**Text**: Acts 24

**Title:** Paul on Trial, Again

**Truth**: We like Paul should testify for Christ at every opportunity.

**Date/Location**: Wednesdays April 9 and 16, 2014

Introduction

Paul was mob-beaten, rescue-arrested by the Romans, testified to the mob, barely escaped a flogging, tried by the San Hedrin, rescued by the Romans again, subject to a plot against his life, and moved from Jerusalem to Caesarea for another trial, which we read about in chapter 24.

I. Accusation by Mr. Tertullus, v. 1-9

We say cannot say Mr. Tertullus is a lawyer, but rather a rhetorician. He is identified as an orator, and he doesn’t bring out much of substance, even though verse 1 says that they “gave evidence…against Paul.” So, he…

A. Butters up Governor Felix, v. 2-4.

B. Badmouths Paul, v. 5-6a

C. Lies about what happened, v. 6b. They did not want to judge him according to their law; the mob wanted to kill him! Lysias’ stretch of the truth looks pretty good in comparison to this outright lie. Actually two times Jews tried to kill Paul, a fact which Tertullus conveniently leaves out. He would probably say that he compressed the events, but between the seizing and the San Hedrin trial there was a little more detail that Felix would have known about based on Lysias’s report in 23:27 and 30.

D. Makes vague charges. The charges reflect more upon the Jews than upon Paul—how is *he* a creator of dissension? Couldn’t they just ignore him or ask him to depart from their meetings and be done with it? The profaning of the temple is a substantial charge in terms of the combination state-church that existed in Israel from ancient times, but even this they did not prove with eyewitnesses.

Other Jews agreed with the charges Tertullus listed.

II. Paul Defended Himself, v. 10-21

A. Short time for all this to have happened…only 12 days!

B. Denied their charges of raising a ruckus in Jerusalem. He was there quietly. He asserts they cannot prove the charges.

C. Starting in verse 14, Paul “confesses” but not as if confessing sin. He is “testifying” that he worships according to Christian teaching which is consistent with Jewish teaching throughout the Hebrew Bible. Key beliefs he lists are resurrection of the dead. He uses the opportunity to tell others of faith in Jesus Christ. That’s not a self-centered defense—that is looking to extend the reach of the gospel to others.

D. Paul circles back around to the circumstances surrounding his arrest in verse 17. Instead of harming the nation, he was coming to bring it financial help. He calls upon the opposition to produce witnesses if they have them, or to testify themselves if they can as to Paul’s misbehavior, because they cannot. He does point out that he used the resurrection to divide the group and cause turmoil, but that was only after being arrested—not before, as Tertullus suggested in his charge against Paul.

III. Felix Did Not Make a Decision, v. 22-27

A. Felix said that he would wait until he heard directly from the commander about the case. Did he really need more information? That is doubtful, particularly since he heard both sides and had “more accurate knowledge of the Way.” Did he even call for Lysias? If he did not call for him, he misled Paul and the others there. If he did call for him, and Lysias came down sometime before two years was up (v. 27), then Felix lied when he said “when he comes down, I will make a decision.” Either way, it is not good.

B. Happily for Paul, Felix recognized that he was not a desperate criminal who needed solitary confinement or torture to stay in line. He let his friends care for him without hindrance.

C. Supposing that Felix was just procrastinating…While it might be hard to make a decision like this, they have to be made, and by the guy charged with making them. Procrastination is not going to help. Additionally, we must note that often times when you make a call, someone is not happy. The person making the call should be clear as to why the call is going the way it is, but he or she should also be aware that someone may hate them for doing so.

D. Felix later brought his wife and talked to Paul concerning “the faith” in Christ – Christianity, v. 24-25

1. Paul spoke about righteousness (we don’t have it, we need it, God provides it in salvation); self-control (ditto, having to do with sanctification), and judgment to come (Acts 17:31). Faith and repentance were key issues in the conversation (24:24, 17:30).

2. Felix became alarmed when he heard what was coming in the future. He put off not only a judgment in Paul’s case, but also his personal decision to believe in Christ. He claimed that when he had a convenient time he would call again for Paul.

**Listen**: it is most often the case that it is *not* convenient to think or talk about sin and death and final judgment. Actually, the way of those things is narrow and difficult, but broad (convenient, for now) is the way that leads to destruction. Don’t take the road of convenience! Take the road of truth!

But then he sent for Paul fairly frequently over the course of the next two years. Perhaps they did not talk about religion and politics? I can’t imagine that Paul did not talk about Christ at every opportunity. Even if a “direct gospel presentation” did not come up, everything Paul said and talked about was colored with Christianity.

Felix’s “wife” was actually his third, was stolen from another man, and was not yet 20 years old. Felix obviously needed a good dose of righteousness.

E. Felix is obviously not a principled man. So I suspect that he was not just procrastinating. Here are two additional proofs of his character flaw:

1. Felix was greedy, because he wanted a bribe, v. 26. Felix kept calling for Paul, but probably not specifically asking for money, just “hoping for money.” Paul couldn’t do that because it was not lawful either in Roman or Jewish law, and it is not Christian either (see Exodus 23:8 and Deut. 10:17 and many other places in the Old Testament). Paul probably knew this (he was not naïve), but used his non-payment and the delay thus caused to make use of more opportunities to witness to Felix and his wife, and probably those all around.

2. Felix used Paul as a token to please the Jews, v. 27. He left him in jail for two whole years until his term expired and another governor took his place.

Conclusion

Next, Paul will face trial before Porcius Festus and King Agrippa (Acts 25-26).

If you are in such a situation as Paul, just tell the truth, like Paul does, and explain why it really is that you are called into question, namely, for your Christian faith. However, do not do so just to cover up if you are really doing something wrong.

Cultivate a decisiveness in your person where you can decide the right thing as each situation dictates. Of course I am not advocating off-the-cuff decision-making, but before too many days elapsed, Felix should have thought it out. Certainly before two years. There is not much substance to the case presented against Paul, and so Felix should have acquitted him and been done with it. Indecision can lead to a lot of wasted time and resources and worry. Certainly you will sometimes make the wrong decision, because that is life in a sin-cursed world of sinful people who don’t know everything. Don’t let that stop you from doing something!

Do not let other factors cloud your judgment. Felix was clouded by greed for money, thus he wanted the bribe. He was also mixed up with the desire to please other people for political gain (power). Forget about money and power, and decide on the merits of the case. Other factors like greed just add sin to the mixture and make a mess of things.

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