

October 9, 2022

“The Danger of Spiritual Procrastination” **Acts 24:1-27**

Prel Rmks

LOGW

Paul had been brought to Caesarea to have his case heard by the Governor – Felix (end of chapter 23 ...)

What we have here in Chapter 24 is Paul’ trial before Felix.

There’s a picture presented to us in this chapter of “The Danger of Spiritual Procrastination”. We see it in the life of this man, Felix.

Let’s read our text

(1) Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. **(2)** And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, **(3)** we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. **(4)** Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. **(5)** For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. **(6)** He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. **(7)** But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands, **(8)** commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

(9) And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

(10) Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, **(11)** because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. **(12)** And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. **(13)** Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

(14) But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. **(15)** I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. **(16)** This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. **(17)** "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, **(18)** in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. **(19)** They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. **(20)** Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, **(21)** unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

The Verdict vv. 22-27

We'll read those verses when we come to them in the message.

INTRODUCTION

Felix takes center stage in this chapter – this trial and the time he spent with Paul in this chapter is the time of his life!

Who was this man Felix? What do we know about him?

A former slave

He had been given his freedom by the Roman Emperor Claudius, who later appointed him procurator or governor of the Roman province of Judea in A.D. 52

History tells us that Felix used his office for his personal gain.

His tenure in office was characterized by excessively brutal enforcement, especially when it came to tax collection and keeping the peace.

He knew that keeping the peace was the key to remaining in office ... but he overdid it so much and ruled with such a heavy hand that it eventually led to him being removed from office by Emperor Nero in A.D. 60

Tacitus said about Felix that he “exercised the power of a king with the disposition of a slave.”

This trial of Paul before Felix took place sometime in A.D. 58

The Case Against Paul ~ Paul’s Defense ~ The Delayed Verdict

I. The Case Against Paul 1-9

(1) Now after five days **Ananias** the high priest came down with **the elders** and a certain **orator** named **Tertullus**. These gave **evidence** to the governor against Paul.

orator – public speaker, one who is good at rhetoric, an advocate, attorney, “Special Prosecutor”

evidence – there was none! SPIN

2-4 Tertullus demonstrates his gift of rhetoric – with flattery

(2) And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that **through you we enjoy great peace**, and **prosperity** is being brought to this nation by your foresight, (3) **we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.** (4) Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, **I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.**

Ananias and the Jews hated Felix

Brutal and harsh and violent rule

Was replaced in A.D. 60 by Nero

So harsh and brutal it incited rebellion

Insurrection among the population

Romans wanted peace ...

Felix took it too far

This was pure flattery and not heartfelt praise

5-9 Tertullus presents the case against Paul

(5) For we have found this man a **plague**,

plague – pest; KJV: a pestilent fellow, public menace, like a disease that spreads

- 1- a creator of **dissension** among all the Jews throughout the world,

dissension – sedition, insurrection, uprising, uproar

threat to the Roman Empire – seditionist or an insurrectionist

- 2- and a ringleader of the **sect of the Nazarenes**.

Nazarenes – followers of Jesus of Nazareth

sect – faction based on beliefs

leader of an unapproved religion

(6)

- 3- He even tried to **profane** the temple,

profane – to desecrate, to defile, to commit a sacrilegious act

the Jews from Asia had accused him of bringing Trophimus into the Temple area – 21:27-29

Not even Roman citizens or soldiers could do that and live. There was an agreement between the Roman government and the Jews that if anyone

profaned the Temple, it was punishable by death and the Jews could carry out the judgment ...

and we seized him,

[and wanted to judge him according to our law.

(7) But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands,

(8) commanding his accusers to come to you.]

By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

threat to the Roman Empire – seditionist or an insurrectionist

leader of an unapproved religion

no regard for the most sacred place in all of Jewish life – violated a law that was punishable by death

(9) And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

No witnesses or proof of any of these things

The Case Against Paul - there was no case

II. Paul's Defense 10-21

Paul refutes each of the charges that Tertullus had presented against him

His opening remarks showed that he was familiar with the rules of rhetoric himself, but he was not nearly so over-the-top as Tertullus had been

(10) Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,

11-13 He addressed the charge of being an insurrectionist – a threat to Rome

(11) because you may ascertain that it is **no more than twelve days** since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

I didn't have time to organize an insurrection in 5 or 6 days

No one saw me trying to do that anywhere during those days when I was in Jerusalem – not in the temple, or in the synagogues, or anywhere in the city

(12) And they neither found me in the temple **disputing** with anyone nor **inciting** the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

(13) Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. **No witnesses ~ no proof**

14-16 He addressed the charge that he was the leader of an unapproved, rogue, heretical religion

(14) But this I confess to you, that according to **the Way** which **they call a sect**, so **I worship the God of my fathers**, **[Abraham, Isaac, Jacob]** believing all things which are written in **the Law and in the Prophets**.

