



# STUDY 4

## Acts 25:12-26:32

### Changes of Heart

Paul has already appeared before two Roman Governors, Felix and Festus. Now he has appealed his case directly to Rome, where he will have the opportunity to speak before Caesar himself. The trouble is, Festus can't decide what to write on the charge-sheet he'll send to Caesar. When King Agrippa drops by for a cuppa, Festus asks for his advice. So Paul appears before King Agrippa, his wife Bernice, and the high ranking officials of the city. According to Paul, everything that happened is because he had a huge change of heart!

Set the scene by reading **Acts 25:23-27**.

In Acts 26, Paul makes his defense. After the usual polite beginning, Paul speaks about his early days as a faithful Jew.

1. Read Paul's opening statements in 26:1-11. List the things he once did to oppose "the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
2. Paul seems to be claiming that he has both CHANGED and yet NOT CHANGED. How can this be?
3. Read carefully the words Jesus spoke to Paul on the road in 26:14-18. Jesus is appointing Paul as a servant and a witness. According to the "mission statement" Jesus gives to Paul in 26:17-18, what situation are the Gentiles in before they hear the gospel?
  - \* Their eyes are \_\_\_\_\_
  - \* They are in \_\_\_\_\_
  - \* They are under the power of \_\_\_\_\_
  - \* They need to receive \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you think the same descriptions apply to people today? Why, or why not? If it does apply, then who to?
5. How does a person move "from the power of Satan to God", and receive forgiveness of their sins?

6. According to the message Paul goes on to preach to both Jews and the Gentiles, what is involved in the process of "being sanctified by faith in Jesus."?

7. Why have the Jews opposed Paul? (v21)

Look back to the meeting Paul had with Felix and his wife in 24:25. How is their response similar?

Are you ever tempted to reject the gospel (or put it on hold) because it challenges you to repent and change? (Maybe you can give some examples of times like this?)

8. Read King Agrippa's response to Paul's speech in verses 24 to 29. Do you think Paul has made any ground with him?

9. Festus and Agrippa agree in verses 31 and 32 that Paul has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment. In fact, if he hadn't appealed to Caesar he could be set free. But Paul sees a greater plan unfolding. How has he described it in verse 22?

## **A COSTLY CHOICE**

Paul has been through a Sanhedrin hearing, two Roman trials, and a hearing before King Agrippa, and has spent more than two years in custody. Every time, he's been found innocent of all charges. But Paul has chosen to appeal to Caesar so as to take the gospel to Rome. It's a decision he makes at great personal risk, and huge cost - but in doing it, he's fulfilling the commission given to him by Jesus. In Acts 27-28, we'll follow him on his trip to Rome.

## **A FINAL THOUGHT...**

\* What risks and costs are you prepared to face to help bring people from the Kingdom of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins?

**NOTE: Next week's passage is quite long, and should be read before you come to growth group!**

