FIVE-DAY THEOLOGY COURSE

ACTS

The Spirit of God in Mission

TAUGHT BY

Lec SK. KIERU

Chapter 13: Jerusalem and Trials

Arrival and arrest in Jerusalem; Paul's speeches; a plot against Paul; trials before Felix and Festus

Day 1: Understanding Acts and Preparing for Pentecost · Day 2: The Spirit-Empowered Church in Jerusalem and Beyond · Day 3: The Gentile Mission and Paul's Missionary Expansion · Day 4: Paul's Missionary Journeys, Jerusalem and Rome

Day 5: Final examination (2026-10-09)

Based on Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission by Denzil R. Miller. Africa's Hope, 2017.

CHAPTER 13 · UNIT 5 · DAY 4

Jerusalem and Trials

Arrival and arrest in Jerusalem; Paul's speeches; a plot against Paul; trials before Felix and Festus

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Source: Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission - Denzil R. Miller (Based on Chapter 13)

Chapter purpose. This chapter follows Paul as the Spirit leads him to Jerusalem: his arrival and arrest, his speeches, a plot against his life, and his trials before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa, with Rome now set as the next place of witness.

After the third journey the Spirit directs Paul to Jerusalem, then toward Rome.

Bible reading: Acts 21:1-25:32

Before beginning this chapter, read Acts 21:1-25:32. Each part of the lesson also has its own short reading: review Acts 21:1-36; read Acts 21:37-23:11; Acts 23:12-35; Acts 24:1-27; Acts 25:1-12; and Acts 25:13-26:32.

Learning Objectives

• Describe how James and the elders received Paul's report about his ministry among the Gentiles, and why they asked him to take a purification vow.

• Explain how Paul understood the Spirit's warnings about Jerusalem, as distinct from those who tried to stop him from going.

• List Paul's five trials in Acts and state the outcome of each.

• List and describe three ways the Holy Spirit enables the church to fulfill its mission to preach the gospel to all nations.

• State the fivefold commission Christ gave Paul, as Paul testified before King Agrippa, and how that commission applies to the church today.

Before This Lesson, Read Your Bible

Acts 21:1-25:32

The book also sets a short reading before each part of the lesson: review Acts

21:1-36; read Acts 21:37-23:11; Acts 23:12-35; Acts 24:1-27; Acts 25:1-12; Acts 25:13-26:32.

The Big Idea

The Spirit was leading Paul to Jerusalem. He knew he was moving in the will of the Lord. What was important to him was that he obeyed the voice of the Spirit and completed the ministry Christ had given to him.

The Spirit Leads Paul to Jerusalem

• The Spirit was leading Paul to go to Jerusalem.

• Paul wanted to meet with James and the other leaders of the church and report to them how the work of the Lord had progressed among the Gentiles.

• After that he wanted to go to Rome, where he would establish a new missionary base, from where he would range even further westward into Spain (compare Romans 15:24, 28).

The Story: To Jerusalem, Journey, Arrival, and Arrest (Acts 21:1-36)

Leaving the Ephesian elders in Miletus, Paul and his companions, including Luke, sailed to Tyre where they met some disciples. These disciples, speaking by the Spirit, urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul and his party, nevertheless, proceeded on to Caesarea, where they stayed with Philip the evangelist and his four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

While in Caesarea, Agabus prophesied that in Jerusalem Paul would be bound and handed over to the Gentiles. Hearing this message, everyone pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem; however, he was determined to go and told them, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

When Paul and the other missionaries arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers greeted them warmly. The following day Paul reported to James and the elders of the church all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. Hearing

this, they glorified God. They then convinced Paul to take a purification vow and join four other Jewish Christians in the temple the next day. In this way, they surmised, those Jewish Christians who were zealous for keeping the law would have nothing of which to accuse Paul.

The next day Paul went into the temple. While he was there, some Jews from Asia saw him with another man, whom they assumed was a Gentile. They therefore seized Paul and began shouting, accusing him of defiling the temple by taking Greeks with him there. Word spread quickly, and an angry mob gathered. Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The Jews began beating Paul and would have killed him had not some Roman soldiers intervened. The Roman officer then seized Paul and took him to the barracks. All along, the crowd kept shouting, "Away with him!"

