to Dizzy Dean. Now his English was not nearly as good as his

pitching. And later on in fact when he announced in St. Louis, there was a public complaint by the school teachers, who complained that the kids were learning English from Dizzy Dean and that was really obstructing all of the teaching of English in the public schools there. Well Dizzy used to say when a man hit a triple that he rounded second base and he “slud into third.” [Laughter] And I remember Dizzy Dean as an individual who said, “He slud into first,” or “he slud into second, he slud into third.” And so it’s often that we are known by some outstanding statement that we have made.

Well Felix is an individual who was known by these things that he said in verse 25 of chapter 24. He said, as he trembled, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Now Agrippa is known also for an unusual statement as well, in chapter 26 in verse 28 he said, “Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” And so these two men were known by these statements. Now Festus is a man who was known by the statement about Paul’s madness. He said, “Paul thou art beside thyself and much learning doth make thee mad.” And we know Festus because of that particular comment. He’s an individual who made a statement really that was very biblical because it’s biblical to call a prophet or a man of God, mad. He’s not the first one who did that.

If one turns to the Old Testament and reads the Book of Hosea, Hosea remarks, “The prophet is a fool”. Now he’s repeating what others are saying about the prophets, “The prophet is a fool, and the man of the spirit is mad.” So it’s very common for people to think that an individual who is a representative of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is mad. There are many fascinating typical men in Acts, as I mention before we begin our study tonight. There is Gallio, the calmly indifferent man. There is Felix, the procrastinating man. And there is Festus, the political, unprincipled man. He was blind he was hardened he was dead in his self-interest. Now he confessed that the Apostle Paul had done nothing worthy of death, but he was going to sacrifice Paul on the altar of self-interest. He acknowledges that he does not know anything about this man that

would condemn him, but nevertheless anxious to do the Jews a favor, just as Felix was anxious to do the Jews a favor, he did not free him. Finally, as the apostle preached in the presence of Agrippa, and in the presence of Festus, he calls him mad. Now remember, Paul is in bonds in Caesarea. He is an innocent football, as one reads these chapters of the priests and the politicians, all of whom are anxious to get along with one another and of course the things of the Lord suffer as a consequence.

So let's turn to Acts chapter 25 where the story of Paul and Festus is given, though not entirely, and let's notice the things that Luke writes as he describes the encounter. Now in the first twelve verses of chapter 25 of the Book of Acts we have Paul before Festus. Now one thing you can say for Festus' benefit, he was a man who was much more upright than Felix. He died untainted by any scandal, a few years later. In fact Josephus called him a wise and just official. He's characterized by the fact that he was a very organized kind of man. He's a man who made his decisions rapidly and quickly. Notice verse 1 of chapter 25, "Now when Festus was come into the province, (he's just now become the governor) after three days he ascended unto Caesarea to Jerusalem." He doesn't waste any time. Then in verse 6 we read, "And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought." And then in verse 22 we read, "Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him." So he evidently was man who kept on top of things, a man that we would call a well organized kind of individual. Not surprising that he is the administrator, he had gifts of administration, no doubt about it. But gifts of administration do not mean that an individual is a moral man. Now the chapter opens with five verses in which Festus' visit to Jerusalem is described, and beginning at verse 1 now we read,

"Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. (now remember the governors lived in Caesarea and Paul is in

Caesarea. He's been brought there because of the fact that he had been plotted against by the Jews) Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. (well that was proper and so, so far, things are moving along in the way that they should. In the next verses, verse 6 through verse 9, Luke describes Festus as a judge, attempting to decide the question, in verse six we read) And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next morning sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure,”

Now if you look back at verse 27 of chapter 24 you'll notice that same expression used with reference to Felix, verse 27 of chapter 24 reads, “But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.” So you can see that they're compromising with their own convictions. And so here, Festus willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul and said, “Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?” Now, the apostle had a very simple choice to make. It's either go up to Jerusalem or stay in Caesarea. But the apostle was no fool. If Festus is not going to give him justice in Caesarea, you can be sure that he's not going to give him justice in Jerusalem when the pressures are going to be so much greater. So you can see immediately the path that Festus has taken, he's

compromising with his convictions. So the apostle does the only thing that he can do, and he appeals to Caesar. And that is described in verse 10 through verse 12,

“Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, (that is your representative of the Romans) 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 they accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal to Caesar.”

