

**to send a
prisoner and not withal
to signify the
crimes against him**

Acts 24:25 – 25:23

~ In our previous report from our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God, Paul was remanded to prison in Caesarea by Felix and Drusilla after Tertullus made a profoundly malicious prosecution against him. They did afford Paul basic liberties, but Felix should have freed Paul altogether. Ananias had come down from Jerusalem, but we didn't hear testimony from him or any of his cohort ilk of religious rulers. Felix knew the charge brought against Paul could never stand; so, Felix uses Paul as a pawn in his political ambition. We considered the private interview Felix and Drusilla conducted with Paul, and Felix was apparently genuinely moved by what Paul had to say. Tragically, his pride stood in the way of accepting Christ.

Nonetheless, Felix postponed judgment day; and, friends, you can postpone your decision for Christ for so long that you will come to the place where you cannot make a decision at all. On the human plane, you can procrastinate until you find yourself unable to turn to God on any level. This is one reason decisions for Christ are usually made by young people. If you have read this far, you are likely one who made a decision to trust Christ at a very young age. I know some people turn to Christ as seniors; but that is a very small minority. Turning to the Lord at a late age also ensures you have no works, witness or testimony. This is one reason we should always try to reach young people: the younger the better. This is also the reason a children's ministry is so effective.

Atheists have the preconceived notion that, because they are becoming older, they are becoming smarter. Well, what they're becoming is more hardened to the Gospel every day they continue to reject Christ as their Savior. A lawyer said to Dr. George Truitt on Dr. Truitt's fiftieth anniversary, "... you used to disturb me terribly with your preaching; but now, you don't disturb me at all." The man laughed after making that statement. He didn't

realize the tragedy of his remarks; because he also added, "...and you're a much greater preacher today than you were back when." Truitt was one of the princes of the pulpit, friends; that statement simply sealed an absolute indifference towards God in the mind of the man who said it....

XXIV

25 And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

~ Felix is a clever and crooked politician, and always looking to accept a bribe. Money is the only way this corrupt man will even think about setting Paul free. So, Paul's imprisonment continued for two years. Felix was looking for a favor; and held on to Paul as a bargaining chip as long as he could. Well, that's how politics go today, too, friends. If Paul was guilty of being a "mover of sedition," then he should have been punished and sent on up the road. If Paul is not guilty – and he wasn't – then he should have been set free. If the charge had been treason, they would have executed Paul on the spot! It just doesn't make legal sense, even by the Roman standards of the day.

Paul had presented an excellent testimony for Christ before Felix. Felix may have trembled, but the cupidity and covetousness Felix harbored in his heart triumphed over truth, justice and righteousness. Those two years are what we call the silent years in the life of the apostle Paul. Felix simply desired corruption above salvation. Leaving a Roman citizen in prison without proof of any crime is corruption at the highest levels. It is entirely possible Paul chafed under the pressure; because he did not write anything during this time. Nonetheless, the manifestation of God was definite. So,

Felix can't hold on any longer; so, he succeeds to the place of governorship. That brings the account of Paul appearing before Festus....

XXV

1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

~ Festus didn't care for Jerusalem; so, he heads back to Caesarea. The evil men amongst the religious rulers wanted Paul to be brought to Jerusalem so they could ambush the movement and kill him. Whether or not Festus was aware of this doesn't really matter. Personally, I think he was aware of the plot but, either way, he was smart enough to refuse to secede to their demands.

In our safari through Acts thus far, we have been with Paul on the steps of the castle in Jerusalem where the mob wanted to kill him; we have seen Paul answer the Sanhedrin where they wanted to kill him; we examined the public inquisition before Felix and the private interview with Felix and his wife Drusilla; and his subsequent imprisonment by their order. During those two years, I am sure they had other meetings with Paul, too. This is getting to be a repetitive habit of sorts as Paul appears before kings and government rulers. When Jesus told Paul he would appear before kings, Paul's idea was not this way, you may be absolutely sure.

His patience had to have been thoroughly tested, but Paul rejoiced in these opportunities to testify of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ before the highest figures in the Roman Empire. Remember, when Christ

apprehended Paul at his conversion, He told Paul he would bear His Name before rulers and kings. That never happened on any of the three missionary journeys. It is being literally fulfilled now. Paul is going to go before Agrippa next. Well, Paul witnesses with the same zest and excitement every time he recounts what Christ has done for him, beginning with the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ - every time....

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

~ Paul is in a den of thieves, murderers and liars; and many believe it was a mistake by Paul to appeal to Caesar. Most seem to think Paul should have carried out his case before Festus. Well, Festus wanted to transport him to Jerusalem; so, the scheme to kill Paul would have been carried out. Paul made no mistake with his request at this time. Paul was a Roman citizen exercising his rights under Roman law. It would have been a normal and natural thing for him to do. Paul is not purposefully making himself a

martyr. I think our modern-day criticisms of Paul, on any level, and in any way is, frankly, a huge mistake. Paul is, actually, trying to avoid martyrdom.

Many people today assume the position of martyr or wear a sackcloth suit that God didn't give them. It's never a good idea to wear martyrs rags unless God Personally gives them to you. I know many people think it's honorable to suffer for Christ; but I want you to know something: that's not my position. I am right now in suffering, but I want to get out of it. I would rather live without the problems. There is something wrong with any individual, both mentally and spiritually, who desires to suffer, be a martyr or say they want to die for Christ. Martin Luther tried this all on for size and found out fast it didn't work.

Well, even though Paul went to Rome as a prisoner in chains, it was totally and completely the will of God to happen that way. As we read on, I detect a note of impatience and frustration with the injustice he is experiencing. Rome was known and noted for justice; Paul respected that authority and is making a legal appeal as a citizen who should have been respected. Remember, the night Jesus was arrested, John knew all the people at the high priests house – and they all knew him. John went in and warmed himself and never thought twice; but Simon Peter denied Him that night. See, some of us will be led one way by the Lord, and others will be led a different way. Some people will be given extreme wealth by God, others abject poverty. The Lord has seen fit to leave me in poverty – what has He done for you? Whatever it is, use it for His glory....

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

13 And after certain days King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

~ Most people think Roman justice was no justice at all. While it did go terribly wrong in the case of the Lord Jesus, and now in the case of Paul, it went wrong because crooked politicians cannot sit in correct judgment of truth and wisdom – it didn't go wrong because of the system of justice. Roman law was exactly what we have today, and no man can be sentenced to prison or death without the opportunity to face their accusers and say whatever they want to say. There also must be some evidence. These are the required legal components; and they were missing in Paul's case. The ONLY part the religious rulers hated was that Paul presented the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ....

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition (religion), and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

~ **Our Spiritual Safari** ends this report with great pomp and circumstance. What a scene this must have been. Festus wanted to hear Paul and know what he had to say; but it wasn't a sincere heart for God, it was only to satisfy some curiosity he had. And with that, the meeting is arranged for our next leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God, as we'll examine the fulfillment of prophecy in Paul appearing before the king himself. You'll be amazed to see what Paul had to say ~