Commentary: Journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16)

• As Paul moved steadily toward Jerusalem, he was repeatedly warned that danger and imprisonment awaited him there. Some of these warnings came by the Holy Spirit.

• Many of his colleagues interpreted this to mean that he was not to go to Jerusalem. Paul understood their fears; however, he also knew that he was moving in the will of the Lord.

• He was prepared even to die in Jerusalem, if necessary. What was important to him was that he obeyed the voice of the Spirit and completed the ministry Christ had given to him.

21:7 We greeted the brothers

• Paul was greeted by a delegation of brothers in Ptolemais, a city in northern Galilee. This is the first time Luke mentions a church in this city.

• Luke does, however, talk about the growth of the church in Galilee (9:31). Ptolemais is one of hundreds of places where the church had been planted by many unnamed Christian brothers and sisters.

21:8 Caesarea

• This city was the site of the Caesarean outpouring some twenty years earlier

(10:44-46).

• In this verse we discover that there was an active church there. Philip the evangelist, formerly one of the seven "deacons" of Acts 6, and the gospel preacher of Acts 8, lived there.

21:9 Four unmarried daughters who prophesied

• Philip had four daughters who were prophetesses. This is in accordance with Joel's prophecy, quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, "Your...daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; compare 1 Corinthians 11:4-5).

• Women are given the Holy Spirit for the same reason men are given the Holy Spirit: that they might preach the gospel in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8, 14; 2:18).

21:10 A prophet named Agabus

• Prophets played a vital role in the expansion of the early church (compare Acts 2:17-18; 11:27; 13:1-2; 15:32; 19:6; 21:9-10).

• On this occasion Agabus visually and accurately predicted Paul's arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem.

• Although Agabus' prophecy told the future, the primary function of prophecy, according to Paul, is the "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" of believers (1 Corinthians 14:3).

• In Acts Luke portrays prophecy primarily as Spirit-empowered proclamation of the gospel to the lost.

21:11 The Holy Spirit says

• To speak as a prophet is to speak for God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

• Prophecies, however, since they always contain a human element, must be tested (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; see comment on 13:3). They are to be judged by other Spirit-filled believers in harmony with the Word of God.

• While Paul accepted the truth of Agabus' prophecy, he did not accept the interpretation others placed on the prophecy. They tried to stop him from going to Jerusalem.

• He, however, knew that it was God's will for him to go there, even if it meant

imprisonment or death (21:12-14).

Commentary: Arrival (Acts 21:17-26)

• Paul's meeting with James and the elders of the Jerusalem church is significant.

• Remember, it was James who led the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), and who wrote the letter that Paul delivered to the Gentile churches.

• James now rejoiced with Paul over what God had accomplished among the Gentiles.

• There were, however, still some traditionalists in the Jerusalem church and elsewhere (the Judaizers) who thought that one must keep the Law of Moses to truly serve Christ.

21:19 What God had done among the Gentiles

• The Greek word for Gentiles is ethn . It means the nations of the world.

• God's salvation and blessings are for all peoples and all nations (Genesis 12:3; Revelation 5:9; 7:9).

21:20 When they heard this, they praised God

• James and the elders of the Jerusalem church rejoiced when they heard how the Gentiles had received the gospel.

• We too should rejoice when the gospel is taken to the unreached tribes of the world. We should do all that we can to ensure that those tribes are reached.

How many thousands of Jews have believed

• Even as the word of the Lord was spreading among the Gentile nations, the work continued to prosper in Judea, for James reports that many thousands of Jews had believed.

Commentary: Arrest (Acts 21:27-36)

• Paul was arrested on trumped-up charges based on false perceptions.

• Nevertheless, the repeated accusations of some Asian Jews incited a mob of angry Jews who wanted to kill him.

21:27 Jews from the province of Asia

• These Asian Jews had probably come to know Paul during his ministry of over two years in Ephesus, in which Paul endured strong opposition and persecution from both the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 19:23; 20:19; 1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:9).

21:31 They were trying to kill him

• Again Paul's life was in danger. Throughout his ministry he faced the prospect of pain and death (1 Corinthians 15:30-32; 2 Corinthians 11:25-26).

