

**Acts 24, The Defense before Felix**  
**May 22, 1993**  
**H. Van Dyke Parunak**

**Overview**

Theme: The Other Side of Providence.

Last time, we discussed providence: how God can use "incidental" circumstances to accomplish his purposes in our lives. This time, we consider what happens when we are the instrument, rather than the recipient, of providence.

Often, we have two reasons for being in a place at a time. One is our "official" reason, the reason that's brought us there. The other is God's reason. We need to remember that whatever we think our current task is, we're always on duty for the Lord--"instant in season, out of season," 2 Tim. 4:2.

**A. Paul's Defense**

1. *Sober*. Compare Paul's opening in vv.10,11 with Tertullus' effulgent flattery in vv.2,3. The first century Roman historian Tacitus describes Felix, a former slave, as "indulging in every kind of barbarity and lust, exercis[ing] the power of a king in the spirit of a slave" (Hist. 5.9). Even arranged for the assassination of the Jewish high priest who was partly responsible for getting him his office! Yet Tertullus praises him effulgently. Paul will not thus violate his integrity.
2. *Uncorrupt*. V.26, Felix kept Paul confined for two years, hoping for a bribe, but Paul does not stoop to such corruption.
  - a) Receiving: forbidden by the Law of Moses, Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19.
  - b) Giving: Ps. 26:9,10 characterizes sinners and bloody men as having "their right hand ... full of bribes," and Prov. 17:23 says that it is "a wicked [man] [who] taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment."
3. *Cogent*. Analysis of Paul's defense.  
NB: each section is chiasmatic!
  - a) The accusation (5,6) has three points: Paul is "a pestilent fellow," literally "a pestilence," because he
    - 1) moves sedition (i.e., against Caesar) among Jews worldwide;
    - 2) leads a heretical Jewish group;
    - 3) tried to defile the temple (NB: does not actually accuse him of having done it, just of trying).

*Paul's defense has three parts: salutation to the judge; denial of any wrong-doing; statement of what he was doing in Jerusalem.*

- b) 10-11, Paul's greeting to Felix. No fulsome praise; just a statement of willingness to answer for himself, because of two

time periods:

- 1) Paul knows that Felix has been in Judaea long enough to understand Jewish law and custom;
  - 2) Felix knows that Paul hasn't been in town long enough on this visit to do nearly the things they accuse him of.
- c) 12-13, Negative defense: denial of the charges.  
Primarily responds to the accusation of spreading sedition. To the contrary, his conduct has been reserved and peaceful!
- 1) What he wasn't doing:
    - a> Disputing--*dialegomenon*. This is part of Paul's pattern of ministry (17:2, Thess; 17, Athens; 18:4, Corinth; 19; 19:8-9, Ephesus; 20:7,9, Troas), but apparently he has taken a subsidiary role in Jerusalem, in keeping with the intent of the second conference. --> He can hardly be "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."
    - b> Raising up the people--stirring up dissension. Thus he can hardly be accused of moving sedition.
  - 2) Where wasn't he doing it:
    - a> Temple, thus no defilement going on;
    - b> In synagogues--answers directly to "ringleader" charge;
    - c> In the city; answering charge of sedition.
  - 3) What his opponents haven't done:
    - a> Actually found him doing what they accuse him of;
    - b> Proven that he was doing it.
- d) 14-21, What was he doing?  
Chiastic, around v.16. 14-15 show him "void of offense toward God," and 17-21 show him "void of offense ... toward men."
- 1) 14-15, Toward God.  
The reference to "heresy" is an allusion to Tertullus' word (translated "sect") in v.5. Here he asserts his orthodoxy: three aspects of his piety--a model for us:
    - a> *Worships* (lit. "serve" *latreuw*) the God of the fathers. The same God.
    - b> *Believes* everything in the law and the prophets. The same scriptures.
    - c> *Hopes* in the resurrection of the dead, both just and unjust. Same judgment.
  - 2) 17-21, Toward Men.  
These vv. describe the outer signs of piety: alms, offerings, ceremonial sanctification, peaceful behavior.
    - a> 17, his general motive for coming to Jerusalem: to bring
      - 1> alms--the offering for the poor saints.
      - 2> offerings--in the temple. Reinforces the idea that Paul did not hesitate to offer animal sacrifices.
    - b> 18-19, his conduct in the temple.
      - 1> submitted to ceremonial sanctification. Very opposite of seeking to defile it.
      - 2> Behaved peacefully.

