

83. Paul Gave His Defense Before Felix

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how God is even able to work through the plans of evil men to carry out His plan and purpose for our lives. The Jews planned to kill Paul. Instead, God took their plan and used it to give Paul the opportunity to speak before kings and rulers and tell them about Christ and the hope that we have as Christians because of the resurrection. In this topic, we will see that Paul is invited to give his defense regarding the charges brought against him by the Jews. Paul used the opportunity to talk about the hope that we have in Christ because of His resurrection.

Acts 24:10-13 says, “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, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.’” Here, we see that Paul began by recognizing that Felix had served for many years as a judge over the Jews. That included both his time as governor and the years before when he had lesser positions of leadership over the Jews.

Paul was very thankful for the opportunity to be able to speak to Felix and give an answer to the charges that had been made by the Jews against Paul. Paul said that Felix could check and find out that Paul had only reached Jerusalem twelve days earlier. Paul had stayed in Caesarea just before he went to Jerusalem. Acts 21:8 says, “On the next *day* we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him.” We see that Paul then traveled directly from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Acts 21:17-18 says, “And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.”

Paul talked to the elders of the church the day after he arrived in Jerusalem. They encouraged him to take a seven-day Jewish vow which he did the next day. Acts 21:27 says, “Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him.” As a result, Paul only spent seven days in Jerusalem. He had spent the previous five days being brought to Caesarea and in Caesarea. Since Paul had taken a vow and was fulfilling the vow, he could not have been inciting the crowd either in the synagogues of the city or the temple. That made it very clear that Paul did not even have the time in Jerusalem to organize any dissension against the Roman government. This made it very clear that the Jews could not prove the first charge that they had made against him (which was the only one that really mattered to the Romans anyway).

Paul was eager to take the opportunity to talk about the hope that he had in Christ. As a result, he did not even spend any more time trying to defend himself against that charge. Acts 24:14-16 says, “‘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 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. This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.” Paul agreed that the Jews called the Way a sect (the sect of the Nazarene) just as they called the Pharisees and the Sadducees sects. Each of the three groups had a system of beliefs that they believed and followed.

He then went on to explain what he believed. Paul said that he worshiped the God of his fathers. He said that he believed all that was written in the Law and the Prophets. Here, we see that Paul made it clear that he believed the entire Old Testament. On the day of His resurrection, Christ had used the Law and the Prophets to show His disciples what they taught about His resurrection. Luke 24:27 says, “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Later that night, Luke 24:44 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’” Christ used the whole Old Testament to explain what the Old Testament taught about His death and resurrection. Paul said that he also believed the whole Old Testament.

Paul said that because he did believe the whole Old Testament, he had hope in God. He said that he believed the same thing the Jews as a whole claimed to believe. He said that he believed in the resurrection. This included both the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust. 2 Peter 2:9 says, “*Then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” Paul also said that the things he believed caused his actions to be changed. Paul had made it his goal for many years to have a conscience without offense either toward God or toward men. In fact, Paul had told these very leaders that were accusing him in Jerusalem a few days earlier, in Acts 23:1, “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’” Paul knew that he had a clear conscience both before God and men.

Paul went on to say, in Acts 24:17-21, “‘Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. Or else let those who are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, 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.’”” Here, we see that Paul explained why he had come to Jerusalem. He had come to bring alms and offerings to the Jewish nation.

After arriving in Jerusalem, Paul had taken a vow and purified himself with four other Jews. It was during the time he had taken this vow that the Jews from Asia had found Paul. He was purified. There was no mob of people with him. There was no noise or tumult. Instead, Paul was just fulfilling the requirements of the vow that he had taken. In fact, Paul said that it was the Jews from Asia who should have been there that day if they had any charge to bring against him. Their very absence showed that they had no charge to bring against Paul.

Since the people who were present in Caesarea that day were from the Sanhedrin, they should have

been the ones giving testimony to Felix of any wrongdoing that Paul had committed when he was brought before the Sanhedrin council back in Jerusalem. Acts 23:6 gives the statement that he had made before the Sanhedrin. In that verse, we read, “But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’” Paul had made it clear before the council that it was his hope in the resurrection of the dead that he was being judged.

The message of the resurrection was the very message that divided the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Acts 23:8 says, “For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.” The Pharisees there that day had defended Paul. In fact, the exact words that the Pharisees had spoken are recorded in Acts 23:9b, where they said, “We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.” The Pharisees had declared Paul innocent before the council, because they also believed in the resurrection. They had said they did not want to fight against God.

Paul then told Felix, “Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.” Felix knew what the Christians believed. He knew that Paul had spoken the truth and that this was the real reason why Paul had almost been killed. We will see in our next topic how Felix had to deal with this statement in his own life. Here, we see the message that sets Christianity apart from every other religion. Every religion has a founder. If that religion has existed long enough, the founder has died. Most religions now have a tomb where the body of their founder is buried. In fact, in many religions, that tomb is almost like a sacred shrine.

It is that very fact of the resurrection that makes Christianity different from every other religion. The founders of all other religions are dead. 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 says, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” Like Paul, it is the message of the resurrection by which we stand.

That is why it is so important that we help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. Only a person that is alive can give life to others. Only a person that is alive can offer forgiveness of sin. That is the message we have to share with the world around us. That is the message that we want to help our children learn to explain clearly. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how they know Christ is risen from the dead.