

Pastor's Papers | Ronald H. Gann
Bible/Apologetics

The Prosecution Of Paul

A Survey Of The Life & Ministry Of The Apostle Paul (Part 7)
(Extracted From *A Hebrew Of Hebrews*; Ronald H. Gann [Aventine Press, 2008])

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The combined loss of one million civilian and military personnel in World War II certainly traumatized a war-torn Europe and the United States. Yet the costly toll inflicted upon the Allied forces between 1939 and 1945 did little to dampen the festivities of May 8, 1945, when Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally. As soon as the news of Germany's defeat reached Europe, western Europeans, together with their American allies across the English Channel, united on city streets to celebrate their hard-fought victory in the most deadly war in human history. Commemorated as V-E Day—or Victory in Europe Day—an intercontinental carnival of tickertape and cheer heralded the beginning of the end to World War II.

In London, crowds massed in Trafalgar Square, the city's capital plaza, ultimately reaching all the way to Buckingham Palace where King George VI, Queen Elizabeth, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill appeared on the balcony before cheering crowds. Similarly, in the United States, President Harry S. Truman who was celebrating his sixty-first birthday, played to massive audiences in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City's Times Square via a live radio broadcast. For his unwavering commitment to end the global hostilities, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had died less than a month earlier, was paid tribute by President Truman as the political architect behind the Allied victory.

Germany's defeat (and the eventual capitulation of Japan four months later) triggered a renewed sense of American and British nationalism. In America, recruitment in the military improved, despite the heavy toll already paid by many families, and the economy surged. Not surprisingly, the euphoria many Americans felt eventually gave rise to a battalion of nationalistic 'bounty hunters'—mostly newspaper reporters working in tandem with government officials—who saw the Allied victory as their opportunity to exercise their patriotism. Fuelled by an implacable demand for justice, overzealous investigators began a series of international witch hunts to capture war criminals.

Because of the infamy of their crimes, priority was given to the arrests of various Nazi fugitives who had managed to escape Berlin prior to its bombardment by the Allied invasion. But the U.S. Department of Justice also set its sights on Japanese criminals hiding in the Orient. Topping the list of the United States' most wanted Japanese war criminals was 'Tokyo Rose'—a notorious siren who had intimate knowledge of American troop movements and was said to taunt Allied soldiers, sailors, and Marines on the radio.

Unlike most war criminals on the lam in 1945, Tokyo Rose was not simply one individual whose whereabouts was easily traceable. Rather, Tokyo Rose was a composite

of about a dozen women who had broadcast over Japanese radio to aid and abet Imperial Japan in the psychological torment of Allied prisoners-of-war. Allied military personnel concocted the fictitious name—Tokyo Rose—to give a single identity to the women. Much of Tokyo Rose’s news content was either grossly embellished or falsified and centered on the losses incurred by the Allied forces.

Following the war, Tokyo Rose became the subject of great interest to many in the American media. Fuelled by Cosmopolitan Magazine reporter Harry Brundidge and Clark Lee of International News Service, the manhunt had reached a feverish pitch by the close of 1945. The fruit of their investigative reporting eventually resulted in the identification of a young Japanese-American named Iva Toguri, who had hurriedly left the United States without proper documentation six months prior to the bombing of the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. Under signed contract and the promise of compensation, Toguri confessed in September of 1945 to being one of Japan’s notorious female propagandists.

Born to immigrant parents in Los Angeles on July 4, 1916, Toguri was a first-generation American who had achieved the ‘American Dream.’ She graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles in January, 1940, earning a degree in zoology. She eventually went on to pursue her graduate studies. A sports enthusiast and swing dancer, she was popular among her friends and was considered the consummate patriot and American loyalist.

In the summer of 1941, Toguri had received word of her aunt’s failing health back in Japan. With aspirations to study medicine abroad, Toguri decided to make the voyage to her native homeland to care for her aunt and to pursue her medical education. But in her haste to be at her aunt’s bedside, Toguri left America without a passport.

Ready to return stateside after only a few months of tending to her aunt, Toguri appeared before the U.S. Vice Consul in Japan to formally request a passport. Since she had left the U.S. improperly, her application was forwarded to the Department of State for further consideration. But before arrangements were completed, Japan attacked the United States on December 7, 1941, and war was subsequently declared. A distraught Toguri voluntarily withdrew her application, opting to remain in Japan until hostilities ended. From mid-1942 until late 1943, with the fighting between the two countries only escalating, she was forced to find gainful employment and went to work as a typist for the Domei News Agency. By August of 1943, she eventually transferred her skills to Radio Tokyo.

Toguri’s fluent command of English earned her successive promotions that eventually placed her in the broadcast booth of the radio network. It was Japan’s intention to exploit English-speaking Japanese women to manipulate captured enemy combatants. The militants who oversaw the network reasoned that the dissemination of misinformation from a female voice would heighten the sense of abandonment that many of the prisoners presumably felt.

Toguri was assigned to work with a number of American and Australian prisoners-of-war who had been coerced into broadcasting radio propaganda. She was chosen by Australian POW Major Charles Cousens to appear on a Japanese radio broadcast entitled ‘Zero Hour,’ targeting American servicemen in the Pacific. Toguri protested, but she was assured that she would not be made to say anything derogatory about her native country. In fact, Cousens secretly planned on sabotaging the program,

making its propaganda useless to the Japanese. It was for this reason that he lobbied for the pro-American Toguri to be on the show.

An unsuspecting Japan never supposed that Toguri was in league with many of the prisoners. An American loyalist at heart, Toguri was moved by the dire circumstances of the Allied prisoners and risked her life on numerous occasions to smuggle food, medicine, and supplies to them. Together, the prisoners and the American refugee carefully crafted pro-American messages and subtly integrated them into her broadcasts. Operating under the call-name 'Orphan Ann' (or 'Orphan Announcer'), Toguri helmed the weekend broadcast for twenty minutes a day with other women on rotating shifts. During this time the legend of Tokyo Rose grew throughout the Pacific.

The epic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in August of 1945 brought a decisive end to the four-year conflict between the United States and Japan. A defeated Japan surrendered its autonomy to the impressive muscle of the Allied forces. Only a month later, reporters Brundidge and Lee were on a transatlantic flight to Japan to hunt down the anonymous collaborator known only as Tokyo Rose.

Brundidge and Lee's information put them on the trail of Iva Toguri. An unidentified Japanese woman implicated Toguri as one of dozens of co-conspirators employed by Tokyo Radio. Thinking that her and her new husband, Felipe d'Aquino, could use the extra income, Toguri agreed to be interviewed by the American journalists for a fee.

