

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

LIX. Putting The Gospel Ministry Above Our Rights And Comfort

(Acts 25:13-26:2)

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 25:13-26:2 records how Paul put the gospel ministry above his personal rights and comfort, so we view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Putting The Gospel Ministry Above Our Rights And Comfort, Acts 25:13-26:2.

- A. Since Paul had appealed for his case to be heard by Caesar, he was not legally required to defend himself before any other lesser official or court than that of his hearing before Caesar, Acts 25:11-12; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 25:13.
- B. Besides, submitting to an unrequired hearing by a lesser official than Caesar when one had already appealed to Caesar carried significant risk: an unfortunate slip of the tongue by the accused before a lesser official could give reasons for the official to send a bad report to Caesar that could hurt the prisoner's case with Caesar.
- C. However, Paul saw a risky, unrequired, humanly uncomfortable hearing before king Agrippa as a ministry opportunity, so he waived his rights at significant risk and discomfort to attend the hearing, Acts 25:13-26:2:
 - 1. Some days after Paul had appealed to Caesar and was waiting to be transferred by ship to Rome, king Agrippa and his wife Bernice visited Judaea's procurator Festus in Caesarea, Acts 25:13. Agrippa was Herod Agrippa II, a son of Herod Agrippa I and a great-grandson of Herod the Great, and Bernice was not only Agrippa's wife, but she was also his sister, "with whom he was living incestuously," Ibid.
 - 2. During their visit with Festus, the latter mentioned Paul's case, and how he had appealed to Caesar, and Agrippa asked Festus if he could hear Paul's case, Acts 25:14-22a.
 - 3. Festus arranged for the hearing to occur the next day, and Paul who had appealed to Caesar and could have refused to attend the hearing apparently agreed to this hearing since it was arranged, Acts 25:22b-23a.
 - 4. The hearing was held with much fanfare: Agrippa and his wife entered the audience hall with great pomp along with the military tribunes and prominent men of the city, and at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in to stand before this crowd of lofty officials, Acts 25:23b ESV. From just the human perspective, this audience could have put a lot of pressure on Paul!
 - 5. Festus then addressed king Agrippa and all the other dignitaries present, informing them that Paul had been the object of great opposition by all the Hebrew people who shouted that he ought not to live any longer, Acts 25:24. Such news could have caused the hearers and king Agrippa to view Paul negatively.
 - 6. Festus added that he had found nothing worthy of death in Paul and hoping to have something significant to write to Caesar about him before sending him to Rome, Festus said he had brought Paul before all these dignitaries and king Agrippa that they might examine him to give Festus something to write about Paul's case for him to give to Caesar, Acts 25:25-27. Paul faced the pressure of having to watch his words.
 - 7. Agrippa then told Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself," Acts 26:1a ESV! So, amid a crowd of dignitaries who would be listening attentively, who might influence Festus to send some positive or negative comments about Paul's case to Caesar, and Agrippa living in an incestuous relationship with his sister Bernice, both of whom were seated before Paul, the human pressure on Paul must have been great!
 - 8. Nevertheless, Paul stretched out his hand to make his defense, claiming that he considered himself fortunate to stand before Agrippa, Acts 26:1b-2. The opportunity to give the Gospel of Christ before such a crowd of dignitaries was worth all of the risks and challenges to his comfort that he faced!

Lesson: *Though he could have lived with much less stress in greater safety by declining to stand before a crowd of dignitaries, with a king present who was in an incestuous marriage with his wife, and both of them being seated before Paul, and with another official waiting to report something significant of Paul's words to Caesar, Paul put aside his rights and comfort at significant risk to himself to view the gathering as a ministry opportunity from God.*

Application: *(1) May we be willing to sacrifice our comfort and rights to minister for Christ if He so leads. (2) If we are led by God to testify before dignitaries, may we claim God's Matthew 10:18-20 promise that the Holy Spirit will testify through us, giving us the words to say, for it will be God's will to use our mouths as His instrument.*