

Series: "Finishing What was Started"

4-28-24

"Delayed Decisions"

Text: Acts 24

Intro: Paul has now been moved from Jerusalem to Caesarea. This would begin a time period of 5 years in Roman custody. His ministry has drastically changed. Although it is not the plan that he had, it is for sure the plan that God had for him. Today we will see how God would orchestrate events for Paul to speak to a wicked man and his wife about who Jesus really is.

1) The Hired Speaker (v. 1-9)

- a. The gifted lying lawyer states his case against Paul
- b. The presence of all three (Ananias, the elders, and a skilled lawyer) at the court of Felix reminds us of how serious the Jewish leadership was about obtaining a conviction against Paul.
- c. This lawyer tries to use flattery to his advantage here, but it is notable that the Jews did not think highly of Felix.
- d. "In reality he [Felix] had put down several insurrections with such barbarous brutality that he earned for himself the horror, not the thanks, of the Jewish population." (Stott) In particular, he ordered a massacre of thousands of Jews in Caesarea, with many more Jewish homes looted by the Roman soldiers.
- e. *"I suppose that even Felix was shrewd enough to have listened with tongue in cheek. What is it that these Jewish leaders are after that they should come all the way from Caesarea and flatter me in this fashion? he must have wondered."* (Boice)
- f. They say that Paul was a plague, a creator of dissention among all the Jews throughout the world.
- g. This had to make Paul smile. The whole world.

2) The Happy Saint (v.10-21)

- a. I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: Paul was happy to answer for himself, knowing that the facts of the case were in his favor – and notably, Paul used no flattery in his address to Felix.
- b. Paul said “Simply put they have no proof.” Where is the proof.
- c. Even though it had been no more than twelve days, and many witnesses could be easily found, Paul’s accusers gave no witnesses to prove that he was in fact in the temple disputing or inciting the crowd. There was simply no proof for their accusations.
- d. V.15 This is a key verse here. Paul made it clear that he had not abandoned the God of my fathers or the Law and the Prophets. Instead, he acted in fulfillment of them both.
- e. Tertullus called Christianity the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) Paul called it the Way.
- f. Paul kept asking where is the proof. All you have are accusations. All I have is the truth.
- g. Christians should never be timid about or ashamed of the truth or of the evidence. If we are truly following God, the truth and evidence are our friends, not our accusers.

3) The Holy Spirit (v. 22-27)

- a. Felix wanted his wife to hear Paul’s testimony, either as a curiosity or so that she could advise him. After all, he claimed to have insufficient evidence for a decision.
- b. With his wife Drusilla: This woman was the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice mentioned in Acts 25. Drusilla was beautiful, ambitious, and about 20 years old at this point. Felix seduced her away from her husband and made her his third wife.
- c. Luke even records that this was a 3 point sermon. Righteousness, Self-control, and the coming judgment. Wow.
- d. Paul spoke clear to the heart of the matter, and he did this to one who could have him killed.
- e. We don’t know exactly how Paul developed these three points, but we can speculate on something like this. · The righteousness that is ours in Jesus Christ, · The need for Christian ethics (self-control) that was evidently lacking in the life of both Felix and Drusilla. · Eternal accountability before God (the judgment to come).

- f. Hearing this message made Felix afraid. Knowing something about his life, at least we can say that he probably understood it. The gospel should make those who are intent on rejecting Jesus afraid.
- g. He rejected Jesus under the pretense of delaying his decision.
- h. *Many respond to the gospel in this way; they express their rejection through delay, by delaying their decision to commit to Jesus Christ – but it is rejection none the less. The Bible tells us to come to Jesus in repentance and faith today: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). (Guzik)*
- i. It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe. “Thou sayest, ‘Another time.’ How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps a voice is saying in thy heart, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ Tomorrow that voice will be hushed. The gaities of the ball-room and the theatre will put out that voice that warns thee now, and perhaps thou wilt 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.” (Spurgeon)
- j. *There once lived a man who was transported into the black abyss inside the earth, surrounded by the evil spirits and their ruler, Satan himself. He watched as a discussion unfolded between Satan and his spirits. He saw that the ruler held a scepter of wickedness in his hand, and he heard him as he said with a loud voice, “Who will go to earth for me and persuade people that I may accomplish the ruin of their souls? What message will you use? How will you say what you want to say so that men and women, boys and girls, will turn away from the things of God?” A spirit responded, “I will go for you, and I will tell people that there is no heaven.” The ruler frowned and replied, “No, that will not do. For too many centuries humanity has been told that there is a heaven. And our enemy, God, has given the Christians a book that talks about heaven and promises that it is a place where there will no longer be death and tears and sorrow and pain and affliction and tragedy.” A second spirit glided forward and said, “I will go, and I will tell men and women that there is no hell.” Again, the ruler responded negatively: “That will not do either. The conscience, if nothing else, convinces people that someday there must be a day of reckoning and a place where men and women will come to terms with their lives. In fact, that book I mentioned, the Christian’s handbook, has more to say about hell than about heaven. You could never convince them there’s no hell.” There was a pause. The ruler added, “I need someone who will make an appeal to all*

classes, all ages, and all cultures in all the countries around the planet where men and women live.” One dark spirit stepped up and said, “I have the answer. I will go for you. I will not tell people there is no hell. I will not tell them there is no heaven. I will simply tell them there is no hurry.” They sent him.[213] The word used for that destroyer of souls is “procrastination.”