Following the interview, Brundidge and Lee handed their notes over to U.S. Army Counter Intelligence for review. The government's concern lay mostly with Toguri's unexplained insight into Allied troop and ship movements. The FBI and the Army conducted an extensive investigation for one year to determine whether Toguri had committed crimes against the U.S.

Army examination of the transcripts determined that—true to the testimony of two prisoners of war who Toguri worked under—she had not committed crimes against the U.S. and her radio program, the 'Zero Hour,' had no detrimental effect on troop morale. Moreover, authorities concluded that her work for Tokyo Radio might have actually boosted the morale of many Americans who were overseas at the time. Authorities decided that, based on the evidence then known, prosecution was not warranted and she was released. "There is no Tokyo Rose," the U.S. Office of War Information eventually revealed. "The name is strictly a G.I. invention ... Government monitors listening [for] twenty-four hours a day have never heard the word 'Tokyo Rose' over a Japanese-controlled Far Eastern radio." Even Assistant Attorney General Theron L. Caudle confirmed that Toguri was innocent. "Her activity," he wrote, "consisted of nothing more than the announcing of music selections."¹

But Iva Toguri's bout with U.S. Counter Intelligence and the American press corps was far from over. In late 1945 a pregnant Toguri petitioned the American consulate in Japan to have her passport reinstated so she could return stateside and have her baby on American soil. The response in the U.S. was one of outrage. The influential gossip columnist and radio commentator Walter Winchell immediately lobbied against her on the airwaves and in numerous newspaper articles, sparking the ire of many American patriots.

The American Legion and the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West followed Winchell's lead and publicly protested, and the Los Angeles City Council passed a resolution opposing her homecoming on the curious grounds that she might adversely influence loyal Japanese Americans. Spurred on by Winchell, they demanded that the woman be arrested and tried in a U.S. court for treason. Their protests, together with Winchell's reporting, triggered a public outcry and a renewed interest in Toguri by U.S. officials—despite their inconclusive findings in earlier investigations.

The public furor convinced the Justice Department that the matter should be re-examined, and the FBI was asked to turn over its investigative records. The Department of Justice issued a press release asking all U.S. soldiers and sailors who had heard the Radio Tokyo broadcasts and who could identify the voice of the broadcaster to contact the FBI. Officials interviewed hundreds of former members of the U.S. Armed Forces who had served in the South Pacific during World War II and dredged up forgotten Japanese recordings of Toguri's broadcasts.

Finally, in 1948 while in the political race of his life, President Harry Truman pressed charges against Toguri indicting her for treason. It was a move by the President that was viewed by many well-informed officials as an obligatory ploy to cater to his electorate. Toguri was re-arrested in Yokohama and extradited to San Francisco, where a federal grand jury convened to investigate her for sedition. Upon review, the grand jury handed down an eight-count indictment against her.

In 1949, with the trial jury deadlocked after 56 days of hearings, the judge refused the jurors' request for dismissal, pointing out that the trial had been "long and expensive." With no alternative, the jury returned two days later, finding Toguri guilty on one count. Her offense boiled down to a single sentence: "Orphans of the Pacific, you are really orphans now. How will you get home now that your ships are sunk?"

Toguri was the seventh person to be convicted of treason in the history of the U.S. Stripped of her American citizenship, the U.S. sentenced Toguri to ten years in prison and fined her \$10,000. Toguri maintained her innocence long after her conviction, asserting that she had not said the words used to convict her, and that she had remained a loyal American. Though forced to broadcast to the troops, she claimed that she, with the help of POWs assigned to the radio broadcasts, made herself and her words purposefully outlandish. Moreover, she took pride in the fact that she had refused Japan's demand that she relinquish her American citizenship, despite the threat of punishment.

On January 28, 1956, she was released from the Federal Reformatory for Women at Alderson, West Virginia, on account of good behavior, after having served six years and two months of her sentence. It was only a matter of hours, however, before the Justice Department came after her with deportation orders and a bill for the \$10,000 fine. (The hefty amount was paid in full nearly twenty years later from her late father's estate but she successfully litigated against efforts to deport her).

It was nearly three decades after her conviction that Toguri's case received renewed attention. In the 1970s a public campaign—spearheaded by Dr. Clifford Uyeda, later to become the Japanese American Citizens League national president—brought to light the testimony of the POWs who worked with her and supported her story. Working with attorney Wayne Merrill Collins and others, Uyeda lobbied for Toguri's clemency, receiving the support of the JACL and the California state legislature.

In 1976, Chicago Tribune reporter Ron Yates discovered that Kenkichi Oki and George Mitsushio, who delivered the most damaging court testimony against Toguri, lied under oath. They both admitted to having been coached by the prosecutor and forced to testify under extreme duress. They stated they had been threatened by the FBI and U.S. occupation police and told what to say and what not to say just hours before the trial. In addition, it was concluded that Cosmopolitan Magazine reporter Harry Brundidge falsified information and suborned perjury. And finally, it was revealed that the U.S. government had failed to give Toguri a fair trial. In fact, the judge who presided over the court case later confessed that he was prejudiced against Toguri from the start and his instructions to the jury stipulated that they exclude in their deliberation virtually all of the arguments put forth by Toguri's defense attorney.

In 1976, the TV news magazine *60 Minutes* told the Tokyo Rose story from Toguri's point of view, setting the record straight after twenty-seven years. Far from a national traitor, Iva Toguri was deemed a war hero who gave comfort to American and Allied POWs and who risked her life on numerous occasions to come to their aid.

On January 19, 1977, while on his last full day in office, U.S. President Gerald Ford granted Iva Toguri a full and unconditional pardon; restored her American citizenship, and offered her the nation's deepest apologies. It was the first time in American history that such a pardon had been given after a conviction of treason. Furthermore, in 2006—the same year Toguri died of natural causes at the age of 90—the World War II Veterans Committee awarded the elderly Japanese woman the Edward J. Herlihy Citizenship Award for her patriotic conduct in World War II.

Sadly, the injustice committed against Iva Toguri by the high court of the land is hardly implausible and far from precedent. Her false imprisonment, the maligning of her reputation, and the haphazard investigations that resulted in her disgrace and internment are not far removed from what many innocent people in history have experienced as a result of wartime passion or political unrest—including in the Bible. In brief, both Iva Toguri and the apostle Paul shared the same heartrending legal injustices.

