

## THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

### MINISTRY NOTES

- A. Paul was transferred by Claudius Lysias to the Roman provincial capital of Caesarea.
- B. His time in Caesarea was one of proclaiming the Gospel and anticipating his promised future ministry in Rome.
- C. Richard Longenecker points out two conclusions from Paul's extended time in Caesarea, ... *that (1) Christianity had nothing to do with political sedition and (2) Jewish opposition to Christianity sprang from the Christian claim to legitimate fulfillment of the hopes of Judaism.*

### PAUL IN CAESAREA BEFORE FELIX, ACTS 24:1-27

- A. Charges presented against Paul (1-9)
  - 1. The High Priest and other Jewish representatives arrived in Caesarea (1), *And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul.*
    - a. The Jewish High Priest, Ananias, and some elders from the Sanhedrin made the trip from Jerusalem to Caesarea.
    - b. They brought a gifted attorney, Tertullus, to appeal their case.
    - c. The word for *spokesman* is only used here in the New Testament. It is the word from which we get *rhetoric* and it refers to a lawyer who is a skilled speaker. They wanted to do the best they could to condemn Paul.
  - 2. Tertullus was the lead in bringing charges against Paul (2-9)
    - a. He began by heaping praise on Felix (2-4), *And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. But to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly.*
      - 1) Tertullus began by praising Felix and that he would not take much of his precious time.
      - 2) Thomas Constable, *Felix was a fierce ruler and the "peace" that existed was a result of terror rather than tranquillity. His "reforms" were more like purges.*
      - 3) Kenneth Gangel, *During Felix's rule insurrections and anarchy had increased throughout Palestine. His brutal attempts to put down popular uprisings had only further inflamed the people. Most Jews living at that time would have been horrified to hear what the high priest's mouthpiece had to say to Governor Felix though it certainly was politically expedient.*
    - b. His accusations against Paul (5-8), *For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.*
      - 1) The specific charges
        - a) Paul was described as a plague because he stirred up riots among the Jews around the world.
          - 1] This was a serious charge since a key responsibility of Roman authorities was to keep the peace, *Pax Romana.*
          - 2] This was an attempt to show that Paul was guilty of sedition against Rome.
        - b) He was the ringleader of the Nazarene sect.
          - 1] This was the only time this term was used for Christianity.
          - 2] Tertullus was trying to paint a picture of Christianity as an unapproved religion outside of Judaism.
          - 3] Stanley Toussaint, *By describing Christianity as a "sect" of the Nazarenes, the attorney made Paul's faith appear to be cultic and bizarre.*
        - c) He attempted to defame the Temple but was stopped by the Temple police.
          - 1] A report in Acts 21:28-29 claimed that Paul defamed the Temple by taking a Gentile into the inner court.
          - 2] The Roman government had given Jews the right to execute any Gentile who entered the Temple's inner court.

- d) Some translations add the following texts to 6 and 8 and add 7.
  - 1] Most scholars believe there is not sufficient evidence to include these in Scripture.
  - 2] The additional text, *and wanted to judge him according to our law. [v. 7] But the commander, Lysias, came and with the use of much force snatched him from our hands [v. 8] and ordered his accusers to come before you.*

2) Tertullus assured Felix that the charges would be confirmed under examination by Felix.

c. Other Jews joined in by affirming the accusations against Paul (9), *The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.*

- 1) The High Priest and other Jews present affirmed the charges brought by Tertullus.
- 2) Josephus, a Roman historian, wrote that the Jews expected Felix to quickly condemn Paul based on his (Felix) treatment of others who had disturbed the peace of Rome.

#### B. Paul's defense before Felix (10-21)

1. Felix gave Paul permission to speak (10), *And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.*

- a. Felix had been serving in Samaria and then in Judea for more than 10 years.
- b. He was aware of the special issues in Judea so Paul acknowledged that Felix was qualified to handle Paul's case.

2. Paul responded to the accusations of the Jews (11-13)

a. He said he had only been in Jerusalem 12 days (11), *You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem,*

- 1) Paul said he had only been in Jerusalem 12 days which was not enough time to have become a pest as charged by Tertullus (verse 5).
- 2) One reason for Paul being in Jerusalem was the feast of Pentecost (Harvest) which occurred fifty days after Passover.

b. He said it could not be proved that he caused a disturbance anywhere in the city (12-13), *and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me.*

- 1) Paul's actions were in harmony with the purpose of the Temple, to worship the God of Israel.
- 2) The charges against Paul were manufactured by Asian Jews and accepted by the mob and Jewish religious leaders.

3. He rebutted the accusation that he was leader of a cult (14-16)

a. He declared that he was a follower of the Way (14), *But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,*

- 1) Paul refuted the accusation that he was leader of a sect.
- 2) According to Paul, the Way (Christianity) was actually the fulfillment of Judaism as found in the Law and the Prophets.
- 3) Thomas Constable, *This would have helped Felix see that the real conflict between Paul and his accusers was religious and not political, as Tertullus had made it appear.*

b. His hope was in resurrection (15), *having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.*

- 1) A central point for Paul was that hope in God focuses on resurrection which was accepted by the Pharisees.
- 2) This is the only place where Paul testified to the fact that all men will stand before God in judgment which is found elsewhere in the New Testament, note John 5:28-29.