• Paul, however, was not driven, nor paralyzed, by his fear. He was rather moved by the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:22; 2 Corinthians 5:14).

Life Application: Unnamed Laborers, Unselfish Motives

• There are more than one million pentecostal churches in the world today, along with many other evangelical churches. Most of these churches are faithfully preaching the gospel of Christ.

• However, much like the church in Ptolemais, few know the names of those who planted these churches or of the believers there. But God knows their names, and on the Day of Judgment those who have labored faithfully for Him will be lavishly rewarded.

• Like Paul, we should not be motivated by fear or any other selfish concern. We should be motivated by our love for Christ and the empowering presence of His Spirit within.

• We are further moved by a clear understanding of God's mission and our part in fulfilling that mission.

The Story: Paul's Speeches in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37-23:11)

On this occasion, Paul had to use his cross-cultural language skills to defend himself. When the Roman commander heard Paul speaking in Greek, he allowed him to address the crowd. Switching to Aramaic, Paul reminded his hearers of how he, too, was once a zealous follower of the Law of Moses and a violent persecutor of the church. He told them the story of how he had met the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus and how he was converted and commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. When the crowd heard him speak about the

Gentiles, they became furious and began throwing dust into the air, shouting, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" Seeing this, the commander ordered a centurion to flog and interrogate Paul. Paul, however, surprised the centurion by asking, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" Upon hearing that Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen, the commander relented and released him.

The next day, the commander called for a meeting of the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin and brought Paul to stand before them. After a brief confrontation with Ananias the high priest, Paul presented his defense. Knowing that the assembly was divided between Pharisees and Sadducees, he said, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, the Pharisees (who believe in the resurrection) and Sadducees (who do not believe in the resurrection) began arguing with one another. Finally, some of the Pharisees concluded that Paul was innocent and asked, "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" The assembly then fell into such confusion that the commander had to order his soldiers to rescue Paul and take him back to the barracks. The next night, the Lord appeared to Paul and told him, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

Commentary: Paul Addresses the Crowd (Acts 21:37-22:21)

• In his address to the angry crowd, Paul did not hesitate to proclaim the gospel. Although his very life was at stake, he remained true to his calling.

• This was the first of Paul's five trials in Acts. In each trial Paul was found innocent of all charges.

21:37-40 Do you speak Greek? He said to them in Aramaic

• Paul was a highly educated man and spoke several different languages. This ability greatly aided him in his missionary work.

• Language learning is a very important part of missionary work. Those who feel that God is calling them to cross-cultural missions must be prepared to learn the language of their host culture.

22:4 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death

• Paul admitted that his persecution of Christians resulted in the death of some. However, he did not let his past life hinder him. He knew that he had been completely forgiven by Christ.

• Instead, he used the memory of his past opposition to Christ to motivate him to even greater service for his Lord (compare 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Galatians 1:13-16).

22:21 Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles

• Paul received this direct command from Christ in a vision (compare vv. 17-18).

• It reminds us of Jesus' Great Commission to His church to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

• Paul's specific command was to go "far away to the Gentiles."

Paul's Five Trials in Acts

Paul's five trials in Acts. In each trial Paul was found innocent of all charges.

Trial · Setting · Passage

• Trial: 1. Setting: Before the Jewish mob in the temple. Passage: Acts 21:37-22:29

• Trial: 2. Setting: Before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Passage: Acts 22:30-23:10

• Trial: 3. Setting: Before Felix. Passage: Acts 24:1-27

• Trial: 4. Setting: Before Festus. Passage: Acts 25:1-12

• Trial: 5. Setting: Before King Agrippa. Passage: Acts 25:13-26:32

Commentary: Paul the Roman Citizen (Acts 22:22-29)

• When the Roman soldiers discovered that Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen, they were alarmed at the way he had been treated. They immediately began to treat him with more respect.

22:25 Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen?

• As a Roman citizen, Paul had certain legal rights. When it suited his purposes, he did not hesitate to use those rights, especially when it resulted in the furtherance of the gospel (compare 16:37-40; 23:27).

