



Acts Lesson 38 – 25:1-27

Discussion Questions for Week of Oct 22-28, 2023

1. Review: Describe the performance of the leaders (Jewish and Roman) handling Paul's "case" so far, from chapters 21-24. Give examples of how they did (or did not) demonstrate consistent justice and honesty. What do you think kept Paul from becoming discouraged by the arbitrary whims of these men who had power over his life?

2. Why do you think Festus, the next Roman leader to take over Paul's case, went "up to Jerusalem" so soon after becoming governor (1)? What did the Jewish leaders there ask him to do, and what was their true intent behind this request (2-3)?

3. Compare the conduct of the Jewish leaders (2-3, 7) in discharging their duties with that of Festus (4-6, 9, 12).

4. Paul said in his defense that he had committed no offense against the Law (8). His letter to the Galatians had been written and circulated by now, and some passages in that letter could have been misconstrued by the Jews as teaching against their Law. Look at Galatians 2:16 and 5:4-6 – can you explain these passages and demonstrate how they are not "against the Law"?

5. Why do you think Paul was not interested in Festus' proposal for a trip to Jerusalem to face another round of accusations? (3, 10-11)

6. Do you think Paul's appeal to Caesar was his way of fulfilling Jesus' promise to him in 23:11 on his own (25:10-12)? Do you think Paul's action here was in God's will? Why or why not?

7. How accurate is Festus' recounting to Agrippa of Paul's situation (15-21)? What light does verse 19 shed on what Paul must have said during his "defense" in verse 8? Why should Christ's resurrection have caused Festus to want to know more about this "certain Jesus" (19, NKJV)? Why should it cause anyone to want to investigate further?


8. What was Festus' main purpose for the audience with Agrippa (23-27)? Why would it have been difficult for Festus to write an acceptable "legal brief" to Caesar about Paul's case?

9. What might God have been accomplishing through Paul's extended imprisonment:
- In the life of Paul?
- In the lives of the leaders responsible for his arrest and imprisonment?
- In the lives of others who interfaced with Paul?

10. Apply it: For over two years, Paul was subject to arbitrary, unfair decisions by those in power over him. Yet we can now see in retrospect the great things the Lord was and would be doing in his life, including writing the magnificent prison epistles, either here or later in Rome. Give an example from your own life of a time when you were in an apparently hopeless situation, but can now look back and see that God was doing something wonderful.



No Longer Kicking Against the Goads Leader Notes for Acts 25:1-27



It had been more than 20 years since Paul was saved on the road to Damascus. Interestingly, the Lord trained Paul as a new believer the same way that we do today. First, Paul was personally discipled – by the Lord Jesus Himself! – for several years, while being given ministry opportunities in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Tarsus. He then settled down with a co-laborer (Barnabas) in a local church (Antioch of Syria) for several more years. In God’s time the Holy Spirit called them both to be church-planting missionaries in Asia (Turkey) and later led Paul to Greece.

However, after about 10 years of successful church-planting, Paul was suddenly stopped short at the apparent height of his ministry and arrested in Jerusalem. He was kept in Roman custody in Caesarea for at least two years. But what appeared to be a human tragedy was actually a pre-planned re-direction of Paul’s life by God’s own design. Besides strengthening Paul’s patience and trust through forced comparative “inactivity”, and bringing the gospel to the highest circles of Gentile power, God used Paul’s letter-writing ministry to complete His Word with the revelation-rich “Prison Epistles” (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) – either here in Caesarea, or more likely, later during his two years under house arrest in Rome (28:30).

The corrupt Antonius Felix had just been replaced as procurator of Judea by Porcius Festus. Festus wasted no time and journeyed immediately to Jerusalem to get the lay of the land, where he found the Jews’ hatred of Paul as hot as ever. Perhaps they had heard about his letter to the Galatians, where he wrote things like, “a man is not justified by works of the Law” (2:16) and “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything” (5:6). They did not understand that he had written these about the supremacy of Christ’s death on the cross, the only way in which people could be saved.

The Jews asked for a fresh “trial” at Jerusalem with the secret intent of killing Paul. Festus, perhaps with a sense of judicial fairness combined with a suspicion of their true intent, invited them to review the case at Caesarea instead. When they did, the session ended with a total lack of hard evidence against Paul and Paul’s own declaration of his innocence.

As a result, Festus could have easily freed Paul, but as a “favor” to the Jews (a political act, not a judicial one), he acknowledged their original request by suggesting a hearing in Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, Paul was not interested and played his “trump card” of Roman citizenship (obtained by birth in Tarsus – showing the hand of God in Paul’s life from the womb) by appealing to Caesar.

At this point, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice (both models of corruption and immorality) came to town, and after hearing Festus recount Paul’s case, Agrippa requested a personal hearing with Paul himself. Festus arranged the meeting for the following day, where he hoped to gain some insight for writing a “brief” of the charges against an innocent man – to be delivered to Caesar (Nero!) in Rome. And although Festus didn’t know what to say, Paul knew exactly what he would talk about – Jesus!