

Woodland Baptist Church
July 31, 2013 - Wednesday Night in the Word
Acts 24:1-27 Paul vs. Tertullus

1) OPENING REMARKS

- a) Following his three epic journeys Luke describes the five trials Paul had to endure.
 - i) Jewish crowd at the northwest corner of the temple area (22:1)
 - ii) Supreme Jewish Council in Jerusalem (23:1)
 - iii) Caesarea before Felix (24:1)
 - iv) Caesarea before Festus (25:1)
 - v) Caesarea before King Herod Agrippa (26:1)

- b) **Luke 21:13-15** - 12 But before all this [the very end] they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.

2) Transitions:

- a) **1** - introduction to the next scene as the Jews from Jerusalem hire Tertullus to prosecute Paul.
- b) **2-9** - Tertullus outlines the case against Paul to Felix.
- c) **10-21** - Paul defends himself against Tertullus and the Jews.
- d) **22-23** - Felix postpones the verdict
- e) **24-27** - Felix calls for Paul and converses with him privately with his wife Drusilla.
 - i) At this point, Felix has sent to Jerusalem for Paul's accusers and meanwhile keeps Paul in protective custody in Caesarea (Stott).

3) READ ACTS 24:1-27

4) **Verses 1** The Jews hire an EXPERT at Roman Law to PROSECUTE Paul

a) **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.**

i) **Five days** - from the time of Paul's transfer to Caesarea

ii) **The high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus:**

(1) **High priest - Ananias** - remember Paul called him a "whitewashed wall." You think vengeance may be in mind?

(2) **Elders** - most likely members of the Sanhedrin familiar with the case that could support it or the ones that help finance hiring Tertullus.

(3) **Spokesman - Tertullus** - they enlisted the services of an advocate named Tertullus to state it in the conventional terms of forensic rhetoric and he was most likely a Hellenistic Jew, but this cannot be confirmed. (Bruce)

(a) It was not uncommon for Jews to hire pagan lawyers who would be more familiar with Roman law than they (Pohill).

5) **Verses 2-9** - The ACCUSATIONS made against PAUL before Felix

a) **2 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, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 5 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. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him." 9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.**

b) There were 4 stages to Tertullus' case:

i) capitatio benevolentiae (buttering up, endeavor to capture the judge's good will)- "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude.

(1) Felix had scarcely done this. He had, in fact, made life miserable for the Jews, as was witnessed by the proliferation of rebellious movements during his term in response to his total lack of sympathy for or understanding of them (Polhill).

(a) Traditionally it was complimentary to the point of hypocrisy and often included a promise of brevity, but on this occasion it descended to 'almost nauseating flattery.' (Stott)

ii) Promise for brevity - 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly.

iii) Accusations: A general characterization is employed as a "perfect pest" or "plague" - a term with sinister implications, not excluding a hint of treason - he becomes more specific, moving from the less particular to the more particular (Bruce):

(1) [Pest] *For we have found this man a plague*

(a) Very similar to the accusations made against Paul in **Acts 17:6-7** - "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

(b) Tertullus implied that the Christians as a whole were a dangerous and seditious sect and that Paul was one of their main collaborators (Polhill).

(2) [Political Agitator] *one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world*

(3) [Leader of Sectarian Movement] *ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes*

(a) Sect - [haireisis] - doctrinally opinionated separation of a group - where we get the term "heresy" today.

(b) Nazarene - this word is used to try to illicit a derogatory response from Felix as the context suggests.

(4) [Temple Disruptor] *He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him...*

(a) Tertullus tries to "spin" the arrest to sound as if the Jews arrested him, when in fact, they were going to kill him, it was the Roman guards that prevented anything from happening.

(b) A reference to the belief that he had brought Trophimus the Ephesian within the prohibited precinct. (Stott).

(i) Had Tertullus substantiated this charge, it would have obligated Felix to turn Paul over to jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin and almost certain death (Polhill).

iv) Final exhortation for personal examination - 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him."

6) **Verses 10-21 Paul DEFENDS himself BEFORE Felix and the Jews**

a) **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. 11 You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 12 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. 13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. 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, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. 17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. 18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia — 19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 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.'"**

i) Paul's rebuttal consists of several stages and address Tertullun's accusations directly and precisely:

(1) **"Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.**

(a) He let's Felix know that he is completely comfortable with being in his court with him as the judge over his case. Paul believes that Felix has the experience to handle it properly and seek the truth.

(2) 11 You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 12 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. 13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me.

- (a) *You can verify...twelve days since I went to Jerusalem* - Felix has in his possession a dated and sealed letter from Claudius Lysias that states the facts of the case. While, there are some omissions to make Claudius look good, there is enough in the letter to help Felix understand that what Paul is saying has much credence.
- (b) *They did not find me disputing...either in the temple/synagogue* - nothing in that letter from Claudius bears the evidence that the Jews are claiming against him, Paul was in the temple, legally, participating in a purification rite and some Asian Jews made an assumption based on hearsay and stirred a mob against him.
- (c) *Neither can they prove to you* - there is no hard evidence regarding the accusations made against Paul, in fact the hard evidence is a letter written by Claudius Lysias, which paints Paul in a positive manner.

(3) 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, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

(a) **But this I confess to you** - Now Paul is confessing his faith before Felix' court! He makes a confession of FAITH not GUILT (Bock).

