

Father, we pray that there might just be a fresh anointing of Your Holy Spirit upon our lives as we look to You and as we worship You and as we call upon You, Lord. We live in a world, Lord, that is filled with evil and unrighteousness. Lord we find our hearts being torn because of the unrighteousness of this world. The things that are allowed and tolerated and encouraged! The destruction of man. Lord, how we need the power of Your Holy Spirit to stand against these powers of darkness that rule and are in control of this evil world. Lord, indeed, our prayer is for a fresh anointing of Your Holy Spirit tonight. Enabling us Lord to stand against all of the powers of darkness that have been aligned against Your church and against Your people and those who would live Godly. And Lord, may we stand. Stand firm, Lord, in the faith and against all opposition. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

At the end of chapter twenty three, we found that when there was a conspiracy discovered by forty Jews to kill Paul. They had bound themselves with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed. And they set up a little plot asking the high priest to talk to the captain of the guard. They told him to bring Paul over to the meeting of the Sanhedrin that they might question him a little more fully. The intent was that as they were taking Paul over, they would ambush the soldiers and Paul. And they would kill him. So Paul's nephew overheard the plot. He came and told Paul. He told his nephew to tell the captain of the guard. And thus they decided for Paul's safe keeping, he should be taken to the capital of Judea, which at that time was in Caesarea, where they had the full Roman protection. So at the third hour of the night, nine o'clock in the evening, Paul was taken from Jerusalem. He was accompanied by four hundred soldiers and seventy cavalry men. And they took him to Caesarea. There he was kept in safekeeping in the palace of Herod.

Now after five days (Paul having escaped from Jerusalem) *Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.* (This Tertullus, a silver tongued orator.) ²*And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying* (He begins with this flattery of Felix, who was just an evil, wicked man. But this palavering and flattering, said to him.): *"Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight,* ³*we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.* O, we are so thankful to have such a man like you ruling over us, you know. Give me a break! ⁴*Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.* Now he begins his accusation against Paul. His first accusation is that Paul was a pestilent fellow. Now this is a very serious charge in a Roman court. Because one thing that Rome would not tolerate was rebellion against the Roman government. You remember that the key that sort of sealed the death of Jesus before Pilate was when they said, He says that He is a king. That He was actually in sedition against the Roman government. And when Pilate said shall I release your king? They said we have no king but Caesar. And Pilate realized that he was in a position of the claim of Jesus being the king of the Jews. That it set Him against Roman authority and rule. And so it was as a result of this charge that Pilate then gave them the right of crucifying Jesus. So Paul is accused of being a pestilent fellow. That is he is stirring up trouble against the Roman government. He is trying to create a sedition against Rome. He was a mover he said of sedition, a pestilent fellow, trying to stir up people against Rome.

⁵*For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world* (This man is traveling to the Jews around the world, seeking to stir up trouble. He is an international problem for the Roman government.), *and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.* Now today we have the Nazarene church. This is where they get their name because of Tertullus and his accusation calling the Christians, the sect of the Nazarenes. The disciples, apostles, often said, Jesus of Nazareth. And that was to identify Him from among the many Jewish boys who name was Jesus or Joshua. The name Jesus is Greek. It is Greek for the Hebrew name, Joshua. Joshua was a very common name for boys in Bible days. Named after this hero of the Old Testament. So it was a very common name. So they would say Jesus bar Joseph, (son of Joseph) or Jesus of

Nazareth, to identify which Jesus they were talking about. So because He was known as Jesus of Nazareth. You remember Peter said, Jesus of Nazareth maketh thee whole. Thus it became known as the Nazarenes. Or they became known as the Nazarenes because they followed Jesus of Nazareth. Now he was accused here of being a ring leader of this sect of the Nazarenes. But that term, ringleader, you see that has a ring of a gang leader. Or you know, he is heading up this sedition. This guy is really a bad fellow.

⁶*He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.* Now you remember they took him and were trying to kill him. So here is Tertullus saying, we were just going to judge him according to our law. Yes! Just kill him!

