GOD IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL

PAUL BEFORE FESTUS

**DATE: 1/5/2011**

**TEXT: Acts 25:1-12**

**INTRODUCTION**

Paul has been kept in Caesarea at the pleasure of Felix for 2 years – **24:27**

Finally there is a change in gov’t, and events are set in motion that will greatly impact Paul’s life (God’s will)

Felix's reign was known for riots and destruction

In 58 A.D., Felix's soldiers were so forceful in putting down a riot of the Jews in Caesarea, that he was replaced by Porcius Festus

What about this man - Porcius Festus?

Let’s look at his life as it affects the life of Paul

Let’s pray and look at **chapter 25** of the **Book of Acts**

And see that **“GOD IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL”**

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First we see:

**I. FESTUS, THE NEW GOVERNOR – v.1a**

***“Now when Festus was come into the province”***

Felix’s inapt behavior finally caught up with him, and he was recalled to Rome in 60 A.D.

Though he escaped the death penalty, it is thought he eventually committed suicide

Porcius Festus was appointed by Nero as Felix’s replacement and he began serving as governor (procurator) in the autumn of 60 A.D.

This information is found in secular history and is a key to determining the date of Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem back in **Acts 21:17**

Festus would die in office in the summer of 62 A.D.

**A. The Character of Festus**

Some historians tells us that Festus was an honest official, dealing in fairness and justice with whom he governed

He was:

**1. Rationalistic**

It is said that he was a student of philosophy …

However, he had no belief in anything he could not see

To him, religion was nothing more than silly superstition

We know this from his comment in -

**V.19 – *“But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive”***

**2. Decisive**

In contrast to his predecessor, Festus was one to take care of matters

Not like Felix who ***“left Paul bound”* – 24:27**

We read in **vs. 4-6**

**3. Political**

Festus was typical of many politicians

He wasn’t interested in what was right, but sought to please the majority

**V.9** reads – ***“But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to***

***Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?”***

**B. The First Act of Festus**

We see in the second half of **v.1** his first task was to pacify the restless Jews

He went to Jerusalem after only 3 days in office

Knowing how important it was for him to get along with the Jewish leaders,

Festus lost no time in visiting the holy city and paying his respects

And the Jewish leaders lost no time in bringing up Paul's case

The new high priest was Ishmael; he had replaced Jonathan who had been killed by Felix

Ishmael wanted to resurrect the plot of two years before and remove Paul once and for all ([**Acts 23:12-15**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+23%3A12-15))

It show to what extent the Lost will go to justify themselves

But, they are only pawns in the hand of the Devil

**John 8:44 – *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from***

***the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”***

**II Timothy 2:26 – *“And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will”***

**II. FESTUS AT JERUSALEM – vs. 2-6a**

**A. The Issue of Paul Revived – v.2**

This shows the extent and persistence of the Jewish hatred toward the Apostle Paul

For over 2 yrs. They have been trying to get at him

No sooner had the new governor been appointed, then were the Jews *informing* him of Paul

**B. The Request of the Jews – v.3**

The Bible says that they ***“desired favour”***

Being experienced in political tradeoffs with the Romans,

Immediately the Jews sought a political favor from Festus

Their plan was simple

In having Paul brought to Jerusalem, they would wait along the way and kill him

***“laying wait in the way to kill him”***

**C. The Reply of Festus – vs.4, 5**

Festus seems determined to take control, over his province and be in control of every situation

Festus was apparently somewhat suspicious of their unusual request to try a man whom Felix had not tried for over two years

We see him acting discreetly

He gave two reasons for denying their request:

**First,** the place to hold court was in Caesarea

Caesarea was the seat of the Roman gov’t in Judaea

Caesarea would be where Paul could get a fair hearing

Although he cared not for Paul or the Jews he was willing to be just in his treatment of a Roman citizen

**Second**, However, in a move of appeasement, he also suggested their leaders accompany him back to Caesarea

He would try the case immediately upon his return

End of **v.6** says – ***“and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought”***

Aside of the human reasoning we might use here,

The fact is, the Providence of God shaped the governor’s reply

**Proverbs 21:1 – *“The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will”***

Back in **chapter 23** and **v. 11,** after Paul’s experience before the Sanhedrin

The Bible says that ***“the Lord stood by him and said, be of good cheer … for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome”***

God has never yet broken a promise

And all the plotting and human reasoning would not circumvent God’s plan and purposes for His faithful servant Paul

**D. Festus’ Return to Caesarea – v.6a**

We’re told that Festus spent over 10 days in Jerusalem

No doubt this involved a lot of socializing with the Jewish elite

**III. PAUL’S ARRAIGNMENT – vs. 6b-12**

**A. The Judgment Seat – v. 6b**

The next day, (the day after arriving back in Caesarea) the Bible says he sat on the *“****judgment seat”*** (*bema*)

Festus had indicated to the Jews that he would give Paul a speedy hearing and he kept his word

He ***“commanded Paul to be brought”*** forth

This was the place of civil jurisprudence (court of law)

I remind you that one day we’ll all stand before God’s

Judgment Seat

**Romans 14:10 – *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ”***

**Matthew 7:2 *–“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again”***

**II Corinthians 5:10 – *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”***

The Jews used no lawyer this time

Rather they ***“stood round about”*** Paul as accusers making vehement charges against him

Luke was evidently present and he records that they could not prove any of their allegations

**B. The Accusing Crowd – v.7**

From **v.7** we would conclude that the charges were but repetitions of their former charges

The Bible outlines those charges brought against him back in chapter **24** and **vs.5, 6a**

**→ *“For we have found this man a pestilent fellow…”***

**→ *“and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world …”***

**→ *“and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:”***

**→ *“Who also hath gone about to profane the temple:”***

Perhaps some new ones were added?