(i) *According to the Way (they call a sect) - I...*

1. Worship the God of our fathers (as they do)
2. believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets (as they do)
3. having hope in God through the resurrection - (as they do)

(b) *Take pains...clear conscience toward God and man* - Paul tried to live his life according to God's will, therefore having a clear conscience. It's not a minority "sect," it's the "Way."

b) **17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. 18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— 19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 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.’”**

i) **Paul elaborates on his account of the temple accusation:**

- (1) **17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. 18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult.**
- (2) *To bring alms and offerings* - Paul’s mission was one of benevolence and peace - he came out of love for his fellow Jews to come and bring a financial gift to bring unity and assistance, not strife and commotion.
- (3) During this time, he went to the temple as requested by his Jewish friends to make purification rites...while there, they saw him, minding his own business, being peaceful.

ii) **Paul points out the real pests/plague:**

- (1) **But some Jews from Asia— 19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me** - the Asian Jews were the primary ones that were responsible for the entire commotion, arrest and confinement by Lysias, trial before the Sanhedrin, trip to Caesarea and now the trial before Felix. Why were they not in the courtroom that day? Where were they??
- (2) **20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 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.’”** Paul is clear, he has done nothing wrong, other than state his belief about the resurrection of the dead. He said that publicly within the meeting of the Sanhedrin which had actually caused a dispute between the Pharisees and Saducees...not even they agree on the resurrection.
 - (a) Those Asian Jews ought to have appeared before Felix as Paul’s accusers, or as witnesses for the prosecution, if they had any serious

charge to bring against him. This was a strong point in his defense: the people who had raised the hue and cry in the first instance, claiming to be eyewitnesses of his alleged sacrilege, had not troubled to be present. It may be that the Sanhedrin thought it best that the Asian Jews should not come before the court as a cross examination would soon have revealed the hollowness of their charges, and a Roman judge would not look lightly on people who wasted his time with unfounded accusations (Bruce).

- (b) Their absence was a serious breach of Roman law, which 'was very strong against accusers who abandoned their charges' (Stott).

7) Verses 22-23 Felix POSTPONES pronouncing a VERDICT

- a) **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."**
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.

- i) *Accurate knowledge of the Way* - how did Felix know about Christianity? His wife, a Jew, perhaps? We are not certain.
- ii) *Put them off* - there was obviously not enough evidence to convict Paul of anything, so Felix uses his authority to buy some time and make some points with the Jews. With the stalemate between Tertullun and Paul, Felix expresses the desire to speak to Lysias so he can better decide the case.
- iii) *Kept in custody...give some liberty...visitation* - Paul is kept in protective custody and given visitation rights.

(1) We could suppose he would have certain visitors:

- (a) Luke, Philip the Evangelist with his 4 daughters (Acts 21:8-9) (Stott).

8) Verses 24-27 Paul shares Christ with Felix and Drusilla

- a) **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. 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." 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. 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.

i) After some time passes, Felix' curiosity get the best of him...how often is it that you have someone of Paul's stature as a prisoner...much less under these circumstances? They send for Paul and hear him speak.

(1) Who is Drusilla? Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, and at this time was not yet 20 years old. As a little girl she had been betrothed to the crown prince of Commagene in eastern Asia Minor, but the marriage did not take place because the prospective bridegroom refused to become a proselyte to Judaism. Then her brother Agrippa II gave her in marriage to the King of Emesa (modern Homs), a petty state in Syria. But when she was only 16, Felix, with the help of a Cypriot magician called Atomos, persuaded her to leave her husband and come to be his wife, promising her (with a play on his name) every "felicity" if she did so. She joined Felix as his third wife, and bore him a son named Agrippa, who met his death in the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79 (Bruce).

ii) What does Paul speak to these high ranking Romans about?

(1) **25 And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present.**

(a) Reasoned about righteousness, self control and coming judgment

(i) *righteousness* - doing what is right for God; and right with God

(ii) *self control* - having control over one's desires and actions - exercise restraint over fleshly impulses.

(iii) *Coming judgment* - judgement at death - heaven, hell, eternity, going before God and being judged for your deeds.

(2) *Felix was alarmed..."Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."* - sounds like he became very convicted of his sins and resisted that conviction.

b) **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. 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.**

- i) *Money would be given him by Paul* - Felix obviously was impressed with Paul and through the deliberations of the trial and hearing of the purification rites, must have thought Paul to have access to much money. Felix felt he could get Paul to pay him to release him from prison...it did not happen.
- c) **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.**
 - i) We would like to believe that Felix accepted Christ, but based on the text, he at least did not while Paul was there in jail. Felix could have at least released him when his office came to an end, but he chose to leave him in prison and let the next Roman procurator deal with his case.
 - ii) Felix still left Paul in prison, even beyond the two-year period which was 'the maximum duration of preventive custody', in order to win the Jews' favour, which means that 'he not only coveted money, but also glory.' (Stott)
 - iii) *Two years* - it is plausibly suggested that Luke may well have done his initial research for his Gospel and Acts in this two-year period. (Bock)

9) CLOSE

- a) Paul saw himself as neither a traitor to either church or state, or that he should come into collision with them, although this is how his accusers tried to frame him. The enemies of Jesus had followed the same ploy...Paul's enemies laid similar charges against him as they did Christ...namely that he had offended 'against the law of the Jews', 'against the temple' and 'against Caesar'.
- b) Paul makes an exemplary case for why Christianity is a threat neither to Rome nor to any state. To bring people to faith should result in more law-abiding citizens who have a moral compass and do not harm other but seek what is best for them. (Bock)
- c) With Felix, Paul challenges a common core value among many who have power: the idea that they are self-made people in control of their lives and need no one. (Bock)