

Paul Before Festus, Part 1

Scripture: Acts 25:1–7

Code: 1794

INTRODUCTION

A. The Position

Acts 25 describes the life of the apostle Paul as a prisoner. He was a prisoner first in Jerusalem, then in Caesarea, and finally in Rome, where tradition suggests he was executed. Paul had completed the missionary journeys spoken of in the biblical account, although there may have been a period of time after Paul's initial imprisonment in Rome where he was able to do some missionary work, possibly in Spain.

The Holy Spirit has chosen to detail in great length the trials and defenses of the apostle Paul. But one cannot help from wondering why Acts 21-28 is so heavily saturated with the defenses Paul made before the various judgment seats of men.

There is a noticeable lack of any doctrine in this section of Scripture, although there is some at the end of Acts 28 in verses 23-31. There is no great cataclysmic salvation story, or church founded, nor any great missionary enterprise embarked upon. There is only one allusion to the gospel in Acts 25:19. Acts 21-28 is written in historical, narrative style characteristic of the book of Acts. In studying this passage, I asked myself, "Why is God here detailing accusations, court procedures, and defenses as opposed to doctrinal issues?" Then I realized that Paul had faced a strategic point in his life.

B. The Phases

1. The mob in Jerusalem

The mob in Jerusalem tried to kill Paul, so the Romans rescued him and allowed him to give his first defense to the Jewish crowd that tried to kill him (Acts 22).

2. The mayhem in the Sanhedrin

The Romans didn't know what to do with Paul so they decided to try him in front of the Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish high court. Paul gave his second defense to the Sanhedrin and left them in chaos, arguing with each other (Acts 23:6-7).

3. The meeting in Caesarea

The Romans decided that Paul should be taken to Caesarea and tried before Felix, who was then governor of the Roman province of Judea. Paul was given an opportunity to bring the third phase of

his defense (Acts 24).

4. The matter before Festus

We have already seen accusations against Paul three times and yet the Holy Spirit describes the same accusations in chapter 25 as Paul is led before Festus, the new governor who replaced Felix.

5. The message before Agrippa

Paul also gave his defense before King Herod Agrippa II (Acts 26). Throughout the narrative of Acts 21-28, Paul was defending himself in the various trials against him.

C. The Principles

As you look at this portion of the book of Acts, you might be confused about the intent of the Holy Spirit. If you read this portion of Scripture casually, you would miss the underlying principles. It is like a carrot: The good part is hidden underneath the surface. We are going to study some profound principles that are underneath the surface of this passage. The text isn't any less important just because the truth is underneath and the illustration on top. What are the principles in Acts 25:1- 12?

1. The power of a blameless life

One of the things we see again and again in the life of the apostle Paul is that each time he was tried before a human court, he was always rendered innocent. The best courts in the world acquitted him of any crime. That shows the tremendous power of a blameless Christian testimony. The Jewish leaders tried to convict him of wrongdoing, but could not find one thing to accuse him of. His innocence stood as a tremendous rebuke of their own sin.

2. The hatred of religious people toward Christianity

It is amazing that the most volatile hostility in the world toward Christianity comes from religious people. The reason is that Satan is the master of all religion. Satan is fighting against God and Christ and is the one who developed all systems of religion outside of Christianity. All counterfeit religious systems are spawned by Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). All false religions fight the truth.

Historically, the greatest persecutors of Christianity have been religious people. Don't expect religious people to be tolerant of Christianity. Satan is the head of all false religion and is absolutely intolerant toward Christ and Christianity.

3. The power of sin

When someone habitually sins, he becomes a captive to his sin. The habit is almost unbreakable. That is what Paul meant when he talked about being a slave to sin (Rom. 6:17).

4. The pattern of persecution from the world

Spirit filled, effective Christians always create problems in the world. That is why the world persecutes Christianity. When a person lives a godly life it shows the world its sin.

5. The courage of a committed Christian

One of the lost virtues for many Christians is courage. It is the external reality of an internal faith. Courage is the legitimizing of my faith, because if I really believe God, I will step out in faith. Courage is the response to faith. Paul showed unbelievable courage because he believed God.

