

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Politics and The Gospel, Pt 3

Acts 25:1-12

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SermonAudio Blurb: Having been held captive for two years, Paul finds himself now under the scrutiny of the new Governor, Festus. This starts the whole investigation into charges against him all over and we again have the opportunity to see Paul's approach to the powers of government and this age as a man committed to Jesus Christ.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 25:1-12.
- B. We come again to the adventures and trials of Paul in Acts 25.
 - 1. I have taught about the value of writing materials and the care in writing. This comes into focus in this part of Acts.
 - 2. So why?
 - 3. I believe it is because this section is used by the Holy Spirit to prepare the reader to understand the reality of following Christ.
 - 4. Though the governing authorities exist and are ordained by God, they belong to this fallen, sinful age. As a result they are, with very few exceptions, somewhere between tolerant to outright hostile to the Christian faith.
 - a. This is because government almost always has a religion attached to it and that religion will eventually find itself at odds with the claims of Jesus Christ.
 - b. That religion might even appear to be "Christian" but it cannot and will not maintain that title over time.
 - (1) In 186 BC there was the suppression of the Dionysian religion resulting in arrests, executions and violence.
 - (2) In 64 AD it was Nero's persecution against the Christians. This was limited to the area of Rome.
 - (3) In 81 AD Domitian brought persecution against the Christians on charges of atheism because the Christians

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would not allow the inclusion of other gods and the imperial cult to be part of their lives.

- (4) In early 100's AD Trajan authorized the punishment of Christians if they refused to allow for other gods and worship in their lives.
- (5) In mid 200s AD Decius mandated that all inhabitants had to perform a public sacrifice to the traditional Roman gods and to the emperor and then obtain an official certificate showing they had done so..
- (6) In later part of 200's Valerian issued edict targeting pastors and then wealthy believers who would not sacrifice to the gods of Rome.

c. The hard reality is though the Christian can enjoy a level of peace, and should pursue that, it cannot sustain peace forever in this age.

- (1) First, because the Church is made up of actual believers and mere professors.
- (2) The second reason that peace as a believer is fleeting is that there is the constant encroachment of false religions from the outside.

C. I want to draw out more principles regarding a Christians stance toward the powers of this age.

- 1. We saw last week in chapter 24 a few principles so far:
 - a. Enemies of the Gospel will use governing authorities for the purpose of suppression.
 - b. Government leaders can only learn of the gospel through the faithful testimony of believers.
 - c. When you speak the gospel make sure that you are clear about what is the gospel and the consequences of rejection.
- 2. Today we will continue to draw out more principles as we follow the storyline before us.

II. Politics and The Gospel.

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- A. Our first principle is drawn out of vss 1-3 where we learn that we should never underestimate the depth of hatred for the gospel.
 - 1. Festus goes to Jerusalem only three days after taking over from Felix. This was not about Paul, but rather to show his respect that Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish world and to learn of what needs existed.
 - 2. These are the leaders of Judaism here. They were the ones who were to shepherd the people of God in faith and obedience. But here we see in living color how vile they were.
 - 3. So, never underestimate the depth of hatred for the gospel.
- B. The second principle today is that those of this age love the lie more than truth.
 - 1. Paul has done nothing wrong. The best they have been able to do is bring false charges and gather false witnesses to lie.
 - 2. When that failed they plot two years later to get the new governor to send Paul to them. But the goal is to murder him on the road in an ambush.
 - 3. We see also that after Festus returns to Caesarea he calls Paul to his tribunal (6).
 - 4. (7) the Jewish leaders then come down to try to get Paul released to them. But again, they bring many charges, all of them very serious against him. But once again, they have no proof.
 - 5. 2 Corinthians 11.

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- C. The third principle is that you don't have to give in to unrighteous demands.
 - 1. So the leaders are in Caesarea making false charges. What is Paul to do? Does he just sit quietly and say nothing? Does he lash out and attack them? Does he meet their lies with his own?
 - 2. No, he simply makes his own defense (8).
 - 3. Then Festus asks the key question that is going to create a situation where there is no turning back for Paul (9). Do you want to go back to Jerusalem?
 - 4. Vss 10-12 is a famous section for us.
 - 5. Never apologize for invoking what is your right.
 - 6. But also never be a jerk or violate the law because you believe you are being treated wrongly.
 - 7. But here is a key point: don't assume that if you act properly or you stay within your rights that everything will turn out ok. Most definitely don't assume this when it is an issue related to the Christian faith.
- D. The final principle for today is one that flows through this story. Never underestimate the power and beauty of a clear conscience.
 - 1. In Romans 2 we find that God has given all humans a conscience, a sense of knowledge of good and bad, right and wrong.
 - 2. A clear conscience leads one to humility rather than anger and bitterness.
 - 3. But a clear conscience also gives you a settled peace and conviction too. You are certain you are clean before the sight of God.
 - 4. A guilty conscience drives people to do many wicked or foolish things. In Proverbs 28:1 it says, "The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion."
 - 5. There is the searing of a conscience. Again it is Paul who describes this in 1 Timothy 4:2.

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6. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:18 to fight the good fight, the battle for people's souls, the battle of faith in Jesus alone. And the way to do this is by keeping faith and a good conscience.
- E. A clear conscience based off of a full trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and a knowledge that you seek to honor Him above all other things will make you stand fast in your day of troubles.

III. Conclusion.

- A. There we have it, four principles from Paul's life that we can use in our own life as we encounter accusations, hardships and troubles from this fallen age.
 1. First, never underestimate the depth of hatred for the gospel.
 2. Second, those of this age love the lie more than truth.
 3. Third, you don't have to give in to unrighteous demands.
 4. Fourth, never underestimate the power and beauty of a clear conscience.
- B. These all come from a heart that has been forgiven of God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- C. These arise from a heart that is determined to live in such a way that it glorifies God rather than makes us comfortable or safe. It is a life that has died to sin and is raised with Jesus Christ.

Benediction

May our gracious Father in heaven cause us to be found in Christ, clothed on in His righteousness which comes through faith from the hand of God. May we know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings as we become conformed to His death. Amen.