

Paul Before Festus, Part 2: The Power of a Dedicated Life

Scripture: Acts 25:7–12

Code: 1795

REVIEW

Acts 25:1-12 describe the apostle Paul's trial before Festus. The book of Acts contains many principles that are not obvious but under the surface of the text. In a book of the Bible that contains historical narrative, most of the doctrine is implied or illustrated. An example is this portion of the book of Acts, where there is no particular statement regarding any doctrine and yet there are several principles that can be seen in this passage.

In the last chapter we saw ten principles that come from the passage without specifically being stated, yet they are implied or illustrated.

A. The Power of a Blameless Life

B. The Hatred of Religious People Toward Christianity

C. The Power of Sin

D. The Pattern of Persecution from the World

E. The Courage of a Committed Christian

F. The Exoneration of Christianity

G. The Impact of the Totally Committed Life

H. The Providence of God

None of these principles are new in Scripture. They are all stated in various portions of the book of Acts and it is as if the Holy Spirit puts this narrative in Acts 25 as a reminder. Second Peter 1:12 says, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth." The Holy Spirit wants to remind the reader of the book of Acts about these principles. They are summed up in Acts 25:1-12.

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

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

A. The Unfortunate Legacy (v. 1)

The apostle Paul had been accused by the Jewish leaders of three things: sedition--committing crimes against Rome, sectarianism-- being a heretic, and sacrilege--blaspheming God by desecrating the Temple. Those accusations were all without evidence however, yet were made nonetheless. As a result, Paul found himself before the governor, Felix, to be tried. Felix knew Paul was innocent, but he did not want to upset the Jewish leaders, who wanted him dead. As a result, Felix kept him in prison for two years. At the end of that time, Felix was removed from his assignment in disgrace and taken back to Rome and a new man, Festus, was put in his place.

As Acts 25 opens, Festus arrives in Caesarea to take over his responsibility. Caesarea was the location of the head of the Roman government in Judea. He performed some business there for three days and then headed for Jerusalem. Festus knew it was important for him to establish

relationships with the Jewish people. He also knew that relationships had been very shaky with Felix, and it was important to form a smooth working relationship in the very beginning of his rule. The first item the Jewish leaders brought up when Festus arrived was the apostle Paul. He had already been a prisoner for two years and they had a deep hatred for him caused them to want Paul dead. They spoke to a naive and uninformed Festus and asked him to bring Paul to Jerusalem. They really wanted to ambush Paul on the way. But Festus refused, saying, "Let them, therefore...who among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him" (v. 5).

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

1. The real request

2. The real reason

a) The hatred of religious people toward Christianity The first principle in Acts 25:1-12 is the hatred of religious people toward Christianity. The people who were antagonistic toward Paul were not Christians, but those who were just outwardly religious.(1) The origin of false religion The persecution that comes against true religion most often comes from those in false religions. It is when false religion rears its ugly head that it begins to abuse the truth. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) and propagates all systems of false religion in antagonism toward true Christianity. The most obvious enemy of Christ is false religion. Throughout the book of Acts it is the Jewish religious leaders who persecute Christ's followers. Persecution always comes as the result of a religious issue. Religion is always the persecutor of Christianity. Satan opposes true religion by setting up false religions and bringing unbelievers into his system in opposition to the truth. That is why any notion of an ecumenical movement is ridiculous because then you have false religions trying to unite with the truth. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30). Christianity is a rebuke to all other religions in the world, and as Christians, we cannot accommodate them. There can be no fellowship with those in opposition to Christianity.(2) The origin of false doctrine (3) The origin of false teachers Second Peter 2:1-2 says, "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall evil be spoken of." Throughout the history of Israel, you will find that the biggest problem the Jewish people ever had was their involvement with pagan religions. They were always drifting into all sorts of idolatry, including Baal worship. It was no different in Peter's day (2 Pet. 2:1-2). False teachers will always speak evil of the truth. The only way Christianity will ever get along with false religion is for false religions to abandon their evil and follow the truth. Christianity always stands isolated because all systems of religion in the world are against Christ. Someone might say, "Well, they don't seem to be." That is the point. They secretly bring in destructive heresies that are not always obvious. Some religions are violently anti-Christ; others are more subtle. Think of the church that follows Jesus as a moral teacher but certainly not as God in human flesh. There is no way Christians can ever accommodate people in false religious systems. They must be confronted.b) The power of a blameless life (see p. x)c) The power of sin The religious leaders in Israel didn't have to deal with the apostle Paul for two years because of his imprisonment, yet their hatred for him grew. You would think in two years they would have forgotten about him, but when Festus arrived, the first thing they said to him concerned Paul (v. 2). They wanted him dead so they asked Festus to send him to Jerusalem so they could ambush him on the way. That kind of attitude says a lot about hatred. Sin drives itself deep into the human heart and stays there only to be released by the Lord Jesus Christ.(1) John 8:30-32--The Scriptures say, "As he spoke these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jesus in effect was saying, "I'm glad you believe in me but the proof of true faith is if you continue in My Word. If you're truly saved, the truth will make you free." By saying that, Jesus implied that the Jews were not free

