

Part 57 Paul's Trial before Felix

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, Nov. 09, 2016

+ Acts 24:1-27

Last week we finished up Chapter 23 of Act which dealt with the murderous plot by the Jews to kill Paul. Forty men had gotten together and made a vow that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. But the Lord was looking out for Paul and had his nephew there in Jerusalem to hear about the plot. His nephew then came and told Paul and then the Roman Chief Captain of the plan and the captain gathered together 470 soldiers to protect Paul and escort him to Cesarea to stand before Felix the Governor. That is where we pick our story up tonight starting in verse 1 of Chapter 24:

1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

For whatever reason it takes 5 days for Paul's trial to begin. I would like to note that 12 days have passed since Paul first arrived in Jerusalem to bring the offerings to the poor Saints in that city. We know that because Paul says so in verse 11.

So we have assembled here the High Priest Ananias, the same one that presided over his little mock trial with the Sanhedrin council, and also a man named **Tertullus**, which the Bible says is a "certain orator." An orator is someone who speaks. His job was to state the accusations that are levied against Paul. The name Tertullus is a Roman name, so he is either hired by the Jews to help them with this case since they would not be savvy to the Roman system. You could think of him as a prosecuting attorney. He is working for the Jews.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

Oh boy, this guy is laying it on thick. He is trying to appeal to Felix's authority and making it sound like they are so grateful for the law and order that Felix has demonstrated across Judea and that under his rule they have enjoyed great quietness and peace.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

Wow, talk about some trumped up charges... To hear them tell it, Paul is the worst of the worst. That word "pestilent" means; **a plague or a disease**. In other words we find Paul to be a disgusting disease that infects men and needs to be eradicated.

Then they call him "a mover of sedition among all the Jews." That means that he is the causer of an uprising or an insurrection. He's the leader of a revolt of the Jews.

And they accuse him of being **a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes**"

That means he is the number one leader of that bunch of heretics that are followers of that man from Nazareth. The term "Nazarene," became a derogatory term used by the Jews when they were referring to Christians.

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

Now they get to the part of how Paul came into custody. He was profaning the Holy Temple and we caught him and drug him out but your Chief Captain stopped us and took him from us. And he did this with great violence!

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. 9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

And so the prosecutor closes with his opening arguments. Paul is a real bad guy, he broke the laws of the Jews. He's the scum of the earth and causing all sorts of trouble. We were going to take care of him but the Roman government stepped in and took him from us against our will and then commanded we come here to plead our case.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

Felix has been governor of Judea for around 7-years at this time. Paul is more than ready to give his defense. Perhaps the Jews had forgotten that Paul was a very equipped Jewish lawyer himself. He had been trained by the very best teacher in the land, Gamaliel, and had started his life out by being a Jewish prosecutor. But, besides his education and experience, he has something even bigger on his side; the truth and the Lord Jesus Christ.

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

First Paul mentions that he has only been in town for twelve days and in those twelve days the governor knows that there has been no such uprising or "sedition" as these Jews are claiming. If there were, Felix would have heard about it.

The French theologian, Theodore Beza, shares a timeline of Paul's 12 days: "The first was that on which he came to Jerusalem, [Act 21:15](#). The second he spent with James and the apostles, [Act 21:18](#). Six days were spent in fulfilling his vow, [Act 21:21](#), [Act 21:26](#). On the ninth day the tumult arose, being the seventh day of his vow, and on this day he was rescued by Lysias, [Act 21:27](#); [Act 22:29](#). The tenth day he was before the Sanhedrin, [Act 22:30](#); [Act 23:10](#). On the eleventh the plot was laid to take his life, and on the same day, at evening, he was removed to Caesarea.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

He just lays out the facts. None of the things they claim are true and they cannot prove them to be true. The only way they can make these claims is if they banded together and agreed to tell lies about Paul and perjure themselves in court.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Paul brings up the resurrection being questioned. When he said “[which they themselves also allow](#),” he is referring to the Pharisees that were present because the Pharisees did believe in the resurrection but the Sadducees did not. But to say that the Pharisees also believed in the resurrection kind of gives a sweeping inclusion of the Jews. Therefore, Paul’s statement sounds like he is meaning all of the Jews also believe in the resurrection.

