

Innocent or Guilty

The Book of Acts
Midweek Sermon
Pastor Carl Toti
June 2, 2021

Acts 25:1-2 (NLT)

1 Three days after Festus arrived in Caesarea to take over his new responsibilities, he left for Jerusalem, 2 where the leading priests and other Jewish leaders met with him and made their accusations against Paul.

Acts 25:3-7 (NLT)

3 They asked Festus as a favor to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (planning to ambush and kill him on the way). 4 But Festus replied that Paul was at Caesarea and he himself would be returning there soon. 5 So he said, "Those of you in authority can return with me. If Paul has done anything wrong, you can make your accusations." 6 About eight or ten days later Festus returned to Caesarea, and on the following day he took his seat in court and ordered that Paul be brought in. 7 When Paul arrived, the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem gathered around and made many serious accusations they couldn't prove.

The Accusers Have the Burden of Proof Against the Accused

Exodus 23:7 (TEV)

7 Do not make false accusations, and do not put an innocent person to death, for I will condemn anyone who does such an evil thing.

Satan Is Called the Accuser of the Brethren

Revelation 12:10 (NKJV)

10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

THREE GROUPS REPRESENTED HERE: JEWISH LEADERS, FESTUS, AND PAUL

THE JEWISH LEADERS reveal how dangerous godless religion can be, how hateful and driven to murder humans can become in the name of their religious dogma. From Hitler to the burning heretics on stakes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, man is imaginative in how he can inflict pain and suffering upon his fellow man. These were the same Jewish leaders in the previous chapter that hired 40 assassins to kill Paul.

FESTUS—what a poor excuse he was for a leader. So much for standing with truth and justice. All he cared about was his own popularity.

All the Accused Can Do Is Deny the Charges—

Acts 25:8 (NLT)

8 Paul denied the charges. "I am not guilty of any crime against the Jewish laws or the Temple or the Roman government," he said.

PAUL

1. Christians must _____ God over man.
2. Christians must _____ the state approved religion.
3. Christians have been tried and _____ in godless courts.

Strive for Peace—

1 Timothy 2:1–4 (NIV)

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Acts 25:9-12 (NLT)

9 Then Festus, wanting to please the Jews, asked him, "Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?" 10 But Paul replied, "No! This is the official Roman court, so I ought to be tried right here. You know very well I am not guilty of harming the Jews. 11 If I have done something worthy of death, I don't refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!" 12 Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, "Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!"

RECAP

1. Sometimes the innocent suffer for the guilty.
2. Don't look for justice in an unjust world, but if you get it, be grateful.
3. Obeying can make enemies.
4. The accusers have the burden of proof against the accused.
5. Never be guilty of accusing the innocent.
6. When unjustly accused, all you can do is deny and appeal to heaven.

ANSWERS:

1. OBEY
2. REJECT
3. CONVICTED