



Walking with the Spirit through the Book of Acts

Pastor Michael Cranford

Copyright © 2024 Michael Cranford

Schedule

April 7	The Holy Spirit	Sept 8	Acts 9:32-10:48
April 14	Acts 1:1-9	Sept 16	Acts 11:1-12:25
April 21	Acts 1:10-26	Sept 22	Acts 13:1-14:7
April 28	Acts 2:1-13	Sept 29	Acts 14:8-16:10
May 5	Acts 2:14-47	Oct 6	Acts 16:11-17:23
May 12	BREAK (Mother's Day)	Oct 13	Acts 17:24-18:28
May 19	Acts 3:1-26	Oct 20	Acts 19:1-20
May 26	Acts 4:1-21	Oct 27	Acts 19:21-23:11
June 2	Acts 4:22-5:11	Nov 3	Acts 23:12-26:32
June 9	Acts 5:12-42	Nov 10	Acts 27:1-28:30
June 16	BREAK (Father's Day)		
June 23	Acts 6:1-15		
June 30	Acts 7:2-60; 8:1-4		
July 7	Acts 8:5-25		
July 14	Acts 8:26-9:31		



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

I. The crowd forms a conspiracy to murder Paul (Acts 23:12-15). This fits the overall narrative of Luke-Acts and the idea of the Spirit's work through individual, faithful people and not (in contrast) the masses, who have always been disobedient to God's plan. Like they murdered the prophets and Jesus, they are now focused on eliminating Paul. This is precisely what we should expect (and this does not imply that God's plan has failed—exactly the opposite).

The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty men were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here." (Acts 23:12-15)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

2. The plot is discovered by Paul's nephew (Acts 23:16-21). This is the only indication that Paul has relatives in Jerusalem, despite the fact that one's family is integral to identity in ancient Near Eastern culture. So we learn at least this much: What defines Paul, fundamentally, is what he does, not his past.

But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.
(Acts 23:16)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him.” So he took him to the commander.

The centurion said, “Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.”

The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, “What is it you want to tell me?”

He said: “Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. Don’t give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request.”

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: “Don’t tell anyone that you have reported this to me.”

Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, “Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix.” (Acts 23:17-22)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

3. Paul is rescued by a Roman commander, who writes a self-serving letter and sends Paul under heavy guard to Caesaria to meet before the Proconsul, who is typically the judge in serious matters of interest to Rome (Acts 23:22-35). Luke makes clear that Paul didn't pose any threat to Rome.

He wrote a letter as follows:

Claudius Lysias,

To His Excellency, Governor Felix:

Greetings.



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him. (Acts 23:25-30)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace. (Acts 23:31-35)

Antonius Felix, the Roman Governor (Procurator) of Judea (52-59 AD)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

4. Paul stands before the Governor (Felix) with his accusers present. Paul refutes their charges and, in legal terms, it is clear that there is no legitimate case against him, with regard to Roman law (Acts 24:1-23).

Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: “We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

“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.”

The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

“After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’”

Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs. (Acts 24:1-23)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

Charges against Paul:

1. Paul is a troublemaker and political agitator
2. Paul is the leader of a sectarian movement
3. Paul attempted to desecrate the temple

Paul's defense:

1. He did not make a disturbance
2. His relationship with the Way is not a violation of Judaism; it is part of Judaism
3. There was no temple desecration
4. There is no proof of the charges (i.e., Paul committed no crimes)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

5. While Paul is awaiting dismissal of charges, he has the opportunity to witness to the Proconsul and his wife, Drusilla (Acts 24:24-27). We know (from historical sources) that they both were rather bad people, and the image here conveys a clear image: Paul does not hesitate to do the thing the Spirit has appointed him to do, regardless of consequences.

Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, **Felix was afraid** and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." **At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe**, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. (Acts 24:24-26)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison. (Acts 24:27)

Porcius Festus, Governor of Judea (59-62 AD)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

6. When the new governor is instated, the Jews (who have no doubt been waiting two years for the chance to have Paul eliminated) open a new appeal and present their charges, with the hope that they can kill Paul during transport back to Jerusalem. Paul again pleads his case, and the charges against him cannot be proven. Nonetheless, Paul is concerned that the governor might adopt a politically expedient transport in order to wash his hands of the matter, so he appeals to Caesar. (Acts 25:1-11)

Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. 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.

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there.”

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. 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.

Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”

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?” (Acts 25:1-9)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

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. 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!”

After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!” (Acts 25:10-12)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

7. As Paul is awaiting transport to Rome to stand before Caesar, King Agrippa II and his wife show up (to greet the new governor of Judea) and have a chance to interview Paul. Paul gives Agrippa his entire testimony and the entirety of the gospel in Christ. (Acts 25:13-26:32) Paul's objective remains the same—to lead the rulers to faith in Christ.

A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. 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. When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned."

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

Herod Agrippa II, the last ruler of the Herodian dynasty

“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. 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. When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. 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. 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. 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.” (Acts 25:13-21)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.”

He replied, “Tomorrow you will hear him.”

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. 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. 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.” (Acts 25:22-26)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

“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. For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him.”

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently... (Acts 25:26-26:3)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

“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 then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But God has helped me to this very day; 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 Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:19-23)



To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "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. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." (Acts 26:24-29)

To Rome via Jerusalem (part 2)

The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”

Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.” (Acts 26:30-32)

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (Acts 9:15-16)