[16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.](#)

Paul’s conscience is clear on this matter. He states that he has no intention to offend God or men. He said “[herein do I exercise myself](#),” meaning he makes it his regular routine to live his life this way, not to offend God or man.

[17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.](#)

Then he states the reason that he was there in the first place. He simply had traveled to Jerusalem to bring his people offerings. He wasn’t there to lead a revolt or to profane the Temple.

[18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.](#)

The Jews had claimed that Paul had caused a tumult or sedition and had profaned the Temple and they caught him doing this. But Paul says otherwise. He wasn’t doing anything except going through the rituals of a vow to God and they came and just drug him out of the Temple for no reason.

[19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.](#)

Then he gives them another punch by stating the truth, that if they had a problem with Paul being there, they should have come to Felix beforehand and objected to it.

[20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.](#)

Again, Paul is referring to the Pharisees here when he says “[let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me](#),” because he knows and they know that they stated they found “[no evil in this man](#).” We read that in our studies 2-weeks ago: [Acts 23:9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.](#)

So, while the Jews just hate Paul, he is making them focus on this one thing dealing with the preaching and teaching of the resurrection of the dead that he is being charged with.

[22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.](#)

No doubt Felix is familiar with Christianity to a degree, especially since his own wife is a Jew, but he is not going to make a ruling until after he hears from the Chief Captain, Lysias, and he also wants to learn more from Paul which we will see coming up next.

[23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.](#)

More waiting for Paul. While he is not thrown into the bottom of a prison cell, he is under house arrest. He has a Roman Centurion stationed with him at all times, both for his protection and to keep him under arrest. However, Paul is allowed to have company. His friends are welcome to visit him whenever they want.

[24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.](#) -- Now the honorable governor Felix visits Paul again. This time he brings his lovely wife, Drusilla de Vil...© and the Bible tells us she was a Jewess.

A little history of Felix and Drusilla: According to history Felix was one rotten ruler. He was the son of a servant that had been set free by Claudius Caesar and had been appointed Governor of Judea, a position he held for 8-years. While in power he had went through 3 wives. His current wife, Drusilla, was the daughter of Herod Agrippa. At 6-years old she had been betrothed to marry Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, king of Comagene, on the condition that Epiphanes would embrace Judaism. Epiphanes refused to keep this condition and would not marry her. So Drusilla’s brother, also named Agrippa, forced her to marry Azizus, king of Emesenes, however, while married to Azizus, Felix the Governor saw her and fell madly in love with her. History says that she was a very beautiful woman. Felix with the help of his friend, Simon the Magician of Cyprus, convinced her to leave her husband and marry Felix.

So, this motley couple have sat down in front of Paul to learn more about “the way.” The Bible doesn’t mention Paul defending himself again in this meeting but rather he was focused to tell them about Christ. Paul is getting the opportunity of a lifetime to share the Gospel with one of the most powerful rulers in the land. Another example of how God uses our trials for good.

[25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.](#)

Paul talks to Felix and Drusilla about Christ and while doing so preaches a message of righteousness, temperance, and judgment. Man, talk about knowing your audience! Here is the Governor of Judea getting blistered by the preacher on Character, Self-Control, and Condemnation! I’m sure Felix and Drusilla walked in there expecting to be treated like royalty and with their noses up in the air, probably like they were doing Paul some kind of favor for even being in his presence. I can just see them sitting there all smug and fat from eating and drinking, like it was some kind of entertainment and then I can just see the blood drain out of their faces as Paul starts preaching.

Felix was so convicted of his evil ways that the Bible says he was trembling. This guy was tore up from the floor up! Naturally he finds a reason to get out of the room. He is running from conviction just as many men do when confronted with their sins.

[26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.](#) We see there was another reason Felix kept Paul imprisoned, he hoped to extort money from him somehow. We are not told that Felix fell under conviction again even though he communed with Paul “the oftener,” for another 2-years. Then a new governor took over, Festus, which we will talk more about next time.

¹ All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible