

I. To Nero You Will Go.... (Acts 25)

- Upon his arrival at his new post, Festus travels to Jerusalem. He is confronted there by Paul's enemies who, under false pretenses, request that Festus move Paul to Jerusalem. Their real plan is another ambush attempt. Festus sees no sense in this and counters by telling them to come to Caesarea if they want to accuse Paul.
- Curiosity aroused, Festus summons Paul before him upon the procurator's return to Caesarea. Paul is brought before the "court" of Festus and the Jews lay out their complaints against him, none of which can be validated. Paul plainly denies violating any laws, religious or civil. Festus lays out an option to Paul of going to Jerusalem to stand trial.
- Paul states that he is deserving of no punishment and, although possessing no fear of death, would face it or his accusers if warranted. He states that if there is nothing to these accusations, he should not be delivered to them. Paul appeals to the judgment seat of Caesar in Rome. The Roman leader at this time would have been Nero.
- Festus agrees to Paul's request, but in the meantime King Herod Agrippa II and his wife pay a visit to the procurator. While they were there, Festus brought up Paul's situation and gives a brief description of what has happened since he assumed power. It seems that Festus did indeed recognize that the Jews had no real accusation to make, other than from a religious standpoint. It seems Festus thinks that the native Agrippa may shed some light on things.
- Agrippa, seemingly intrigued, requests to hear Paul's story first hand. Festus agrees to the request. After a regal entrance and display by Agrippa and other prominent men of the city, Paul is brought before the group. Festus briefs everyone about the situation and informs them of Paul's appeal to Caesar ("Augustus" is the title given to Roman emperors in general, not to be confused with the particular Caesar Augustus mentioned in Luke 2:1, which was Octavian, the first of the Caesars). Festus is trying to determine what exactly he should say in the dispatch to Nero's court to describe the problem and why Paul is being sent.

II. Paul's Defense, Act 4: Mr. and Mrs. Agrippa (Acts 26)

- Having been granted permission to speak by Agrippa, Paul expresses his gratitude for the opportunity to address Agrippa. Paul is glad to explain the situation to someone who may understand the laws and customs of the Jews. He appeals to Agrippa's longsuffering in hearing the entire story.
- Paul speaks of things familiar to us already, and some other new tidbits:
 - Paul states that his youth was spent in Jerusalem (not Tarsus), and this fact was well known
 - If others would tell the truth, they would assert that Paul indeed lived in strict obedience to the doctrine of the Pharisees
 - He stand sin judgment of simply believing the promise given by God to his ancestors of the redeeming Christ
 - Is it really so incredible that I believe in resurrection?
 - Admits to actions contrary to Christ's mission and teachings, namely persecuting Christians
 - He relays a brief summary of his experience on the road to Damascus, adding in verses 16-18 some of the speech given to him by Christ we have yet to hear
- Upon simply executing the will of God and spreading the Gospel in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, and the Gentile world, Paul was arrested and falsely accused. Paul still stands on the truth, that Jesus was the deliverer promised to Israel and spoken of by Moses and the prophets. Once again, when Paul gets to the point of the story regarding the resurrection of the dead, Festus rudely interrupts him. He accuses Paul of madness
- Paul turns to Agrippa for a sympathetic and understanding ear. Agrippa answers him in an oft-debated manner. Many think that Agrippa is stating that Paul's argument is convincing, others that Agrippa is somewhat sarcastic, joking that Paul should not expect to convince him of the gospel so quickly. Paul express a desire that not only Agrippa, but all who are listening, would come to a realization of the Truth.
- Agrippa, Bernice and Festus discuss Paul's statements to the side. They all admit that he does not deserve any punishment and, had Paul not appealed to Caesar, he could be freed right away.

III. Setting Sail (Acts 27)

- Paul is placed under the charge of the Roman centurion Julius as they prepare to sail for Rome. Paul is joined by an old friend from Thessalonica named Aristarchus (cf. Acts 19:29). The plan was to sail along the coast of Asia and do so until the port of Myra. Here, they swap ships to join another crew, a ship from Alexandria bound for the Italian peninsula.
- They stop next on the island of Crete at the port called Fair Havens. They stay there for a while until after the "fast". This fast is generally thought to be the fast of Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16:29-34;

23:27-32; Numbers 29:7). This “Sabbath” occurs in mid-fall and a period of poor Mediterranean weather. Paul warns the crew that he has a premonition of disaster befalling the ship, cargo and crew if they set sail. Julius fails to heed Paul, trusting instead the judgment of the ship’s pilot and owner. The harbor of Fair Havens is also judged to be unsuitable to spend the winter in.

- A southerly wind arises and the sailors deduce that now is the time to leave. It is not long, however, until Paul’s prophecy seems to begin to ring true. A rough wind known as the “Euroklydon” (Gk.-“east wind of violent agitation”) drives the ship about and causes some difficulty securing the “life boat”. A lengthy struggle against the storm takes place, with the crew doing performing great efforts to help the ship survive. After many days of stormy black skies with no view of the stars and sun, hope of salvation was lost.
- The men on the boat, perhaps due to stress, panic or even a plea to their gods, have not eaten for a while. Paul encourages them with a revised portent: the ship will be lost, but their lives will be spared. An angel has informed Paul that he will survive to stand before Nero and that the Lord has granted a surety of survival for his companions. Not all is good news, as they will run the ship aground on an island.
- Two weeks have passed (assuming since the storm started, see 27:33) and the seasoned sailors sense land is near. Measuring the depth of the sea under the ship, they determine they are indeed closing in on shallower waters (an “orguia”-translated fathom- is equal to about 5-6 feet). They drop four anchors to try and slow the ship and avoid a violent crash. Some of the men panic and begin an attempt to sneak away on the lifeboat. Paul tells the centurion and soldiers that they will die if they permit the deserters to leave. They ensure no one will be taking the skiff.
- The men have not eaten in fourteen days and Paul gives them further reassurances of their safety and encourages them to eat. They seem to have placed great faith in Paul and the manifest of 276 souls eat. Eating their fill, they further lighten the ship by ditching the food overboard.
- Land is sighted, including a suitable beach within a bay that looks like a good place to “land” the ship. They remove the encumbrances to the ships progress, hoist sail and make for land. Unexpectedly, they run aground prematurely and the rear of the vessel is being pummeled by waves. The soldiers, fearful of punishment if the prisoners escape, plan to kill them. The centurion intervenes and instead commands that they abandon ship. All escape safely to land

IV. Last Few Steps to Rome (Acts 28)

- The wayward voyagers discover that they are marooned on the island of Malta, just off the southern coast of Sicily. The natives show great kindness and hospitality to the shipwrecked group. They make a fire to warm the cold seafarers and Paul busies himself gathering wood. When Paul places the wood on the fire, a viper springs out and bites Paul on the hand. The superstitious islanders are sure that Paul is being punished for murder by a higher power and observe him. Paul appears to suffer no ill effects from the bite, convincing the natives that he is himself a god.
- Paul’s companions are also shown great hospitality by a prominent islander named Publius. Publius’ father is ridden with a fever and Paul heals him. Many other islanders experience relief from disease by miracles of healing from God via Paul’s hands. As time neared for Paul and the others to leave, the grateful islanders provide provisions for them.
- Acquiring passage on another Alexandrian ship, one crowned by a figure of Castor and Pollux, the mythical twin sons of Jupiter and Leda and patron gods of sailors. The stop for three days in the ancient and mighty city of Syracuse and then to Rheguim, both cities of Sicily. The group finally sets foot on Roman soil at Puteoli, finding refuge in the homes of other Christians for a week.
- As Paul and his companions make their way towards the seat of world power, another contingent of brethren from Rome have heard they were coming. They meet Paul at Appii, a city about 40 miles outside Rome, and at Tabernai, a popular traveler’s rest about 6-7 miles closer to Rome than Appii. Paul is encouraged by the brethren and gives God thanks.
- Paul finally arrives at Rome and is placed under a loose guardianship. Paul meets with the leaders of the Jews and tells them why he has arrived. He declares the reason he is chained is for proclaiming the hope of Israel. The Jews report that they have not been informed in any form of anything negative regarding Paul. They are, however, curious to hear more about this “hope”. A hope that is, unfortunately, being spoke of negatively in many places.
- Paul gives witness of the gospel and Jesus’ grace, but again receives a mixed reaction from the Jews. He quotes Isaiah 6:9-11 to the ones who refuse the saving message. Paul relays the now familiar message that the great gift of God will be shared with the Gentiles. Paul goes on to spend two years in Rome, freely sharing the message of Jesus Christ.