but slaves to sin. The Jewish leaders didn't like that and said, "We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (v. 33). They thought since they were of Jewish heritage, they were absolutely free. They had forgotten about the Egyptians, Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Syrians, Grecians, and Romans. They had been in bondage to many nations. "Jesus answered them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (v. 34). Sin is slavery that binds the soul. The Greek word for "servant" is doulos, meaning "bondslave." The only way you could cease being a bondslave was to die (Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, vol. 3 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], p. 45). Our Lord said sin is bondage.(2) Titus 3:3--Paul said, "We ourselves also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Sinners are called douloi, or bondslaves to lust.(3) Romans 6:19--Paul also said, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity." Sin captures a man. He is not free but a slave. The only release from the slavery is death. It is wonderful to realize that as a believer, you have been crucified with Jesus Christ, freed from death, and risen with Him in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:3- 7). You have become a doulos to a new Master. You do not serve sin but Jesus Himself. You are still a bondslave, but now you are a bondslave to Jesus Christ. Being a bondslave to Christ is better than being a slave to sin. It is sad that the Jewish leaders would allow two years to elapse and be destroyed on the inside by their hatred. Paul, on the other hand, loved them.

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

1. The proposal

2. The plan

a) The providence of God In spite of what seemed to be the normal course of events, God was ordering the entire sequence of Paul's trials. When the Jewish leaders wanted Festus to take Paul up to Jerusalem, he refused. That was very strange because Festus was trying to win the Jews over. He was trying to influence them and establish a base of operation. But instead of saying yes to their request, Festus said no. There wasn't any logical reason to say no, other than the fact that God was in control. Lamentations 3:37-38 says, "Who is he who saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?" It is clear in the Word of God that nothing happens for good or evil unless it is in the framework of God's allowance. Festus didn't realize it, but he was moving right along the divine timetable, and his own attitudes fitted the consistency of the will of God. God controls the destiny of every man.b) The place of defense

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

"And 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, which they could not prove."

A. The Accusations

1. Sedition

2. Sectarianism

3. Sacrilege

B. The Application

The best original manuscripts render verse 6 as saying, "When he had tarried among them more than eight or ten days." So in the space of eight or ten days, Festus had made some contacts with the Jewish leaders and established relationships with the high priest and the Sanhedrin. When he went back down to Caesarea, he dealt with Paul the very next day. The accusers came from

Jerusalem ready to present their case but all their complaints were without evidence. The kind of accusations that the Jewish leaders presented against Paul are typical of the persecution that comes from the world.

1. False persecution

In Matthew 5:11 Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Jesus was saying, "It isn't you they hate, it's Me.

2. Faulty persecution

If a Christian receives the rebuke of the world as Paul received it, it will not be because he deserves it, but because of his vibrant testimony for Christ. His life should be lived in such a way that any accusations are false. And the only reason the world is bringing accusations is that they cannot tolerate the Christ in us. When we live our lives that way, the world will take notice.

LESSON

III. THE ABSENCE OF PROOF (vv. 7-11)

"And when he was come, the Jews who came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended in anything at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged; to the Jews have I have done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things of which these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar."

A. The Lack of Evidence

According to Scripture, the accusations against Paul could not be proved (v. 7). In all the trials of Paul thus far, there was never any substantiated evidence, only trumped up false charges. They could not prove one charge against Paul. There were no witnesses or evidence and therefore no case. Some have suggested that the Jewish leaders did not really work hard enough at convicting Paul, but that theory is not supported in Scripture. In chapters 23 and 24, the Jewish leaders tried to gather a case against Paul with no evidence. They are attempting the same thing in Chapter 25. Verse 6 says that Festus spent eight or ten days in Jerusalem before returning to Caesarea. A possible reason for the delay in Festus coming back to Caesarea might have been to allow the Jewish leaders to build up their case against Paul. Rest assured that since the Jewish leaders had lost in two previous trials because of a lack of evidence and witnesses, they used most of those eight to ten days scurrying about to produce some evidence. But they couldn't find any because Paul had done nothing wrong.

