

# Crossway Life Group, Week of February 23

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

## Community

---

Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.

## Scripture: Acts 25. Sermon: "God is (still) at work"

---

### Reading & Discussing Scripture

1. **Invisible Work:** What are examples where work is occurring, but it is difficult to observe? (For example, chlorophyll working inside plants to convert sunlight into chemical energy for the plant to grow). When is God's work difficult to observe?
2. **Background / Overview:** Paul has been in prison for two years awaiting a proper trial for a Roman citizen. A new governor comes to office and addresses Paul's case. Luke paints a picture of Paul in a web of self-interested people in an unjust system. However, Paul is not a helpless victim. As opportunity comes, he continues to bear witness to his Lord. Although Paul continues to be denied justice and freedom, God is still at work beyond a human perspective enabling Paul to courageously follow his call.
3. **Read Acts 25:1-12.** What details does Luke provide to show the intensity of Paul's situation?
4. **Read Acts 25:6-12.** How does it seem Paul is trapped in a broken system? **Read Acts 20:21-24, 23:11.** In what way is Paul's appeal to Caesar an act of faith following God's general and specific call to Paul?
5. **Read Acts 25:13-27.** What similarities and differences do you observe between Paul & Jesus in following their general and specific calls? What lessons do you see about living the call God has for you?
6. Do you have any other questions about the passage or the sermon?

### The Big Idea

**God protects and provides for His people in all the (general and specific) work He gives them to do even through danger and difficulties and flawed people and institutions**

### Application & Reflection Questions

1. **Even when God seems still, God is still at work!** How do you see this truth in the life of Esther (see Esther 4:12-14), Jesus (Mark 1:9-13), or other biblical figures?
2. Where in your life does God seem to be still? How are you tempted to view your circumstances from a limited human perspective?
3. What are your responses to flawed people, broken institutions, or unjust systems? What helps you believe God is at work even through flawed things of this world? See **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**.
4. God's general calling for all Christians (loving God, loving others, bearing fruit, etc) is fulfilled in the specific circumstances of our lives. To what specific work has God called you in this season of life and this week? Perhaps to a place, job, attitude, relationship(s)?
5. How can your life group members give courage to you to see and believe that God is at work your circumstances? Take a few moments to speak into each other's lives by faith: Take time as a group in listening prayer. Then, invite group members to share how they see God at work in and thru others.

### Growing in Cultural Understanding

---

Paul used his understanding of his environment, Jewish and Roman cultures, for gospel opportunities. How have you done that? Is there a setting in your life where you are trying to do it more?

## Serving beyond ourselves

---

*What are ways that your group can be for the benefit of people beyond yourselves?*

Please **pray for our church's nominating committee** as they consider the people who have been recommended by the congregation. They intend to share a progress report in March.

### Acts 25 (New International Version)

#### Paul's Trial Before Festus

Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. <sup>3</sup> They requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. <sup>4</sup> Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. <sup>5</sup> Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there."

<sup>6</sup> After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. <sup>7</sup> When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them. <sup>8</sup> Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar." <sup>9</sup> Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?" <sup>10</sup> Paul answered: "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. <sup>11</sup> 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!" <sup>12</sup> After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

#### Festus Consults King Agrippa

<sup>13</sup> A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. <sup>14</sup> Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. He said: "There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. <sup>15</sup> When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned. <sup>16</sup> "I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. <sup>17</sup> When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. <sup>18</sup> When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. <sup>19</sup> Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. <sup>20</sup> I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. <sup>21</sup> But when Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar." <sup>22</sup> Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself." He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him."

#### Paul Before Agrippa

<sup>23</sup> The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup> Festus said: "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. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him."