

Acts 25: 1-22; “I Do Not Object to Dying”, Sermon # 86 in the Series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on October 23rd, 2022, in the Morning Worship Service.

In this section of verses Paul is interacting with Festus about where he should go in the future, in order that his legal case with the Jews might be tried fairly. In verse 9 Festus asks whether he was willing to go back to Jerusalem and there be judged before him, concerning these things. In verse 10 he says, No – “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged.” “To the Jews I have done no wrong.” And then he makes this very interesting statement in verse 11 – “For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying.”

I believe that we can learn some important things from this statement. And so in this message I want to show you the reasons why Paul said that he did not object to dying. 1st of all – He did not object because he knew that a part of his commission was to reach the Jews. (verses 1-8) 2nd – He did not object to dying because a part of his commission was to reach governors. (verses 9-12) And 3rd – He did not object to dying because a part of his commission was to reach kings. (verses 13-22). In relating these truths to you, I would have you consider more carefully what you are willing to lay down your life for, in relation to the gospel, and the gift which the Lord has given to you.

1st of all – He did not object to dying because he knew that a part of his commission was to reach the Jews. (verses 1-8)

Verses 1-3 say – “Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.” “Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem – while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.” So we find here in these verses, that the opposition and hostility of the Jews to Paul and his preaching the gospel of Christ continued unabated. Nothing had changed. After 2 years had gone by, they still sought to kill him. These wicked men thought of themselves as very righteous men. And yet the murder of Paul was continually in their hearts because they thought that Paul should not preach the Lord Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They believed that it was undermining their whole religion.

They did not believe that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God. They believed him to have been a blasphemer, and a false prophet. And that is why the leaders of their nation and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, put him to death. The reason that they did this was because they did not see the depth of their own sins. Jesus said as He was being crucified – Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. Jesus suffered and died at their hands. Now Paul was suffering at their hands for his desire to preach Christ to them.

One of the real questions that should come to our minds, when we encounter people who are hostile to the gospel, is whether we are willing to suffer their vitriol? Their vitriol is their unreasonable expressions of anger and hatred towards us, for our telling them that they are sinners. This can happen for such a simple matter as when we say that they cannot be saved by their own good works; but that they must have Christ to be saved and to know God. Paul was willing, not only to suffer, but he was also ready to die for the truth. But it was more than that. But many of these people hated him. They hated him unrighteously, he knew.

What were his thoughts, towards them? The thoughts of his heart were, that he was willing to suffer and die for the people who should have been his friends but they weren’t. You will see this if you will turn over with me over to Romans chapter 9. I want to read to you verses 1-5. “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that

I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.” “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.”

I want you to see that this was a very solemn matter to Paul, the salvation of the Jews of his day. He knew that many of his own fellow countrymen according to the flesh, the Jews, were perishing in their sins. I want you to notice that “his heart’s desire” was that they would be saved. He didn’t have any bitterness toward them. He didn’t have any sinful anger. Their salvation was something that he longed for continually. It was something that he had great sorrow and continual grief over.

He did not say to himself – Well I believe and teach the doctrine of election, and so if they are ever going to be saved, it is a matter which is in God’s hands. They are either chosen unto eternal life, or they are not. I will preach to them, but I have no feelings about the matter, regarding their salvation. No, their salvation was a matter of agony to him. He knew that they had been given so much by God. As a nation they had been adopted by God. As a nation, he knew about the glory of their having been chosen by God to be His people. He knew of His giving of how God had given them His holy law.

And He had given them all the details of their service of worship in the ceremonial law. Just as significant, and even more so, was that He had given them the promises of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, those fathers of their faith, from whom, according to the flesh, had come their Christ, their Messiah; the One who was over all, the eternally blessed God. And yet, he knew, they had despised and rejected Christ. Paul remembered that he himself had once been like them, and he himself had thought that he had to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But then the Lord had confronted him on the road to Damascus, and changed his life forever. He opened his eyes to the truth that He Jesus was His Lord, and He wanted Paul to serve Him.

He gave him this commission – You are a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. I will show you how much you must suffer for Me. And this He was doing for Paul, making him most effective in his ministry, even through his sufferings. Dear believer, do you see it this way in regard to your own personal ministry for Christ? You are one of His chosen vessels, and you are bearing His name before the people that you come into contact with each and every day? Do you remember this in your everyday life, dear Christian? Perhaps you do, but do you realize that your being rejected by some of those people and having to suffer for Christ is all a part of glorifying Him with your life?

Suffering with Christ and being rejected by some people is a part of your becoming a more like Christ and more effective in your own personal ministry. Listen to Paul in 2nd Timothy 2: 8-13 – “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.” “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” “This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.” “If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.” “If we deny Him, He also will deny us.” “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”

Paul says here that he suffered trouble even as an evildoer, even to the point of chains. And this was for his preaching that Christ risen from the dead! But He knew that the word of God was not chained. Yes, God could use Paul right where he was, in prison or in chains. But the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit would, at the same time, make the word all the more effectual to many

people in those areas where Paul preached. Our faithful God would cause the word concerning Christ to be effectual to the understanding of many people, even far beyond where he was there in prison. This was because God is not bound as to how He can work in the hearts of men in relation to the gospel preached. Paul says that he endured all these things, all of these sufferings for the sake of the elect, so that they would obtain the salvation which is in Christ. And so it was a faithful saying then, and a faithful saying now – That if we died with Him we shall also live with Him. If we endure (that is, if we will persevere in holding fast to Christ while suffering), we also shall reign with Him in glory forever. Dear Christian – Are these things which you think upon?

