

CP – 8/18/24

Acts 25: New Characters, Same God

Sermon Outline

1 Peter 3:13-17— *“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”*

New Characters

Festus— Roman Procurator of Judea, ruling from 59/60–62 AD

Agrippa II— Great-grandson of Herod the Great, son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12), brother of Drusilla

- Took reign of uncle's kingdom in Chalcis.
- Exchanged it for old tetrarchy of Herod Philip.
- Nero awarded him more territory over the years.
- In charge of picking the high priest and other temple business.
- “King of the Jews”
- Ruled 47 years (53– c. 100 AD).

Bernice — Agrippa II's younger sister

- She had been married to the uncle, King of Chalcis.
- After her husband's death, she remained in her brother's house.
- There were rumors and gossip about their strange relationship.
- She became a mistress of Titus, the Roman general who crushed the Jewish revolt (70 AD) and became emperor in 79 AD.

Same God

- no matter who the characters are, God is still sovereign

1. **God is always providentially working for His purposes and His people.**

- God is always working in the normal affairs of man.
- Providence— God's ruling of the universe toward His intended purpose through the ordinary.
- God worked used a face-saving Roman governor, a power hungry Jewish king, Roman law, and a Roman citizenship to get Paul to Rome.

- Paul might seem to be the passive pawn of characters and events outside of his control, but God is the hidden director of the events.
- Paul's opponents are malicious, treacherous, and callous. Yet time and time again, God has protected Paul from their many plots hatched against his life.
- Despite human injustice and enmity, God will fulfill His promise regarding Paul.
- Acts 9:15— "a chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles, and their kings and to the people of Israel"
- *"Paul is protected not because he is Saint Paul, someone special, but because he is a chosen instrument with a special task that he has yet to complete"*
(David E. Garland)
- What may seem like an inconvenience could very well be God working in and through you.
- Don't despise the two years in the jail, for God may be orchestrating and preparing you for His plans He has for you.

2. Paul was serious about the purity of the Church's witness.

- The early church was always accused but found innocent.
- Paul wasn't defending himself to save face; he was ready to die.
- But the testimony of God's people was important to him.

3. Everyone has a Lord that they are answering to.

- Festus' problem was that he was worried about reporting to the wrong Lord.
- Everyone is bowing down and pledging their allegiance to someone or something.
- We best make sure that it is the right one.
- Everyone serves somebody; the question is whether we are serving somebody worth serving.

****Setting up the scene of Acts 26****

Acts 25:23

- Great pomp — purple robes and golden crown, scarlet robes, pageantry of a procession with high ranking officers, military tribunes, and leading men of the city.
- Paul— a little fellow, lacking in appearance, balding, bushy eyebrows, a hooked nose and bandy legs, wearing neither crown nor gown, but only handcuffs and a prisoner's tunic.

“The unsuspecting congregation assembles, believing they hold the power and authority. Soon, a man in chains will appear before them. Ironically, it is only that man who is truly free, and he possesses the key which could set the entire room free: not from Roman law but from the wrath of God. (Albert Mohler)

Small Group Discussion:

1. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you through the Scripture and sermon on Sunday morning? What stood out to you? What questions do you have?
2. How do we see God at work in the background of Acts 25? What does it mean that God is always providentially working for His purposes and His people? How does this truth encourage you to not lose hope?
3. Why was Paul quick to defend himself? Was he more concerned about himself or the witness of the church? Why do you think Paul was so concerned with the church having a pure witness?
4. Festus was worried about what to report to “his lord”. What does it mean that everyone has a lord that they are answering to? What does it mean for something to be “lord” of one’s life? What does it mean for us to say Jesus is the Lord of our life?
5. Read 1 Peter 3:13-17. How does Paul illustrate 1 Peter 3:13-17 in Acts 25?