It says that they ***“laid many and grievous complaints against Paul”***

There are always embellishments with any false accusation

And again they still could not prove themselves

**C. Paul’s Answer – v.8**

Paul’s defense is not given lengthy discussion here

Paul once again ***“answered for himself”***

The word ***“answered”*** has the sense *“to defend*

*Oneself”*

The English word *apologetic* is related to it

Paul summarized the allegations pending against him as

**(1)** violating Jewish law

We know that at no time did Paul ever do this

As a matter of fact Paul proclaimed that -

**Romans 10:4 – *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”*** (I Tim. 1:5; I Pe. 1:9; Rm. 14:9)

**(2)** violating the Jewish Temple

We know that at no time did Paul ever do this

As a matter of fact Paul proclaimed that –

**Acts 24:17, 18 – *“Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings”   
“Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult”***

Paul’s heart longed for his people to believe and be saved

**Romans 10:1 – *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved”***

**(3)** violating Roman law regarding sedition

We know that Paul taught just the opposite

**Romans 13:1-7**

Festus only would have interest in this third category

The Jews could offer no evidence whatsoever concerning any of these, much less the third charge

Paul finishes his statement by proclaiming –

***“Nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all”***

**D. Festus suggests a Compromise – v. 9**

In **v.9** Festusreveals his true colors

To Festus, the whole affair was a matter of political gamesmanship

He cared nothing for justice, truth, or fairness for Paul

Rather, he saw an opportunity to make political capital

Though he was not elected by the Jews, currying their favor would be a plus on his resume and further advance his career as a politician

From his corrupt perspective, he had more to gain by pleasing the Jews than by executing justice and releasing Paul

He therefore offered Paul the opportunity for another hearing at Jerusalem

Paul immediately saw through what was happening

He had not received justice from either Felix or now Festus

He correctly realized that he was being made a political football

If Festus would not deal with him fairly in theoretically neutral Caesarea,

He knew he stood no chance in the highly prejudicial atmosphere of Jerusalem

Over the last two years, Paul no doubt had much time to

mull over his legal status as a Roman citizen

He now knew Festus was no better than Felix and maybe worse

He therefore knew what his answer must be

**E. Paul Appeals to Caesar – vs. 10, 11**

***“Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest”***

Paul realized he had no hope for justice from Festus

He was already before the right court to be judged

To be sent back to Jerusalem, surely would mean death

Paul’s appeal, was actually an appeal of Faith

Because Paul knew the will of God for his life

**Acts 9:15 – *“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:”***

**Acts 19:21 – *“After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome”***

**Acts 23:11**

This also was an appeal without precedent

A man could only appeal to a higher court after his conviction in a lower court

In this case, Paul went directly to the highest court

This is why we see Festus conferring with his ***“council”*** in **v.12**

Paul’s words in **v.11 – *“if I …have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die…”***

Continuing, Paul declared that if he were an offender (i.e., a criminal) guilty of a capital offense, he was willing to face the charges

But inasmuch as there was no basis for the charges

pending against him,

He reminded Festus that under Roman law even he could not legally deliver him to the Jews

Paul, no doubt, had long mulled over what he was about to say

He, no doubt, had long reflected concerning his desire to see Rome and that Jesus had promised him that he would see it in **Acts 23:11**

As Roman law had developed, a Roman citizen

had the right to appeal what he believed to be an unjust matter directly to Caesar

Paul knew he would receive no justice from Festus

He announced to Festus and the Jews present -

***“I appeal unto Caesar”***

**F. Festus Agrees to Send Paul to Rome – v.12**

***“Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go”***

What led Paul to make that wise decision?

For one thing, he knew that his destination was Rome, not Jerusalem;

And the fastest way to get there was to appeal to Caesar

Paul also knew that the Jews had not given up their hopes of killing him, so he was wise to stay under the protection of Rome

By appealing to Caesar, Paul forced the Romans to guard him and take him to Rome

Finally, Paul realized that he could never have a fair trial in Jerusalem anyway, so why go?

It must have infuriated the Jewish leaders when Paul, by one statement, took the case completely out of their hands

He made it clear that he was willing to die *if he* could be proved guilty of a capital crime,

But first they had to find him guilty

Festus met with his official council, and they agreed to send Paul to Nero for trial

No doubt the new governor was somewhat embarrassed that he had handled one of his first cases so badly that the prisoner was forced to appeal to Caesar; and to Caesar he must go!

**CLOSING**

Our Heavenly Father is Always at work, working His perfect will!

Whether it’s in Paul’s life or ours

GOD IS IN COMPLETE CONTROL

Next time we will see Paul before King Agrippa