Commentary: Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23:11)

• Upon discovering that Paul was a Roman citizen, the Roman commander proceeded with more caution. Because he wanted to know the exact charges against Paul, he called for a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

23:6 I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead

• Paul again testifies concerning the resurrection of the dead.

• As we have discovered in our study of Acts, the message of Jesus' resurrection was the central component of the gospel Paul preached (Acts 17:18; Romans 10:9-10).

• He wrote, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:13-14).

• The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are key elements of true gospel preaching today (1 Corinthians 15:1-6).

23:11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul

• In a night vision the Lord again appeared to Paul, telling him to take courage because he must also testify in Rome.

• What an encouragement this must have been to Paul at this difficult time in his life.

Life Application: Christ Comes to Encourage Us

• In times of great stress and difficulty, we must remain focused on our mission and our message.

• If we will seek His face, Christ will come to us to encourage us. He will not always come in a vision, as he did to Paul in this instance, but He will come nevertheless.

• Jesus promised, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20), and "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

• Christ will come to us through the Holy Spirit and be our divine Comforter (John

14:16-18, KJV).

Further Insight: How the Holy Spirit Enables Mission

• In Acts, the Holy Spirit is actively involved in fulfilling the missio Dei. As we have shown in our study, He is indeed the Superintendent of the Harvest.

• He enables the church to fulfill its mandate to preach the gospel to all nations before Jesus comes again. He does this in at least three essential ways.

1. The Holy Spirit inspires mission

• It is the Holy Spirit who moves the church away from inactivity and motivates believers to participate in God's mission.

• When asked why he went to the Gentiles in Caesarea, Peter answered, "The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them" (Acts 11:12).

• When it was time for the church in Antioch to send out missionaries to the nations, the Holy Spirit moved in the church and spoke, saying, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (13:2).

• If we will ensure that our church members are filled with the Spirit, and if we will allow Him to move freely in our churches, He will inspire our people to get involved in missions.

2. The Holy Spirit empowers mission

• Jesus said that we would receive power for missional witness when the Holy Spirit comes upon us (Acts 1:8).

• The Spirit will empower our witness in various ways: He will inspire our teaching and preaching (2:14-41; 11:22-26; 18:25), giving us boldness and insight into the gospel and into the lives of the people to whom we are ministering (4:31-33; 14:9).

• As we preach the gospel, He will manifest His presence through spiritual gifts, including confirming signs and wonders (2:43; 5:12; 15:12).

• We, like the disciples before the Day of Pentecost, must faithfully "stay in the city until [we] have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

3. The Holy Spirit sustains mission

• The Spirit comes to those who are involved in fulfilling God's mission and encourages them in the work.

• As He did with Stephen, Paul, and others, the Holy Spirit will come to us in our times of great trial and discouragement. He will comfort us through dreams, visions, and inner works of grace (Acts 7:55; 16:9; 18:9).

• Through it all, as we seek the Lord's face, the Spirit will keep us focused on the mission of God.

• We can build ourselves up and keep ourselves in the love of God by praying in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:4; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20-21).

The Story: Plot and Escape (Acts 23:12-35)

The next morning a group of about forty Jews developed a plot to kill Paul. They bound themselves together with an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until Paul was killed. They told the Jewish rulers about their plan and asked for their help. As a ruse, the chief priests and elders were to ask that Paul be brought before the Sanhedrin for questioning. The conspirators would then kill him on his way to the meeting.

Paul's nephew, however, heard about the plot and told Paul, so Paul called for his guard and had him take the boy to Claudius Lysias, the commander of the barracks. The boy told Lysias about the plot. That night the commander had Paul transferred to Caesarea, escorted by a detachment of 270 soldiers. He wrote a letter to Felix, the governor of Judea, telling him of the situation and stating that he had examined Paul and had found no charge against him deserving death or imprisonment.

In Caesarea Paul was handed over to Felix. When the governor discovered that Paul was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." He then ordered that Paul be kept under guard in the palace of Herod.

Commentary: The Plot to Kill Paul (Acts 23:12-22)

• Not satisfied that justice had been done in the matter concerning Paul, a group of radical Jews conceived a plot to murder him before he could be tried.

23:12 A conspiracy

• The conspiracy to kill Paul was conceived in the hearts of evil men. Its origin, however, was demonic.