The Jerusalem Homecoming

By way of Cos, Rhodes, Patara, and Tyre, Paul and his ministry team finally arrived by boat at Caesarea. From there, the apostle, together with Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus, Silas, and Luke, traveled fifty miles on foot to Jerusalem, the Roman provincial capital of Judea. Earlier attempts by a number of disciples in Tyre—especially Agabus the prophet—to dissuade Paul from continuing onward to Jerusalem proved ineffective, as Paul was convinced that the Holy Spirit was directing him to go there (Acts 21:4; 10–14). Furthermore, the apostle was steadfast in his desire to attend Pentecost in Jerusalem, having already missed Passover due to Jewish opposition in Cenchrea (cf. Acts 20:16). He marched to the City of David, intent on celebrating the religious festival and to present the collection offering to his famine-stricken brethren.

Paul's arrival in Jerusalem marked the end of his third, and what was to be his last, missionary journey. It also marked the beginning of a renewed conciliatory effort toward Jewish Christians who, despite the Jerusalem Council's ruling over a decade earlier, remained circumspect toward Gentiles in the covenant community (cf. Gal. 2:6–10; Acts 15:13–29). No doubt the Jerusalem church was grateful for the monetary expression of support from the Gentile congregations, but the leaders were more overcome with worry than relief. The rising tide of Jewish nationalism and a growing body of scrupulous believers in Jerusalem made solidarity with Paul and his Gentile converts tenuous. Moreover, rumors abounded that Paul preached against Moses and the Law, making for a rather awkward welcome for the apostle.

On their second day in town Paul and his troop arranged a meeting with James and the Jerusalem elders and reported in detail—in like manner as his previous reports (Acts 14:27; 15:4, 12)—all that God had accomplished in Asia Minor, Galatia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Thrace, Syria, Macedonia, Cyprus, and Achaia. Summarizing the events that comprised his ten years on the mission field, Paul humbly credited God for the work he accomplished among the Gentiles. He saw himself only as a frail instrument who God chose to graciously empower (Rom. 15:18; Eph. 3:8; 1 Thess. 2:4).

On hearing Paul's heartening report, Luke records that the assembled elders broke out in ovation and with considerable rejoicing. They praised God for what He had brought about through the apostle Paul as well as the impact his converts were having in their local communities. But the elders' celebration was overshadowed by other pressing concerns.

Hosting the apostle Paul and his team of disciples in Jerusalem placed the local church in a precarious situation. Many laymen in the congregation were at odds with the apostle's evangelical tactics overseas. Given their misconception about his teaching on grace and their bigotry toward non-Jews in the Church, Paul's rumored disrespect of Jewish tradition agitated many of them. Indeed, a slanderous accusation was circulating that the apostle Paul was encouraging Jews to apostatize from Judaism. For this reason, a potentially serious problem had fomented inside Israel.

Some of the more stringent Jewish Christians objected to what they perceived as Paul's tolerance for Hellenistic practices. At issue was his promotion of Gentiles in the Church even though they blatantly ignored the rites of circumcision, diet, and the keeping of holy days. Apparently the Jerusalem Council a decade earlier had done little to placate misinformed zealots of the Law. William MacDonald sums up their concerns about Paul:

He did teach that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe. He did teach that once the Christian faith had come, believing Jews were no longer under the law. He taught that if a man received circumcision as a means of obtaining justification, then such a man cut himself off from salvation in Christ Jesus. He taught that to return to the types and shadows of the law, after Christ had come, was dishonoring to Christ. In view of this, it is not hard to see why the Jews should think of him as they did.²

James and Paul both knew that Jewish ceremonies could not perfect salvation (cf. Acts 15:13–21; Gal. 2:15–21). But they also recognized that some parts of the Law and certain Jewish customs could be followed as an expression of a believer's faith in, and love for, Christ. With this concession in mind, James and the elders approached the apostle with their remedial plan to contain the controversy surrounding Paul before it spun out of control. In short, they suggested that the apostle assume the Nazirite vow, as he had done previously in Corinth (Acts 18:18–21), as a public showing of respect for the Jews and to demonstrate that Christianity, as personified in Paul, had not abandoned the Jewish religion. Longnecker comments:

In effect, they were saying to Paul, "We can accept [the relief offering] from the churches and so identify ourselves openly with your Gentile mission, if you will ... identify yourself openly with the nation." Thus they were protecting themselves against Jewish recriminations while at the same time affirming their connection with Paul and his mission ... It doubtless seemed to all concerned a particularly happy solution to the vexing problems that both Paul and the Jerusalem church were facing ... Having urged Paul to follow their proposed course of action, the leaders of the Jerusalem church went on to assure him that this in no way rescinded their earlier decision to impose nothing further on Gentile converts ... in order not to impede the progress of the Jewish Christian mission.³

Paul consented to the proposal. To that end, he agreed to subsidize four impoverished men at the temple in the completion of their Nazirite vow. His sponsorship would not only allow these men, who were financially unable to provide their own offering, to reap the spiritual benefits of the vow with all expenses paid in full by the apostle, but would also show himself to be a pious Jew who upheld the traditions of Moses.

Some have argued that Paul blundered by agreeing to James's proposal. They accuse the apostle of compromising his convictions and violating his conscience. But Paul's reason for agreeing to the terms was an act wholly in accordance with his own missionary principles. What is more, it was conducive to biblical truth which Paul himself admitted fell under the umbrella of Christian liberty (cf. Rom. 14–15). His code was straightforward:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (1 Cor. 9:20–22).

Because Paul had arrived in Jerusalem from abroad, Jewish Law deemed him to be ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15:31). It served his purpose, therefore, to accompany the four men to the temple for their absolution ceremony and to join in the purification

ritual. Whereas the men were completing their vow, Paul would be beginning his. Both events required the application of the purity rites.

A week later, following the end of his purification period, Paul returned to the temple with Trophimus, a Gentile representative from Ephesus, to receive the water of atonement. Meandering in the temple area at that time was a group of Jews from Ephesus in town for Pentecost. They were surprised to see not only the apostle at the temple, but also their fellow Ephesian, Trophimus. They regarded the presence of Paul's Gentile companion as evidence that the apostle had brought a non-Jew into the temple courts reserved for Jews—an offense punishable by death.⁴

Determined to take more effective action against the apostle than they had at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:9), the Ephesian Jews instigated a riot. "Men of Israel, help us," they shouted to the crowd. "This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place" (Acts 21:28).