⁷*But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands,* Oh man! Here he rescues Paul. But they try to make him a real evil fellow. He came with great violence. Police brutality, you know kind of a thing because he wouldn't let us kill him. ⁸*commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."* So Lysias sent us down here that we might bring to you these accusations against him. And the high priest, Ananias, now remember he is an old man. This is a journey of about seventy miles. It's not easy or pleasant. It is, you know, not by Greyhound bus or limousine or whatever, but it is over rugged country and on donkey or whatever and yet he was so incensed with Paul, that he comes down to make these accusations against Paul. ⁹*And the Jews also assented* (They said, yeah, that's right, you know. They were assenting to these flowery words and accusations that Tertullus was making), *maintaining that these things were so.*

¹⁰*Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch* (Paul is now answering for himself. He has a tremendous knowledge of Roman law though.) *as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation* (Seven years altogether. Two years at Samaria and five years now over Judea. Because I realize that you have been a judge over this nation.), *I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,*

¹¹*because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days* (So Paul was in Jerusalem less than a week, because he has been five days back in Caesarea. So he was in Jerusalem less than a week. It was just twelve days ago.) *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.* (I wasn't in any kind of a group, conversation. I wasn't there trying to stir up people. Not in the temple. Not in the city. Not in their synagogue.)

¹³*Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.* (They have no proof. You can't just make accusations. You've got to present some kind of proof that the accusations that you are making are true. They didn't bring any witnesses. There was no attempt to prove the accusations. So they are unfounded accusations, which of course are totally unacceptable in a court of law. Just accusations. So they can't prove these things.

¹⁴*But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect* (Or heresy. As we mentioned a few weeks ago, this term, the Way, is a term that was given to early Christianity. They really weren't called Christians. That's something that has come along through the years. It was in Antioch where the term Christian was first used. But it was sort of localized. In time it has come to identify the followers of Jesus Christ. They are Christians. But an earlier term was the Way. And that is why some churches name themselves The Way, because it probably one of the earliest terms for the Christians or for the church. They were known as the Way. So Paul said, I'll confess to you that after the Way, which they call heresy), *so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.* So Paul is saying, I'm not guilty of heresy. They called it heresy. But in reality, I am only believing all of the Scriptures. They don't believe all of the Scriptures. I worship the God of our fathers. I worship the same God, but I happen to believe all of the Scriptures and all of the Prophets. All of the things that are written.

Now there were many things written in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. A lot of the things they spiritualized because they could not correlate the prophecies of the Messiah that spoke of His reign over all the earth with the prophecies that spoke of His being despised and rejected and put to death. Suffering. So they more or less spiritualized those Scriptures that referred to His suffering and death, saying they were spiritual allegories because they just couldn't reconcile them. He's going to reign over the house of David. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. Along with He is despised and rejected of men, a

Man of sorrow, acquainted with grief. Numbered with the transgressors in His death. And so they didn't believe all of the Scriptures. Paul said I believe all that is written. And of course throughout the Old Testament, the many, many, promises of the Messiah that God would send. So Paul is confessing that he does worship God, the God of their fathers as he believes all of the things which the Scriptures declared.

And he said, 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.* I believe this, Paul said! There is going to be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. Now this is mentioned in Daniel, chapter twelve (Daniel 12:2-3) where Daniel speaks there of the last days, this general resurrection of the dead. Some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and contempt. So Paul said they allow this. In the Jewish faith, they allowed the belief in the resurrection of the dead and of this judgment that is going to come.

⁶*This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.* I've always endeavored to have a clean conscience. A conscience that is without offense. What a man! That he can say that I have a clear conscience towards God! I have a clear conscience towards men. I have always strived toward this. I've exercised myself to always have this clear conscience. You remember a few chapters ago when he was talking to the elders of Ephesus, he said, I am pure of the blood of all men. For I have not failed to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Paul said my conscience is clear! I've shared with you all of the Scriptures! I've shared with the full counsel of God! I have a clear conscience! What a great thing to be able to say, I have a clear conscience toward God! I have a clear conscience toward men! And that's the way we should live!

