

2092 - PAUL BEFORE FELIX (1) - Acts 24.1-21

PRELIMS. Paul is in Caesarea – on trial for his faith in Jesus Christ. The Jewish Council (the Sanhedrin) have apprehended him making **false** claims about his behaviour. They bring him from Jerusalem to Felix the Roman governor in Caesarea who will hear his case. Felix reads the letter and says he will hear the case *when your accusers arrive* [23:35] So we are awaiting a **Court Case!**

COURT PROCEDURES

*After five days everyone was present. The High Priest, elders, lawyers, etc. Tertullus was the chief lawyer for the prosecution. He was called to speak and present his case against Paul. Like many lawyers, and professional men, when performing in a **political** arena, resort to ‘nauseating flattery’ to win the affections of the ‘powers that be’. 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* [2,3] He thanks Felix for the enjoyment and peace and excellent reformatations which he has brought to the region [2,3]! All of which were enormous **lies!**

History testifies that Felix was known for **corruption, violence, self-promotion!** These things were **characteristics** of his personality! **APP** It is one thing to be **respectful**, and to give **honour** – it is **another** to **flatter** people with **untruths**. Of course it is **tempting** to win the favour of politicians and judges, but if we believe in a **God of Justice**, it will be counter-productive! God is not impressed with untruths or corruption. And actually, **neither** are most **people!** The **public** are not stupid. Listen to the comments re **Politicians!**

Tertullus, claimed there were **three** separate **charges** against Paul. **(1)** He was a **trouble-maker!** *We have found this man a **plague**. One who **stirs up riots** among all the Jews throughout the world* [5]! Ie, ‘No matter where this fellow goes, he causes trouble. Plenty people can **confirm** the **troubles** that have resulted from this man’s teaching’. Yes indeed, trouble has followed this man, but **he did not create** it! **APP** We must never lose heart when people say ‘Religion is the **cause** of all the **wars**’ and point to all the ‘religious’ wars! The

‘Rangers/Celtic football matches are said to be **sectarian** and **religious!** What **nonsense**. It may be in the **name** of religion, but the **bitterness** is certainly not about religion! The **fans** know very little about ‘transubstantiation, purgatory, the Apocryphal Books, extreme unction, or the difference between mortal and venial sins’, issues over which Protestants and Roman Catholics did, and do, differ! But these doctrines are not what the fans are angry about! Xnity has been **blamed** for a lot of things although completely innocent!

(2) He is a **ringleader** of the **sect** of the **Nazarenes** [5]. Now the Romans **accepted** the **Jewish** religion, it was **officially recognised** among the **plurality of religions** in the Roman Empire. But what Tertullus was saying, was that Paul’s religion (Xnity) was an entirely **new religion** and was **not** recognised by the Roman authorities. And anyway, it was a **heretical** religion which ought to be **banned**. The Greek word used for sect here is the word from which we get ‘heresy’! **APP** We live in a day and culture in which **all** religions are seen as **equal**, and all leading to the one God! (Not our nation’s official position, but it is what most people think). But in spite of this, Xnity, then, as now, is actually treated as ‘**less equal**’ than others and singled out as being a **bigoted** religion! Today, in many quarters, a **belief** in **absolutes** is understood by the majority of people to be **intolerant!** and **arrogant!** How intolerant is that?

There has been a **subtle shift** in the academic world and in dictionaries [computer’s Encarta] as to the meaning of ‘**tolerance!**’ There has been a ‘shift from “**accepting the existence of different views**” to “**acceptance of different views**”, from recognising other people’s **right** to have different beliefs and practices to accepting the different views of other people, is **subtle** in form, but **massive** in substance... We move from allowing the free expression of contrary opinions to the acceptance of all opinions’ [Carson ‘The Intolerance of Tol...’ p3]