A multitude of pilgrims at the temple were quickly riled. They seized the apostle inside the sanctuary, offended by his supposed besmirching of the sacred, and dragged him out to the Court of the Gentiles. The size of the angry mob grew quickly until the whole city was in an uproar. With hateful fury, they began to pummel the apostle, no doubt intent upon killing him.

It was not long before news of the fracas reached Roman authorities nearby. At the Fortress of Antonia—a Roman stronghold adjacent to the temple grounds—the military commander in charge of policing the temple's vicinity, Claudius Lysias (cf. Acts 23:26), was briefed on the situation. Having been told that all of Jerusalem was in chaos, Lysias acted decisively to quell the riot. He ran down the steps leading from Fort Antonia to the Court of the Gentiles and into the mob to rescue Paul.

Flanking Lysias was a squad of two hundred soldiers. But the uprising was fierce; rioters began pressing against the protective circle formed by the soldiers who daisy-chained themselves around the bleeding apostle. To pacify the mob and to regain some semblance of calm, Lysias ordered that Paul be bound. He also began to question his attackers as to who Paul was and what offense he had committed. Unable to get a cogent explanation from the contradicting mob, the commander ordered that Paul be taken into custody at the Fort Antonia barracks, but not before permitting the apostle to address his Jewish accusers.

The angry mob granted Paul a momentary reprieve and allowed him to plead his case. Speaking in their native Hebrew, the bloodied apostle was bold in recounting his personal testimony. Beginning with his roots as a Jew—his education at the feet of the well-known Jewish teacher, Gamaliel, and his erudite instruction in Judaism—the apostle Paul recalled his zeal as a Pharisaic Jew. He described how he once persecuted the Christian faith, filling the prisons with those who professed Jesus as Lord. He then related the events that led to his own conversion, specifically his vision of Christ on the road to Damascus who charged him with the commission to preach the gospel to *Gentiles*. He also mindfully invoked the name of the highly respected Ananias, the prophet who had been summoned to Straight Street at Judas's home to heal him, as a means of bolstering his credibility (cf. Acts 9:12ff; 22:12–13).

The crowd remained silent, indifferent to his testimony, until his mention of taking the gospel to the Gentiles re-ignited their ire and hatred. Such an undertaking

was inflammatory and insulting to their customs. The scene turned chaotic again. Chanting furiously, they cried out for Paul's life: "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" (Acts 22:22b).

His impassioned speech failed to subdue the intractable Jews or to persuade the Roman officials (who had decided to forcibly coerce an admission of guilt from the apostle when they returned to the barracks). Paul had no alternative but to invoke his Roman citizenship. Such an appeal made Paul exempt from examination under torture and required the due process of law, creating a dicey situation for Lysias. At an impasse as to how to handle his 'Roman' prisoner in the throes of a riot, the military commander surrendered to Jewish pressure and decided that Paul should stand trial before the Jewish legislative body, the Sanhedrin, for further interrogation.

The Sanhedrin Interrogation

Were it not for the physical and verbal abuse heaped upon him at the hands of the high priest, also named Ananias, or the fact that his freedom hung in the balance, Paul's trial before the Sanhedrin would have been ridiculous. What began as a formal deposition before the council soon dissolved into acrimony between the two main prosecuting branches: the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Their attention turned from Paul onto each other as they bickered over opposing ideology.

The Sanhedrin was Israel's national senate and high court, which had jurisdiction over all non-capital cases in the nation (though it exercised significant influence over Roman governors who presided over cases involving the death penalty). Totalling seventy-one Pharisees and Sadducees, the council was composed of three concentric groups: the chief priests, the elders, and the teachers of the law (or scribes). The chief priests included the high priest—considered the president of the Sanhedrin—as well as former presidents and various officials "who were of high-priestly descent" (Acts 4:6). The elders were comprised from the priestly aristocracy and wealthy classes, usually recruited from among the Sadducees. And the scribes, mostly drawn from the ranks of the Pharisees, were scholars of Jewish law.

The dispute among the councilmen centered on Paul's attempt as an ex-Pharisee to appeal to his former group's doctrine and their mutually-held belief in the resurrection of the dead. "My brothers I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," Paul testified, in his opening statement. "I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6).

By invoking the doctrine of resurrection and recalling his membership in the roll call of the Pharisees, Paul included himself among their ideological camp. The Sadducees interpreted the apostle's remarks as a manipulative ploy to elicit favor from the Sanhedrin's more conservative members. Moreover, they saw the banality of religion in their sophisticated legal proceedings as inappropriate and balked at the Pharisees' propensity for being so easily duped by spiritual rhetoric. Their objection to the supernatural, in turn, provoked the indignation of the Pharisees who perceived their protests as a blatant sign of disrespect toward their religious traditions. The result was a

verbal spar between the Pharisees and Sadducees that brought an abrupt end to the proceedings without any adjudication of Paul's case.

The Trial Before Felix

Since the Sanhedrin proved to be an abysmal failure in getting to the bottom of the allegations made against Paul, the military commander, Claudius Lysias, detained the apostle until he could arrange a Roman examination. Thus, a few days later, Paul's case was escalated to Antonius Felix, procurator of Judea, for further review. At Caesarea, home of the governor's quarters, Paul was brought before Felix with a sealed letter from the military commander notating the ambiguous facts of the case (Acts 23:26).

Antonius Felix was a thoroughly corrupt and licentious despot whose lack of political and moral scruples was renowned. Despite an ineffectual term as a subordinate official in Samaria, Emperor Claudius promoted Felix to procurator of Jerusalem in 52 AD as a political favor to Felix's older brother, Marcus Antonius Pallas (the empire's secretary of the treasury). His legacy is marked by personal decadence, including infidelities and multiple marriages, and diplomatic incompetence, such as subornment, oppression, and a proclivity for violence. So excessive were Felix's ways, both personal and political, that even Emperor Nero—a man whose own peccadilloes was especially sinister—would have the governor recalled in 60 AD for his misconduct.

Born a slave, Felix was given to extreme bouts of paranoia as a freedman. Not surprisingly, he was determined to safeguard the autonomy and luxury accorded him as a Roman ruler. He was relentless in suppressing any activity he deemed to be seditious, including having ordered the murder of the high priest Jonathan who publicly criticized him for his misrule. His brutality and immorality led the Roman historian Tacitus (56–117) to dismiss him as one who “exercised the power of a king with the mind of a slave.”⁵ Similarly, the Jewish historian Josephus (37–100) painted him as an incompetent scoundrel whose predilection for financial kickbacks sullied the empire's illustrious legal system in Judea.