B. The Lesson of Paul

1. The power of a blameless life

The effect of an innocent and blameless testimony is a powerful rebuke to the world. First Peter 3:14-16 says, "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good manner of life in Christ." If you suffer for sin, you deserve the accusation of the world; but if you suffer for the sake of righteousness, you should be happy because you are suffering for Christ.

a) Be right A Christian is to do three things according to this passage. The first thing according to verse 14 is that he is to live a holy life so that the world cannot rightly accuse him of sin. b) Speak

rightVerse 15 commands that a Christian is to speak accurately the truth of God. He is to set apart Christ in his heart and be ready to give an answer to anyone about that truth.c) Think rightThe third command is in verse 16: "Have a good conscience." After you have been persecuted for righteousness' sake and spoken the truth of God, your conscience ought to be clear because you know you have pleased God. The result is the world will speak evil against you, but they will be ashamed because they are falsely accusing your good manner of life in Christ. Do you know how to rebuke people who accuse you? Give them nothing to accuse you of and their accusations will be unfounded. Then they will have to face the real issue which is their hatred of Christianity, not anything you've done wrong.Paul's innocent life made the Jewish leaders face time and time again that their hearts were not right. They hated Jesus Christ, and Paul forced them to feel that way, because there was no crime they could blame him for. According to 1 Peter 3:14-16 you are to examine what you are, say and think. You are to then set Christ apart, be bold, and confront the world with your innocent life. The impact of such a life can make the world ashamed, ashamed enough to cause conviction that may bring them to Christ.

2. The exoneration of Christianity

It was a common tactic of the Jewish leaders to try to destroy Christianity by accusing the Christians of being criminals against the Roman government. Throughout the book of Acts and the early history of the church, the Jewish leaders tried over and over again to make the Romans believe that Christianity was a revolution. They claimed that if Christianity continued, it would overthrow the government. The hypocrisy of it all was that many of those same Jewish leaders were busy trying to overthrow the government.

a) The zealots of the Jewish religionThere was a group called the Zealots who were starting riots and secretly assassinating those they wanted to get rid of. The Zealots would kill any Jew who paid homage to Rome as soon as they would kill a Roman. There was tremendous insurrection coming out of Judaism, and yet the religious leaders were trying to accuse the Christians of insurrection.

Every time the Jewish leaders would present a case for the trial of a Christian, the Roman government would declare them innocent.The testimony of the exoneration of Christianity is written down for all time and for all men to know. Christianity is not a revolution, or a political threat, but a personal relationship with the living God. The world doesn't need to fear Christianity, because God has established that fact in the Word of God.b) The zenith of the Roman empireThe Romans started persecuting Christians because there was a change in the structure of the existing Roman empire. The Roman Empire was vast, extending from the Euphrates River in Asia on the east to Britain on the west. To the north was Europe and to the south, North Africa. The Romans feared the possible fragmentation of their empire, so they worked long and hard to come up with a unifying factor that would pull the entire empire together. Their solution was Caesar worship. If they could get everyone to worship Caesar, they thought that might unify the empire. They established the reigning Emperor as a god and commanded everyone to worship him. Once a year every inhabitant of the Roman Empire had to take a pinch of incense, burn it to Caesar, and publicly declare Caesar as lord. After that he could worship any god he desired. But he first had to believe in the god Caesar, and publicly verbalize that belief. No true Christian would ever do that, so this presented a difficult problem. That is when the Roman persecution of Christians began. This reiterates the idea that persecution is predominately religious in its intent. The Romans persecuted Christians for religious disloyalty. It is always false religions that lead persecution against the truth. This period is when martyrdom first began.c) The lunacy of NeroThe first man to martyr Christians was Nero, who was Caesar at the time of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea. Nero was a maniac. He began to murder Christians, as did many of the succeeding Caesars because of the Christian's supposed religious disloyalty. The first five years of Nero's rule were largely uneventful, until emperor worship was established, which brought about large-scale persecution.d) The loyalty of ChristiansThe record stands in the Word of God that no guilty verdict was ever found against the believers of that day.(1) Acts 16:35-39--The