2nd – He did not object to dying because a part of his commission was to reach governors. (verses 9-12)

“But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, ‘Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?’ “So Paul said, ‘I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged.’ “To the Jews I have done nothing wrong, as you very well know.” “For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them.” “I appeal to Caesar.”

This was Paul’s prerogative as a Roman citizen. By this time, Paul had been detained as a prisoner for 2 years. He was waiting and wondering and praying about would come next for him. Let’s think about Paul’s commission to governors. Now, Felix is now no longer the governor, but Festus is. During the time that Felix was governor, Paul did get to preach the gospel to Felix and to his wife Druscilla, who was a Jewess. But as far as we know, they did not come to Christ for salvation.

Sometimes we may become discouraged when we find that the people that we have shared the gospel with, are really vacillating when it comes to what they think about Christ. They are not sure that they really need Christ. They think that it not essential to believe in Christ for eternal life, a changed heart, and a better life in terms of doing what is right. This is how Felix was. He was totally indecisive about faith in Christ. He went back and forth about whether he really had to believe in Him.

Some people we share the gospel with may be the same way. They go back and forth in their minds, wondering if the things that we tell them are really so. Well, we know that they are really so. And so, how should we react to their indecision? I believe that we should understand that God really is striving with these people that we preach the gospel to, by the power of His Holy Spirit. He would have each person that we share with, consider the meaning of life. And so, we should keep trying to talk to them about their need as long as they will let us.

Our continuing to share the truth of the gospel and God’s word with them is being faithful to them and to Christ. It the best possible thing that we can do for them. Don’t argue with them, or make yourself obnoxious to them. But don’t stop talking about Christ, and the things which you have seen and heard which you know are true. You should continue to speak as the Lord leads you, even as Paul did. Whenever and wherever the Lord gives you opportunity to present the truth to people around you, you should do it.

Understand that their vacillation is due to their natural blindness. Spiritually in their mind and heart they cannot see. And so they resist your words, sometimes to the point of anger. Or they resist your words because they personally reject the idea that they need to be saved. They reject the idea that they are ultimately accountable to God. And ultimately, they believe in themselves. This is because they think that they are outwardly pretty good people. If they do

believe in God, they also believe that somehow they will be able to prove this to God at the time of Last Judgment. In this regard they will be very surprised and dismayed.

This is why we should persevere with them. Paul did have to shake out his garments before some of them who he knew should have believed in Christ. Sometimes he told them that their blood was on their own heads and from then on, he would go to the Gentiles. They may see themselves as righteous before God based upon this truth that they are, from their standpoint, trying hard to keep God's commandments, even. But they are not able to keep them perfectly, without their believing in Christ. We must be patient and be willing to suffer in order to continue to present this truth to them.

He would have them consider the importance of their eternal soul and their state before Him before they die. We cannot force people to decision for Christ, but we can be the human means of faithfully preaching the gospel to them. This is what Paul did in regard to Festus as well as Felix. He said to Festus – If I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.

He would not let Festus put him into a boxed-in situation with the Jews who would continue to press for his death. He would appeal to Caesar so that he would be sent on to Rome, the very place he wanted to go and preach the gospel. Brethren, let us not allow people in authority to box us in either, in regard to the greatest desire that we have, which is to continue to bear witness to Christ's name wherever we see that we best can bear witness. Let us make full use of our being United States citizens, to keep men from persecuting us further, or trying to put us to death. But let us see as Paul did, that to live is Christ, and that to die is gain. (Philippians 1: 21)

3rd – Paul did not object to dying because a part of his commission was preaching to kings also. (verses 13-22)

I want you to consider with me how unusual this situation was, for these men that Paul was preaching to, Festus and Agrippa, to have to consider what they should do about Paul. Festus relates to Agrippa in verse 15, that those Jews who hated Paul and wanted to see him put to death, had been asking for a judgment to be made against him. In verse 16, Festus says to Agrippa – “To them I answered, ‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.’” All of this worked together in Paul's favor, to be able to bear witness to Christ before governors and kings.

When Festus and the Jews met together and Paul was brought in, Festus says that when these accusing Jews spoke, they brought no accusation against him about actual things that Paul had done against them, but rather they had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Festus needed Agrippa's help in this matter, and so Paul was going to get to preach to this king. The Lord Jesus was providentially ordering all of these things, even though neither Festus, nor Agrippa knew it.

In closing this message I want you to understand that the object of many of these sermons that I have been preaching to you in the book of Acts has been to show us that it is Christ Himself by His Holy Spirit who leads us through this life. And He fulfills His purpose in regard to our life in particular. I hope that you will understand, that each of you who believes has been given a particular gift, and a measure of grace; which, in accordance with your own desires, the Lord Himself interacts with you over what is taking place in your life, so that you might fulfill your own particular ministry.

Yes, He has all your days planned out for you, even when there has not been one of them that has taken place yet. And yet, he also wants to interact with you to find out, and prove to you, what your own desires are, in relation to what you want to accomplish for Him. If you truly see this, blessed are you in living your Christian life to Him. When you are living your life to Him, then he will give you great opportunities to serve Him and bear fruit to Him in your sharing the gospel with people around you. He will ordain things so that you will be able to ministering to them in the name Christ, using the gift that He has given to you. Since our Christ was so great as to be able to bring these great things about for the fulfillment of Paul's ministry, will He not do the same for you? If you are faithful to persevering in giving others the gospel and in being willing to suffer for His name's sake, then He will allow you to fulfill your personal ministry and to glorify Him in the process.