- c. His desire was to have a clear conscience before God and man (16), *So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.*
  - 1) *clear* is only used two other times in the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 10:32 and Philippians 1:10.
  - 2) It means *not causing to stumble, or not offending.*
  - 3) Paul sought to live in such a way that his life was in obedience to God and not a stumbling block to others.
  
- 4. His key reason for being in Jerusalem (17-18a)
  - a. He had come to worship and was doing so without any problems (17), *Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.*
    - 1) Paul had spent years away from Jerusalem proclaiming the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles.
    - 2) The *alms to my nation* were collected by Asian Christians to help meet the physical needs of Christians in Judea who were suffering from a severe famine.
    - 3) Paul wanted to demonstrate the unity of the church as Gentile Christians ministered to the physical needs of the Jewish Christians who had ministered to the spiritual needs of Gentile Christians.
    - 4) *Offerings* were Paul's paying the expenses of the four men who had taken Nazirite vows.
  - b. He was doing that without any problems (18a), *While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult.*
    - 1) Paul was worshiping after completing the purification rites.
    - 2) He was causing no disturbance and no formal charges had been made.
  
- 5. The disturbance was started by Jews from Asia (18b-21)
  - a. The Jews from Asia should be the ones making the accusations (18b-19), *But some Jews from Asia—they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me.*
    - 1) The original accusers, Jews from Asia, were not present.
    - 2) Paul declared they should have been there if they had any evidence against him.
  - b. The accusers present should be stating the accusations they found against Paul at the Sanhedrin Council (20), *Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council,*
    - 1) The Jewish representatives who were present had no charges to present.
    - 2) Their examination of Paul fell apart when a theological argument broke out between Pharisees and Sadducees.
    - 3) Tertullus had no charges to present.
  - c. Paul declared the only thing for which he was being accused was belief in the resurrection of the dead (21), *other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'*
    - 1) The split occurred when Paul declared he was on trial because he believed in the resurrection of the dead.
    - 2) Such a charge would not incur a penalty in a Roman court since he had to do with religious opinions.
  
- C. Felix postponed Paul's case (22-27)
  - 1. He said he would decide Paul's case after the arrival of Lysias (22), *But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case."*
    - a. Felix possibly had a knowledge of Christianity from his Jewish wife, Drusilla and others in the Roman Empire who had contact with the Way.
    - b. He was probably stalling since Lysias had already given him a letter of introduction and no date was set for Lysias to appear.

2. He ordered the centurion to keep Paul in custody but give him freedom to have friends attend to his needs (23), *Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.*
  - a. Felix placed Paul under house arrest but Christian friends were permitted to visit him and care for his needs.
  - b. Paul's visiting friends probably included Aristarchus, Luke and Philip who lived in Caesarea, note Acts 21:8.
  
3. Felix called for Paul to share his faith with him and his wife (24-27)
  - a. Felix and his Jewish wife listened to Paul's testimony of faith in Christ (24), *After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.*
    - 1) Paul gave testimony of his faith in Jesus Christ to Felix and Drusilla.
    - 2) Background on Drusilla
      - a) She was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I who had authorized the death of James and had Peter imprisoned.
      - b) The Herods were Idumeans, part Israelite and part Edomite.
      - c) She was Felix's third wife whom he had married when she was 16 and at this time, she was 19.
  - b. Felix was convicted by Paul's testimony (25), *And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."*
    - 1) Paul's testimony followed the convicting role of the Holy Spirit concerning sin, righteousness and judgment, note John 16:8-11, *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*
    - 2) Felix was *alarmed*, the word means *terrified*, it is the word from which we get *phobia*.
    - 3) Thomas Constable, *Felix and Drusilla were notoriously deficient in all three of these areas. It is not surprising that Felix became uneasy. He apparently was willing to discuss theology but not personal morality and responsibility. These subjects terrified him.*
  - c. Felix was hoping for a bribe from Paul but he continued to meet with him (26), *At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him.*
    - 1) Conviction concerning Felix's spiritual condition did not stop him from wanting a bribe to comfort his physical condition.
    - 2) Kenneth Gangel, *Bribes, of course, were against Roman law, but they occurred quite commonly throughout the empire...Perhaps Felix just acted like Felix, carrying out his office with usual disregard for ethics, morality, and righteousness.*
  - d. He was held by Felix for two years and then by Porcius Festus who succeeded Felix as governor (27), *When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.*
    - 1) Paul was held in custody by Felix as a favor to the Jews.
    - 2) Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus after two years of Paul's confinement.
    - 3) Felix lost his position because of his harsh treatment of Jews in an uprising in Caesarea between Jews and Greeks.

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. Seeming inactivity does not mean God is not in control, according to Kenneth Gangel, *Many scholars believe Luke was with Paul all this time and took opportunity to gather information for his writings, perhaps both Luke and Acts.*
- B. The center of Paul's message was resurrection because there is more to life than this existence.
- C. Spiritual conviction does not always bring change in behavior.