

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on April 25, 2021:**

**"Transformation of the Early Church Series on
The Book of Acts – Paul on Trial [Part 1]
(Acts 24 - 26) (Part 23)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman on Zoom shows us that in the midst of contention and strife, God provided Paul with His peace to deal with it just as God provides us His peace and wisdom to guide and direct our ways today.]

Introduction:

- The rich meaning of these verses depict the epic battle between church and state which began in the first century.
- And it's still going on today because of the COVID-19 situation – when and how churches can open.
- Paul gives us a good example of how to deal with this because he is in the middle of a battle between the Roman officials and the Jewish community.
- What's so interesting is that Paul had more backing from the Roman government in his trial which was brought on by the Jewish religious leaders.

- These chapters significantly represent the contention between church and state.
- We also see that Jesus is right there guiding the situation and giving Paul the wisdom and the ability to deal with this stressful time peacefully.
- Jesus told his disciples that they would appear before kings, but not to worry because He would give them the right words to say.

- Pastor Craig made an announcement by Tim Sitterley that Wayne Mitchell is stepping down as a pastor at the end of July and the West Valley Church will be dissolved and no longer be a church of GCI.
- The will become a separate church apart from GCI.

Overview outline of today's message:

1. Paul before Felix (24:1-27)
 - a. Prosecution by Tertullus (verses 2-9)
 - b. Defense by Paul (verses 10-21)
 - c. Adjournment by Felix (verses 22-27)
2. Paul before Festus (25:1-22)
 - a. Festus refuses Jewish leaders' request to bring him to Jerusalem (verses 1-5)
 - b. Festus hears Paul's defense and his appeal to Caesar (verses 6-12)
 - c. Festus asks Agrippa's advice (verses 13-22)
3. Paul before Agrippa – the grandson of King Herold (25:23-26:32)
 - a. Festus introduces the case (25:24-27)
 - b. Paul makes his defense (26:1-23)
 - c. The judges react to the prisoner (verses 24-32)

Poetic Preview of today's message – Pastor Craig's rhyming verses:

*The time has come for Paul to present his Case,
In doing so, the gospel of Jesus will be given Space.
Before three Roman officials Paul is now Tried,
They find Jewish condemnation and charges can't be Relied.*

*Paul appeals to Felix that they have no Proof,
But in worshipping God following the Way he was not Aloof.
I have the same hope as them and this is True,
Resurrection of both righteous and wicked I will tell You.*

*I presented gifts in Jerusalem, remained ceremonially Clean,
Not defiling the temple, nor disturbance is what I Mean.
The case had now adjourned for several Days,
Then Felix's Jewish wife Druscilla gathered to hear his Ways.*

*Paul spoke of Jesus and clearly shared his Faith,
Describing Paul's witness and testimony Luke does Saith.
Two years passed Festus succeeds Felix as the Roman Gov,
Festus keeps Paul jailed to foster some Jewish Love.*

*Leaders in Jerusalem want Paul brought There,
Festus says come to Caesarea, Paul's life he will Spare.
Once again attempting charges they could not Prove,
Paul appealed to Caesar, a wise legal Move.*

*Now Festus and King Agrippa discuss Paul's Case,
The King was intrigued wanting to meet Paul face to Face.
Festus didn't admit his motives were actually Weak,
Then Agrippa met Paul giving him permission to Speak.*

*So Paul shared his hope founded in ancestral Pride,
The promise made to the 12 tribes their accusations Abide.
He described the persecution he brought about the Church,
Then how Jesus changed him and stopped his zealous Search.*

*Forced to ask who are you Lord? Not knowing what to Say,
I am sending you to Gentiles to be included in the Way.
At this my life changed and I began to preach the Word,
A message of faith in Jesus, and this they never Heard.*

*This is why they seized me, not wanting these things Said,
And now I stand on trial, they would rather have me Dead.
Then Festus shouted loudly, You are out of your Mind,
Agrippa asked if he was persuading him to be of Christian Kind.*

*With that the long case ended, tension thinned from the Air,
Paul expressed his hope they would yield to Jesus' Care.*

*The King then stated, this man has done no Wrong.
God succeeded in rescue, Paul's faith remaining Strong.*

Acts 24:1 (NIV), Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. 2) When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation.

- The first issue at stake here is: the Roman government would allow people to worship Jesus as long as peace is maintained.
- So, peace becomes a legal contention here.
- First charge against Paul is that he started a mob riot in Jerusalem, thus taking away the established peace.
- The 2nd charge is that Paul was supporting a religious sect that wasn't recognized by the Roman nation.
- The 3rd charge was that Paul was accused desecrating the temple by bring a Greek Gentile there, thus breaking temple laws.

3) Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. 4) But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

5) "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect 6) and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. [7] 8) By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him."

- So, this is the Jewish case against Paul.
- But the underlying motive was that they wanted Paul killed.

9) The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true. 10) When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. 11) You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

- Paul said that he went to Jerusalem to worship at the temple not to start a riot.
- So, we see here Paul's desire to worship and come to a gathering together with his people, even though some didn't believe as he did.
- Now, Pastor Craig got from our congregational survey was that all of us want to come back together at church.
- But we have some issues about masks and whether we can worship fully by singing together, whether we can talk with one another, and have snacks together.
- Pastor Craig feels that the Holy Spirit is telling us to wait before we attempt to get back together.
- Zoom seems to be the best situation we can have at this time.

- The word from GCI headquarters is that we all come back together as soon as we can.

12) My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. 13) And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me.

- Can all of us find it in our hearts with the same approach that Paul had then when we get back together again? And not argue over issues?

14) However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15) and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16) So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

- This is an important summary where Paul is saying that he doesn't have a problem with Moses or the prophets or the law but is striving to have a clear conscience with others.
- Paul says that he is even respectful to those who are accusing him.

17) "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.

- This was the offering from the more wealthy Christian Gentile converts from Macedonia

18) I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance.

- So, church should not be about what we want but rather what God wants and what my brothers and sisters need and how can I yield to God.

19) But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. 20) Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin – 21) unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'"

- We need to remember that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection while the Sadducees didn't.
- And the resurrection is all about our faith in Jesus, because if it weren't for the resurrection, there wouldn't be our inclusion and the hope of what is to come.
- So, the resurrection is a significant point of doctrine and understanding for those who believe in Jesus.

22) Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case."

- Felix's thinking was that he didn't have a clue as to how to resolve the issues against Paul without offending the Jews.

- So, he kicked the can down the road for other officials to decide.

23) He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

- Even though Paul was in jail, he did have certain freedoms to interact with his friends.

24) Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.

- Drusilla apparently was aware of Jesus and the doctrinal issues.
- Here's another example for us; when we are in a distressed situation, it's a good thing to talk about our faith in Jesus, as Paul did.

25) As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." 26) At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

- This shows some of the corruption that went on with the Roman government officials.
- Righteousness is about justification – the forgiveness of our sins, past, present and future and our righteousness that comes from Jesus.
- In essence, we are holy as the Father looks upon us because of Jesus.
- This is what we should share our faith with others – what Jesus has accomplished for us.
- So, out of our relationship with Jesus comes self-control, so we don't act out in a non-Christian way in difficult situations.

27) When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

- Wow – Paul was in prison for over 2 years.
- Felix wanted to satisfy the Jews, so he left Paul in prison.
- Nevertheless, Paul was able to share the gospel and to share Jesus with these Roman leaders during this time.
- This is an epic case of church versus state.

(Closing prayer)