• Jesus taught that the "gates of Hades" (that is, the conspiracies of the devil) will not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18).

23:16 The son of Paul's sister heard of this plot

• It was no accident that Paul's nephew discovered the plot to kill Paul. It was providential, that is, it was arranged by the hand of God.

• God not only directs us by His Spirit, He also directs us by His providence.

Commentary: Paul Transferred to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-35)

• Guarded by a large contingent of Roman soldiers, Paul was secretly transferred in the night to Caesarea.

23:29 There was no charge against him

• Throughout all of his trials, Paul was found innocent of all charges.

• Luke wanted to show the Roman officials throughout the empire that the church was not a subversive organization but that Christians were law-abiding citizens. This would hopefully help to lessen the persecution that Christians were enduring.

Life Application: Our Lives Are in God's Hands

• Our lives are in God's hands. We can know that at all times God is at work for us.

• One way He does this is by providentially arranging the circumstances and the events of our lives so that we are blessed and His kingdom is advanced.

• Paul wrote, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

• Our job is simply to remain true to Him and seek to walk in the center of His will.

The Story: Paul's Trial Before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)

Five days later, Ananias, the high priest, took with him some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus and went to Caesarea. There before Felix they presented their case against Paul. Tertullus, after an attempt to flatter the governor, made his

charge against Paul. "We have found this man to be a troublemaker," he said, "stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple."

When Paul was given permission to speak, he calmly denied the charges against him. He did admit, however, that he worshiped "the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect." He testified concerning his hope in God that there will be a resurrection of the dead. He further stated, "It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today." Felix, who was himself well acquainted with Christianity, deferred his decision, claiming that he wanted to first hear from Lysias, the commander of the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem.

A few days later, Felix and his Jewish wife Drusilla sent for Paul. This time Paul spoke to them about faith in Christ. He talked about righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment. As Felix listened, he became fearful and demanded that Paul stop. "When I find it convenient, I will send for you," he said. Because he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, he sent for him often and talked with him.

Two years passed, and Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Because he wanted to win the favor of the Jewish leaders, Felix left Paul in prison.

Commentary: Paul's Trial Before Felix

24:14 I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way

• Christianity is called "the Way" five times in Acts (9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22).

• The name reminds us of Jesus' words, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

24:24 He spoke about faith in Christ Jesus

• Faith in Christ is the essence of true Christianity.

• By this time, Paul had already written his letter to the Romans, which he wrote while in Corinth during his third missionary journey. Paul, no doubt, spoke to Felix about many of the things written in that epistle.

• In Romans Paul used the word "faith" forty times and "believe" seventeen times.

In one place he wrote, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:17).

Life Application: Jesus Is the Only Way

• We should never forget that Jesus is the only way to God, both for us and for the ones to whom we minister.

• It is only through faith in Him that anyone can be saved.

• Christ should therefore be at the center of our lives, and He should be the main subject of our preaching and teaching.

• We must never forget that our primary task is to bring others to faith in Him.

The Story: Paul's Trial Before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)

Porcius Festus succeeded Felix as governor of Judea. Three days after arriving in Caesarea, he proceeded to Jerusalem. There he met with the chief priests and Jewish leaders, who immediately told him of their charges against Paul and pleaded with him to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem. They were secretly planning to ambush and kill Paul on his way there. Festus, however, denied their request, saying that they could come to Caesarea, where he would listen to their charges against Paul.

The next day, after arriving back in Caesarea, Festus convened the court and summoned Paul. The Jews who had come with Festus accused Paul of many serious crimes. They were, however, unable to prove any of them.

In his defense Paul denied that he had done anything against the Jewish law, the temple, or Caesar. Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor, so he asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial there. Paul answered, "I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well." He then pressed his case: "If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!" After conferring with his council, Festus replied to Paul, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

Commentary: Paul's Trial Before Festus

25:11 I appeal to Caesar!

• Paul's appeal to Caesar was more than a desperate attempt to beat the charges against him. It was a calculated, and possibly Spirit-led, move to ensure that he traveled to Rome.

