

Stuck in Caesarea

Acts 24:1-27

Paul has arrived at his final destination of his third missionary journey. He came to Jerusalem as he planned, but Providence has given him not only a detour, but also a dead end. Paul had come to fulfil his Jewish longings of coming to the Temple at Jerusalem and going through the rituals he had experienced in his youth. He saw Christianity, not as an opponent of Judaism, but as we have pointed out earlier, as the same story--just the next proverbial chapter. The caretakers of the Temple would have none of Paul and his Gospel. To them it was an amalgamation that was never meant to be. Even as I write these words, I hear the voice of our Savior as recorded in Luke 13:34: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" I am reminded that the Gospel of John begins with John 1:11: "He came unto His own, and His own received him not." When Claudius Lysias, a Roman tribune in charge of one thousand men, realized that the Pharisees and Sadducees were literally about to tear Paul apart, he decided to take matters into his own hands and rescued Paul from the mob. After questioning Paul, it seems the tribune came to the conclusion that whoever Paul was, he was definitely a very influential man in the known world and was determined to get any responsibility off his own hands and to delegate Paul to the governor (Felix) of Judea for the decision of what to do with Paul.

Now this brings us to:

I. THE TRIUMVIRATE OF TROUBLE

Acts 24:1-9

A. Ananias, the Jewish Drone

The drone bee is the one and only male member of the beehive. Once he has fulfilled his purpose, he is driven from the hive and is no longer needed. To linger would mean his death. His purpose was necessary, but once his day is done, his office is defunct.

The office of the high priest was needful at one time, but now is no longer necessary. Hebrews 4:14: "Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

Look up Hebrews 8:1-6. Not only do we have a new and greater High Priest, but we see God now meets in another temple: I Corinthians 3:16, 17b: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ...for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

The people of God at this time were living in the New Testament paradigm. The Aaronic priesthood has passed and the meeting place of God is in the New Testament temple, i.e., the body of the believers in Christ. Ananias is the personification of the drone in the hive. And if someone rejects the person of God, Christ: The Life; The Word of God: The Truth; The Church of God: The Way, then, like Ananias, they fight.

B. Tertullus, The Jurisprudent Dramatist

Tertullus is the counsel for the angry Jews who are desiring Paul to be killed or at least exiled. He is a smooth talker. He is buttering up Felix so that when Felix rules, he

will rule in the favor of the angry ruling Jews from Jerusalem. There is not one piece of history that speaks of any kindness Felix proffered to the Jews. But Tertullus speaks as though Felix has been a great benefactor. Tertullus besmirched the character of Paul. He mocks the New Testament Christians by calling them Nazarenes. John 1:46: "And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see." The lawyer lied about Paul defiling the Temple. He lied about Lysias violently taking Jesus from the livid ruling Jews' murderous hands. It was actually the other way around. Lysias actually saved Paul's life from their proposed violence.

C. Felix, the Judging Degenerate

Felix is a wicked man. He lusted after Drusilla, a daughter of Herod Agrippa I who was married to Azizus. After seducing her they later married. Felix's formal name was Antonius Felix and he was formerly a slave but was promoted by Claudius Caesar to the office of governor of Judea and Samaria (Proverbs 30:21-23). And this is the man who is supposed to pass judgement on the great Apostle Paul.

II. THE FLAWLESS DEFENCE

Acts 24:10-23

- A. Paul's Great Spirit. Acts 24:10: "cheerfully"; Acts 26:2: "I think myself happy...."
- B. Paul's Reason for Being in Jerusalem. Acts 24:11-21
 - 1. He came to worship: Acts 24:11
 - 2. He came to bring considerable love offerings to the converted: Acts 24:17
- C. Paul, Not an Insurrectionist. Acts 24:12
- D. Paul Demands Eyewitnesses. Acts 24:13; Acts 24:18-20; Acts 21:29
- E. Paul Presents His Biblical Orthodoxy. Acts 24:21; Acts 24: 14, 15
- F. The Procrastinating Response of Felix. Acts 24:22,23.

III. THE TROUBLED COUPLE

Acts 24:24-26

Felix and his wife of ill-begotten means, Drusilla meet with Paul in what appears to be a private meeting.

- A. Paul's Explanation of Faith to the Couple. Acts 24:24; Paul now earnestly contended "...for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude, verse 3b). I Cor. 15:1-4.
- B. The Convicting Power of the Word. Acts 24:25a.
- C. The Disastrous Delay. Acts 24: 25b.
- D. The Underlying Idolatry. Acts 24:26; I Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

CONCLUSION:

Acts 24:27. After two years, Felix never came to a conclusion or resolution about what to do with Paul. Due to Felix's poor management of his governorship, Rome dismissed him and he was replaced by Porcius Festus. In one last effort to quell the discontent of the Jews, he kept Paul locked up.

A person who cannot make a decision for Christ has already made a decision not to receive Christ. And the person outside of Christ, especially those who have come to

the knowledge of the Truth, are in a very sad place. Felix and Drusilla are more in bondage to their unbelief than Paul's literal bondage because of their delayed response to the Gospel. Hebrews 10:26: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Hebrews 10:10: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Now we are free, there's no condemnation,
Jesus provides a perfect salvation;
"Come unto Me," O hear His sweet call,
Come, and He saves us once for all.
Once for all, O sinner, receive it,
Once for all, O friend, now believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.

By P.P. Bliss (2nd stanza and chorus)

Pastor Pope