Five days after Paul arrived in chains at Caesarea, accompanied by an escort of two hundred Roman horsemen and two hundred armed javelin throwers (owing to a discovered plot to assassinate him), the high priest Ananias arrived with certain members of the Sanhedrin. Among their ranks was a ‘hired gun,’ Tertullus, to prosecute the case against Paul.

A Hellenistic Jew, Tertullus opened the prosecution's case by first appealing to Felix's vanity. He lavished upon the governor a series of flattering salutations as a ruse to curry his favor—a common tactic employed by litigators. The lawyer then set forth the allegations brought against Paul by the Sanhedrin. The intended impression was to paint the apostle as a zealot, in league with the *sicarii* (a group of anti-Roman terrorists put down by Felix earlier by a massive use of force). More specifically, Tertullus suggested that Paul had instigated a worldwide insurrection that threatened the inviolability of Rome's provincial rule. Identifying Paul as “the ringleader” of the illegitimate and despised “sect” (Acts 24:5b), the allegation was that the apostle was the

principal agitator of a messianic cult that was potentially troublesome to Israel and thus to Rome.

“We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him” (Acts 24:5–7).

With spurious charges such as disturbing the peace (sedition), desecrating the temple (sacrilege), and violating Jewish law (sectarianism), representatives from the Sanhedrin, including the high priest Ananias, colluded with the prosecutor by “asserting that these things were true” (v. 9). Without question, given his determination to subdue riots and civil disobedience, Felix found Tertullus’s indictment disturbing.

Paul stood alone without any legal representation. Forced to defend himself against a stacked jury, as it were, he remained unshaken. A motion by the procurator signaled for him to make his rebuttal. The apostle first expressed his gratitude to stand before the governor, who no doubt was familiar with Jewish customs due to his term as an official in Samaria. Second, and most significantly, he then offered proof of his innocence, addressing each charge categorically.

The apostle informed the procurator that it had been “no more than twelve days ago” (v. 11) since he had come to Jerusalem to worship “the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect” (v. 14). He argued that twelve days was hardly enough time to foment a revolt. Second, his accusers had no viable grounds to arraign him as the ringleader of sedition since only Trophimus was by his side when they arrested him in the temple. By inference, Paul challenged the court to produce one witness to the contrary or cite any time where he was known to have stirred up a rebellion in the city.

Paul reconstructed the events that led to his coming to Jerusalem. Given the famine ravaging the land, his aim was merely “to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings” (v. 17). He insisted that he made no attempt to create a disturbance; rather, while worshiping in a ceremonially clean condition, the crowd accosted him without cause solely on the basis of religious intolerance. Finally, Paul contended that the Sanhedrin, who was widely regarded to be thorough in their investigations, were unable to arrive at a conclusive position concerning his conduct.

Probably the most damaging to Tertullus’s case, Paul argued, was the inexplicable absence of his original accusers. Those responsible for ambushing him at the temple, namely the Ephesian Jews, were not present in the courtroom. Their absence suggested that they had nothing against him that could withstand the intense cross-examination of a Roman appellate court. Instead, representatives of the Sanhedrin, who were not eyewitnesses to his alleged crimes nor were fully unified, were the only complainants present. Their testimony, by default, was invalid.

Governor Felix faced a difficult dilemma. Paul was a Roman citizen, against whom no credible witnesses had come forward. Moreover, he “was well acquainted with the Way” (v. 22) and knew that its adherents were not marshaled with political revolutionaries who sought to disrupt his rule. Yet in like manner as the ambivalent

Pontius Pilate who presided over Christ's Roman trial (Matt. 27:23–24 cf. John 19:12a), he was well aware that should he acquit Paul, he would incur the resentment of the Jewish people. From a political stance, it was imperative that he curry their favor but, at the same time, imprisoning an innocent citizen of Rome was tantamount to political suicide. It was sure to render him a career-ending censure from Nero.

Trapped between justice and popularity, an indecisive Felix refused to render a verdict. He adjourned the proceedings under the guise that he would consult with commander Lysias when he arrived in Caesarea for more information. In the meantime, Paul was remanded into the protective custody of a Roman centurion in the palace of Herod the Great. Since Paul held proper citizenship and had not yet been convicted of a crime, Felix ordered that he be allowed some freedom and permitted to receive visitors.

Felix was certainly intrigued by the apostle Paul. Several days later the procurator arranged for a private interview with the apostle, in the company of his third wife, Drusilla, who was a Jewess. They hoped to hear him expound further on the Christian faith.

The apostle did not disappoint. He spoke persuasively in the palace courtroom about his faith in Jesus Christ, uninhibited by the presence of royalty (Drusilla was the granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra). The youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12) who had been enticed by Felix to abandon her marriage to the king of Emesa, Drusilla and her philandering husband were ideal candidates for the gospel. Fittingly, Paul spoke on the subjects of righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come (Acts 24:25a).

Felix was understandably disturbed by the subject matter of Paul's private lectures. Overcome with guilt, on one occasion he refused to let the apostle finish his harangue: "That's enough for now! You may leave," the procurator said. "When I find it convenient, I will send for you" (v. 25b).

Luke records that Paul stayed in custody for two years in Caesarea, where Felix summoned him often to hear him preach. His respect for Paul, however, did not diminish his lust for riches. With throngs of Christians who professed allegiance to the apostle, Felix was aware of the potential goldmine he had by holding the apostle indefinitely. It was his mischievous hope that either Paul, or one of his followers, would offer him a financial incentive to secure his expedient release. But no bribe was forthcoming.

The Trial Before Festus

With his legal case still unresolved, Paul's two-year internment in Herod's palace saw the political landscape in Israel shift. Procurator Felix's worst political fears had been realized. An outbreak of hostilities inside Caesarea had arisen between Jews and Greeks that resulted in sporadic and bloody skirmishes throughout the territory. Always on guard against the threat of revolutionaries in his province, a paranoid Felix ordered Syrian troops to quell the Semitic revolt by any means necessary. The result was the arbitrary killing of scores of Jews, the incarceration of countless civilians suspected of having terrorist ties, and the plundering of Jewish wealth and land

holdings. So disproportionate was Felix's response that a leading delegation of Jews mustered the nerve to travel to Rome to register an official complaint with the imperial officials.