• Paul had been compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (20:22). Although Luke does not say, it is quite possible that he was now compelled by the Spirit to appeal to Caesar. The context seems to indicate that this is the case.

Life Application: Live So That Charges Are False

• As gospel workers we may at times have charges leveled against us. We must live such lives, however, that these charges will always be false.

• Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (Matthew 5:11).

• Note that we are blessed only when men speak evil against us falsely. The Jews leveled charges against Paul, but they could not prove any of them.

• Paul wrote that ministers of the gospel "must be blameless" (Titus 1:6).

The Story: Paul's Trial Before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32)

A few days after Paul had appealed to Caesar, King Agrippa and his wife Bernice arrived in Caesarea. Festus discussed Paul's case with the king, telling him of the recent events. He told Agrippa that the Jews took issue with Paul concerning "a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive." He further told the king how Paul had appealed to Caesar. Hearing this, Agrippa wanted to speak to Paul himself; so a hearing was scheduled for the next day.

The next day Paul was brought before King Agrippa. Festus told the king how the Jews had filed charges against Paul, calling for his death. However, he had concluded that Paul had done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment. Nevertheless, because Paul had appealed to the Emperor, Festus had decided to send him to Rome. Yet, the governor faced a dilemma: he had no crime with which to charge Paul. Thus, he needed the king's help to know what to write to

Caesar.

When Agrippa finally gave Paul permission to speak, the apostle launched into his defense. He explained to the king that his "crime" was nothing more than believing what God had promised to the fathers, that there would be a resurrection of the dead. He told of how he had once persecuted the church in Jerusalem, and how one day, while on his way to Damascus, he had encountered the risen Lord. It was then that Jesus told him that he was to go to the Gentiles.

Paul explained to the king how he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision and how he immediately began to preach the gospel in Damascus and later in Jerusalem and Judea and to the Gentiles in many lands. He preached that they should repent of their sins, turn to God, and live holy lives. Then Paul continued, "I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

At this point Festus became so agitated that he shouted at Paul, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane." This Paul denied. Then, turning to the king, he said, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do." Agrippa responded, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" Paul replied, "Short time or long, I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

Having heard this, the king and his entourage left the room. After conferring with the others, Agrippa concluded, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment." He then said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Commentary: Paul's Trial Before Agrippa

• King Agrippa was also known as Herod Agrippa II. He was the son of Herod Agrippa I, the one who killed James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1-4), and was the great grandson of Herod the Great.

• Agrippa had taken his sister Bernice to be his wife. So there were many reasons

why Paul could have feared the ruthless King Agrippa.

• Paul had to rely on the Holy Spirit's power to respond so clearly and courageously to such a powerful and ungodly ruler.

• Although God's messengers often minister to the poor or to common people, we must not forget that the wealthy and powerful are also in need of the Savior. God may also send His servants to witness to them.

• Paul's trial before Agrippa is his final trial in Acts. Here we see Paul the evangelist as he presses the claims of Christ on Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus.

Festus Consults King Agrippa (25:13-22)

• Festus, not knowing how to handle Paul's case, consulted with King Agrippa, since the king was better acquainted with Jewish customs (26:3).

• He was hoping that Agrippa could help him out of his predicament: he was sending Paul to Rome, but he had no crime with which to charge him.

• When Agrippa heard about Paul's case, he decided to interview the apostle himself the next day.

Paul Before Agrippa (25:23-26:32)

• Paul's meeting with Agrippa was a fulfillment of the words of Christ to Ananias that Paul would carry Christ's name "before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

26:16 To appoint you as a servant and as a witness

• Jesus appointed Paul as a servant and as a witness of what he had seen and heard.

• Two primary activities of missionaries are to be servants of God and the people to whom God has sent them and to be witnesses to Christ and His finished work on the cross.

• Verses 17-18 recount Jesus' commission to Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. His commission was fivefold: (1) to "open their eyes"; (2) to "turn them from darkness to light"; (3) to turn them "from the power of Satan to God"; (4) to see that "they may receive forgiveness of sins"; (5) to see that they may receive "a place among those who are sanctified by faith" in Christ.

• As Christ's ambassadors, we have been given that same responsibility today (compare 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

26:19 I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven

• More than twenty years after first receiving his commission from Christ, Paul testified that he had remained faithful to his original vision.