(15) I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

We as Christians today, who are part of this same Way, as followers of Jesus, we:

worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

believe the Old Testament Scriptures

we believe those OT Scriptures teach that there will be a resurrection of the dead – the just and the unjust

Job 19:25-27 For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; **(26)** And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, **(27)** Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

And our hope is sure because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. **(23)** But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.

(16) This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

We should live this way, too.

Francis Schaeffer – How Should We Then Live?

Paul is preaching to everyone there ... here

17-19 He addressed the 3rd charge against him: that he had profaned the temple

He tells Felix what he was doing in Jerusalem and what happened in the Temple when he was arrested

(17) "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, (18) in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.

(19) They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

no witnesses ~ no proof

Not even the ones who were there from the Sanhedrin could truthfully say that they found anything wrong with him

(20) Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,

no witnesses ~ no proof

(21) unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' " **23:6**

Paul's Defense

Felix had all the information he needed to make a judgment – there was no case against Paul

Charges and accusations – unsubstantiated: would not stand in a Roman court of law

III. The Delayed Verdict 22-27

He put off coming to a decision –

not only about Paul's legal case

but about something far more important

(22) But when Felix heard these things, having **more accurate** knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "**When Lysias the commander comes down**, I will make a decision on your case."

more accurate – more exact; very accurate

no record that Lysias ever came to Caesarea to testify in this case

Felix knew that Paul was not guilty – look at the leniency he showed him:

(23) So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.

24-26 Paul presents another case to Felix: the case for coming to Christ for salvation

(24) And after some days, when Felix came with his wife **Drusilla**, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Drusilla – what do we know about her?

daughter of King Agrippa I (chapter 12)

sister of King Agrippa II (chapter 25)

Josephus – when she was in her teens, she was given in marriage by her brother to the King of another domain, but she was lured away in a very deceptive way by Felix.

So Felix and Drusilla had committed an open, flagrant, scandalous sin.

They showed no remorse, much less repentance for their unchaste behavior.

So, as Paul witnessed to Felix concerning faith in Christ ...

(25) **Now as** he reasoned about:

righteousness – the need for r. , man’s lack of r. apart from Christ

self-control – the control of passions and desires, often used in reference to sexual desires

and **the judgment to come,**

These 3 items are associated with the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

John 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Felix **was afraid** – fearful, frightened, alarmed,

KJV - trembled

Felix was under conviction ...

But he resisted coming to Christ for salvation

and [He] answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient **time** I will call for you."

time – Kairos = season

He did call for Paul and converse with him, but not because he was under conviction and concerned about his soul

(26) Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

No mention is ever made that Felix ever came under conviction again.

Genesis 6:3 And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever ..."

(27) But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

A.D. 58-60 Paul was left in confinement in Caesarea

Politics was involved – Felix was under threat of losing his governorship

Conclusion

A pattern in the life of Felix emerges in this chapter that serves as warning.

The pattern is this:

He knew all that he needed to know to make the the right decision about Paul's legal case – but ...

He put it off ~ He delayed ~ He procrastinated

He ran out the clock, and for political advantage and favor with one of his constituencies he passed the buck to his successor

He knew all that he needed to know to make the right decision about Christ:

Acts 24:22 He had very accurate knowledge about the Way – the way of salvation:

He knew that he was a great sinner

He knew that Jesus was sent to die so God could forgive men of their sins

He knew that Jesus did die, and that He rose again and that forgiveness was available

And don't you know that Paul witnessed to him every time they met and explained to him in even more depth the way of salvation

He knew all that he needed to know to be saved, but when he was under conviction about his own lack of righteousness, and about his sin, and about the

judgment to come, he chose to put off placing his faith in the Lord Jesus.

For just a moment he got a glimpse of the impending jeopardy of his soul before God and it horrified him and he trembled.

But there is no record in Scripture that he ever came under conviction again or that he was ever concerned about his soul again, or that he ever came to Christ.

God's Word pleads with man not to delay in coming to God for salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ:

2 Corinthians 6:2 " Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Isaiah 55:6-7 Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. **(7)** Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Hebrews 3:7-8 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, **(8)** **DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS**

Hebrews 4:7 "TODAY," after such a long time, as it has been said: "TODAY, IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, **DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.**"

{**Harry Ironside** 12 years old – D.L. Moody – Theater –
rafters – All Christians 7,000 ~ before 15 ~ half ~ 20 ~ 1,500
30 ~ 40 ~ 50 ~ only about 20 people standing}

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now your Creator in the days
of your youth, Before the difficult days come ...

now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation

{An old spiritual chorus:

Get right with God
And do it now.
Get right with God,
And He will show you how.
Right down at the cross,
Where Jesus shed His blood,
Get right with God.
Get right, get right with God.}