

Acts 25:1-27 “God’s Sovereignty and Trials”

Intro.

Subject: God’s sovereignty and Paul’s trials before Festus and Agrippa

Object: Trust the Sovereign God

Context: Paul stood trial before Roman Gov. Felix. He concluded that there was no evidence to convict, but wanting to please the Jews held Paul in custody for two years.

A. God’s Promises [Acts 9:15, 23:11]

1. Paul was commissioned to bear witness for Christ before the Gentiles, kings and the Jews [Ac. 9:15]. Luke’s record in Acts records the fulfillment of Christ’s promise as Paul bears witness before Roman governors Festus, Felix, & King Agrippa

2. But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.” [Ac.23:11]

Luke also records Christ’s promise to protect Paul and bring him to Rome to bear witness of the gospel and the fulfillment.

? What promises of God are encouraging to you in this season?

B. God’s Providence [1-27] God’s Promises shall be fulfilled

1. The trial before Governor Festus [1-12]

a. God protected Paul and guided him to Rome despite efforts to kill him

v.1-3 Festus was the newly appointed governor. History speaks highly of him as just and fair. He was an educated philosopher but did not believe in life after death. Went to Jerusalem to determine conditions in his new jurisdiction. Despite the passage of two years the Jewish leaders still want to kill Paul. They ask Festus to try the case in Jerusalem and they secretly plan to ambush and kill Paul on the way.

v.4-6 Festus invites the Jewish leaders to return to Caesarea the Roman seat of government in the region to bring charges against Paul. As soon as he returned to Caesarea reopens the trial [6].

v.7-8 The Jewish leaders brought many serious charges against Paul which they could not prove. Paul declared he was not guilty of any wrong against Jewish law, the temple, or Roman law.

v.9 Jewish leaders sought a change of venue to Jerusalem. They hoped to ambush & kill, or execute Paul under Jewish law for alleged defiling of temple.

v.10-12 Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar at Rome.

b. God will bring you to the promised destination if you are in Christ [**homing doves*]

? In what areas of your life do you feel challenged to trust God?

2. The trial before King Agrippa [13-27]

a. God fulfilled the promise that Paul would bear witness to a king

v.13 King Agrippa II great grandson of Herod the Great (Matt.2 infanticide), father Agrippa beheaded James (Ac.12) killed John the Baptist & mocked Jesus (judged by God Ac.12). Ruled northern Galilee. His wife Bernice was his beautiful ½ sister

v.14 Festus sought the counsel of Agrippa re Paul's case. Festus is new to the position and Agrippa is familiar with the customs of the Jews.

v.14-18 Festus assumed Paul was guilty of something but after hearing evidence concludes: no proof of insurrection against Rome or crime punishable by death.

v.19-20 The real cause of conflict was Paul's declaration re Jesus' resurrection.

v.21 Can't send to Caesar with no account of charges, no evidence, and no decision.

v.22 Agrippa is familiar with Judaism and curious about Paul's claims re Christ [@ 25 years since Jesus' death and resurrection].

v.23 contrast the grandeur & pageantry of robes, crowns, civil & military leaders, coastal amphitheatre vs Paul entering with iron chains on marble stone

24-27 No evidence of serious offense, but the Jews sought Paul's life. Needs to establish a record why the case is coming Caesar [v.25 Augustus = title, Nero was emperor at time. Festus will use the trial before Agrippa to prepare an official report.

b. The Roman governors and king concluded that Paul was not guilty: Felix Festus, and King Agrippa found no fault in Paul worthy of death & could have been set free had he not appealed to Caesar at Rome [26:32]

C. God's Peace: Paul learns to trust the Sovereign God

Since Paul is not guilty why does God allow him to suffer imprisonment & hardship since he is genuinely seeking to live for God? *If someone asked you, "Why does God allow hardship if He is good, and suffering people are seeking to please Him?" How would you respond?* [Paul, Job, Joseph].

1. Faith based on man's performance: Paul as a Pharisee had conditioned God's blessings on his performance of the law. There is no peace in faith based on your performance since you are never sure if good enough.

2. Faith based Christ's performance [death and resurrection] [25:19] Paul understood that he was right with God because of what Jesus did on the cross as proven by the resurrection. Yet our tendency is to assume that if we seek Christ obey and perform that God will bless us in this life and we should not suffer hardship.

3. Faith based on trust in God's goodness and promises despite circumstances: Mature faith knows that God is good based on the cross grace and primarily spiritual blessings. It accepts that God is Sovereign and can do however He pleases [Ps.115:3] and trusts God's promises.

a. God *allows* suffering to develop Christ-like character, encourage dependence upon Him, and to reveal His glory when we respond in faith.

i. Radically different way to deal with suffering than the world

ii. God does not owe me an explanation. I can trust that He has an infinite perspective and is working good despite what appears to be finite suffering to me.

Rom. 8:28

Ph.4:10-13

? How have you grown in your faith in the midst of trials?

Conclusion/communion: encourage to trust the Sovereign God

Discussion Qs

- 1. What promises of God are encouraging to you in this season?**
- 2. In what areas of your life do you feel challenged to trust God?**
- 3. If someone asked you, “Why does God allow hardship if He is good, and the suffering people are seeking to please Him?” How would you respond?**
- 4. How have you grown in your faith in the midst of trials?**