

Sermon Date: March 9, 2014

Paul before Felix in Caesarea – Acts 24:1-27

Doug McBride

A quick review of Paul's recent travels and events – Acts chapters 21 through 23:

- Paul ties up the end of his third and last missionary journey – Acts 21:14
 - The Spirit tells his friends he will suffer, his friends plead with him not to go – Acts 21:11-12
 - Paul affirms his calling to go to Jerusalem despite the danger – Acts 21:13-14
- On arrival in Jerusalem, Paul purifies himself completing a Nazarite vow – Acts 21:22-26
- At end of 7-day purification, Jews seize Paul in the Temple and accuse him of taking a Gentile in the forbidden area
- Mob violence and Paul's arrest – Acts 21:27-40
- Paul gives a defense speech before the mob in Jerusalem - Acts 22:1-21
 - Speech goes well until Paul ends with his calling from God to the Gentiles – v. 21
- Paul before the Sanhedrin – Acts 22:30-23:10
- Jesus encourages Paul in prison with a promise of reaching Rome – Acts 23:11
- Conspiracy to kill Paul, plan is thwarted – Acts 23:12-31
- Paul is brought to Caesarea to address Felix the Roman governor of Judea – Acts 23:33-35

Read Acts 24:1-27 – Paul's defense before Felix

1. Who is Tertullus (v. 2)? How does he butter up Felix the governor (v. 2-4)? What does he say about Paul (v. 5-6)? How does he spin the truth (v. 7-8)?

2. How does Paul deny some of the charges and what does he admit to (v. 10-21)?

3. In his teaching, Doug drew our attention to Paul's calm demeanor: "The Gospel is about the pursuit of God on behalf of mankind to make things right again, but it's not meant to make things smooth. Think about the Spirit of God actually blowing through you on behalf of humanity. God is overturning darkness through us." Can you share a time or two when this has been true for you, when God gave you calmness of presence and words to say?

4. At this period of time Christians did not have a standard word to describe themselves. Paul uses the term *the Way* (v. 24:14). See also Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 24:22). Why is *the Way* a fitting term for following Christ?
5. What do you make of Drusilla and Felix's fascination with Paul (v. 24-25)? How about in v. 26-27?
6. Doug makes the following quote "The gospel is designed to comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable." What is meant by that?

Paraphrased from N.T. Wright, Acts for Everyone, pg. 193-194:

"The two years Paul spent in custody in Caesarea must have been, at one level, pure torture for him...What happened to Jesus' clear promise to him that he would get to Rome in the end (Acts 23:11)? For two years+, no answer came. No doubt, as Paul prayed the Psalms, he regularly found their invocation of God's promise and power very relevant: 'Wake up YHWH! Why don't You **do** something?' Perhaps those Psalms are for precisely that reason. Or perhaps God's people are allowed to get into the position where they need to pray the Psalms quite personally and angrily, so that they can come to the place where they can relate to much of the human race, who, for much of the time see the world puzzling and grey with only occasional flashes of divine possibility. And maybe then God's people can bring that unspoken sorrow, that dull ache, into speech, into prayer, into the presence of God. Perhaps is that part of how Jesus is straightening the world out."

Significant thoughts:

Doug comments about Paul having a Kingdom perspective:

- *At difficult times, if we take the eyes of our soul off the Kingdom and have an inward focus, we miss the thumbprint of God bringing life to an otherwise dark situation.*
- *And by the way, God is going to move and redeem it whether you see it or not. The only difference is you don't get to see it and you will be mired in hopelessness rather than hope.*

These are great points of personal reflection and discussion. How does this speak to you personally?