

Refuge City Church — October 16, 2022

“Let the Truth set you free!” [Acts 24]

Introduction

- **Last Week:** Paul’s Jerusalem journey ends in another round of chaos, on behalf of the Sanhedrin. Paul is moved to Caesarea for protection and further questioning by Governor Felix.
- **Today:** We are witness to a more ‘ordered’ rule of law, and Paul gets to defend his actions and accusations made against him.
 - Remember the importance of a clear/good conscience before the Lord? Now it comes into play once again.

Verses 1-9

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

- Tertullus is ‘hired’ by the Jewish delegation as a lawyer to plead their case against Paul.
- They bring 3 specific charges against Paul.
 1. *Personal:* “A plague” [a pest]. Likening him to a dissident, rebel, rioter; political charge [possibly hearing of the riot in Ephesus].
 2. *Political:* “A ringleader”: Inciting a ‘new religion’; under Roman law at this time, Christianity was illegal.
 - ‘Sect of the Nazarenes’ was another term used against Christianity.
 - According to the Jews, they were a separate religious organization.
 - According to the Romans, they were associated with the Jews.
 3. *Religious:* “tried to profane the temple”; appealing to Roman compassion for the Jews [**Reminder:** Felix already received & read the letter of events as told by Claudius Lysias]
- They attack his character and accuse him of political sedition. Hoping Felix would see this as an attack against the authority of Rome, and allow them to exercise their right to apply the death penalty for criminal activity against the temple.
 - However, in all of these charges, they provide no evidence, no witnesses.
- Notice the elegant speech used towards Felix [**flattery**]
 - Trying to deceive someone with flattery and lies, shows disrespect [scripture speaks loud and clear against this kind of speech].
 - **Romans 16:17-18**, “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such

persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.”

- **Jude 1:16**, [speaking of the ungodly] “These people are grumblers and complainers, living only to satisfy their desires. They brag loudly about themselves, and they flatter others to get what they want.”
- The need for flattery gives the impression there is a lack of trust/disrespect, and therefore smooth speech [insincere praise] is used to achieve a desired outcome.
 - If the speech used is insincere, one is therefore lying to get what he/she wants.
- This delegation is trying to flatter Felix to get rid of Paul in the same way the Jews appealed to Pilate to have Jesus crucified.
- **Truth vs. Lies: John 18:36-38**, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”
- Jesus, the embodiment of truth, gave everyone an opportunity to listen to the truth, yet many don’t want to take the time to listen. They only want what they want to fulfill their own selfish agenda.
 - **Ephesians 4:14-15**, “so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the *truth* in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,”
 - **John 8:31-32**, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the *truth*, and the *truth* will set you free.”

Verses 10-21

“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. You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 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. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. 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, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 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 had no need for flattery, because he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt he had a clear conscience before the Lord. [“I cheerfully (good courage) make my defense”]

- Paul answers for the 3 charges brought against him; using the words *verify & prove*; it was their responsibility to provide proof of crime, but they couldn't.
 - For being a 'pest': time and eye-witnesses would prove he was causing no disturbance.
 - For being a 'ringleader': he proclaims his worship of God, which all the delegation say they do as well.
 - For profaning the temple: he was there to bring his alms and offerings, and if there were Gentiles with him, those who brought the original accusation should be there to speak to it.
 - **Deuteronomy 19:15**, "A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established."

Verses 22-27

"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." 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. 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. 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." At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison."

- Given the fact that Claudius Lysias sent a letter detailing the issues at hand, Felix calls for him to come and provide testimony; to which he already claimed Paul's innocence.
- Being acquainted with Christianity and wanting to learn more, Felix and his wife talk to Paul.
- Three points are discussed with them: Righteousness, Self-control, & Judgment.
 - All three of these are exactly what Jesus said concerning the Holy Spirit.
 - **John 16:8**, "And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."
 - The Holy Spirit will 'convict' [proof of guilt; consider the court of law]
 - **John 3:20**, "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed."
 - **Hebrews 4:12-13**, "For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable." [conviction]
 - To know the good news of Jesus, is also to recognize the bad news of sin that separates from a relationship with Him.

- The ultimate sin is to reject the truth of Jesus Christ.
- Too many believe they can stand on their own self-appointed ‘righteousness’.
 - **Isaiah 64:6**, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”
 - We need to understand that God’s foundation of truth and morality is the only thing that stands the test of time; all else fails.
- Here’s what it comes down to: Recognition/Acceptance or Rejection; and there is ultimate judgment for those who reject Jesus.
 - **Revelation 20:12**, “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.”
 - **Ephesians 2:1-3**, “Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.”
 - **QUOTE:** “There can be no conversion without conviction, and there can be no conviction apart from the Spirit of God using the Word of God and the witness of the child of God.” [Warren Wiersbe]
- To this Felix and his wife become terrified!
 - Paul presented the gospel. Felix couldn’t handle it, and put him off for 2 years.

Conclusion

- This is not a gospel of convenience.
 - **QUOTE:** You say, ‘Another time.’ How do you know that you will ever feel again as you feel now? This morning, perhaps a voice is saying in your heart, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ Tomorrow that voice will be hushed. The pleasures of the world will put out that voice that warns you now, and perhaps you will never hear it again. Men all have their warnings, and all men who perish have had a *last warning*. Perhaps this is your last warning.” [Charles Spurgeon]
 - **Proverbs 27:1**, “Don’t brag about tomorrow, since you don’t know what the day will bring.”
 - **James 4:14**, “yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”
 - **2 Corinthians 6:1-2**, “As God’s partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God’s kindness and then ignore it. For God says, ‘At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.’ Indeed, the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation.”
 - **Isaiah 55:6-7**, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”