3> The ones who accused him of behaving otherwise didn't show up at the hearing!

c> 20-21, his conduct before the Sanhedrin  
The only criticism they can bring is on a point of doctrine on which they themselves differ!

3) Both halves end with a reference to resurrection. The in-varying heart of Paul's gospel, even to the Greeks in Athens; trying to hook Felix' curiosity? Preparation for next section.

*The official reason for Paul to be in Caesarea is to give this defense. But even in giving it, his references to the resurrection show that he is aware of his constant role as representative of the Lord, and subsequently he has a chance to execute that role more thoroughly.*

## **B. Paul's Personal Mission to Felix**

Note Felix' need, and Paul's response to it.

### 1. Felix' need:

- a) We have already commented on his general corruption.
- b) Note Felix's deferrals: a man marked by procrastination. Unwilling to take unpopular stands.
  - 1) 23:35, "when your accusers arrive"
  - 2) 24:22, "when Lucias comes"
  - 3) 24:25, "when I have a convenient season"
  - 4) 24:27, left him for Festus
- c) His wife Drusilla, who appears in v.24, is an example of his corruption.
  - 1) Youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa 1 (of Acts 12). Think of her general moral orientation.
  - 2) She is his third wife.
  - 3) Immorality of their marriage: he had seduced her away from her first husband, Azizus king of Emesa.

### 2. 24-25, How Paul responds to this.

- a) The opportunity: to entertain his jewish wife, calls for Paul to explain "the faith in Christ." --> Is this interest triggered by Paul's "seeds" about the resurrection?
- b) v.25 shows how Paul develops his theme. Not abstract, theological, third person. He recognizes the spiritual need of his hearers, and goes straight to the heart of the matter:
  - 1) Righteousness--the need to keep God's perfect standard. The fact that there is a moral pole in the universe.
  - 2) Temperance = self control--the opposite of the kind of indulgence that characterized Felix' life. The need to subject our own desires and appetites to the rule of God.
  - 3) Coming judgment--when we shall all answer to God for our lives.
- c) Paul : Felix : Drusilla :: John the Baptist : Herod the Tetrarch : Herodias. It would be much safer for Paul to leave aside such questions, but he will risk the king's wrath to

bring him the news of eternal life.

3. 25-26, Felix' response: he understands the message and trembles, but does not receive Christ. So close, and yet so far.

### Summary

In every circumstance, be aware that we have two tasks: the "official" one that everybody can see, and our service to God as his representatives, channels for his providence.

### Analysis

- A. 23:34-35, Safe harbor with Felix
  1. 34 a)nagnou\s de\
    2. kai\ e)perwth/sas e)k poi/as e)parxei/as e)sti\  
"what sort of province"; because imperial, Felix would hear it. Otherwise, like Pilate in Luke 23:6,7, he would have tried to pass the case off to someone else.
    3. kai\ puqo/menos o(/ti a)po\ Kiliki/as,
    4. quote p
      - a) quote f: ... e)/fh ...
      - b) quote:
        - 1) 35 Diakou/somai/ sou ...
        - 2) o(/tan kai\ oi( kath/goroi/ sou parage/nwntai:
    5. keleu/sas e)n tw^| praitwri/w| tou^ (Hrw/|dou fula/ssesqai au)to/n.
  - B. 24:1, Setting
    1. time: 1 Meta\ de\ pe/nte h(me/ras
    2. kate/bh
      - a) o( a)rxiereu\s (Anani/as
      - b) meta\ presbute/rwn tinw^n
      - c) kai\ r(h/toros Tertu/llou tino/s,
    3. comment: oi(/tines e)nefa/nisan tw^| h(gemo/ni kata\ tou^ Pau/lou.
  - C. 2-9, Accusation
    1. 2-8, Tertullus' accusation: quote p
      - a) quote f: 2 kllhqe/ntos de\ au)tou^ h)/rcato kathgorei^n o( Te/rtullos le/gwn,
      - b) quote:
        - 1) Opening flattery (*captatio benevolentiae*)
          - a> Pollh^s ei)rh/nhs tugxa/nontes dia\ sou^
          - b> kai\ diorqwma/twn ginome/nwn tw^| e)/qnei tou/tw| dia\ th^s sh^s pronoi/as,
          - c> 3 pa/nth| te kai\ pantaxou^ a)podexo/meqa, kra/tiste Fh^lic, meta\ pa/shs eu)xaristi/as.
          - d> 4 i(/na de\ mh\ e)pi\ plei^o/n se e)gko/ptw,
          - e> parakalw^ a)kou^sai/ se h(mw^<sup>n</sup> sunto/mws th^| sh^| e)pieikei/a|.
        - 2) Charge
          - a> Against Paul: 5 eu(ro/ntes ga\r to\n a)/ndra tou^ton
          - 1> loimo\n lit. "pestilence"

