

# ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

## LVIII. Understanding God's Use Of Strong, Evil Opposition

(Acts 24:24-25:12)

### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 24:24-25:12 records how Paul faced strong, evil opposition, but how God utilized it all to fulfill His will.
- C. We thus view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

### II. Understanding God's Use Of Strong, Evil Opposition, Acts 24:24-25:12.

- A. In Acts 24:24-25:9, Paul faced a series of strong, evil opposition pressures:
  - 1. Paul faced prolonged, sinful opposition from Judaea's procurator Felix, Acts 24:24-27:
    - a. Felix heard Paul's case and decided to postpone making a ruling on it to avoid the political hazard of publicly critiquing Jerusalem's religious authorities who had brought charges against Paul, Felix continued to stall on making a ruling, Acts 24:24; Ibid., p. 422. He repeatedly called for Paul to hear him speak on the Christian faith, hoping that Paul might bribe him that Felix might release Paul, Acts 24:26.
    - b. Nevertheless, Paul's words critiqued Felix's sinfulness, causing him to tremble to where he dismissed Paul and directed that he would hear him later, Acts 24:25. Felix's conviction is understandable in view of his life: he was on his third marriage, to marry his current wife, a Hebrew woman named Drusilla, he had to break up another marriage, his regime was marked by injustices, and he wholly lacked self-control, Ibid.
    - c. To please the Hebrews, Felix left Paul imprisoned, and after two years, Festus replaced him, Acts 24:27.
  - 2. Paul faced another trial with Felix's successor Festus, with even greater enmity from his foes, Acts 25:1-8:
    - a. Three days after becoming Judaea's procurator, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem where the high priest and leaders of the Hebrews informed him of their charges against Paul, and they asked that Festus bring Paul to Jerusalem and try him there, hoping to ambush and kill Paul on the way, Acts 25:1-3.
    - b. Festus replied that Paul needed to remain in Caesarea, but he asked that Paul's critics return with him to Caesarea to bring their charges against Paul there, and that Festus would hear the case there, Acts 25:4-5.
    - c. Paul's Hebrew foes then returned to Caesarea with Festus, and when the case was convened, they stood around Paul and brought many serious charges against him that they could not prove, Acts 25:6-7.
    - d. Paul argued in his defense that he had not committed any offense against the Mosaic Law of the Hebrews, nor against the Jerusalem temple, nor against Caesar, their charges apparently being the same that had made in his previous trial before Felix, but now with enhanced rancor and hatred, Acts 25:8.
  - 3. Paul face an incredibly dangerous crisis full of evil intrigue by a political move by Festus, Acts 25:9:
    - a. As the newly appointed procurator of Israel, Festus wanted to do the Hebrews a favor, so he asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem to be tried by him there on the charges that Paul's Hebrew foes had made, v. 9.
    - b. This proposal by Festus, if implemented, would prove harmful to Paul for a variety of reasons:
      - i. Paul's foes had once plotted to kill him when he moved from one place to another in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 24:27), so they would surely kill him if he went from Caesarea up to Jerusalem, Ibid., p. 423.
      - ii. Were Paul to arrive safely in Jerusalem, the "possibility of a fair trial" there "was remote," Ibid.
      - iii. Paul had been stalemated as a prisoner in Caesarea for two years, so he wanted to get out of it, Ibid.
- B. Paul answered Festus that since he stood before Caesar's tribunal where he ought to be tried, since he had done nothing wrong to the Jews as he said they knew well, but that if he had done anything worthy of death, he did not want to escape death, and since no one could rightly give Paul up to the Hebrews, what a trial in Jerusalem would clearly entail, he would use his Roman citizenship right to appeal to Caesar, Acts 25:10-11.
- C. Festus had no legal alternative but to announce that Paul would be tried by Caesar, Acts 25:12; Ibid.
- D. However, all of these strong, evil pressures that Paul faced at Caesarea that led to him to appeal to Caesar fit God's revealed will in Acts 23:11: there, the Lord had told Paul in a vision that he "must" (*dei*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 509; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 171) testify of Him in Rome.

**Lesson:** *The strong, evil opposition that Paul faced during his imprisonment in Caesarea was used of God to move Paul to appeal for a trial before Caesar that God might get Paul to Rome to minister in line with His revealed will.*

**Application:** *If we face strong, evil opposition, may we know that God is merely using it to fulfill His plan for us.*