

Acts #35  
Paul Before Felix  
Acts 24:1-27

As we come to Acts 24 we will need to fill in the gaps between here and Acts 21. Paul had been arrested on trumped up charges. The members of the Jewish Sanhedrin had accused him of desecrating the temple and of stirring up a riot. He had been rescued from a Jewish mob by the Roman tribune, Lysias, who was unaware of the reasons for the intense hatred directed against Paul by his own people. Since it was impossible to find out all of the facts immediately, the tribune had Paul placed in prison for protective custody. At a later time Paul was carried before the Sanhedrin and proclaimed his innocence of the charges of desecration of the temple. The trial of Paul was indecisive and the Roman tribune decided to leave him in prison until further light was thrown on the case.

The Bible tells us that the Jewish leaders put together a plot to kill Paul. They would ask for him to be brought to another public trial. On the way from the prison to the court he would be assassinated. More than forty men pledged themselves that they would neither eat nor drink until Paul was put to death. They were probably a part of a group called the “Sicarri,” which would correspond to our present-day Mafia. It is a shame and disgrace what has been, and continues on today, done in the name of religion.

At this point we learn an additional fact about the apostle Paul. Acts 23:16 tells us that Paul had a married sister who was living in Jerusalem. His sister's son heard of the plot to kill Paul and brought this information first to Paul and later to the Roman tribune. Lysias felt it would be unwise for Paul to remain in the city of Jerusalem and under the cover of night had him taken to Caesarea and placed under the jurisdiction of Felix, the Roman governor.

Now look with me as we take some time out to look at Felix and his wife Drusilla. Felix was a strange man. He and his brother Pallas had been slaves of Antonia, the mother of the Roman emperor Claudius. They had become pets in the Roman government and had been freed by Claudius himself. Later Felix was appointed by Claudius to become the governor over Judea and Samaria. This is one of those rare twists of history that a slave could become a ruler. Tragically, though, Felix remained a slave in his heart. He was arrogant, unscrupulous, and ruled with great cruelty and lust. He was a wicked administrator and the people hated him.

At his side was a sixteen-year-old ravishing beauty, his wife Drusilla. She was a Jewish daughter of the infamous Herod Agrippa who had James put to death in Acts 12, and had Peter imprisoned with the expectation of

having him executed. You will remember that God struck Agrippa with a gruesome sickness, and the Bible tells us that he was eaten of worms.

Drusilla herself, although 16 years old, had been married to King Azizus, ruler of a tiny province, but left her husband in order to become the wife of Felix.

So there you have the governor and his wife.

Look at verse 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." The Jewish council had hired for themselves a man by the name of Tertullus to be their lawyer. The name Tertullus indicates that he must have been a Roman citizen and therefore used the Gentile name. The truth of the matter is that the Jews and the Romans hated each other, but they hired themselves a Roman lawyer to carry their case before the Roman governor.

Now look at verses 2-9, "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 provision, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. 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, who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law, but the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee; by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, of which we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so."

Notice that Tertullus did not set forth his accusations against Paul until he had first of all become involved in some very hypocritical flattery. Knowing that Felix was a very vain man, the prosecutor sought to win the favor of the governor, by heaping exaggerated praise on his governorship.

Notice the three charges that were brought against Paul to Felix.

First, he was accused of being a "pestilent fellow." That classed Paul with those insurrectionaries who continually stirred up the Jews in seasons of unrest. Tertullus knew that the first charge was a lie, but it was a most effective one, for he also knew that Rome could not stand by and tolerate civil disorder.

**Second, he was accused of being a "ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."** That charge coupled Paul with Messianic movements that taught that the Jews were to follow another king besides that of Roman leadership, and that charge carried with it the hint of treason. Turtullus knew that this also was a lie, but it was an effective charge.

**Third, he was accused of having "profaned the temple."** It was the charge that we have in verse 6, "Who also hath gone about to profane the temple; whom we took, and would have judged according to our law." Bringing a Greek into the inner temple would have been counted as desecration, and the penalty for such transgression was death.

**In verses 10-21 Paul gives his defense.** He denies his guilt of the charges against him, but in the same breath he makes a confession by giving testimony of his faith in Jesus Christ. In verse 14 he says, "I admit to you, Felix, that I worship God." "In fact," says Paul, "the God whom I worship is the God of Israel whom these men who are accusing me claim to be worshipping." **The point Paul is making is the subtle suggestion that the God of Israel was the God of justice and holiness.** These men who were accusing him have perverted justice. Therefore, they cannot be true worshippers of God.