6. The exoneration of Christianity

True Christianity forever stands innocent in the face of an accusing world. One of the early criticisms of Christianity was that it was attempting to overthrow the existing governments. That is why in the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit records the trials of Christians before the Roman world to show that they are innocent and law abiding. That is important for the world to know. Unfortunately, some of Christendom through the centuries has become largely political, as in Ireland today, and is a defamation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

7. The impact of the totally committed life

Many have wondered what one man alone could possibly do to effect the world. But if you look at the life of the apostle Paul long enough, you will see what one person can do. He affected people from the simplest man on the street to the very leaders of Rome. It is amazing to see the impact of one man's totally dedicated life.

8. The providence of God

The providence of God is the marvelous way in which God works out all human circumstances to achieve His own results.

9. The Christian's attitude toward government

10. The Christian's attitude toward persecution

LESSON

Acts 25:1-12 describes the defense of Paul before Festus. The former governor, Felix, had been assigned by the Roman government to rule over the Jewish people, but had been recalled to Rome because of poor leadership. Felix was unfit in his position as governor as were the earlier governors before him. He, like Pontius Pilate before him, had been forced to make some decisions that were favorable to the Jewish leaders. According to historians, Felix was so inept that the whole province of Judea was in an uproar. Riots were occurring repeatedly with villages being burned, looted, and plundered. The Jews wanted to get rid of Felix and consequently, Rome recalled him in dishonor in A.D. 59 and replaced him with Porcius Festus. This is indicated in Acts 24:27: "After two years [two years into Paul's imprisonment] Porcius Festus came into Felix's place."

Felix left Paul in prison because he wanted to pacify the Jewish leaders although Paul had never been accused of anything. Festus inherited not only the political problems of Felix's regime but the

prisoner of Felix as well. Historians do not record much about Festus other than that he was a good administrator. Josephus, probably the most informed and widely read historian of that period of history, implied that Festus was better than Felix and Albinus, who followed Festus as governor (Antiquities 20.8.9--20.9.2). Festus died after only two years in office and unlike Felix, dealt with things as swiftly as possible. The account of his dealings with the apostle Paul are recorded in Acts 25:1-12.

I. THE ASSASSINATION PLOTTED (vv. 1-5)

A. The Unfortunate Legacy (v. 1)

"Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem."

Festus has to be pitied somewhat because his predecessors' incompetency left him a legacy of profound hate from the Jewish people, who hated all their oppressors. The incompetency of the previous governors didn't help matters at all. Festus arrived on the scene in Caesarea, which was the Roman headquarters. The Romans had taken over the palace of Herod the Great and turned it into the Roman praetorium, where the governor lived and ruled. He spent three days there getting things organized and becoming oriented to his surroundings.

1. The ascension

After a brief three days in Caesarea, Festus recognized the need to "ascend" to Jerusalem. In the land of Palestine you were always "ascending" to Jerusalem because its elevation was so great. Festus did that because he knew the first thing he had to do in office was to conciliate the Jewish population.

2. The animosity

The animosity toward Felix and the Roman empire was so extensive and hostile that Festus went to Jerusalem, the national center of Israel, to acquaint himself with the Sanhedrin. He knew he had to become well aware of the customs and politics in the situation in which he has been thrust. He knew those contacts were important, so he went to Jerusalem to establish a warm, working relationship between himself and the Sanhedrin.

a) Against Pilate

The Romans were afraid of the Jews. The previous Roman governors had been severely scorned by the Jewish leaders who were masters at blackmail. They blackmailed Pilate into crucifying Jesus Christ. The first thing Pilate did when he arrived in Judea was ride into Jerusalem with idols all over his armor, intending to place them all over the area. They were idols in the image of Caesar which made the Jews extremely upset. He refused to take the idols down so the Jewish leaders reported him to Rome, who ordered him to take them down.