Now that was an expression that was used very commonly by Romans. It's *Ad Caesar am prevoko*, it was official technical term, “To Caesar I appeal.” Now if he's not protected by a Roman man, then he will be protected by Roman law, so Paul feels. And these hungry Jews, who are anxious to pounce upon him like wolves, are baulked by the apostles' appeal to the Roman law. This was consistent incidentally, with Paul's philosophy. Some commentators have suggested that the apostle did not really trust the Lord in this instance, by appealing to Roman law. But one only has to read what Paul has to say in Romans 13 about the place of law in the government of this universe by God to realize that the apostle was only following his own philosophy, for he understood that the government of this universe in its daily affairs has been committed to human governors. And Paul in Romans 13 has a number of statements with reference to the relationship of the Christian to law. He is to be subject to the law. In fact Paul says, “Let every soul be subject to the high authorities.” The very fact that he says “let every soul” is a reference to the fact that he considered this a universal responsibility of both believers and unbelievers, they are to obey the law.

And furthermore, he believed that the law had power ultimately, over our lives because he said, “they bear not the sword in vain.” Implicit in that is the right incidentally, of capital punishment. “They bear not the sword in vain” that belongs to

human government. Now of course the apostle also, as the other apostles, taught that in case of conflict between divine truth and the government or human government, human law, then as Peter put it, we must obey God rather than men. But so long as human government was not violating the divine principles, we are responsible to obey the government. That is why there is really no such right as revolution, unless there is some spiritual principle involved in it, so far as I can tell. Now the apostle is not being disobedient to the Lord, he is not being untrustful, he is appealing to what God has in his sovereign providence given to men, human government. So when he says, “I appeal to Caesar” he is doing just what his own philosophy approves. Now of course there are times when God will even over rule human government for his glory. Peter was put in prison, and a miracle of God enabled him to escape. An angel came, opened the prison and he escaped. But we don’t have to depend on miracles all the time. We have the right to appeal to the legal authorities. And that I think is what Paul did here.

Now then, in the next verses, verse 13 through verse 22 of this Acts chapter 25, we have a visit from Herod Agrippa to Festus and that is described, it was a kind of courteous summit meeting. It was characteristic for example, when a new governor became the governor of a province, or the procurator of a province, to have social visits from other governments, or other governors, who served under the Roman government in the area. So when Herod Agrippa and Bernice come, this is Herod Agrippa II, when they come, it really was, first of all, something of a kind of social visit. And yet, some spiritual significance will attach to it. In verse 13 and following, we read these words, now read through verse 21,

“And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: About whom, when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have

judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. (now you can see the kind of story that he is telling Agrippa is not really true to the facts, he's glossing over the fact that he was willing to take him up to Jerusalem, if Paul would agree to it and have him again stand before the bar of judgment, verse 17) Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, (or of their own religion) and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted (or the Greek text is the word that commonly means in the New Testament “perplexed”) And because I was perplexed) about such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.”

This meeting is a very interesting meeting because Herod Agrippa II was a man who had a very interesting history and the fact that he was with Bernice, who was his own sister and with whom he was now living, was one of the great scandals of the time. To go back and talk about their background would take us too long of course, but Herod Agrippa's uncle had been married to Bernice, and then after that marriage had failed, Bernice then married her own brother. And the two were living together. So Herod Agrippa II and Bernice were brother and sister. They were the children of Herod Agrippa I. So it was a scandalous kind of union and it was known over the Roman Empire as a scandal at the time. She had also been married to another man in the mean time, so this was about her, I believe her third husband. It wasn't quite as bad as Elizabeth and



Richard, but nevertheless it was of the same kind of thing. So it was a scandal but nevertheless they had authority from Rome and they came now to pay Festus a little visit.

