**BCM Bible Study – November 20/21, 2013**

**Acts: Paul Before Festus and Agrippa (Acts 25-26)**

*It has been a couple weeks (thanks for the breather, FTLT!) since we covered Paul’s arrest and defense before the Jewish leaders. We concluded the last study with God’s promise in 23:11 that Paul would eventually testify for Him in Rome. By the end of chapter 23, Paul is protected from the Jewish leaders’ murderous plot as a governor named Felix. Felix safeguards Paul from the Jews and listens to Paul expound on the gospel, but as he waits to be bribed and delays any action, Paul is held by him for two years! That leads us to chapter 25, where a new governor named Festus has replaced Felix.*

Paul appeals to Caesar – **Read Acts 24:27-25:12**

* What do you do and how do you feel when you feel like you are not being listened to? Do you feel like you handle this better or worse than the “average person”?
* Two years later, the Jewish leaders are unwavering not only in their commitment to bring charges against Paul, but in their desire to kill him. If you were Paul, what in these verses would give you concern about not getting a fair trial or being used as a pawn?
* When Paul “plays the Caesar card”, what is going on? Do you think it is a case of…

1. I don’t trust Festus, so I am heading up the chain of command.
2. Take that, Jewish leaders! You can’t touch me now!
3. He is following the path of God’s promise in 23:11.
4. A mix of things above and maybe some other factors as well

Agrippa enters stage left – **Read Acts 25:13-26:1**

* As Festus brings Agrippa up to speed, what does he reveal about his thoughts about Paul and about Jesus?
* In verse 22 Agrippa directly tells Festus that he wants to inject himself into the hearing of the case. Agrippa is the son of the Herod in 12:1-23. How would that truth influence his interest in this case?
* What do we learn about Agrippa in verse 23? In 24-27 what do we learn about Festus and the predicament that he is in?

Paul once again defends himself – **Read Acts 26:2-23**

* What are the most inspiring and powerful elements of Paul’s story as you hear it?
* Why does Paul say that he is on trial? (verse 6 and 7 – also see 23:6 and 24:21 for his consistency in this belief)
* Note the irony of verses 9-11. Paul is accused by Jewish leaders to be worthy of death for actions since becoming a Christian, but his only criminal acts came from the days that he was “one of them”.
* Paul would be tempted to think, “I have wasted two years here.” What parts of his story likely help him to not get discouraged and to battle that temptation? (v. 17, v. 22)
* What are some essential elements of the gospel and essential elements of our call to serve Christ found in 17-18 and 22-23?

Conclusion – **First read Acts 26:24-32**

* Paul has already indicated that he is on trial for his hope. What did you learn tonight about his hope and belief that these are not “wasted days” and that God can use him to reach anyone? How should that/will that influence your hope and expectancy this week?