From the beginning of his reign, Pilate was under the thumbs of the Jewish leaders. When he

threatened to kill them, they called his bluff and he backed down. When it came time to crucify Jesus Christ, they had Pilate right where they wanted him. If he failed to do what they wanted, they would report him to Rome again and his reign would be over. They had Pilate cornered from the time he arrived.

b) Against Felix

The Jewish leaders had Felix in the same situation. He was afraid to do what was right concerning the apostle Paul because if he had, they would have been upset and would have reported him to Rome. Felix was not able to handle them.

c

) Against Antiochus Epiphanes

The Romans could look back into Jewish history and see the Jews' animosity toward their oppressors. If you study the intertestamental period, the four-hundred-year period between the Old and New Testaments, you'll see that Israel was dominated largely by Syria. The Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes, who liked to call himself Theos Epiphanes, which means "God manifest," was enamored with Greek culture and tried to impose it on the Jews. However, the Jews called him Epimanes, which means "the maniac." They finally revolted, led by Judas Maccabaeus and his sons, and started a revolution that ultimately led to liberation from Syrian rule.

The Romans knew the revolutionary power the Jews had and if they could ever mount a charge, the Roman empire would be in a battle. Every Roman governor was walking a tightrope. When Festus arrived, he knew it was strategic to conciliate the Jewish leaders and at the same time not get himself under their thumb. He immediately went to Jerusalem to work on this conciliation.

B. The Unwise Leadership (vv. 2-3)

"Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired a favor against him, that he would send him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him."

1. The request motivated by their hatred

The first order of business for the leaders was to discuss with Festus the situation of the apostle Paul. The term "the chief of the Jews," refers to the Sanhedrin, which consisted of the high priest, chief priests, elders, and scribes. There were seventy-one in all.

Verse 2 says they "informed him against Paul." That's the first thing they said to the new governor. Over two years had past in Paul's imprisonment and the first thing they said to Festus had to do with Paul. That question had been burning in their minds for over two years.

Verse 2 ends by saying they "besought him." Why did they beseech him? "They desired a favor against him" (v. 3). The one thing the Jewish leaders did not want in Paul's case was justice. They wanted a favor because justice would have released him. The leaders requested that Festus "send him to Jerusalem" (v. 3). Initially, that request sounds very innocent. But they were planning to lay "wait in the way to kill him" (v. 3). It was a planned ambush. The Jews were trying to take advantage of the new governor. They knew Festus realized the mistakes Felix had made and he wanted to appease them. They were ready to trap Festus from the very beginning of his rule.

The Sanhedrin operated in a very deceptive way. If the plot to execute Paul was carried out and they later wanted to rid themselves of Festus, they could report to Rome that he should be replaced because he was @responsible for the death of an innocent man. It is amazing to note that Paul has been in prison for two years and yet they were still terrified about anyone who preached Christ. There is little doubt that word of Paul's present ministry came to Jerusalem from Caesarea. Paul must have taught and ministered quite extensively. The word around Jerusalem must have been how Paul was doing so well living in the Caesarean palace. The possibility of a new governor brought with it the possibility of release, but the Jews were afraid of that.

2. The reasons motivating their hatred

a) The hatred of religious people toward Christianity

It is amazing that the religious leaders of Paul's time were the great antagonists to Christianity. They claimed to love God and yet had murder on their minds. Religion is very mild until it comes in conflict with the truth. The real struggle is not false religion fighting between themselves but all the false systems against the truth. The only desire of the religious leaders was a favor from the governor, not justice. They were hoping that the new governor's inexperience would play a part in the execution of Paul.

(1) The origin of false religion

Whenever you see hatred like that, it is of Satanic origin. The reason religious people hate the truth is that they are in Satan's false religious system. His system is against Christ. The Jewish leaders despised Paul because he identified himself with Jesus Christ not because he was dishonoring the Jewish people. He was once one of them--chosen for their own court, a leader of the Christian persecution, and a student of the great rabbi Gamaliel. But when he became identified with Jesus Christ they hated him, not for his sake but for Christ's sake. The hatred of so-called religious people is always toward the truth.

(2) The origin of false doctrine

If you read through the New Testament you will find that the greatest persecution comes from false teachers against the truth. False teachers slander the truth, as Paul told Timothy (1 Tim. 1:6-7).

(a) John 15:18-25--Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."

