

Sermon No. 423

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The book of Acts

CHAPTER 24

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

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Introduction

- When Paul presented the Gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem

Accused . . . attacked . . . arrested . . . mistaken for a terrorist . . . flogged

- The Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, has him stand before the Sanhedrin

Again he is attacked . . . protective custody

- Following reports of an assassination . . . taken to Governor Felix in Caesarea

Acts 23:35 ³⁵ he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come"

The major focus of Acts 24 are the accusations against Paul

(1) The Jews assemble their case against Paul

¹ Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator *named* Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul

- Tertullus is a skilled lawyer
- This shows us how serious the Jewish leadership was about gaining a conviction
- Not so much against Paul . . . but his message

(2-4) The lawyer introduces his accusation by flattering Felix

- Flattery is an often-neglected sin . . . it is all about 'winning' people over

Proverbs 28:23 *In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery*

False teachers use flattery . . . Romans 16:19 *Avoid them, for such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words*

²And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, ³we accept *it* always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. ⁴Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.

- Flattery is deception
- We know these were lies . . . Felix did not bring peace and prosperity to the Jews

(5-6) Tertullus states the charges

⁵For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.

- The accusation is that he is politically dangerous
- Sedition
- But there was no evidence presented at all . . . we have found!
 - Doesn't take much to work people up
- Paul had nothing to fear . . . not only is there no evidence . . . GOD is on his side!

(7-9) In summing up

⁷But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took *him* out of our hands, ⁸commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

- More lies! More flattery! "You will find, through your own examination, that everything we say of Paul is true"

⁹And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so

- For all his legal skill this was a poor presentation
- There is no supporting evidence

(10-13) Paul makes his defence . . . exposing the weakness of the case

¹⁰ Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, ¹¹ because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

- Paul knows a conviction requires evidence
- But after 12+ days there is none

NLT ¹³ These men cannot prove the things they accuse me of doing

- They can't give evidence – because there isn't any!

(14-21) Paul explains his ministry, and THE REAL reason why he was arrested

¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

- I haven't abandoned GOD or the Law or the Prophets

HERE IS MY CRIME

¹⁵ I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust. ¹⁶ This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

¹⁷ "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, ¹⁸ in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.

THE VOICE ¹⁸ When they found me, I was not disturbing anyone, nor was I gathering a crowd. No, I was quietly completing the rite of purification

¹⁹ They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

²⁰ Or else let those who are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, ²¹ unless *it is* for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'"

THE VOICE ²¹ Perhaps my crime is that I spoke this one sentence in my testimony before them: "I am on trial here today because I have hope that the dead are raised."

- Paul consistently called the case back to the evidence . . . because he was right
- Since we have Christ we ought to have no fear of the evidence

(22-25) Felix avoids making a legal decision!

²² But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of *the* Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." ²³ So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let *him* have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.

- That was gracious . . . but he was just procrastinating
 - He avoided a decision on the pretence of waiting for more evidence
- Actually he *had* enough evidence to make a decision in Paul's favour

²⁴ And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

- Drusilla was Felix's third wife . . . she was the sister of Herod Agrippa wife Bernice.
 - Historians say she was beautiful, ambitious, and about 20 years old at this point

²⁵ Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

- The points he made frightened Felix . . . because Paul directed his message right at Felix's life
 - (a) We are made righteous before GOD through Christ . . . *clearly Felix would have figured himself righteous*
 - (b) Self-control must be evident in our lives . . . *clearly Felix would have had little self-control*
 - (c) There is a coming judgment . . . therefore turn to CHRIST . . . *clearly Felix would have rejected the need to be accountable*
- Some say don't get personal . . . but when the person comes to you?
- No point talking generalities when someone asks you to explain the GOSPEL

(26-27) Sadly the motive of Felix's heart is revealed: greed

²⁶ Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore, he sent for him more often and conversed with him. ²⁷ But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

In summary we could say Felix characterizes the lost:

1. He was a procrastinator

- He avoided making a legal decision
- He avoided making a spiritual decision
- He could have done both . . . instead he made excuses
- A procrastinator delays what he knows in his heart is true

- Delaying a decision to commit to Jesus Christ . . . THAT IS REJECTION
- Felix said "wait for a more 'convenient time'"
 - If we insist on waiting for a 'convenient time', it could be too late
 - You could end up waiting for an eternity
 - That eternity would be spent in agonizing separation from GOD

2 Corinthians 6:2 **Today is the day of salvation**

- The Bible tells us to come to Jesus in repentance and faith today

2. He walked the middle ground

- People like Felix and Pilate are the guiltiest of those who reject Jesus Christ
 - They *know* what is right but refuse to do right purely out of the *fear of man*
- Felix did what Pilate did . . . and he did it for political advantage
 - Felix did not want to identify himself with Paul's Gospel and the Christians
- So he made no decision to keep Paul in custody

His accusers had developed a judgmental spirit

Bitter

The Heart of the Matter: Sometimes we do just same!

- We procrastinate!

Serving the LORD

Being more committed

Dealing with issues that need to be addressed

- We walk the middle ground!

We become people pleasers!

Not talking about "One foot in the world and one foot in the church"

1. Paul shows be example that we need to get moving

- There are people out there who need to know about the LORD
- There is work to be done in the church

2. We must not have a judgmental spirit

Despite who Felix was, Paul did not hold back sharing the GOSPEL

- Historians tells us he was an evil man
- Tacitus, the Roman historian, described Felix as "a master of cruelty and lust"
- His public and private life was not pretty
- He was formally a slave . . . had no love for the Jews . . .

He seems the most unlikely convert!

- But as always Paul's conscience remains clear . . . for Paul spoke to him about Faith in CHRIST

Acts 24:24-25

THE VOICE ²⁴ A few days later, Felix sent for Paul and gave him an opportunity to speak about faith in the Anointed One. Felix was accompanied by his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. ²⁵ As Paul spoke of justice, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became fearful.

- Paul never tried to change Felix's behaviour
- Given his lifestyle you'd think Paul would get on his case
- You have to make some serious lifestyle changes before you can come to know Christ

3. We must not be anxious about results

- Paul never complained about the lack of results
- For two years he was in prison – no mention of new converts
- Sometimes it seems that the LORD is distant
- Paul never lost faith

Acts 23:11

¹¹ That night the Lord came near and spoke to him, "Keep up your courage, Paul! You have successfully told your story about Me in Jerusalem, and soon you will do the same in Rome"

- We have to know that GOD expects us to be ready to share the GOSPEL – for it will be in His time that the opportunity will arise

Mark of Ministry – 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 – NLT

We are not responsible for the results!

Our responsibility is to share CHRIST . . . faithfully!

CLOSING

If you have never made a commitment to follow Christ

Don't procrastinate

Don't keep dragging your feet

Don't keep sitting on the fence!

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says:

"In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."^[a]

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

³ We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. ⁴ But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, ⁵ in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; ⁶ by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, ⁷ by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸ by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and *yet* true; ⁹ as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.