¹⁷*Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,* (I came with money to give to the nation, to give to the people.) ¹⁸*in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.* They just saw me there in the temple. I had gone through the rite and was purified.

¹⁹*They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.* In other words, they are the ones that should be here making the accusation. You know, these fellows weren't even around! They don't know what was happening. And so if these men had any objections they are the ones. And Paul is absolutely correct, legally. That all that has been presented thus far is just hear say. No evidence. No proof. And these fellows that got all upset are the ones who should be here making the accusations.

²⁰*Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,* Now he is just denying the charges. (Let them speak up before the counsel of any evil that I did.)

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.'* " Paul said, that's the only thing I said. I'm here because I believe in the resurrection of the dead.

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."* It seems that Felix was a man who was always deferring making a decision. Putting off decisions. He's deferring this case against Paul. I'll wait until Lysias the captain comes down. And I'll get his side of the story. So a deferring of judgment. As he waits for Lysias to come down.

Now there is an interesting phrase here, having more accurate knowledge of the Way. It seems that Felix had heard of Christianity. There is an interesting story that Simon Magus, the Simon from Samaria, who you remember when Philip came down and preached Christ, he was a magician. He passed himself off as a man with God's powers. And when Philip came and was working miracles, he was attracted. And all of the people were attracted because marvelous miracles were being wrought by Philip. So he had deceived the people for a long time. They thought he had God's powers. That he was a magician. That he worked magic among them but nothing compared with what Philip was doing, as far as the miracles of God that were being wrought by Philip. So when many people believed because of Philip's preaching and the miracles that he did. Simon also at least affected to be a believer and was baptized. He was sort of hanging around. Probably trying to figure how Philip was doing those things. And you remember when the church in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans were receiving the gospel, they sent unto them Peter and John that they might receive the Holy Spirit. And when this Simon saw that through the laying on of hands people were receiving the Holy Spirit, he came to Peter and said

hey, I'd like to buy that trick. I would like to purchase that same power that I can go around and lay my hands on people and they will receive the Holy Spirit too. And you remember how Peter rebuked him and said, "Your money perish with you. Pray that God will forgive the dishonesty of your heart for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness." Down deep in his heart he was angry that he had lost his control and power over the people. And he was wanting again to have that same kind of recognition where people would say, oh, you know, Simon.

Now the story is that Simon Magus was the one Felix hired to woo Drusilla away from her husband. And that he and Simon had discussed Christianity. And that is where he received his first exposure to Christianity with his conversations with this Simon Magus. And it's an interesting story. We do know from history that he hired a magician to woo Drusilla away from her first husband, Aziz. When he knew the Way more fully, Paul was explaining to him this Way of Jesus Christ. So he deferred. We'll wait, I won't make a decision yet.

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.* So Paul was under house arrest but he had a certain amount of liberty. His friends could come and freely visit him. Luke was with him there and of course, Philip. Because Philip lived in Caesarea and in fact had been Paul's host just a couple of weeks earlier to this trial. He had stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist. Now the interesting thing, the reason why Philip was living in Caesarea, is he fled from the persecution in Jerusalem of which Paul was the chief persecutor. When Paul was persecuting the church in Jerusalem, Philip as a result of that persecution, fled from Jerusalem, went first to Samaria and then ended up in Caesarea. Now years later, here the men are brought together through Jesus Christ. Men who at one time were on opposite sides, through Christ had been brought together. And Philip becomes Paul's host there in Caesarea. So Paul had the freedom or rather his friends had the freedom to visit him. Aristarchus was there with him as well as Luke and of course the body of Christ that was there in Caesarea, Philip, his daughters and all. So that they had that freedom though he was a prisoner of the Roman government. But Felix had granted him certain liberties. Now Paul was two years in this wait. Now the Lord had told Paul when he was back in Jerusalem, that he had to go to Rome. He was also going to witness in Rome. And while you are sitting there for two years, you might wander, well, did I get it right? Am I to minister in Rome? Why am I still here? And why did the Lord leave Paul for two years in Caesarea? When you look back on Paul's ministry, this fellow was going night and day for years. He was constantly on the go. I think the Lord is just saying, Paul, it's time for a sabbatical. Just kick back. You can't go anywhere. I do believe that it was during this time that Paul wrote that important book called Hebrews. I do believe that Paul was the author of the book of Hebrews. That probably he co-authored it with Luke, because Luke was there with him. So what a time as Paul is there near the church in Jerusalem where many of those who had embraced Christianity were sort of leaning back towards Judaism. And Paul had had a visit to the church in Jerusalem and saw the influence of the tradition on the believers. How that some of them were sort of being drawn back into Judaism and thus this great letter to the Hebrews warning them against going back and trying to find a righteous standing before God by keeping the law. And the importance of the great high priest Jesus Christ. Showing the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. A better way. Better promises. A better hope. A better high priest. And this great letter of Paul's to the Hebrew believers. It probably was written during this two year stint that he was there in house arrest in Caesarea.