2> kai\ kinou^nta sta/seis pa^sin toi^s )Ioudai/ois  
 toi^s kata\ th\n oi)koume/nhn  
 3> prwtosta/thn te th^s tw^n Nazwrai/wn ai(re/sews,  
 4> 6 o(\s kai\ to\ i(ero\n e)pei/rasen bebhlw^sai,  
 b> Against Lysias:  
 1> o(\n kai\ e)krath/samen,  
 2> and would have judged according to our law.  
 3> 7 But the chief captain Lysias came [upon us],  
 4> and with great violence took [him] away out of our  
 hands,  
 a: 8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee:  
 3) par' ou(^ dunh/sh| au)to\s a)nakri/nas peri\ pa/ntwn  
 tou/twn e)pignw^nai w(^n h(meis kathgorou^men au)tou^.

2. 9, Jewish confirmation  
 9 sunepe/qento de\ kai\ oi( )Ioudai^oi  
 a) fa/skontes tau^ta ou(/tws e)/xein.

D. 10-21, Paul's Defense: quote p

1. quote f: 10 )Apekri/qh te o( Pau^los neu/santos au)tw^| tou^  
 h(gemo/nos le/gein,  
 2. quote:

a) *captatio benevolentiae*

*Two circumstantial ptcs, flanking main clause. Note similarities between the ptc clauses:*

- 1) Both are awareness quote paragraphs;
- 2) In both cases, the contents of the quote deals with length of time;
- 3) In the first, Paul knows something about the governor's length of time in the province, while in the second, he asserts that the governor knows something about his (Paul's) time there.

*Thus Paul's comments have the effect, "I, having only recently returned to Jerusalem [and thus hardly having had time to cause all the trouble that these seek to lay at my feet], am grateful to present my case before a governor of such long standing as you.*

1) AQ p

a> AQ f: ... e)pista/menos

b> AQ: )Ek pollw^n e)tw^n o)/nta se krith\n tw^| e)/qnei  
 tou/tw| ...

2) eu)qu/mws ta\ peri\ e)mautou^ a)pologou^mai,

3) AQ p

a> AQ f: 11 duname/nou sou e)pignw^nai o(/ti

b> AQ: ou) plei/ous ei)si/n moi h(me/rai dw/deka a)f' h(^s  
 a)ne/bhn proskunh/swn ei)s )Ierousalh/m,

b) 12-13, Negative defense, or denial ("I didn't do what they say.")

1) 12 kai\ ou)/te e)n tw^| i(erw^| eu(^ro/n me pro/s tina  
 dialego/menon h)\ e)pi/stasin poiou^nta o)/xlou ou)/te e)n  
 tai^s sunagwai^s ou)/te kata\ th\n po/lin,

*Two possible offenses: disputing and stirring up the people.*

*Three locations: temple, synagogues, city.*

2) 13 ou)de\ parasth^sai du/nantai/ soi peri\ w(^n nuni\  
kathgorou^si/n mou.

c) 14-21, Positive defense ("What was I doing, then?")  
*Chiastic about v.16: "void of offense toward God ..." (14-15, ref. his faith and hope, which only God can see) "... and man" (17-21, ref. outer signs of piety: alms, offerings, ceremonial sanctification, peaceful behavior).*

1) 14-15, "void of offense toward God": answers "ringleader of the Nazarenes."

a> 14 o(mologw^ de\ tou^to/ soi o(/ti

b> kata\ th\n o(do\n h(\n le/gousin ai(/resin ou(/tws  
latreu/w tw^| patr w/|w| qew^|,

1> pisteu/wn pa^si toi^s kata\ to\n no/mon kai\ toi^s  
e)n toi^s profh/tais gegramme/nois,

2> 15 e)lpi/da e)/xwn ei)s to\n qeo/n, h(\n kai\  
au)toi\ ou(^toi prosde/xontai, a)na/stasin me/llein  
e)/sesqai dikai/wn te kai\ a)di/kwn.