Now it's very interesting, as you read these things that Luke says about Festus, to note that he had more than just a cursory understanding of what Paul was talking about. Notice the 19th verse, “But had certain questions against him of their own religion and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” So in other words, he had an insight into what Paul was talking about and furthermore, and this perhaps is one of the reasons why he was the important man that he was in the area and a governor, he had the ability to cut through all of the extraneous things and get right to the heart of the matter. And he saw that the heart of the matter was the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now he says, it's “one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive” but you can see from this that the apostle has given a very clear testimony about the significant facts of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. But even though he has this understanding of what Paul is talking about, he still is perplexed over it and still in doubt. Verse 20 he says, “Because I doubted of such manner of questions.”

Well you know this is a very, I think a very interesting little engagement, and it illustrates so much the things that often happen in our own experiences. You often find people for example, who have an opportunity to give the gospel to someone and they give the gospel to the individual and then they are very discouraged because there is not response. I've often seen people like that, they will give the gospel, in fact they'll give the gospel a number of times, often this happens in our families, after we have become a Christian and then we give the gospel with eagerness and zeal to the members of our family and they don't respond. And sometimes we tend to forget that the reason that they don't respond is not necessarily related to us at all.

When I was going, when I was teaching in theological seminary in the area here, one year the students at the seminary decided that they would do something different and so it was a time when everybody liked to get some little symbol, some little statement,

some little formula, which they would put in a very, a very brief and pointed way and then they would have a campaign to support the idea that was expressed in this short symbolic statement. Well the students at the seminary thought that it would, it sounded real good, and might stir up some of the students to evangelism if they did something like that, and so they got up a little statement and it was put on some buttons and the idea was to get the seminary student body all excited and thrilled, as a result of this little statement which was an epitome of the truth. And what they did was, they managed to devise this little statement which was, “If love is felt, the message is heard.”

And we would have men come into the chapel on the morning of chapel and the faculty would give them a couple minutes in which they would try to stir up the students with this little, little formula, “If love is felt, the message is heard.” Well it was striking to me, I was a faculty member and it was striking to me how many of our students fell for that. And I must say it was an humbling experience because, after all, they all should have laughed at it right from the beginning, but they didn't. They took it all seriously and they actually believed it, “If love is felt, the message is heard.” But if one reads the Bible at all he discovers that that is just not true. That is not theologically sound. No one ever gave the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with purer love than our Lord Jesus Christ, and he was crucified. The Apostle Paul followed and perhaps was the second, if we were making divisions, was the second among individuals who gave the gospel in purity and in love. But so far as tradition is concerned, the apostle was martyred. And one only has to read in 2 Corinthians to read the things the apostle suffered for preaching in love.

You see there is something more than love. What is needed is illumination by the Holy Spirit. What is needed is efficacious grace looking at it from the divine stand point, which opens the mind and heart to the gospel. It's great to preach the word and it's great and we ought to preach it in love. But in the final analysis, response is through the divine enablement, through divine efficacious grace. So here is Festus, he's had a ministry from the Apostle Paul, a man who no doubt gave the gospel as it should be given,

perfectly and accurately, and nevertheless he is in perplexity over what the apostle is talking about. He just does not understand because he was not the recipient of the work of God the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace.

Some years ago that great musical theologian, Pat Boone, wrote a pitiable little book called *A New Saul*. It was crammed with doctrinal boners and if anyone reads it today I'm sure with some spiritual understanding, you will see boner after boner committed in it. But right at the beginning it began on page ten, with the words, I read this because it had some things in it about the charismatics and a charismatic friend of mine asked me if I would read it. And it was designed to impress me with the fact that the charismatics were true and we who were not were wrong. Well it impressed me with a lot of things. It impressed me with the fact that Pat didn't know any theology at all, I don't say that he wasn't a Christian or is not a Christian, but he didn't know any theology at all, and certainly didn't know any theology of man. And he really didn't know about his own charismatics, because when he said he was lying on the bed one time and suddenly he began to speak in Latin, and I think it was just a phrase or two that maybe he had heard because I don't think he, I think he said, it's a little hazy now, because it's been over ten years since I read this book, but I think he said that this phrase came to him though he had not studied Latin. And in it there was a grammatical error in the phrase. He had heard the phrase alright, but he had heard it a little wrong, and this was the way the Lord gave it to him, would have to rewrite the Latin grammar books because wherever that message came from it came with erroneous Latin grammar. But any rate, in this book on page ten, Pat says, “Every man wants to know God.”

