

Acts 25:1-22 [70]-PAUL BEFORE FESTUS

PRELIMS. Paul has been **falsely accused** by the Jews of stirring up **strife**. He has been taken to Caesarea for trial before Felix, the Roman governor. During the course of events, Paul has been able to speak to Felix about **righteousness, self-control** and **judgement** to come. Felix did not like it and told Paul to *“Go away...When I get an opportunity I will summon you. At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul”*[25,26]. But after two years, Paul is still ‘in prison’, although with some freedom, his case is still **unresolved!**

DURING THESE TWO YEARS

During these two years, Felix **mishandled** a political situation re the Jews and was called back to Rome! He was replaced. He had to make way for Festus to take over his governorship! It is written that Felix ‘took **unnecessarily harsh** military action **against** the Jews, he was called back to Rome’! Yes, the people he at one time wished to *“do a favour”* towards [24:27] were the **means** of him losing his job!! He got so caught up in his politics and personal ambitions, he made the wrong decisions and found it necessary to oppose the very ones he at one time wanted to help! **APP** So there are **lessons** to learn – being **corrupt** does not always pay! It **never** pays - in the wrong run to be corrupt. God always catches up with the evil-doer, if not in this world most definitely in the next! (Don McGov & job!)

During these two years, what happened to Paul? Why was it, some would ask, was the world’s best theologian bound up in prison? God had promised Paul he would preach in Rome [23:11]. Paul no doubt can see now how that is going to happen – courtesy of the State! But now this – two whole years locked up in prison? **Why** God? **Because** waiting is the **best method** of **training** believers to **trust** and **depend!** Yes, **waiting** can be very painful – but rewarding! This week a minister told me of a **traumatic incident** 8yrs ago which necessitated much patience

and which created many long and weary hours of wondering why such a negative thing happened. But after 8yrs, it turned out to be a great blessing and the trying experience was the very means of stability and the building up of his congregation! Without that time of testing, there would **not** have been the blessings they now enjoyed. God **does** ask us to wait at the most **inconvenient** of times! This is the way **faith works!** *“they who **wait** for the Lord **shall renew** their strength”* [Isa 40:31] Paul had to wait longer in order to become stronger! *“**no one has heard...no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who **wait** for Him**”* [Isa 64:4] God acted for Paul in a way he did not expect because he was patient. *“The Lord is **good** to those who **wait** for Him... It is **good** that one should **wait quietly** for the **salvation** of the Lord”* [Lam 3:25,26]

Well, Festus comes on the scene – a **new face** a **new man** – so there is **hope!** A new **football** manager brings renewed hope! I am sure Paul’s **hopes revived**. I’m sure he **prayed** with new **vitality!** I’m sure he thanked God for a change of governor! He did not have to wait long, for *“**three days after Festus had arrived**”*[1] Festus gets down to the business of Paul! And...

The Jews were **quick** to get in on the ‘new man’ and *“**laid out their case against Paul and urged him, asking as a favour against Paul that he **summon** him to **Jerusalem**”***[3]! However, Festus made it plain that he was going back to Caesarea and try Paul there and that they should *“**let the men of authority...go down with me and if there is anything wrong...let them **bring charges** against him**”*[4,5]

Of course the **real reason** the Jews wanted Paul tried at Jerusalem was that *“they were planning an **ambush** to **kill** him on the way”*[3] **APP** Note that **after two years**, the **hatred** they had against Paul was still very much alive. **Unresolved** anger develops into **hatred**. If we do not destroy hatred, hatred will destroy us! Many a person died an early death, because they did not deal with hatred. *“**Refrain from anger, and **forsake** wrath...it **tends only** to evil**”*[Ps37:8] If anger is not dealt with it **will** develop into something worse!