Scripture says, "When it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go; now, therefore, depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privately? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates; and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city." Paul and Silas were thrown in jail for nothing. God caused an earthquake and opened every door in the place (v. 26). The magistrates were frightened because they were put in there without any reason. Paul and Silas also were upset about being put in there, yet they also accepted it as the will of God. The magistrates wanted Paul and Silas to leave peacefully but Paul wanted everyone to know that they were placed there illegally. The Romans officials knew Paul and Silas hadn't done anything, so they wanted to get their own injustice off their back.(2) Acts 18:12-16--The Scripture also says, "When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made an attack with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgement seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked crime, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgement seat." Gallio threw the entire case out of court because he realized the case wasn't under his jurisdiction. It is the same throughout the book of Acts. Christians were never convicted by the Roman government of insurrection because a Christian is a model citizen, one who conforms himself to the government for his own conscience's sake.(3) 1 Peter 2:12-14--Peter said, "Having your behavior honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." This is the Christian's responsibility because it gives evidence of a godly testimony. The Christian is to be an example.

C. The Logic of Paul

In Acts 25:8 Paul answers the accusations against himself and effectively ends the case. He said, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended in anything at all." The Jewish leaders brought a case into court without any evidence; subsequently, there was no case against Paul.

D. The limitation of Festus

What should have been Festus's response? He should have dismissed the case immediately, but instead, "willing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?" Festus did what was advantageous for himself by conciliating the Jewish leaders. If Felix was the procrastinator, Festus was the governor who did what was expedient, which is possibly even worse. Festus knew that if he let Paul go, he would suffer the consequences. The Jewish leaders from the start of his reign would be against him because they wanted Paul dead. Festus wanted a compromise: He would allow Paul to go to Jerusalem only if he himself was the judge. The Jewish leaders wanted Paul in Jerusalem with the Sanhedrin judging him.

E. The language of Paul

Paul was very upset by this time and used strong language to defend himself. He spoke to the governor of the entire Judean province and said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged; to the Jews have I have done no wrong, as thou knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things of which these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them" (vv. 10-11).

Any province with a governor sitting on the seat of judgment was Caesar's representative. Paul is saying in effect, "If you've got a crime to deal with, then deal with it. I've never done anything wrong to the Jews, and you know it." Festus knew Paul had not committed any crime because later in talking to Agrippa he said, "Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation of such things as I supposed" (v. 18). Festus did not let Paul go because of his political maneuvering. Paul was a human Ping-Pong ball between the Roman governor and the Jewish leaders. They were playing a little game and he was the victim. He was no doubt upset at seeing the absolute naivete of Festus, who thought the Jewish leaders would deal nicely with him in Jerusalem. He also knew in his own mind that the Jewish leaders would possibly plot to kill him. He stood trapped in a snake pit of intrigue, victimized by the two groups and their interplay. He therefore stood up for his rights as a Roman citizen to stand before the highest Roman court.

Paul had a tremendous amount of courage. He believed in a principle and stood up for it without compromising. When compared to the compromising Jewish leaders, that's quite a difference! Paul was not trying to escape the death. If the charges were true, he was willing to die (v. 11). He knew dying was a promotion for him (Phil. 1:21). It wasn't death he was avoiding; it was justice that he was after. He knew Roman law that if someone had not committed a crime, he was to be set free.

IV. THE APPEAL PROPOSED (v. 12)

"Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go."

A. The Proposal

1. Paul's right

The apostle Paul was not making a subtle comment but an official appeal to Caesar. A lower court judgment could be appealed to Caesar either before or after the verdict of a lower court. All the apostle Paul had to do was say, "Ad Caesarum pro voco," or "Caesarum apello," which in Latin means, "I appeal to Caesar," and the case ended immediately. He would immediately be transferred to Rome. This was one of the rights of a Roman citizen and Paul exercised it. He knew he was getting nowhere in Caesarea in the midst of a political battle. The moment he made his appeal, the case shifted out of the hands of Festus into the hands of Caesar in Rome.

2. Paul's reasoning

Paul must have been excited when his appeal was granted because he knew that was the sovereign purpose of God. In Acts 23:11 the Lord said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." Paul knew God was controlling his every step, and when he was able to appeal to Caesar, he must have been exhilarated realizing that was his ticket to Rome.