Well, if one might actually defend that position in this way, one might say everyone wants to know God in the sense that God has implanted in each one of us, because we're created in the image of God, a knowledge of the existence of God, and that knowledge of the existence of God is something that we know. But Paul goes on to say in Romans chapter 1 that it is something that we constantly suppress. So there is a

sense in which we were created to know God, but then the apostle goes on and says while we were created that way the fall has taken place and because of the fall, we suppress the knowledge that we have, and then in the 3rd chapter of Romans he says, “There is none that seeketh after God, no not one.” Not even Pat, and certainly not us. We do not seek after God. And it is not true that every man wants to know God. As a matter of fact, every man does not want to know God, and it is only by the work of the Holy Spirit that we are brought to the place where we really are desirous of the light that comes from God through Christ.

Well Festus gives his report and Agrippa’s request is stated in verse 22, “Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. (and Festus quickly replies) To morrow, you shall hear him.” And so now we read in the last verses of the chapter, Paul before Festus, Agrippa and Bernice. So let’s read the final verses of the chapter, verse 23 through verse 27, “And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.” You can just imagine this crowd, it was a crowd in which there was a display of all kinds of human pomp, and glitter and glamour and glory for that part of the world. Here is the governor, here is King Herod Agrippa II, here is Bernice, and a very famous person she was, furthermore all of the people associated with them all of the military were there and in addition the chief or principle men of the city.

So you can see the, Agrippa and Bernice and the purple robes of royalty and you can imagine the gold circlet of the crown on their brow and Festus to do honor to the occasion no doubt, donned the scarlet robe that was characteristic of the governor on state occasions, and behind Agrippa would have stood the men who were with him. And then the influential men of the Jews no doubt were there as well. “Close by Festus where the captains who were in command of the five cohorts of Roman soldiers that were associated with them, and there would be the tall Roman legionaries and the chief men of

the city, and they're all gathered around probably in the finest room in Caesarea, and in brought before them is the little Jewish tent maker, who has been detained in prison. Paul was brought forth,

“And Festus said, 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 had 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.”

Well, that was true. Voltaire once called Paul “that ugly little Jew”. I would imagine that there were many in that gathering that looked at Paul and thought of him just like this. What is also interesting about it is that when Paul was called to the ministry, remember, he was told by the Lord, that the Lord was going to bring him before Gentiles and kings. That was striking wasn't it? And so he is fulfilling his word, the apostle will not only preach the gospel to the Jews, he will preach the gospel to the Gentiles and he will stand before kings. And he does. Well, Festus has the dilemma of the demented. What he needed was some official reason for sending Paul to Rome. He had to justify doing it. And so he's looking for any help that he possibly had, because to release a man like this would put him in bad with the Jews and so what he would like to do is to stay in the good favor of the Jews and at the same time as a Roman official, adhere to Roman law.

Well let me sum up what it seems to me this incident illustrates about Festus and Paul, first of all, the tragedy of Festus. A man shackled by self-interest. He had heard the story of the cross and the resurrection, we have seen, and yet in spite of that, he has not responded to them. James Denny was one the great theologians of the country of Scotland, professor of New Testament and Divinity in the University of Glasgow, and Denny's writings are well known by evangelicals. He was a man who was very strongly evangelical in his earlier days and then in his later days drifted a little bit and finally, near the end of his life, though one might not want to call him a heretic or an apostate, nevertheless his sense of the way in which the Lord Jesus accomplished atonement underwent such a profound change that many men, such as Benjamin Warfield and others, felt that in his latter days he had departed from the essence of the true understanding of the cross of Christ. Denny's once said that there was one reason why he would like perhaps to be a Roman Catholic, he said this to his students, he said as he picked up a crucifix and held it he said, "I would like to go into every church of Scotland throughout our land and hold it up in front of the congregation and say, 'God loves like that.'" And the reason he said that was because in his day the Church of Scotland was becoming cold and indifferent to spiritual things and Denny was not, and he noticed that. I think that anyone who's grown up in a denomination in this country that has drifted from the faith, you can understand the sense that an evangelical Christian has of how he wants them to come to the knowledge of the truth. Well Denny said he would like to raise the crucifix and say, "God loves like that."