• He had traveled thousands of miles, often on foot. He had lived in constant danger. He had been beaten, stoned, and harassed by both Jews and Gentiles.

• He had at times gone without shelter, food, water, and sleep, laboring tirelessly for the cause of Christ (compare 2 Corinthians 11:25-28).

• In all of this, he had endured and had not lost his vision. Neither had he wavered from his original commitment.

26:20 I preached that they should repent and turn to God

• Not only did Paul remain true to Christ and His mission, he also remained true to Christ's message, that is, the message of the gospel.

• He faithfully preached about Christ's death and resurrection and how through faith in Him and repentance toward God, people could turn to God and find life everlasting (compare 20:21).

Life Application: Prove Faithful

• Above all else, Christ demands that His servants be faithful. No matter what the circumstances or the cost, we must remain faithful to Christ and His calling on our lives.

• Paul wrote concerning himself and his own ministry, "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

• We are stewards of the "mysteries of God," that is, the gospel, and we must faithfully preach that message, no matter what the personal cost.

Conclusion

• Paul had finished his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea. He would soon be on his

way to Rome, but not as he had previously expected.

• When he was departing from Ephesus during his third missionary journey, Paul had stated, "I must visit Rome also" (Acts 19:21).

• A few weeks later, when from Corinth he wrote to the Roman Christians, he told them, "I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you" (Romans 1:10).

• Now, Paul was indeed on his way to Rome; however, he was going not as a free man but as a prisoner.

Important Terms

ethn . The Greek word for Gentiles. It means the nations of the world.

Judaizers. Traditionalists who thought that one must keep the Law of Moses to truly serve Christ.

the Way. A name for Christianity in Acts, pointing to Jesus as the way to the Father.

Nazarene sect. Tertullus' charge against Paul before Felix: that he was a ringleader of this group.

missio Dei. Latin for the mission of God.

Superintendent of the Harvest. Luke's picture of the Holy Spirit as the one who directs the work of missions.

Fivefold commission. Christ's commission to Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, listed in five parts in Acts 26:17-18.

Providence. God arranging circumstances by His own hand, as when Paul's nephew heard the plot.

Key People

• Paul: Led by the Spirit to Jerusalem, arrested in the temple, testified through five trials, and appealed to Caesar so that he would go to Rome.

• James and the elders: Received Paul's report, praised God for what He had done among the Gentiles, and asked Paul to take a purification vow because of Jewish

Christians zealous for the law.

• Philip the evangelist: Formerly one of the seven "deacons" of Acts 6, and the gospel preacher of Acts 8. Paul stayed with him in Caesarea.

• Philip's four unmarried daughters: Prophetesses, in accordance with Joel's prophecy quoted on the Day of Pentecost: "Your...daughters shall prophesy."

• Agabus: A prophet who visually and accurately predicted Paul's arrest and imprisonment in Jerusalem.

• Jews from Asia: Seized Paul in the temple on trumped-up charges, accusing him of defiling the temple by taking Greeks there.

• Ananias the high priest: Confronted Paul before the Sanhedrin, and later went with elders and Tertullus to Caesarea to accuse Paul before Felix.

• Claudius Lysias: Commander of the barracks. After Paul's nephew reported the plot, Lysias transferred Paul to Caesarea with 270 soldiers and wrote to Felix that he had found no charge deserving death or imprisonment.

• Paul's nephew: The son of Paul's sister. He heard of the plot to kill Paul. The textbook calls this providential, arranged by the hand of God.

• Felix: Governor of Judea. Well acquainted with Christianity. Heard Paul on faith, righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, hoped for a bribe, and left Paul in prison for two years.

• Tertullus: The lawyer who presented the case against Paul before Felix, calling him a troublemaker and a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.

• Drusilla: Felix's Jewish wife. She and Felix sent for Paul, and Paul spoke to them about faith in Christ.

• Porcius Festus: Succeeded Felix as governor of Judea. Heard the charges, found them unproved, and after Paul's appeal said, "To Caesar you will go!"