If you were to give a definition of the word world [Gk., kosmos], what would you say? Most would think immediately of Satan's evil system. But when you think of the world as Satan's evil system, don't just think of bars, crime, prostitution, and immorality; think primarily of religion. That is the pinnacle of Satan's system. The Bible says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Most of the hatred toward Jesus Christ does not come from atheism, but Judaism and other religions. The part of the world that hated Christ was not the prostitutes or criminals but religious leaders. If you are a part of the world, the people of the world will love you (v. 19). If you are a part of the "big beer brotherhood," everyone is your buddy. All you have to do is drink beer and you are a part of the brotherhood. You can get drunk like everyone else and be one of the boys. The implication is if

you don't drink beer you're out of it.

The world has ways of recognizing its own. The world hates us because of Christ (v. 19). The world may hate you because of something other than Christ, but the hatred Christ is talking about in verses 18- 25 is the world's animosity toward the truth of Jesus Christ. And the only way that kind of persecution can happen is when you legitimately live a godly life. All religious people claim to know God, but they don't if they don't know Christ (vv. 20-21). That is why people despise Christ and all who follow Him.

(b) John 16:9--The great and climactic sin of John 15:22 is explained in John 16:9, which says the Holy Spirit will convict worldly people of sin, "because they believe not". If Jesus had never come and confronted sinners, He would not have unmasked the truth that they were not believers. John 15:24 describes the sin of rejecting the full revelation of Christ. Christ was saying, "I manifested Myself and made people responsible for their sin. I have shown them to be unbelievers by their rejection of the truth." He said at the end of verse 25 that they hated Him without a cause because of their sin. The world hates people who stand in opposition to Christ.

(3) The origin of false teachers

b) The power of a blameless Life

Your life should be a rebuke to the world. A friend told me once he shared Christ with a man so frequently and showed such concern that the man became angry with him and wouldn't speak to him for years. However the wife of that man received Jesus Christ just from the testimony of my friend's witness. She saw how angry her husband became, so she had to investigate the claims of Christ. She began to read the Bible, and received Christ. Now they're praying for her husband.

Aristeides the Just

Aristeides was a man who lived in Athens during the fifth century B.C. He was called "the Just." The Greek word for just means "righteous." He was such a good man that people gave him the name, Aristeides the Just. The people of Athens, along with the council of Athens voted to have him banished from Athens. When one of the citizens was asked why he had voted for the banishment, he replied, "Because I am tired of hearing him referred to as "the Just"! He could not stand for anyone who was upright. It is dangerous to live a godly life in an ungodly system.

A godly life stands as a conscience to the watching world, pricking its conscience. The world will be a terrible place during the tribulation period because the conscience of the world (Christians) will be taken in the rapture, and all hell will break loose. The convicting power of a blameless life can be seen in Acts 25:2 where for two years the Jewish leaders hated Paul and their bitterness was like venom, eating away their hearts. That hatred was to be meted out against the apostle Paul.

c) The power of sin

There is another principle here and it is that sin enslaves people to its power. For two years the Jews had been bound by sin in thinking how to destroy the apostle Paul. The sad thing about the deceitfulness of sin is that if you are an unbeliever, you think you're free but you're really enslaved.

The Soaring Eagle

There is an old story of an eagle that once soared beautifully across the sky. It continued flying until an observer watched it get lower and lower until finally its wings began to fold and flap like a sparrow suddenly smashing into the side of a cliff. The man walked over and picked it up and there clutching its breast was a rodent that had sucked all its blood. That is what sin is like. We think we are getting away with our sin until little by little the life is being drained out of us. Sin enslaves the human heart.

Paul had been in jail for two years and instead of the Jewish leaders being free to love, they were slaves to hate. As medical doctor S. I. McMillan has said, "It's not what you eat--it's what eats you" (None of These Diseases, [Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1984] p. 105). One of the greatest evils is hate. You will self-destruct if you continue to feel hatred or bitterness toward someone.

i) Romans 6:16--Paul said, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" If you say yes to sin, you become the slave of sin.

ii) Genesis 4:5-7--This is what hate did to Cain: "Unto Cain and to his offering he [God] had not respect. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou angry? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."

iii) Genesis 27:41--Esau is another example of someone whom hate drove his entire life. The Scripture says, "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother, Jacob."