The Jewish objections to Felix's rule were sustained by Rome. Felix was recalled by Emperor Nero for his antics and eventually relieved of his post in Caesarea. Appointed to replace him was a political novice of Roman nobility named Festus.⁶

When Festus arrived on the scene in 60 AD he was quick to take inventory of his pending docket with the aim of adjudicating any outstanding cases left in the wake of Felix's impeachment. In addition, he moved swiftly to meet with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in order to placate those whom he would be governing. He was keenly aware that the high priest and his influential colleagues in the Sanhedrin played key roles in not only maintaining the peace throughout Judea but also ensuring the longevity and success of his reign. And maintaining the peace was the highest priority of a Roman provincial governor.

Along with the public unrest brought to bear by Felix's brash conduct, Festus inherited Felix's most controversial prisoner, Paul of Tarsus. It was disappointing to Festus to learn that Paul still remained confined after two years, without a rendered verdict, leaving the new governor with the undesirable assignment of ruling on the potentially explosive matter. Even more surprising was the vitriol he encountered among the leaders in Jerusalem concerning the apostle. Although a significant amount of time had passed since Paul was remanded to Caesarea, the Jews had not forgotten him, nor had their murderous hatred subsided.

At their first face-to-face conference in Jerusalem only three days after assuming his royal seat over the province (Acts 25:1), Festus faced his first political challenge from the Jews. Hoping to take advantage of the new governor's inexperience, the Jewish authorities requested that he transfer Paul's case to Jerusalem for trial. But the idea of surrendering a Roman citizen into the hands of a Jewish court did not bode well with the governor and was plainly a violation of imperial law. Moreover, were he to ignore his legal scruples and hand Paul over to the Sanhedrin to stand trial yet again, he suspected their motives to be anything but legally ethical. (It is doubtless that Claudius Lysias briefed the new governor about the Jews' previous plan to assassinate the apostle). It was evident to Festus that they did not want a fair trial for Paul but a summary judgment of condemnation (cf. Acts 25:3).

Hoping to achieve compromise, Festus invited the Jerusalem authorities to present their case against Paul in a Roman court in Caesarea. Deflated by the governor's proposal, the Jews had no choice but to consent.

After more than a week in Jerusalem conferring with Jewish leaders, Festus returned to Caesarea and convened his courtroom. He ordered that Paul be brought before him. In opposition to the apostle was the usual cast of characters from the Sanhedrin. When Paul arrived under guard, Festus took his seat at the tribunal, thus sanctioning it as an official Roman trial.

The charges laid against the apostle were the same charges put to Felix two years earlier: sedition, sectarianism, and sacrilege (cf. Acts 24:5-6). And as it was before in Felix's court, the Jews failed to present any convincing evidence of wrongdoing on Paul's part. They produced no eyewitnesses or corroborating testimony that Paul either sought

to overthrow Caesar's occupation of Judea, violated Jewish laws and customs, or defiled the temple.

Fully aware of the poverty of their case, Paul was quick to plead his defense. He knew that the Law's moral standards never change, any more than God Himself does (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). To him, the Law was holy, good, and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14), expressing God's character and requirement for a righteous life (cf. Matt. 5:18–19). With a clear conscience, Paul spoke with poise: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar" (Acts 25:8).

Despite the gushing leaks in what was alleged to be a watertight case against Paul, the matter was not an easy one for Festus to settle. Paul was a Roman citizen, falsely accused and obviously innocent. But to release him would antagonize the Jewish leaders—the same leaders Festus desperately needed to placate in order to keep the peace. At an impasse and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Festus asked the defendant, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?" (v. 9).

It is likely that Paul's spirits were dampened by Festus's legal pitch, knowing full well that any transport to Jerusalem or referral to a Jewish tribunal was, in effect, his death warrant. Not surprisingly, the apostle balked at the suggestion:

"I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. *I appeal to Caesar!*" (vv. 10–11, emphasis added).

Paul's appeal to the king of Rome was no trivial matter.⁷ He had every right to expect justice from a Roman court. Therefore, he was under no obligation to put his life in the hands of a kangaroo committee of Jewish watchdogs. His appeal to the Emperor was a matter of right inherited by all credentialed citizens of Rome, which he could not afford to forego. *The NIV Bible Commentary, Volume 2: New Testament*, comments:

Roman law at this time protected Roman citizens by their right of appealing to the emperor. Such appeals could only be made in cases that went beyond the normal jurisdiction of a governor—particularly where the threat of violent coercion or capital punishment by provincial administrators was present ... [The provincial governor] had to determine (1) whether the charges against his prisoner fell into the category of normal provincial jurisdiction, and (2) whether it was either just or feasible to acquit the prisoner and make the appeal unnecessary. Since the charges against Paul concerned political sedition, which in Roman law could be punished by death, and profanation of the Jerusalem temple, which in Jewish law called for death, Festus had no choice but to acknowledge the extraordinary character of the charge and accept Paul's appeal.⁸

Festus saw his way out of the legal and political quagmire. Once he granted the appeal, it would take the apostle's case out of the governor's jurisdiction and transfer it to the Emperor. Such an exchange not only allowed Festus to save face with the Jews but also upheld Roman law and catered to the defendant's wishes. With much relief, the governor responded to Paul: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!" (Acts 25:12).

But Festus was not entirely relieved of all matters concerning Paul; he was still expected to produce for Rome a transcript that highlighted the particulars of the case. This report was to be affixed to the apostle's extradition paperwork, which would enable Caesar to flesh out the indictment's pertinent information rather speedily. The difficulty that Festus faced with such a report was that Paul's case was primarily religious in nature, apart from the curious charge of sedition. What is more, having only been in the province for two weeks, the foreign procurator found Jewish and Christian theology alien (cf. vv. 18–19). Fortunately for him, assistance arrived in the person of Herod Agrippa II.

The Trial Before Agrippa

Only two weeks into his governorship over Judea and only a day or two removed from Paul's trial, Festus was paid a royal visit by Herod Agrippa II, the tetrarch of the Galilean territory of Palestine during the Roman occupation. The purpose of Agrippa's visit was to pay his respects as a neighboring official and congratulate the new governor for his political appointment in Judea.