• King Agrippa: Also known as Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I and great grandson of Herod the Great. Paul's meeting with him fulfilled Acts 9:15. He concluded that Paul had done nothing deserving death or imprisonment.

• Bernice: Agrippa's wife, and his sister. Paul pressed the claims of Christ on Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus.

Key Places

• Miletus: Where Paul left the Ephesian elders before sailing toward Jerusalem.

• Tyre: Where disciples, speaking by the Spirit, urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

• Ptolemais: A city in northern Galilee. The first time Luke mentions a church there, one of hundreds of places planted by unnamed brothers and sisters.

• Caesarea: Site of the Caesarean outpouring some twenty years earlier. Paul stayed with Philip, was later transferred there under guard, and stood trial before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa.

• Jerusalem: Where Paul reported to James and the elders, was arrested in the temple, addressed the crowd and the Sanhedrin, and was told by the Lord that he must also testify in Rome.

• The temple: Where Paul took a purification vow and was seized by Jews from Asia on false charges of bringing Greeks inside.

• The barracks: Where the Roman officer took Paul after rescuing him from the mob, and where the Lord appeared to him at night.

• The palace of Herod: In Caesarea, where Felix ordered that Paul be kept under guard.

• Cilicia: Paul's home region. When Felix discovered Paul was from Cilicia, he said he would hear the case when the accusers arrived.

• Rome: Paul's intended next missionary base, and the place the Lord said he must testify. After the appeal to Caesar, Festus said, "To Caesar you will go!"

Key Event

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and told him, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11).

In a night vision the Lord again appeared to Paul. This word of courage set the path from Jerusalem toward Rome, the next movement in the unit and in Jesus' Acts 1:8 agenda.

Key Verse

"Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

Acts 23:11

Remember This

• I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

• The primary function of prophecy is strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

• We should be moved by the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

• Learning a language is an important part of missionary work.

• The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are key elements of true gospel preaching.

• In Acts, the Holy Spirit is actively involved in fulfilling the missio Dei.

Textbook Review and Application

• 1. How did the elders in Jerusalem receive Paul's report concerning his missionary ministry among the Gentiles? Were they justified in their concern for Paul to correct the Jewish perception regarding his ministry and methods?

• 2. List and describe three ways that the Holy Spirit enables the church to fulfill its mission to preach the gospel to all nations.

• 3. According to Paul's testimony before King Agrippa, what five-fold commission had Christ given him? How might this commission apply to the church today?

• 4. Does God ever require His servants today to stand in witness before kings or rulers? Why is it important to be respectful and yet to present the gospel clearly to such leaders?

Quick Review

1. How did James and the elders receive Paul's report about what God had done

among the Gentiles?

Answer: They glorified God (they praised God). They rejoiced when they heard how the Gentiles had received the gospel.

2. What three ways does the Holy Spirit enable the church to fulfill its mission?

Answer: He inspires mission, empowers mission, and sustains mission.

3. What did the Lord tell Paul the night after the Sanhedrin hearing?

Answer: "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

4. Name Paul's five trials in Acts, and the outcome of each.

Answer: Before the Jewish mob in the temple, before the Sanhedrin, before Felix, before Festus, and before King Agrippa. In each trial Paul was found innocent of all charges.

5. According to Paul's testimony before Agrippa, what fivefold commission had Christ given him?

Answer: To open their eyes; to turn them from darkness to light; to turn them from the power of Satan to God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins; and that they may receive a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ.

Chapter Summary

The Spirit was leading Paul to Jerusalem. What mattered was that he obeyed the voice of the Spirit and completed the ministry Christ had given him.

• James and the elders praised God for Paul's Gentile ministry, then asked him to take a purification vow. He was arrested in the temple on false charges.

• Paul testified before the crowd and the Sanhedrin. The Lord told him he must also testify in Rome. After a plot against his life he was transferred to Caesarea.

• In trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, Paul was found innocent. He appealed to Caesar and would go to Rome as a prisoner.

Remain true to the calling received from Christ. The Spirit inspires, empowers, and sustains the church's mission, and He may send His servants to witness even before kings.

ONE-SENTENCE MEMORY

Paul went to Jerusalem in the will of the Lord, testified there through

arrest and five trials, and was told he must also testify in Rome.