²⁴*And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish* (As we mentioned, she was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Now Herod Agrippa I is the one who stretched out his hand against the church and had James, the brother of John killed. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter. He was going to bring him forth and kill him the next day, but the angel of the Lord came at night and delivered Peter out of the prison. Herod had the guards put to death. He went back down to Caesarea and shortly thereafter died. The Bible says the angel smote and he died. So this is the daughter of Herod Agrippa I and a granddaughter of Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded. So her brother is Herod Agrippa II. You will come across him as you read chapter twenty five. In our next chapter, Herod Agrippa II comes into the picture. So Felix came with his wife Drusilla. Now she was an extremely beautiful woman. And as we have mentioned she had been the wife of another man, Aziz who was the king of Emasa. So she is living in open adultery with Felix. This is his third wife. They are living just an open, adulterous life. Tacitus the Roman centurion said of him that he was licentious. That he was evil. And that he exercised all the prerogatives of king with a spirit of a slave.), *he sent*

for Paul (He was no doubt curious and interested in Christianity, in this Way.) and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Paul shared with him his belief and his faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

So as Paul reasoned with Felix. ²⁵Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid God requires righteousness. God said, "Be ye holy for I am holy." Living in a right relationship with God. That is God being first, "Thou shall have no other gods, He said, before Me." Being in a right relationship with your fellow man. Living as God would have us to live. Loving one another, forgiving one another, being kind one to another. Not lying, not stealing, not cheating, not taking that which belongs to someone else. More concerned with helping them and giving to them than to taking from them. An "others centered" kind of life rather than "self centered" kind of life. God centered. Others centered. We used to sing years ago a chorus, "Jesus and others and you", what a wonderful way to spell joy, Jesus, others, you." But each one has to be in that order. That place. Jesus first. You last. That spells joy in anybody's life.

So Paul was speaking to him about righteousness. Living the right kind of life, honest life, pure life, wholesome life, reasoning with him about these things. Because it does make sense. It makes sense to live a good life. To live a wholesome life. To live an honest life. That makes sense. It doesn't make sense to live a sinful life because sin is so destructive. And so Paul reasoned with him of righteousness and of temperance, moderation. And surely the Bible does teach us that we should be temperate in all things. Not living in excesses, one way or the other. But just well rounded, a well balanced life. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit, that self control.

And then he reasoned with him of the judgment to come. In other words, you are not going to get by with evil. One day it's going to catch up to you. One day you are going to have face the past. You are going to have to answer for what you have done. As the Scripture says (Hebrews 9:27), "And as it is appointed for man to die once, but after this the judgment." There is a judgment day that is going to come.

John describes it in the book of Revelation (Revelation 20:7-15) that judgment of the sinners. We Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. To receive the rewards for what we have done for Christ while in these bodies. But then the sinners will have to stand before this great judgment of God. As they stand condemned and they receive their sentence and are cast into Gehenna, the lake burning with fire.