2) 16 e)n tou/tw| kai\ au)to\s a)skw^ a)pro/skopon  
sunei/dhsin e)/xein pro\s to\n qeo\n kai\ tou\s a)nqrw/pous  
dia\ panto/s.

3) 17-21, "void of offense toward ... men": answers "profaning the temple."

a> General motive of his visit:

17 di' e)tw^n de\ pleio/nwn e)lehmosu/nas poih/swn ei)s  
to\ e)/qnos mou paregeno/mhn kai\ prosfora/s,

b> Conduct in the temple:

1> 18 e)n ai(^s eu(^ro/n me h(gnisme/non e)n tw^|  
i(erw^|, ou) meta\ o)/xlou ou)de\ meta\ qoru/bou, 19  
tine\s de\ a)po\ th^s )Asi/as )Ioudai^oi,

2> ou(\s e)/dei e)pi\ sou^ parei^nai kai\ kathgorei^n

3> ei)/ ti e)/xoien pro\s e)me/.

c> Conduct before the Sanhedrin:

1> 20 h)\ au)toi\ ou(^toi ei)pa/twsan ti/ eu(^ron  
a)di/khma sta/ntos mou e)pi\ tou^ sunedri/ou

2> 21 h)\ peri\ mia^s tau/th s fwnh^s h(^s e)ke/kraca  
e)n au)toi^s e(stw\s o(/ti

3> Peri\ a)nasta/sews nekrw^ n e)gw\ kri/nomai sh/meron  
e)f' u(mw^ n.

E. 22-23, Felix's response

1. time: 22 )akousas de tauta o( Fhlic,

2. a)neba/leto au)tou\s,

3. reason: a)kribe/steron ei)dw\s ta\ peri\ th^s o(dou^,

4. concom. action: quote p: speech to the Jews

a) quote f: ei)/pwn,

b) quote: temporal p

1) time: (/Otan Lusi/as o( xili/arxos katabh^|

- 2) diagnw/somai ta\ kaq' u(ma^s,
- 5. concom. action: quote p: speech to the centurion
  - a) quote f: 23 diataca/menos tw^| e(katonta/rxh|
  - b) quote:
    - 1) threi^sqai au)to\n
    - 2) e)/xein te a)/nesin
    - 3) kai\ mhde/na kwlu/ein tw^n i)di/wn au)tou^ u(phretei^n h) proserxesqai au)tw^|.

F. 24-26, personal interactions

- 1. Summons
  - a) occasion: 24 Meta\ de\ h(me/ras tina\s parageno/menos o( Fh^lic su\n Drousi/llh| th^| i)di/a| gunaiki\ ou)/sh| )Ioudai/a|
  - b) text:
    - 1) metepe/myato to\n Pau^lon
    - 2) kai\ h)/kousen au)tou^ peri\ th^s ei)s Xristo\n )Ihsou^n pi/stews.
- 2. Dismissal
  - a) setting: 25 dialegome/nou de\ au)tou^ peri\ dikaios/nhs kai\ e)gkratei/as kai\ tou^ kri/matos tou^ me/llontos
  - b) reason-1: e)/mfobos geno/menos o( Fh^lic
  - c) text: quote p
    - 1) quote f: a)pekri/qh,
    - 2) quote:
      - a> To\ nu^n e)/xon poreu/ou,
      - b> kairo\n de\ metalabw\n metakale/somai/ se:
  - d) reason-2: 26 a(/ma kai\ e)lpi/zwn o(/ti xrh/mata doqh/setai au)tw^| u(po\ tou^ Pau/lou, o(pws lush| auton:
- 3. later interactions: dio\ kai\ pukno/teron au)to\n metapempo/menos w(mi/lei au)tw^|.

G. 27, Waiting for Festus

- 1. time: 27 Dieti/as de\ plhrwqei/shs
- 2. e)/laben dia/doxon o( Fh^lic Po/rkion Fh^ston:
- 3. reason p
  - a) reason: qe/lwn te xa/rita kataqe/sqai toi^s )Ioudai/ois
  - b) text: o( Fh^lic kate/lipe to\n Pau^lon dedeme/non.