3. Paul's risk

Appealing to Caesar was a risk considering the Caesar at this time was none other than Nero himself. If Paul had thought about it long enough, he might have thought he would be better off with the expediency of Festus rather than the lunacy of Nero. Being judged by Nero wasn't the epitome of absolute justice. Nero was one of the most immoral men of that day. He killed Britannicus, the son and heir of the Emperor Claudius. He murdered his mother Agrippina to please his lover Poppaea, who was already married. He got angry with Poppaea and killed her by kicking her in the stomach while she was pregnant. He wanted to marry his adopted sister Claudia Antonia afterwards when she refused, he killed her. He married Statilia Messalina after he assassinated her husband. He spent his career assassinating all the best citizens of Rome because he couldn't stand good people. He finally did the smartest thing by killing himself, relieving everyone of his despotic rule.

B. The Principles

1. The courage of the committed Christian

The apostle Paul did two courageous deeds: one, he rebuked Festus face-to-face and two, he put

himself in the hands of a maniac, Nero. Courage is born out of the confidence a Christian has in God. Paul realized that God could overrule both Festus and Nero. Paul believed that God was running his life, so nothing bothered him.

a) Numbers 13:30-33--The Scripture says, "Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (v. 30). But the other spies said, "There we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, who come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (v. 33). Ten out of the twelve spies came back with a grasshopper complex! But Joshua and Caleb came back confident they could prevail in battle. The difference was courage.b) Judges 4:8-9--Barak said to Deborah, "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." The Israelites were vacillating over who was going to defeat Sisera's army. A lady named Deborah took the initiative and led them to victory. All the men blinked and followed. Deborah had courage that God was in control.c) 1 Samuel 17:32--"David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." David walked up with a handful of rocks to fight a giant. It wasn't that he believed he was a good shot; he believed God would deliver him.

Courage is born out of faith in God, and Paul had that faith. In Acts 20:23-24 Paul said, "The Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Courage is irreplaceable for the Christian who is willing to stand up and speak what is true. God will honor that kind of courage. It is a virtue that rightfully belongs to the committed Christian.

2. The Christian's attitude toward government

Acts 25:12 says, "Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shall thou go." Festus had to check with his Roman council to see if Paul had Roman citizenship allowing a legitimate appeal. Festus made the decision for Paul to go to Caesarea, and Paul must have been excited. Rome at last! By this time he had written the book of Romans and wanted to minister there and impart some spiritual gifts to the Roman Christians (Romans 1:11). He also wanted to establish a base of operation from which to go to Spain.

Paul, by putting himself in the hands of the government, set a pattern for all believers to follow: We are to subject ourselves to the government. The reason is that government is an institution of God. Romans 13:1-6 says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves judgement. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."

This passage is not saying that every elected official or ruler in the world is a believer; it simply means that government as such is an institution of God. And if you fight against the government, you are resisting God. All Christians should model citizens, not only for their own sakes lest they receive chastisement from God for not obeying.

Christians are not to be revolutionaries. There may be times when a government forbids you to love the Lord Jesus Christ or to worship Him, but that is a different situation. Within the framework of laws that exist in government, we are to be submissive to it. It does not matter if the government is like that in China or the Soviet Union--they still protect people who do good and punish criminals. We

may not agree with their philosophy but basically they protect their citizens. It may not even be good leaders who protect their citizens because evil people can do good deeds in the framework of government. As long as Christians obey the government, the government will take care of them. There may always be the variable of religious persecution, but generally, if you abide by the law, you will be protected by the government. If you drive a hundred and twenty miles an hour in a forty-mile zone, don't feel you are being persecuted for righteousness' sake. Romans 13:4 clearly states that governments are ministers of God to effect His will, even at times without their knowledge. If you disobey the government, you have a right to be afraid, "For he beareth not the sword in vain" (v. 4). God gave the government that sword, and the prerogative to do as justice demands. Verse 5 says that the outcome of our obedience is a clear conscience. Verse 6 commands taxes to be paid because as ministers, government officials are simply collecting the money God has allocated to them.

The Christian then is to subject himself to his government. We are not to be like the Zealots who plundered, used violence, and even killed Jews who obeyed the Roman government. Paul disconnects Christianity from Judaism by making it clear that Christianity and respect for government go together. Civil government, no matter in whose hands it may be, is a divine institution of God. And it is to be obeyed, even if there is a Nero on the throne. The Roman government was ordained of God, so Paul is appealing to a divine institution. Even if a government does not do what it is supposed to do, the standard of obedience is still the same.

