

84. Paul Was Kept in Caesarea for Two Years

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain the importance of the resurrection of Christ. Instead of spending all of his time trying to defend himself from the false charges of the Jews, Paul made it clear that the real reason why he was standing before Felix was due to the fact that he believed and had his faith and hope in the resurrection. Felix knew that was the thing that made the beliefs of the Christians different. They had a hope in Christ. We will see how Felix reacted when he had to face the reality of that message for his own life.

Acts 24:22-23 says, “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.’ 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.” Felix had heard the charges that the Jews had brought against Paul. He had also heard the defense of Paul. However, he gave an excuse to postpone a decision.

One of the things we see is that Felix had more accurate knowledge of the Way. We have said that the Way is what Christianity was called at that time. The wife of Felix was the youngest daughter of Agrippa 1 and was Jewish so she could have explained Christianity to him. In addition, Felix had been in that area for many years. This meant that he had probably heard much about Christianity and the death and resurrection of Christ. We see one of the main reasons why Felix postponed a decision in Acts 24:26, where we read, “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.” Here, we see one reason Felix did not declare Paul innocent was due to the fact that he hoped Paul would pay him money to be set free.

Felix gave as his excuse for postponing the decision the fact that he would wait until Lysias, the Roman commander in Jerusalem, came to Caesarea. Lysias has already written in his letter in Acts 23:28-29, “‘And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.’” Lysias had said that the reason Paul was accused was due to questions concerning the Jewish law. He said that there was no charge that would cause Paul to deserve death. In addition, there was not even a charge that meant he should be kept in prison. By this letter, Lysias said that he thought Paul was innocent. There is no written record that Lysias was ever asked to come to Caesarea about the case of Paul.

One other thing that is unusual about this case is the fact that those who made the original accusations against Paul were Jews from Asia. Acts 21:27-28 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, crying out, ‘Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.’” These accusers from Asia had not even come to Caesarea. The high priest and the other Jewish leaders had not been able to prove any crime. Paul

was innocent and should have been set free.

The real reason why Felix postponed the decision about Paul was his own fear. He knew that the Jewish religious leaders wanted Paul killed. He was afraid that they might stir up much opposition if Felix allowed Paul to go free. Here, we see that just like Pilate, Felix was more concerned to please the Jews than to do what he knew was legal and right. Mark 15:14-15 says, “Then Pilate said to them, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, ‘Crucify Him!’ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified.” Pilate wanted to please the Jewish religious leaders. Here, we see that Felix also wanted to please the Jewish religious leaders instead of doing what was right.

The Jewish leaders returned to Jerusalem since Felix was going to keep Paul in prison. Felix did tell the centurion that was given the responsibility to guard Paul that he was to let Paul have liberty. The particular word translated “liberty” meant that he was to be *free from chains even though he was in prison*. The centurion was also told that he was to allow the friends of Paul to come and visit him. This way they could provide for his needs and also visit him to learn more from him.

Acts 24:24-25 says, “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. 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.’” Several days later, Felix and his wife, Drusilla, sent for Paul so that they could hear from him concerning the teaching about Christ and what it meant to have faith in Him. His wife was Jewish and so she had probably heard people speak both for and against Christianity. Both Felix and Drusilla wanted to know more about faith in Christ.

We see that Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. Here, we see that Paul understood clearly how to work with the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit could bring conviction of sin. John 16:8-11 says, “‘And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.’” The word translated “reasoned” means *to talk together or to discuss*. We see that Paul talked together with Felix about the very areas where the Holy Spirit brings conviction to the non-Christian.

The word translated “righteousness” means *the condition of being acceptable to God*. In John 16:10, we see that the Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness as we share Scriptures about the fact that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One who could pay the penalty for sin, because He was without sin. It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to convict people in this area, because Christ is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father. He is not here on the earth where people can see and hear Christ, so the Holy Spirit convicts them through the Word of God. The fact that Felix had not lived a life that was acceptable to God meant that he needed to come to God through Christ.

Paul also talked with Felix and Drusilla about self-control. The word translated “self-control” means *one who masters his desires and passions*. Felix had certainly not exercised self-control as Drusilla was his third wife and Felix had talked her into leaving her husband to become his wife. The only way that Felix could have self-control was to repent of his sin of unbelief and place his faith in Christ. In John 16:9, Christ said, “Of sin, because they do not believe in Me.” As Paul and Felix talked together, Paul let him know that the only way that he could come to God was through Christ.

Paul also talked together with Felix about the judgment to come. John 16:11 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” When Christ died, Satan thought that he had won. When Christ rose from dead, Satan knew that he had lost, that he was condemned and that he faced judgment. As Paul talked with Felix, he spoke about the fact that Satan and all those who continued to follow him would face that judgment to come. As Felix heard those words his heart was filled with fear. He knew that he deserved that judgment. He told Paul to go away for the present and that when he had a more convenient time he would call for Paul again. This fear was the result of the conviction of the Holy Spirit, but we see that Felix did not respond to Christ.

Acts 24:26-27 says, “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. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.” Although Felix did call for Paul and did talk with him many times over the next two years, we never read that he repented of his sin of unbelief. The Holy Spirit convicted Felix and filled his life with fear. However, that did not bring him to the place where he ever repented of his sin.

Instead, we see that the reason why Felix called more often for Paul was because he hoped that Paul would give him money to gain his freedom. Here, we see that Felix was so controlled by his sin that he had developed a very destructive root in his life. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 says, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds* of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” The desire of Felix to gain worldly riches and the temporary pleasures that come from those riches caused him to call for Paul many times.

After two years, Porcius Festus was appointed as the next governor to replace Felix. Even after talking to Paul many times, Felix continued to harden his heart. He did not respond and receive the message regarding the death and resurrection of Christ. Instead, he made the choice to please the Jews and left Paul in prison when the new governor came into office. Here, we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that some will accept and others will reject when we share about the death and resurrection of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn that such individuals are either responding to or rejecting the convicting of the Holy Spirit.