

HOLY AMBITION

Acts 24-26

What is Paul's ambition

In Acts 24-25, Paul is brought before Felix, the Roman governor of Judea. Felix finds Paul not guilty but leaves him in prison for two years. When a new governor, Festus, arrives, Paul again defends himself and appeals to Caesar. Acts 26 records Paul's arraignment hearing before Festus and King Agrippa II to figure out why Paul is being sent to Caesar.

Paul is not on trial for a social or political reason but a theological one: he has become a witness to the forgiveness and sanctification available to all through faith in Jesus (26:16-18). It is testifying to this hope that Paul is on trial (26:22-23).

Paul's great ambition, the thing he desired to achieve through his sentencing, is that all who hear would come to faith in Jesus (26:29). This ambition is what Luke hopes to instill in his readers.

How our ambition differs from Paul's

Ambition, our desire to achieve, can be identified by asking questions like:

What energizes you (Col. 1:28-29)?

What do you persist in despite difficulty (2 Cor. 11:23-27)?

What would you regret not doing (1 Cor. 9:16)?

While ambitions are not inherently bad, we often use our ambitions to override God's other-focused commission (Matt 28:19).

Underneath our ambitions is a desire to prove that we matter, that we have worth and ought to be accepted.

Why we would want to change our ambitions

Our ambitions are incapable of attaining righteousness. Acceptance is only found by sharing in Jesus' achievements on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). Faith in Jesus is trusting in his achievements to make you acceptable before God, not your own.

Only Jesus and the power of his resurrection can shift our ambitions because it changes our motivations beneath our ambitions.

Are we struggling to adopt the God commissioned, other-focused ambition we see in our text? Then we are still looking to our ambitions to functionally achieve our righteousness. The solution is that we must not only know about Jesus and the power of his resurrection, we must also know (experience) it.

Key Point: We will only share in Paul's other-focused ambition if we share in his experience of Jesus and the power of his resurrection.

Small Group Application Questions:

If someone were to look at your life this past week, what would they say your ambition is?

How does working *from* acceptance differ from working *for* acceptance? How would you know which position you were working from?

Where might God be inviting you to “lay your deadly doing down”—to stop trying to prove your worth and rest in what He’s already done?

What might it look like to have an “*other-focused*” ambition like Paul’s in everyday life? How could that shape your work, friendships, or family life this week?