3. The Christian's attitude toward persecution

In the early church, there were many people with a martyr complex. They tried hard to die as martyrs because they believed there were two levels of future life: one for normal people and one for martyrs. The man who seeks martyrdom is not a martyr. The only martyr is the one who has fought for every possible escape and found no way out. Paul used every possible resource to avoid death. He never initially appealed to Caesar because he knew that might involve death. He waited until the last possible moment for another solution. He was not a spiritual masochist. Some Christians think the only time they are godly is when they're in pain--that the sicker they are, the more holy they must be. But that is not so. If God brings you joy, health, peace, and safety, thank praise Him. If He brings you pain thank Him for that as well.

4. The impact of the totally committed life

This one dramatic principle supercedes the others. Only eternity will be able to measure the impact of the apostle Paul. He had a staggering impact on his entire world. I pray to God that I too would maximize whatever impact I could have on this world. The key is to order my priorities, discipline my time, and seek to function within those priorities. Maybe the best way for you to maximize your life is to pour it into three people who will be able to multiply their lives into others (2 Tim. 2:2). Christians ought to realize that one man can affect an entire world if that man is right before God and seeking His glory.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the Holy Spirit's purpose in describing Paul on trial in Acts 25:1-12?
2. What were the crimes the apostle Paul was accused of by the Jewish leaders (Acts 24:5-6)?
3. What was the significance of the city of Caesarea?
4. Why was it important for Festus to travel to Jerusalem?
5. What kind of people are most antagonistic toward Christianity?
6. True or false: Persecution comes as a result of a religious issue.
7. Describe the principle of the power of sin (John 8:30-32).
8. It is clear in the Word of God that nothing happens for _____ or _____ unless it is in the framework of God's _____.
9. Describe the patterns of persecution as seen in Matthew 5:11?

10. Why might Festus have delayed in coming back to Caesarea (Acts 25:6)?
11. According to 1 Peter 3:14-16, what three things is the Christian to do when suffering for the sake of righteousness?
12. What was one way the Jewish leaders of Paul's day tried to destroy Christianity?
13. Describe the sect of Judaism known as the Zealots.
14. Christianity is not a _____, or a _____, but a _____ with the living God.
15. How did the Romans plan to unify the Roman Empire?
16. According to 1 Peter 2:12-14, what is to be the attitude of the Christian toward the government?
17. What should have been the logical decision for Festus to make concerning the trials of Paul?
18. Why did Paul respond so strongly to Festus in Acts 25:10-11?
19. What was Paul's right as a Roman citizen?
20. Did Paul fear the possible judgment of death against him? Support your answer with Scripture.
21. What two courageous things did Paul do in his appeal to Caesar?
22. Courage is a _____ that rightfully belongs to the _____ Christian.
23. True or False: Government is an institution designed by God for the effecting of His will.
24. How can you make an impact on your world for Jesus Christ?

Pondering the Principles

1. Several principles were brought out in the text of Acts 25:1-12, one of which is the power of sin. When a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, he is separated from the power and the penalty of sin. One day he will also be separated from sin's presence. Are you still under the power of sin? If you are, remember as a Christian, you have the power to say no to sin. Read Romans 6:3-7 and ask God to confirm His sanctifying work in you.
2. Another principle we studied is the exoneration of Christianity. The record stands in the Word of God that no guilty verdict was ever found against the early Christians. Christianity was exonerated by those who had a blameless testimony. Do you have a testimony that validates the truth of Christ in your life. If you were taken to court for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Take time right now to examine your life. Ask God to show that Christianity can be exonerated through your excellent witness.
3. A Christian should be a model citizen toward his government. The reason is that government is an institution of God. The apostle Paul set a pattern for all believers to follow. Are you a model citizen? Do you endeavor to abide by the laws established by your government? Reread Romans 13:1-7 and ask God to reflect what you've learned in this lesson in your attitude toward government.
4. An overriding principle is the impact of the totally dedicated life. There are three keys to developing your dedication to Christ: ordering your priorities, disciplining your time, and seeking to function within the guidelines you've established. If you desire to have an impact like that of the apostle Paul, take the following steps: Order your priorities on a scale from one to ten, discipline yourself daily to achieve those priorities, and seek to function primarily within the areas you are gifted in. Record your progress daily on paper. Praise God for what you are able to accomplish.

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