He was callous Festus was, to the things of God. He speaks about religion, one notices in the 9th verse, "Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, to be judged there of the things before thee (before me)?" And then in verse 26 he says, "Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto thee. Wherefore I brought thee forth, specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write." So he is an individual, who knows

about religion, but he's not interested in the reality of things, he's interested in just preserving his own skin, and office.

A few years back, there appeared an article in *Time Magazine* about two rabbis. It was a striking article because these two rabbis were two young rabbis, about thirty-seven years of age, and they both had become so disenchanted with Judaism that they were speaking out on the point. And in fact, one of the rabbis, a rabbi by the name of Siegel, so had reacted against what he found in Judaism, and he himself didn't have anything either it turns out, he decided he would write a diary. And he would write a diary of what it was to be a rabbi and of the things that happened in his congregation. These are some of the things that appeared in the article, I have it before me here, and the article assails the materialism and the shallow religious loyalties of the congregation.

It provoked incidentally, angry reactions throughout the New York area. In the midst of his diary he said that on April, Friday he chose to give his sermon of the year on Port Noise Complaint, which drew a great crowd. One of the other climaxes of his service to this point was the July day when he had to delay a wedding ceremony in order to satisfy the couples' wish that they be pronounced man and wife at the moment the astronauts landed on the moon. He said there was a woman who wanted to give a bar mitzvah for one of her children, for one of her boys, and she spent a ruinous fifteen thousand dollars on the bar mitzvah so that, quote, she said to the rabbi, “We'll be able to face our neighbors” unquote. And perhaps the most appalling passage in his diary was when he asked some students that he had at a confirmation class, and he asked them the question how many of them, now this is at a confirmation class, how many of them would give up their Judaism if it was necessary to get into a good college. Well he had fourteen students in the confirmation class and thirteen of them said they would give up their Judaism in order to get into a good college. Well you can understand the kind of grasp that they had of spiritual things.

Bob Hope once made the comical comment that as far as he was concerned, he attended the services of all denominations because he didn't want to miss the hereafter on a technicality. [Laughter] Well, it might seem funny to us, but you know it's tremendously sad that in this country, in our religious institutions, our churches, there is no more reality in them than is represented by these things.

This man regards the apostle as a mad man. He says, later on in the next chapters Paul is preaching and giving his testimony again, he said in the 24th verse, “Paul thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad.” In other words, the apostle is a religious fanatic and he is a religious fanatic because he's studied the Scriptures too much, “Much learning hath made thee mad” well that's a typical response.

The Pope said that Luther ought to be in Bedlam, which was of course the equivalent of the same thing. They said with reference to the Wesleyans that they were mad, and that they ought to be put away. And they replied, “Fools and madman let us be, yet is our sure trust in Thee.” When William Booth broke with the barrier of ecclesiasticism that was strangling his message, they said he's not quite all there. And down to the present day, that's characteristic of the world. They like to say with regard to a Christian whose testimony is forthright and bold, there is something wrong with him, he is a fanatic, he's mad. When Spurgeon began to preach he was just a young boy, literally, about sixteen or seventeen. For a lengthy period of time in London, he was the butt of all of the jokes and attacks of the magazines in the city and the newspaper. *Punch Magazine* constantly attacked him also drew cartoons of him, humorous cartoons. *The Saturday Review* did the same thing. The whole of the country attacked him until finally at the end, when Spurgeon died, one of those magazines, I've forgotten whether it was *The Saturday Review* or *Punch*, paid him a glowing tribute, now that he was dead. But that's characteristic of the world. And in the case of Festus it's not surprising that he speaks as he does, because do you remember our Lord's experience? The Jews said,



according to John chapter 10, verse 20 that Jesus was mad. And in fact they said concerning, in the family of the Lord, they said he's beside himself, even his own family.