Of the legion of *junior* officials produced by the Roman Empire between the intertestamental period and the first three centuries of the Common Era, none were rumored to be more scandalous than Marcus Julius Agrippa II,⁹ a Jewish politician in cahoots with Rome. He was reputed to have been a man of perverse attitude, enmeshed in an incestuous relationship with his younger sister, Bernice. (History would also judge him to be a Semitic turncoat who eventually sided with the Greeks during the Jewish revolt in 66 AD).¹⁰

The last in the line of the Herods, Agrippa II was the nephew of Herod Antipas, who executed John the Baptist (Mark 6:14–29) and arraigned Jesus (Luke 23:7–12). Agrippa's father, Herod Agrippa I, was responsible for having the apostle James beheaded and for imprisoning Peter (Acts 12). The junior Agrippa's diabolical pedigree stemmed not from his father or uncle but from his maniacal grandfather, Herod the Great. In an attempt to assassinate the infant Jesus, Herod the Great had ordered the killings of all male newborns and toddlers in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16–18); a memory that still haunted many elderly Palestinians. Three generations removed saw little difference in temperament between grandson, father, uncle, and grandfather.

Agrippa's Galilean regime encroached upon Festus' jurisdiction in Judea only in terms of the Jewish temple. Although he had no formal standing over Judean legal matters, Rome conferred to Agrippa the oversight of the temple treasury and the authority to depose and appoint the high priest responsible for the temple's coffers and

priestly vestments. Given his ethnic background, Rome viewed Agrippa II as their primary authority for all things Jewish in the empire.

Festus welcomed the arrival of Agrippa and his consort, Bernice, with much eagerness. In light of the pending court report that he was required to write, it was only fitting that he broach the subject of Paul's case with Rome's noted Jewish authority.

Festus reported to Agrippa in detail all the events surrounding Paul's case. He pointed out his due diligence in cross-examining both Paul and the Sanhedrin concerning the evidence of the case and was surprised to learn that the charges did not amount to felonies considered punishable by Roman law. In fact, Festus told Agrippa the two parties appeared to be at odds over "a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive" (v. 19b).

Agrippa immediately took an interest in Festus's prisoner (as it is likely he was already aware of the apostle's fame).¹¹ Not content with merely providing passing advice to his new political colleague, Agrippa was eager to witness Paul in action: "I would like to hear this man myself" (v. 22).

Festus arranged for Paul to appear before Agrippa and Bernice the next day. The hearing began with great fanfare typical of a Roman inquest. A grand pageant was put on display when Agrippa entered the audience chamber. He was dressed in all the trappings of royalty, including a purple robe, opulent crown, dress rings that boasted his regality, and perhaps even a scepter. Accompanying him was Bernice, though not technically his queen, adorned in formal dress and flanked by "high ranking officers and the leading men of the city" (v. 23b). It was clear to all that Festus had turned Paul's hearing into an occasion to honor Agrippa.

When the pomp and pageantry of Agrippa's parade subsided, Festus gave the order to bring Paul in to appear before the royal tribunal. With all eyes affixed on him, the rugged apostle was escorted into the court chambers of Herod the Great's Caesarean palace where the distinguished audience sat attentively. MacArthur observes, "The contrast could not have been more striking. Into the midst of the assembly hall, crowded with the most important people in Caesarea, walked a Jew who has been described as short, bald, and physically unimposing (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10). Murmurs of surprise must have greeted his appearance; many in the crowd probably found it hard to believe that this seemingly unimpressive man was the cause of so much controversy."¹²

Festus opened the proceedings by publicly acknowledging what he had already made known to Agrippa in private:

"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. 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. 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" (Acts 25:24–26).

When Festus concluded his introductory remarks, Agrippa assumed control of the proceedings. With a raised eyebrow and a piqued curiosity, he turned his attention to the shackled apostle. “You have permission to speak for yourself,” he said (Acts 26:1).

At Agrippa’s invitation, Paul motioned with his hand to the court to introduce his remarks. After two long painstaking years in relative seclusion, the apostle Paul was finally in the presence of a knowledgeable judge, a sympathetic governor, and a respectful audience to whom he could plead his case. Since Festus had already admitted that Paul was not guilty of sedition (v. 24), the apostle took the opportunity to address the charges of sacrilege and sectarianism.

Concerning his personal life story from Christian persecutor to Christian preacher, Paul affirmed his commitment to the teaching of the Old Testament, as he had in his trial before Felix (cf. Acts 24:14–15). He hammered the fact that he was an exemplary Jew who in no way stood opposed to the religion of his kinsmen. The Jews would have to admit, if only they were willing to testify under oath to Caesar, that he had followed the pathway of the strictest orthodoxy, being an irreproachable Pharisee. Yet inexplicably, he argued, he now stood trial in chains for no greater crime than the fact that he clung to the promise made by God to the Jewish fathers in the Old Testament:

“The Jews 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 ... that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:4–8).

Paul viewed the antagonism toward his preaching as having little to do with the divisive doctrine of resurrection, but more with the fact that most Jews were adamantly opposed to the notion that Jesus of Nazareth was the *risen* Messiah. In an attempt to empathize with his critics in the courtroom, Paul turned the court’s attention to his own life story and personal opposition to Christianity.

He reminded Agrippa of the savage and unremitting campaign he waged against the followers of Christ during his commendable career as a Pharisee. He spared no details in emphasizing his former hatred for everything and everyone Christian; that he went to impressive lengths to imprison many of the believers in Jerusalem and in the outlying townships. Moreover, when Christians stood trial before the Sanhedrin, he cast his vote against them mercilessly. He even facilitated the punishment of those whom he found infiltrating the synagogues, and he did all he could do to force them to recant their allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul’s account of his early life eventually transitioned to the precipitating event that transfigured the hardened Pharisee into the apostle who now stood trial in chains. No doubt Agrippa sat enthralled as Paul spoke with passion:

“... I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priest [to persecute Christians]. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 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 ... I am Jesus whom you are persecuting ... I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you ... I am sending you to [the Gentiles] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light ...’

So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me ... [A]nd so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:12–23).

Paul was obviously an intelligent and cultured man. It baffled the governor and the king that he could genuinely believe such superstitious musings about a Jewish carpenter who had been executed by one of their predecessors, Pontius Pilate. Sympathetic to his case but unwilling to concede to his stupendous claims of a heavenly encounter on the Damascus road, Festus was the first to interrupt Paul. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane” (v. 24).

Paul immediately shot back at the procurator: “I am not insane, most excellent Festus ... What I am saying is true and reasonable. 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” (vv. 25–26).