iv) Genesis 37:8--"His [Joseph's] brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed... have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words." Hate caused the sons of Jacob to sell their brother Joseph into slavery.

v) 1 Samuel 18:7-9--"The women spoke to one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what he have more, but the kingdom? And Saul watched enviously David, from that day and onward." Hated toward David ultimately drove Saul to kill himself.

vi) 2 Samuel 13:22, 28--Hate led Absalom to kill his brother Amnon. Scripture says, "Absalom spoke unto his brother, Amnon, neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister, Tamar.... Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye, now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not. Have not I commanded you? Be courageous, and be valiant.

Sin is the cruel master of slavery. What starts out as a simple activity becomes a habit that produces slavery. That is the deceitfulness of sin. The only one who can break the power of sin is Jesus Christ. There is no human resource that can handle this kind of enslavement. When you give your life to Jesus Christ, sin's power is broken. Those who have known only hatred before are now able to love.

C. The Unforeseen Limitation (vv. 4-5)

"But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly for there. Let them, therefore, said he, who among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him."

1. The proposal

It might seem initially a fair request to ask Festus to take Paul to Jerusalem for a trial. But Festus was an intelligent man and might have suspected some wrong motives on the part of the Jewish leaders. He informed them that he intended to leave Paul in Caesarea and try his case there. If any accusation was to be made, it was to be made in Caesarea. Festus probably had an instinct for justice by the very fact of his position. Also, history implies he had a commendable character.

When you begin to look at the evidence surrounding the trial, it is strange that Festus didn't take Paul to Jerusalem. It seemed a rather insignificant request. Festus was probably aware of Jewish procedure and wanted to make friends with the Jewish leaders. He didn't know Paul personally, so his reputation as a subversive hadn't had its full impact on Festus. All these factors contributed in Paul staying at Caesarea.

2. The plan

There is another reason for Festus not taking Paul to Jerusalem: the providence of God.

a

) The providence of God

God ordains the attitudes and actions of men to bring about His own end. Even in government, God is in sovereign control. Some may wonder why God does what He does in certain situations but you can still trust Him. If you do not understand what God is doing, attribute it to your ignorance and not His ineptitude! People are so anxious about the direction of the world, but God is in control. I never worry about politics, the economy, the world, because I trust in the God who is in control of the world. There are many passages in Scripture that show God is in control of the world.

(1) John 19:10-11--Pilate said to Jesus, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Pilate thought he was running the show but he wasn't--God was.

(2) Acts 2:22-23--The apostle Peter said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." God is in complete control.

(3) John 7:30--The religious leaders sought to take Jesus, "but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." God was timing things perfectly.

(4) Luke 22:53--Jesus said, "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." The Jewish leaders had tried to catch Jesus but couldn't. He would pass through their midst, and now in effect says, "Now you may take Me." God ordained the entire event.

(5) Genesis 45:7-8--Joseph said to his brothers, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt". The brothers of Joseph sold him into slavery in Egypt where he later became a ruler. Who really put Joseph in Egypt? It was not his brothers, but God. Do you know what would have happened if Joseph had never gotten to Egypt? All his brothers might have died in the famine that came, and the Messianic line would have been obliterated. God preserved the Messianic line by sending Joseph in advance to Egypt to make sure that when the famine came, Joseph would have

Egypt stocked with enough extra wheat to feed his family. That is God's providence. God uses natural circumstances to effect His supernatural desires.

(6) Daniel 4:17--King Nebuchadnezzar said of Babylon, "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." Nebuchadnezzar had the idea that he was the greatest ruler, but a vision came that Babylon would fall to the Medes and the Persians, who would be followed by the Greeks, and finally by the Romans. These were the four great world empires. But to whomever is in charge verse 17 says, "That the living may know that the Most High [God] ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Do you know who is running the politics of the United States of America behind the scenes, to affect His own will, even through the evil of men? God. The powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1). We may not always understand what God is doing but we can trust Him.