Yesterday afternoon or the day before, just a couple of days ago, I was counseling with a young couple that are thinking about getting married, and the young lady has become a Christian and is a relatively new Christian. And her sister had become a Christian a few months back and the result is that the family, a fairly prominent family so I'm told, the thing that they are upset over is they really think that they have gone around the bend. And in fact, the father has suggested that the older sister needs psychiatric attention, because she has become a Christian. So that's, well as we would say, par for the course. And the Apostle Paul was called mad so many times that in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 he anticipates it and says, “Am I mad?” And in this passage of course, he will later say no, no, he is not mad, but he is speaking the words of truth and soberness. So Festus then is a polite man who thought that truth was only for the religious. Like many today who, live for years in Christendom, hear the sound of Christmas bells and hear the gospel perhaps, married by a Christian minister, and plan to be put in the grave ultimately by a Christian minister, but pay no attention in the mean time. He was a man who was an individual who did not take the things of the Lord seriously. He never examined Paul words at all, he was at a loss, or perplexed.

Some years ago I was traveling from Edmonton and Calgary down to Denver on Western Airlines, and at Calgary two blind young people got on the plane. They were helped on the plane and they sat right next to me, there were three of us in the aisle, and so they were seated, they were, looked like they were still in their twenties, and we engaged in a little bit of conversation. And I asked them how they had become blind, were they, had they been born blind or had something happened that caused their blindness. And the young man spoke up and said that he had been born blind, but the young lady, who was now his wife, was an individual who was blinded as a result of an accident.

Well I got up my courage and asked them, “Are you a Christian?” And the young man replied, “Of course we’re Christians, we were born Christians, we are Roman Catholics.” They had been quite friendly to that point and so I thought, well I will just say a little something very politely and courteously and I said, “Well of course, I was born a Presbyterian but I was not a Presbyterian, and it’s possible you know that you may have grown up in the church, but perhaps you do not really know Jesus Christ, because being a Christian is more than being born in an organization that is a Christian organization.” Well you could see the look over their face, I guess if they had not been blind they would have been more skilled at covering up what they were thinking, but nevertheless their whole face turned and they never uttered another word to me until finally, as we got into Denver, they needed a little help to get up out of the seat and so I was helping them up out of the seat, and they smiled and said thank you.

It illustrates the fact that we can be exposed to so much truth and not respond, and after all who is mad in such a situation? Is it the Christian who is mad? No. Like Paul, they’re not mad, they speak the words of truth and soberness. It is those who, in the light of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ who do not respond who treat it as if it were simply fanatical untruth, wild stories, it is they who are really the mad ones. Felix trembled. Festus is perplexed, as we shall see Agrippa is very uneasy. In fact, in this gathering of important individuals, Festus the governor, Agrippa the king, Bernice the queen, the only regal individual in the whole crowd is the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One wonders how it is possible sometimes for a man like Paul to be so bold and so effective in a gathering such as this, because he must have been nervous over the matter, except perhaps he had had the experience many times before and was used to it now. But I know we would feel that way and what was it about the apostle that gave him such boldness in situations like this? Well I think it was the conviction of the Christian faith that made it easier for him. You see a Christian knows that the last hour belongs to him. When the time comes that we pass out of this existence into the

presence of the Lord, then the last hour, that permanent time of eternity, that is ours, and that is why we need not fear the next few moments of this life. That was what sustained the Apostle Paul. It's a magnificent testimony that he gave before Agrippa and Festus, and later on we'll take a look briefly at least next week, the Lord willing, at what he said before Agrippa.

I'd like to finish these studies on Paul in the next two times that we're together so next time we'll cover a little bit more than we've been covering, and try to conclude our study of Paul's life and ministry, two weeks from tonight, Lord willing. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these marvelous incidents in the life of Paul which are so revealing to us. Give us Lord...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**