

Acts

Part 59 – “I do not seek to escape death”

Acts 25:1-12

The arrival of Festus, the new governor in Caesarea, raised the possibility that some of the unresolved cases left behind by the corrupt Felix would finally receive closure. Festus wasted no time in getting right to work. Josephus records that Festus had a brief tenure (59-62 AD) and that he governed fairly. In handling Paul's case, he sought to balance the demands of the religious leaders in Jerusalem with that which Roman law required for one of its citizens.

This passage has many things in common with the previous two court proceedings recorded by Luke: a) Paul's life is threatened. b) False accusations are made against him. c) Paul argues in his own defense. It must be kept in mind that Paul has been held in Caesarea for some two years at this point. How great must the stress upon this man have been! For years he had born a variety of physical and emotional suffering which few if any of us can understand. And yet for the sake of Christ and the salvation of sinners Paul endured his suffering with patience entrusting himself fully to the God whose ways may always be trusted.



Main Idea: Our zeal for the salvation of sinners must be of greater value to us than even our own lives.

Vs. 1 – A courtesy call, but an opportunity for the Jews to bring up the case they wanted resolved.

Vv. 2-3 – The request from the Jewish leaders to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem was a ruse to assassinate him. Rather than being complicit in an assassination plot the religious leaders are now the ones who design the plot. Even after two years these men had not forgotten nor had they forsaken their plans to eliminate Paul.

Vv. 4-5 – Despite his desire to make them happy, Festus was not willing to alter procedure at the request of the Jews.

Vs. 7 – They had difficulty proving their charges in the first place; the fact that the case is now two years old didn't make it any easier.

Vs. 9 – Keeping the Jews at peace was one of Festus' chief assignments. Anything that might be done to ingratiate himself with them — especially in a matter as inconsequential as this must have appeared to him (cf. 15:18-19) — was worth doing.

Vs. 10 – Paul makes the bold assertion that his innocence is readily apparent to Festus.

Vs. 11 – Paul understood the change in venue as tantamount to handing him over to the Jews, perhaps Festus, according to a Roman custom, had actually proposed putting some members of the Sanhedrin on his advisory council. The appeal to Caesar was a right of Roman citizens. Paul did not take the Lord's previous assurance that he would see Rome as a reason to put his head in the lion's mouth. He took the prudent course to protect himself in the assurance that he was far more likely to get justice from a Roman court than a Jewish one.

What can we learn from Paul about bearing up under the kind of suffering that comes from faithfulness to Christ?

1. Do not despise the ways of God.

God's path for Paul was one marked by much pain. After years of faithfully planting churches and risking his life for the salvation of sinners Paul is imprisoned by Rome and under constant threat from his own people. He has been slandered in court proceedings by malicious men. And yet we never find Paul lodging protests against God as though the Lord has somehow dealt unfairly with him.

a.) Know why you are here.

b.) Believe that God knows what he is doing.

*** 1 Peter 2:21-23**

2. Bear suffering with patience.

Paul understood that his sufferings were part of God's plan to conform him to Christ. In fact he would write of his own desire for this end in a letter he wrote during this period of imprisonment: "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (**Philippians 3:7-8**).

*** Psalm 109:1-4**

3. Do not demand vindication.

Throughout his ministry Paul faced slanderous accusations. This final section of Acts records the repeated lies told against him by his enemies. Appropriately, Paul asserted his innocence in response to those false charges. But he was never vindicated in a human court. How did he remain on task under such a weight of injustice?

a.) Care more about the salvation of sinners than your reputation.

b.) Care more about the vindication of Jesus than your own.

c.) Look to Jesus.

*** Romans 8:33-34**

*** Colossians 3:1-3**