Daniel 4:25 says, "Till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Verse 32 says the same thing: "Until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." If God said something once, it's important; but if God said something three times, you had better remember it! Verse 35 says "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

Daniel 5:21 says, "Till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointed over it whomsoever he will." Five times, God rules the kingdoms of men. That is the greatest political fact in existence. God is ruling and in control of destiny. Festus didn't do what he wanted because God was in control, and if Paul had gone to Jerusalem, there would have been an ambush and Paul would have been killed. God made a promise to Paul that he would bear witness to Christ in Rome (Acts 23:11).

b) The place of defense

Verse 5 says, "Let them, therefore, said he, who among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him." The phrase "who among you are able," is dunatai in the Greek text and refers to those men who are powerful or influential in their position. Festus was asking the powerful Jewish men of the Sanhedrin to come down to Caesarea and accuse Paul there, and see if there is any wickedness in him.

II. THE ACCUSATION PRESENTED (vv. 6-7)

"When he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day, sitting on the judgement seat, commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews who came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul."

A. The Accusations

1. Sedition

Acts 24:5-6 describes the accusations brought against Paul two years earlier. The first accusation was that Paul was a "pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the

world." They claimed he was stirring up Jewish revolution against Rome, which is the crime of insurrection.

2. Sectarianism

The second accusation brought against Paul in Acts 25:5 is that he was "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." This means they thought Paul was not only a political activist, but also a heretic as well.

3. Sacrilege

In Acts 24:6 Paul was accused of going "about to profane the temple." Paul was not only accused of being a political activist and a heretic, but also sacrilegious by abandoning Judaism.

B. The Applications

According to the Jewish leaders, Paul had offended Rome, Israel, and God. But all three accusations were lies. I trust this lesson shows you the power of a totally dedicated life--the life of the apostle Paul and that God will use the principles that we've studied to cause you to glorify Him.

Focusing on the Facts

1. How many defenses did Paul make? Describe the phases of his trials, beginning at Jerusalem.
2. What is the book of Acts dealing with in chapters 21-28?
3. Name the principles taught in Acts 25:1-12.
4. What is the power of a blameless life?
5. Describe the principle of the hatred of religious people toward Christianity.
6. What does it mean to be a slave to sin?
7. One of the lost virtues for many Christians is _____ .
8. Describe the principle of the exoneration of Christianity.
9. What can be the impact of one man's totally committed life?
10. What is meant by the providence of God?
11. What was the condition of the government Festus inherited from Felix?

12. What was the first order of business for Festus?
13. What was the first order of business for the Sanhedrin?
14. What was the underlying motive of the Sanhedrin in wanting Paul's trial in Jerusalem?
15. Who is the origin of all false systems of religion?
16. A godly life stands as a _____ to the watching world.
17. What is one of the greatest evils, according to page 10?
18. What was the unforeseen limitation not expected by the Jewish leaders?
19. Who is in control of all governments of the world. Support your answer with Scripture?
20. What were the three things Paul was accused of in his trial?

Pondering the Principles

1. Several principles were brought out in the text of Acts 25:1-7, one of which was the hatred of religious people toward Christianity. Can you see any evidence of hatred by others toward you because you are a Christian? If not, what is hindering you from being salt and light in your workplace or community (Matt. 5:13-16)? Read John 15:18-24 and ask God to allow you the joyous opportunity of suffering for Christ's sake. Take each verse of this passage once a day for seven days and thank God for the opportunity to suffer for Christ.
2. Another principle we studied was the power of a blameless life. Do you have a blameless Christian testimony with those around you? Is it evident to everyone you come in contact with that you are a Christian and that you live a life that rebukes the world of its sin? If that is not the pattern of your life, ask God to make you the kind of person that lives a consistent Christian testimony. Memorize Colossians 3:1-4 and strive to make it the pattern of your life.
3. There are several reasons Festus did not take Paul to Jerusalem to be tried, but the overarching reason is the principle of God's providence. God ordains the attitudes and actions of men to bring about His own end, yet man is still responsible for the choices he makes. Do you trust the sovereign God for what He is doing in your life? Are you being responsible in making godly decisions? Reread the account of Joseph in Genesis (which starts in chapter 37) and ask God to make your responses to his will like the responses by Joseph (45:7-8).

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