Paul turned his attention to an embarrassed Agrippa. Unlike Festus, who was a foreigner to the area, the king was well aware of the commotion Christianity had stirred in Palestine throughout the course of the last three decades, and he most certainly was aware of its cardinal tenet: the resurrection of Christ. That certain eyewitnesses could attest to Jesus’ death and resurrection was an assertion he could not sidestep. Indeed, not long before his confinement, Paul argued irrefutably to the Corinthians that “more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time” witnessed the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:6). The Jewish Agrippa soon found himself in a philosophical bind.

Before the very eyes of the two magistrates, together with a forgotten assembly hall filled with enthralled onlookers, the prisoner became the prosecutor. The criminal became the cross-examiner. Locking eyes with King Agrippa the apostle Paul asked forthrightly: “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do” (v. 27).

Paul’s question was met with an awkward silence. Agrippa presumably shifted uncomfortably in his seat as he realized that the defendant had cleverly turned the tables on him. As the echo of Paul’s question rang in the air, the king found himself in a sticky situation. Were he to respond to Paul’s question truthfully he would, as Paul saw

it, have to concede that Jesus was the Messiah, particularly in light of the weight of Old Testament evidence that corresponded fittingly with Christ's empty tomb and in accord with the testimony of many eyewitnesses.

But if Agrippa were to confess his belief in the prophets of old, he was sure to be labeled a buffoon by his fellow dignitaries; he had a reputation to maintain before Festus and his Roman cohorts. Nevertheless, he could hardly disavow the revered prophetic writings of his own people.

A tongue-tied Agrippa was forced to dodge Paul's direct question with his own clever, though inane, one. Mocking the apostle in his attempt to screen his loss of composure, the king retorted: "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" (v. 28).¹³

Paul's response was epic, if not gracious: "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains" (v. 29).

To Paul, the joys and blessing of the Christian life surpassed the temporal suffering one endured for the cause of Christ—including the scourge of Roman chains. His heartfelt desire was that all who heard him in the courtroom that day would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ regardless of the personal outcome of his trial. As G. Campbell Morgan poignantly writes, Paul "would die to save Agrippa, but he would not put his chains upon Agrippa."¹⁴

Paul's avowal signaled the end of the inquiry. Agrippa had presumably heard enough to instruct Festus what he should write in his report to Rome. On behalf of Festus, he dismissed the hearing, and with Festus and Bernice following suit, strode out of the audience chamber. As they made their way into an adjacent room for private deliberation, Agrippa commented to Festus, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment ... This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (vv. 32–32). Notwithstanding their acknowledgment of Paul's innocence, plans for his extradition went forward.

Paul had once again been found blameless of any unlawful activity. He had boldly proclaimed the gospel to some of the most important dignitaries in Palestine, accomplishing one aspect of his divine charge. Now, after two years of despondency in the Herodian palace, it was time for the second aspect of the Lord's promise to be fulfilled: "Take courage!" Christ had promised him back at the Fort Antonia barracks following his Sanhedrin trial. "As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11).

The trumped up charges brought against the apostle Paul by an overzealous mob at the close of his third missionary journey had all the making of a legal quagmire. Like Iva Toguri, who is forever linked as the propagandist Tokyo Rose, Paul was falsely accused on the testimony of false witnesses eager to advance their political agenda. Also similar to Toguri was the fact that the only admissible evidence worthy of the court's consideration supported his case as an innocent and honorable citizen rather than to paint him as a soldier of sedition. Drawing even further comparisons to Toguri's case was the fact that those who presided over the courtroom were often favorably disposed

to the prosecution—swayed by the politics around them—rather than by the evidence at hand or the convincing arguments or character of the defendant.

Although a true patriot, Iva Toguri was falsely maligned as a turncoat whose day in court saw its vindication twenty-seven years after the injustice done to her. As for Paul, he rested on the promises of a sovereign God and stood strong in his faith that vindication would soon be his—whether in his lifetime or in the life to come.

—Ronald H. Gann

¹ Cited at www.hnn.us

² MacDonald, William. *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Farstad, Arthur L. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1651.

³ Longnecker, Richard L. *Acts of the Apostles; The NIV Bible Commentary, vol. 2: The New Testament*, Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, eds., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 495.

⁴ Modern archaeology has substantiated that it was a capital offense to breach the temple ground rules. An inscription, found in 1935, warns, "No Gentile shall enter within the partition and barrier surrounding the temple, and whoever is caught shall be responsible to himself for his subsequent death" (see Blaiklock, E. M. and Harrison, R. K., eds., *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], 389).

⁵ Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, (Grand Rapids: Eedmans, 1977), 355.

⁶ Little information is available from secular sources concerning the historical record of Festus. What is known of him is gleaned mostly from the New Testament record.

⁷ Some view Paul's appeal to Caesar as a curiosity given that the infamous Emperor Nero (54–68 AD), no friend to Christianity, was the Caesar of Paul's day. However it should be noted that Nero's early rule, under the influence of Seneca the philosopher and the prefect of the Praetorian Guard Afranius Burrus, was looked upon as something of a Golden Age. His early years were not marked by the cruelty and insanity of his later years.

⁸ Longnecker, Richard L. *Acts of the Apostles; The NIV Bible Commentary, vol. 2: The New Testament*, Barker, Kenneth L. and Kohlenberger III, John R. eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 506.

⁹ Arguably the most unsavory two *senior* rulers of Rome were the Emperors Nero (54–68 AD) and Diocletian (284–305 AD). Accordingly, state-sponsored persecution escalated Christian suffering to epic proportions, with its focal point occurring during the reigns of these two notorious Caesars.

¹⁰ MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Acts 13–28*, (Moody Press, 1996), 327.

¹¹ MacArthur notes, "The imperfect tense of *boulomai* (I would like) suggests Agrippa had been wanting to hear Paul for a long time. He undoubtedly knew of Paul and looked forward to hearing the leading spokesman for Christianity in person" (MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Acts 13–28*, [Moody Press, 1996], 329).

¹² *Ibid.* 330.

¹³ There is considerable disagreement as to exactly what Agrippa meant by his question, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" The King James translation (KJV) suggests that the king actually had been brought to the threshold of conversion. Contemporary translations suggest the proper rendering connotes a response, not in the form of a statement but of sarcastic inquiry. The KJV translates Agrippa's words as a matter-of-fact statement: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Modern translators, however, are quick to point out that "almost" is not contained in the text. (See Longnecker, Richard L. *Acts of the Apostles; The NIV Bible Commentary, vol. 2: The New Testament*, Barker, Kenneth L. and Kohlenberger III, John R. eds. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994], 510).

¹⁴ Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Fleming H Revell Co., 1960), 528.