The (3) charge was he **tried to profane** the **temple** [7]! It **wasn’t** that Paul was **in** the temple (Paul acknowledged he was), but that he **tried** to **profane** the temple. This was one of the few charges on which the Jews could still pronounce the **death sentence!** **APP** Be **prepared** and seek **grace**, to accept that people **will exaggerate** and **twist** the truth to their advantage. If you read the ‘Barnabas Fund’ magazine

you will see how many of our brothers and sisters in Christ in Muslim countries are falsely charged! To **misrepresent** a person's **motives** and put an **edge/spin** on an incident to **influence** someone else's opinion/view, is a very great sin! *Do **you live such a life** that people could charge you with being a **strong believer** in Christ? Would there be enough evidence to convict you of being a strong Xn who was prepared to suffer for your faith?

Tertullus stated that all these charges could easily be proved by *examining him yourself* [8]! The Jews agreed that **these lies** were a true representation of the case, **affirming that all these things were so** [9]! Its so like the **corruption** at the trial of Jesus Christ, isn't it?

PAUL'S DEFENCE

Paul has no lawyer, he speaks for himself *when the governor had nodded...Paul replied...Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.* [10] He too gave the 'required' compliments to the governor, he **congratulated** him on his **long service**, his *many years!*[10] But **no flattery!**

He immediately **refutes**, one by one, the charges. 'Yes, I was in Jerusalem and in the temple too, but I had a two-fold mission – I was there to **worship**, the God of the temple [12] and I was there to **bring alms** and **present offerings** [17]!! They **did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd** [12] 'In fact, when they found me in the temple, they **found me purified...without any crowd or tumult** [18]! Paul then **assures** Felix *Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me* [13] 'There are **those who ought to be here before you** if I am guilty? Claudius Lysias!! The man who was about to **whip** Paul before he checked up Paul was a Roman citizen!

Paul had a **one-track-mind!** He just could **not miss** the **opportunity** to **testify** to the gospel of X! In explaining/detailing his innocence Paul **zoned-in** on the essence of the gospel! Speaking of the temple and worship he says *I confess to you that according to **the Way**, which they call a sect, I **worship** the God of our fathers* [14] Paul says **4 things**:

(1) I worship **according to the Way** [14] The 'Way' was the Xn way

– that was how many described Xnity! Isn't that wonderful!! The way of **peace**; the way to **heaven**; the way of **righteousness**; the way of the **Lord**; the way of **truth**; the way of **salvation**; etc! **Originally** in the Garden, there was *the way of the tree of life* [Gen 3:24] but things happened and so we also now read of *the way of Cain* [Jude 11] and the *the way of Balaam* [2 Pet 2:15] and the **way to Hell!** But Paul taught what he learned from Jesus: **Christ** was the Way the Truth and the Life! In all your 'travels' have **you** discovered this?

(2) **believing everything** laid down by the **Law** and written in the **Prophets** [14], ie, the name for the Holy Writings of Scripture! X said *until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished* [Mat 5:18]! But **all** this has taken place **that** the **Scriptures** of the prophets might be fulfilled [Mat 26:56] **APP** How do **you** feel about everything in Scripture coming to pass? It is not believing some things but **all things** written in Scripture! Do **you** believe **everything** or just the nice things?

(3) Paul testified he had a **hope** in God [15] Saving faith is a faith that believes in **propositions**. There are **statements** to believe – but with that faith there is **also** a **life** conveyed which brings a **certain hope**. He has **caused** us to be **born again** to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ [1P1:3] we desire each one of you to show the same **earnestness** to have the **full assurance of hope** [Heb 6:11] How earnest are **you** in making sure you have **this hope**? Thus I always **take pains** to have a clear conscience toward both God and man [16]. Do you **take pains** to have a clear conscience?

(4) He was **convicted** there **will** be a **resurrection** of **both** the just **and** the unjust [15] Earlier *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body* [2C5:10] **APP** How do **you** feel about that? What do you think you are **due**?

Paul finished by saying: *it is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day* [21] – 'it is **not because** I am guilty of any crime'! May you/I be able to say the very same 'Not guilty - but my faith may be unpopular and cost me much in the way of persecution'!