*DEVOTIONAL*

April 30 – May 5

*Paul and Governor Felix*

**Monday, April 30 Acts 24:1-9**

*“Tertullus laid charges against Paul”*

 The seriousness with which the Jewish leaders took this case is apparent in that the high priest himself made the sixty-five-mile journey from Jerusalem to Caesarea along with the elders and the lawyer Tertullus. Tertullus begins his speech with a typical introduction, acknowledging Felix’s authority on the matter phrased to win favor and goodwill. He expresses the gratitude of the Jews for the peace they have enjoyed under him. This was not really true, for there had been many insurrections that had been brutally stamped out by Felix.

 Tertullus then brings several charges against Paul. His causing riots may refer to the trouble he supposedly precipitated in Asia. Paul is also charged with being a ringleader of the Nazarene sect, and trying to desecrate the temple. The term *Nazarene* probably derives from the fact that Jesus grew up in Nazareth and the term was used of Jesus in the Gospels. This is the only time in the New Testament it is used of the church. Tertullus asserts that an examination of Paul will show that the charges they bring are true.

*Protect your followers, Lord, when the powers of this world persecute us. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 1 Acts 24:10-23**

*“Now it was Paul’s turn”*

 In his defense, Paul makes a series of telling points. It can be easily verified that he had been in Jerusalem for a brief period of time, during which his accusers did not find him doing anything anywhere in Jerusalem that might suggest he was causing trouble; they have no proof of any of their charges. Paul does admit that he is a member of the Way, but he goes on to show that this sect has similar beliefs to the Jews. Next, Paul gets specific about his visit to Jerusalem, referencing the gifts for the poor he brought with him.

 Then Paul denies the specific charges against him. He was ceremonially clean when he was found in the temple, there was no crowd with him, and he was not involved in any disturbance. If the charge about his causing trouble all over the world refers to the trouble in Ephesus, then the people from Asia should be there to press charges. Paul has one more point to make. He was tried by the Jewish Ruling Council, but they found no suitable charge to bring against him.

*Our defense, Lord, is greatly strengthened when we act honorably. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 2 Acts 24:24-27**

*“They listened as he told them about faith in Christ Jesus”*

 Felix should have released Paul, but he was reluctant to displease the Jews. So he delayed making a decision until the commander came. But he gave Paul relative freedom, allowing his friends to visit him and care for his personal needs. Felix’s delaying tactics went on for two whole years, at which time he was removed from his job. Felix clearly thought that Paul was innocent of any crime against the state but it served his purposes to keep him in custody.

 Included in Paul’s discussions with Felix and his wife about the gospel were conversations about “righteousness, self-control and the judgment.” These discussions made Felix afraid, which expressed itself in a couldn’t-care-less attitude (“When I find it convenient, I will send for you”). We also see how mixed his motives were, for he was looking for a bribe and did not want to displease the Jews even if that meant being unjust to Paul. He probably thought that one who was a Roman citizen and who had just brought a substantial gift for the poor must have access to substantial wealth.

*As foretold, Lord, the mighty hear the gospel and must decide how to respond. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

April 30 – May 5

*Paul and Governor Felix*

**Thursday, May 3 Acts 25:1-12**

*“I appeal to Caesar”*

 Governor Festus, taking over for Governor Felix, made his first visit to Jerusalem three days after arriving in the province. He met with the Jewish leaders who were quick to bring up the issue of Paul. Even two years after Paul’s arrest their urgency over this case and their plans to kill him had not diminished. Rather than return Paul to Jerusalem for trial, Festus asked the Jews to come to Caesarea with him. As in the trial before Felix, the Jews made serious charges against Paul, which they could not prove. Again Paul proclaimed his blamelessness before both Jewish and Roman law.

 Since the process of justice had been stalled for two years, Paul now realized that there was no hope of his getting a fair trial in Judea. The influence of the powerful Jewish leaders not only perverted justice but placed his life in great danger. Paul must have felt that this problem would not be as serious in Rome. Besides, the Lord had told him that he would testify in Rome (Acts 23:11). Thus, he decided to appeal to Caesar – a privilege granted to Roman citizens. Festus conferred with his council and declared the appeal valid.

*Our ultimate appeal is to you, Lord, and you have declared us “not guilty.” Amen.*

**Friday, May 4 Acts 25:13-22**

*“Festus discussed Paul’s case with King Agrippa”*

 Festus was happy to use a visit from Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice to consult on the puzzling case of Paul, explaining the events up to that point. It was a straightforward explanation, and it is interesting to note that he saw the resurrection of Jesus as a pivotal point in this case. When Agrippa expressed a desire to hear Paul, arrangements were made for a meeting to be held the next day.

 The history of the Herods and the early Christian movement were woven together. King Herod the Great, Agrippa II’s grandfather, had been the king who feared the birth of Jesus when told about him by the wise men. His panic over the threat to his power prompted him to murder the male children in the vicinity of Bethlehem. Jesus and his family escaped to Egypt, returning upon King Herod’s death. Some years later, John the Baptist was murdered by Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. Antipas was also present in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, and Jesus was sent to him by Pilate.

*Paul preached the resurrection, Lord, and so will we. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 5 Acts 25:23-27**

 *“There is no real charge against him”*

 The appearance of Agrippa and Bernice with great pomp to hear Paul speak at a gathering that included high ranking officers and the leading men of the city reminds us of the prediction God made to Ananias that Paul would appear before the kings of the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Though Agrippa cannot himself be called a Gentile, the territory he ruled included many Gentiles. It was an imposing setting in which the Apostle was to witness for Christ. We can picture Paul, chains dangling about his stooped, physically unimposing stature. What a contrast between the dazzling splendor of the high and mighty, and the humility of a prisoner for Christ.

 Festus’ recounting of the events surrounding Paul shows that he was influenced by the demands of the Jews for Paul’s death, while at the same time convinced that Paul was innocent. His immediate dilemma was that while he was about to send Paul in chains to Rome, he did not have any specific charge against Paul to present to Caesar.

*You raise the humble, Lord, and bring down the proud. Amen.*