Even a small **word** if not corrected, can develop into very serious matters *“the tongue is a fire...staining the whole body, setting on fire the **entire course of life**, and set on fire by **hell**”*[Jam 3:6] *“Whoever is **slow to anger** is **better** than the mighty and he who **rules his spirit** than he who takes a city”* [Pro16:21] *“**Hatred** stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses”* [Pro 10:12] We must bring our anger and hatred to God. We must ask Him to **change** our **hearts** and to give us another view of His steadfast love – His love which shines through all our faults/failings.

As soon as Festus arrived back in Caesarea, *“the **next day** he took his seat on the tribunal”*[6]. The Jews came and brought *“many and **serious** charges against him **that** they **could not prove**”*![7] **APP** Again we remind you - that is the Xn life – people will **miscall** you and **falsely accuse** you. ‘If Xnity was a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict **you**?’ What a challenge!

Festus was a much **fairer** man than Felix. He knew the Jews would love Paul to be tried in Jerusalem where members of the **Sanhedrin** would be on the ‘jury’, etc. So, *“wishing to do the Jews a favour”* he tried to help them – but **not** against the laws of justice! He **asked** Paul would **he** be **willing** to go up to Jerusalem to be tried *“on these charges before me”*[9] If Festus was not a fair man, he would have sent Paul to Jerusalem **without** asking for **Paul’s** consent! But the law stated that such charges were to be held in civil courts. Religious laws were dealt with by the Church. Once you are before the civil court (Caesar’s) it remained there unless you were willing to return to your regional court (which was a **theocracy** church+state). So Paul replied *“I am standing before **Caesar’s** tribunal, where I **ought** to be tried”*[9] Paul knew that at Jerusalem he would have no chance! **APP** It is not wrong to make use of your rights! If Xns do not make use of their ‘rights’, unbelievers will make greater use of their’s! X **commended** *“the sons of this world...they are **more shrewd** in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light”*[L16]

So Paul exercised his Roman rights to be tried by Caesar’s court *“I appeal to Caesar”*[11]. It was **Nero** who was Emperor! But he was under the influence of the Stoic philosopher Seneca at this time and

his **hostility** toward Xnity was not yet developed, so Paul had reasonable hopes of an acquittal there. Of course Paul knew he was in the hands of God, and no doubt he was excited at going to Rome!

The removal of Paul to Rome would be a great relief to Festus, as he would be out of his jurisdiction. And of course the Jews would also be delighted as Paul was no longer around to convert Jews to Xnity!

Note: Paul was prepared to take any due punishment – even up to **death!** *“If then I am a **wrongdoer** and have committed anything for which I **deserve** to **die**, I do not seek to escape **death**”*! [11] It looks like he believed in **capital punishment!** He actually **had written earlier** to the **Romans** that there those *“who know God’s decree”* and *“practise such things”* (as he had been speaking about and listing) that they *“deserve to **die**”* [Rom 1:32]!

In appealing to Caesar, Paul, in a way, was bringing the Church before the Civil Courts! Some say that is **wrong!** Not at all! The Church is **not above law!** It is subject to the law of the land as are individuals and institutions and businesses. If the Church cheats or commits crimes it too must be subject to the governing authorities. Paul himself wrote again *“Let **every person** be subject to the **governing authorities**”* [Ro 13:1]

The Church should never be afraid to open its doors to be seen to be pure and above board in all its dealings! As Paul here! The **Government** is not above Law – neither is the Church. **Charles 1** lost his head because he thought he was above Law! The role of the State is to **protect** the innocent and ensure that **justice** is done in all areas of life. The Civil Magistrate is *“a minister of God”* [Rom 13:1-7 + 1 Pet 2:13,14] William Blackstone the architect of the British Constitution, who Works are standard reading for all lawyers said ‘...national laws ought to **conform to God’s laws**’! Some argue [1 Cor 6:1-8] teaches that we are not to go to law. **Ans:** Refers to **private** matters!

All this should make us thankful that there will be a **honest Court/Verdict/Punishment** and reveal to us how much we **need** a Saviour? Do **you** have One? You will **need** One!