So Paul testified to Felix about these things. Felix, there is a day of judgment that is going to come. You have not been living a righteous life. You've been very intemperate. You've indulged yourself in all kinds of evil. And it's going to catch up with you, Felix. There is day of judgment coming. And Felix trembled. Quite often under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, a person begins to tremble. I remember one night, (I grew up in church), but I remember one night very vividly, I was in my very early teens. My parents weren't able to go to church that night so my sister and I went together. And somehow that night the Holy Spirit gave to me a very deep conviction of my sin. I don't remember the message at all. I remember the name of the Pastor, but I don't remember the message at all. All I remember is that I was very conscious of my sin and I sat there shaking. And when he gave the invitation to come forward, I went forward and I knelt. And though I had been forward many times, this night I can remember still how the Spirit of God was so heavy upon me. And when I went home I was still shaking and was sharing with my parents, the work of God's Spirit in my heart that night. And how I went forward to just really commit myself to the Lord.

Felix was shaking. But again he put it off. The pattern of the man. Indecision. Deferring the decision. Putting off the decision. So just being convicted by the Spirit, even having a powerful experience of shaking under the conviction, does not guarantee conversion. It takes an acting upon that conviction to bring conversion. And that's the step that Felix couldn't take. Convicted? Yes. Trembling? Yes. Conversion? No. He put it off.

And so he said, and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." When it's more convenient. Go your way now. When it's more convenient, I'll call you again. Putting off, deferring again the important decision about his own life. And how many people have made this same mistake that was made by Felix in putting off the decision to commit their lives to Jesus Christ? When that moment had come, when that hour of God's Spirit was there, they put it off! And with Felix the convenient time never came. Tragic! It never came. And so it is true of so many people who have put off that decision for Jesus Christ, waiting for a more convenient day. Only to discover that they sinned away the day of grace. And that more convenient day never came! Hell is filled with people who decided to wait for a more convenient day.

²⁶Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him You see he was a corrupt man. He was looking for a bribe. He knew that Paul had funds available. Paul had brought an offering to the nation of Israel. He testified of that fact. So he knew that Paul had funds available. It's interesting to me that Paul would not, even for the sake of his own freedom, bow to bribing an official. In other words I have a conscience that is clear before God and man. If he would stoop to bribery, he would not have this. He would rather be in prison than to get out on an illegal basis by bribing the governor. And yet this corrupt Felix was waiting for a bribe. He also hoped that money would be given to him) *by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often* (He was probably was just thinking, well Paul, one of the days, will give me a hundred talents, you know. Let me go.) *and conversed with him.* ²⁷*But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix;* (Felix was brought back to Rome and there the accusations of his mismanagement were made. His corruption was revealed. And he would have been sentenced to death because of his corrupting of the Roman government, but his brother Pallas interceded. He was a close friend of Nero. Thus his life was spared, but only because of his brother's close relationship to Nero. But he was banished. End of the story for Felix. The convenient day never came.

However one last little evil deed. *and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.* Not just. Not right. But, you see, it was the Jews that were making that were making the accusations against him. And so as he went back to Rome to face the accusations, by leaving Paul bound in prison he was hoping that maybe you know, that would cause them to send some letters of favor towards him. Corrupt to the end. And so Paul is left bound over in prison as Festus takes over the Roman powers and authorities there.

So in our next chapter we find Paul's defense before Festus, his appeal to Caesar. And then the dilemma that Festus faced as he was forced to send Paul to Caesar. Now he tried to get Agrippa to help him with that dilemma. So an interesting, fascinating chapter, the twenty fifth chapter. You will enjoy it as we continue the story of Paul the apostle and his witness and service for Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank You again for this privilege of gathering tonight to spend the time with You in the study of the Word. Lord, we pray that You will help us to exercise ourselves to always have a clear conscience before You and before men. Lord, we want to live as you would have us to live. We want to have a right relationship with You, Lord, and we want a right relationship with our fellow man. Lord, we want to live a life of moderation, controlled by Your Spirit that we do not indulge ourselves in excesses. For we realize that Lord, some day, we are going to answer to You as the great judge, overall. And thus Lord, we want to be able to stand before You and to hear Your words of approbation, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And may we be just that! Good and faithful servants. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.