

Acts 24

Paul the terrorist?

(What are we to conclude from Paul's unfortunate(?) treatment and circumstances?)

1. During this period of Paul's life he wrote some of his most important letters, (Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians) To appreciate these letters, we need to consider the circumstances recorded in this chapter.
2. It had to be very frustrating for Paul to be so misunderstood, falsely accused and manipulated for political reasons. In this chapter Paul is accused of terrorism.
3. One might look at Paul and conclude that he is a victim of political forces that isolate him from effective ministry. It is at this time however, that Paul's ministry becomes most fruitful in that it led to the writing of many of his most important letters.

Paul is a victim of religious fear .

"¹ And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with a certain attorney {named} Tertullus; and they brought charges to the governor against Paul. ² And after {Paul} had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying {to the governor},

"Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, ³ we acknowledge {this} in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. ⁴ "But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing. ⁵ "For we have found this man a real pest and **a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world**, and **a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes**. ⁶ And he even **tried to desecrate the temple**; and then we arrested him. [And we wanted to judge him according to our own Law. ⁷ But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, ⁸ ordering his accusers to come before you.] And by examining him yourself concerning all these matters, you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him." ⁹ And the Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.

- Misunderstandings are inevitable in ministering the Gospel to the world. Note that these attacks are leveled at Paul as a person, not his message.
 1. Paul was accused of being uncivil.
 - “a real pest” is an expression which is used to describe the terror and chaos at the end of the world (Lk.21:11).
 - “stirs up dissension” is the same term used to describe Barabbas the terrorist who was spared while Jesus was crucified (Lk.23:19,25)
 2. Paul was accused of being a part of the fanatical fringe.
 3. Paul was accused of disrespect for true religion.

- Those who control the past (the story of history) control the future. Those who control the present (deciding who gets to tell the story of the past), control the past (how we understand the reality of the past).
 1. Who is telling your story or our story? Is it accurate?
 2. The true story takes shape as we listen to several perspectives.
 3. Wisdom starts with learning to be a good listener.

Paul makes his defense.

I am not a terrorist.

¹⁰ And when the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense, ¹¹ since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² And neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city {itself} did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot. ¹³ Nor can they prove to you {the charges} of which they now accuse me.

I am not a heretic.

¹⁴ But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; ¹⁵ having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ In view of this, **I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience {both} before God and before men.**

- Paul defines his life style as one of:
 1. service to God,
 2. belief in the Scriptures,
 3. and hope in the resurrection of the dead.
- In light of this he:
 1. exerts personal effort – Personal discipline was necessary.
 2. to maintain a blameless conscience – It is the quality of his inner life that is important.
 3. before God and men – Accountability touches two spheres of life.

I am not a blasphemer.

¹⁷ Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; ¹⁸ in which they found me {occupied} in the temple, having been purified, without {any} crowd or uproar. But {there were} certain Jews from Asia--¹⁹ who ought to have been present before you, and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. ²⁰ Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, ²¹ other than for this one statement, which I shouted out while standing among them, 'For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.' "

²² But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case." ²³ And he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and {yet} have {some} freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.

Paul is a victim of Governmental fear.

²⁴ But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him {speak} about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ And as he was discussing **righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come**, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you." ²⁶ At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. ²⁷ But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and **wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned."**

- How are we to view circumstances that seem to remove us from effective ministry in life?
 1. There are many logical conclusions that were available to Paul at this point.
 - a. He could conclude that God was not there, did not care, and was not fair.
 - b. He could conclude that his ministry was over.
 - c. He could conclude that Satan was trying to thwart God's plan and that he needed to pray for deliverance from these circumstances. He could become bitter at the Jews and the Romans.
 2. What we get from Paul is Philippians (the joy of the Christian life), Ephesians (the glory of the church), Colossians (the majesty of Christ). This can inform our responses to the circumstantial challenges we often face.

Eph. 1 "¹⁸ {I pray that} the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. {These are} in accordance with the working of the strength of His might."

Phil. 1 "²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear {to be} in me."

Col. 1:24 "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

- How are we to respond when we are misunderstood or misrepresented?
 1. **Expectations** - We should not be surprised that we are misunderstood (sometimes by sincere, God fearing people).
- I Pet. 4** "¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the

degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if {anyone suffers} as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.”

2. **Authority** - We should not be passive in defending the truth but be careful that we appeal to proper authority.

I Pet. 2 “¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ {Act} as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but {use it} as bond-slaves of God. ¹⁷ Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”

3. **Blessing** - We should not be guilty of the same mistake by over reacting to our detractors. The natural tendency to do unto others as they have done onto you must be resisted.

I Pet.3 “⁸ To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For, “*Let him who means to love life and see good days Refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile.* ¹¹ “*And let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.* ¹² “*For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*”

4. **Response** - We should remind ourselves of the “big picture” and remember that the power of our testimony is in our response to life (especially to its injustices).

I Pet. 3 “¹³ And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, {you are} blessed. *And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,* ¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always {being} ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. ¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, {the} just for {the} unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;”

5. **Creativity** - We should seek to minister in new and creative ways when expected opportunities are closed to us.