**The trial of Paul ended in a stalemate.** The decision of Felix is found in verses 22-23, "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 determine your case. 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."

Look at verse 24, "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." **Why would this harsh and cruel pagan Roman governor want to hear from Paul? I think that something Paul had said moved in his heart.** And now he had to know what the real truth was, therefore he says, "All right, Paul, speak to me of these things concerning faith in Christ."

I like what we are told in verse 25, "And as he (Paul) reasoned of righteousness, self-control, 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." We are told that Paul "reasoned" with Felix. **It does not say he preached at him; it does not say that he pounded the pulpit; it does not say that he ranted and raved; it does not say he told him emotional stories and stirred him up.** But, he was obedient to the Word of God, as seen in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

**It is right for a man to "reason" about his relationship with God, for this is the greatest appeal that man will ever have to decide.** It appeals to the highest level of your mind, the highest level of your reason. The appeal as to whether or not you will spend eternity with God, or eternity in hell.

**First, we are told that Paul reasoned with him about righteousness.** Paul talked about how a righteous, holy God can honor only righteousness and holy people. I think he talked about the high road, the good life, the godly life, the obedient life, the blessed life, and the set aside life. **Then, I think he must have revealed the problem.** What did he say? Romans 3:10, 23 give us a clue, when Paul wrote, "There is none righteous, no not one...for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." **Felix was no different from any other man – he had sinned and he needed a Savior.** But Paul did not stop there, he revealed to Felix the solution to his sin problem, as seen in 1 Corinthians 1:30, when he declares that, "Christ is our righteousness." Christ is the answer!

**Second, we are told that Paul reasoned with him about temperance.** Temperance is simply the application of righteousness in our every day living. The Greek word translated "temperance" means "self-control." It means "disciplined, a straight, planned, organized" life. It may be applied to chastity, lustful desires, as well as self-control over one's way of life.

**You see, the Jewish religious leaders talked about righteousness but they lived in selfishness.** Therefore, Paul reasoned with Felix about what true temperance and righteousness really consisted of.

**Third, we are told that Paul reasoned with him about judgment.** He pointed out the universal judgment of God which is to come, as reveals in his teaching in Acts 17:31 where he said God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained; thereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." In all of his power and prestige Felix might have felt he was above reproach, but Paul simply remind him that there would be a day when all men everywhere would stand before Holy God to give an account of their lives.

**So Paul talked about righteousness, about discipline, and about judgment.** Now what was the response of King Felix? The Bible says, "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

**The Greek wording here means more than just an outward shaking, but an inward alarm and apprehension.** He trembled because inside him was stirring an awakened conscience. As Paul spoke, Felix was reminded of all the ungodly things he had done. **He remembered the innocent men he had sent to**

**prison. He remembered the bribes he had taken. He remembered the adulterous relationships he had had with women. He remembered all the innocent people his soldiers had run down in the streets. And he trembled.**

But you will notice that Felix did not respond to the call of God for salvation, for he said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, and I will call for thee.” Verse 26 reads like this in the Greek, “He also hoped that Paul would bribe him, so he sent for him often and talked with him.” **Now listen very carefully to this statement: it does not matter if the preacher is the Apostle Paul, or Jesus Christ himself, salvation is still a choice that the individual must make for himself!** It is not the *messenger* but the *message* that demands a response!

**I heard the story of a farmer who was walking down a country road with a pig trotting along behind him like a puppy dog.** He met another man coming down the road, and the man said, “Man, you have that pig well trained. Where are you going with just a pretty and well trained pig?” The farmer answered, “I am going to the slaughterhouse.” “What?” was the reply, “How on earth did you get this pig to follow you to the slaughterhouse to be killed?” The farmer revealed his secret, “I have a bag of beans in my pocket. As I walk along, I just drop a bean every once in a while, and the pig just keeps on following.”

**That is the way the devil works in the life of a lost person, he just drops you a bean ever so often – another day of pleasure and another day of sin.** He says, “You have plenty of time, so don’t rush into this thing about being saved.”

If you have never been saved, why not tonight?