

Acts 23 - Paul's Defense Before the Sanhedrin; The Lord Encourages Paul; Jews Plot Paul's Murder; Paul Sent to Felix

III. Outreach to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13:1—28:31)

(c) Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin (23:1-11)

(d) The conspiracy to kill Paul (23:12-22)

(B) Paul in Caesarea (23:23—26:32)

(a) Paul's transfer to Caesarea (23:23-35)

Acts 23

(c) Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin (23:1-11)

1 Now looking intently at the Council, Paul said, "**Brothers**, I have lived my life with **an entirely good conscience** before God up to this day."

1 Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

1 Paul looked straight at the Council and said, "Brothers, with a clear conscience I have done my duty before God up to this very day."

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

- "...Brothers" - he identified himself as a Jew, since his loyalty to Judaism was in question

- "...an entirely good conscience" - Paul frequently claimed to have lived with a clear conscience before God (20:18-21,26-27; 24:16; Rom 15:19,23; Phil 3:6; 2 Tim 4:7)

— Paul's point here was that he believed that he had not done anything contrary to the Hebrew Scriptures; essentially, his Christian beliefs and conduct did not compromise his Jewish heritage

2 But the high priest **Ananias** commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

2 The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

2 Then the high priest Ananias ordered the men standing near him to strike him on the mouth.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

- Paul's claim of uprightness so angered Ananias that he ordered a soldier to strike Paul

- "...Ananias" - Josephus writes: "[A] Glutton, tyrant, bigot and murderer. He defrauded impoverished priests of tithes; sent paid servants to the threshing floors to steal corn; Any who resisted were bludgeoned to death."

— The Talmud speaks of unpardonable conduct when what remained of the sacrifices was completely devoured so that nothing remained for the hungry priests.

— Eventually he was sent by Quadratus, the governor of Syria, to answer for his deeds before Caesar. Apparently, the emperor gave his support to the priests, who returned to resume his work in Jerusalem.

— He was a traitor to his own nation and a puppet of the Romans

3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you **whitewashed wall**! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law, order me to be struck?"

3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"

3 At this Paul told him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! How can you sit there and judge me according to the Law, and yet in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

- Jewish law considered a person innocent until proven guilty, but Ananias punished Paul before he had even been charged, must less tried and found guilty

- "...whitewashed wall" - Paul was calling him a grave: "barefaced hypocrite" (Matt 23:27; see Ezek 13:10-12)

— This prophecy was fulfilled according to Josephus—Ananias was later dragged from a sewer in which he was hiding and killed by an assassin's dagger

— When the Jews revolted against Rome in 66 AD, Ananias had to flee for his life because of his known sympathies with Rome. The Jewish guerrillas found him hiding in an aqueduct at Herod's palace and killed him.

4 But those present said, "Are you insulting God's high priest?"

4 But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

4 The men standing near him asked, "Do you mean to insult God's high priest?"

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 And Paul said, "I was not aware, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'"

5 And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

5 Paul answered, "I didn't realize, brothers, that he is the high priest. After all, it is written, 'You must not speak evil about a ruler of your people.'"

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

- Paul quoted Ex 22:28

- Paul was unaware that Ananias was the high priest because he was previously dismissed from office, went to Rome to answer charges made against him, and only recently returned to Jerusalem. Paul had been away for several years and would not have known the ruling high priest.

6 But Paul, perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, *began* crying out in the Council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

6 But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul *began* crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

6 When Paul saw that some of them were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he shouted in the Council, "Brothers, I'm a Pharisee and a descendant of Pharisees. I'm on trial concerning the hope that the dead will be resurrected."

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

- Paul recognized that he could not get a fair trial in a court that did not even observe the law it purported to defend, so he changed his tactics

- He divided the jury between Sadducees and Pharisees, and began his defense again

- The "hope that the dead will be resurrected" [ISV] was fundamental in Paul's case (Cf. 17:32)

- Israel's national hope of deliverance by her Messiah rested on the resurrection of that Messiah as predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures

- The resurrection of the dead was a key difference between the Pharisees (who believed it) and the Sadducees (who didn't) (v7-8)

7 When he said this, a dissension occurred between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

7 After he said that, an angry quarrel broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided,

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

8 because the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection and that there is no such thing as an angel or spirit, but the Pharisees believe in all those things.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

- Paul turns the trial into a theological argument between the "fundamentalists" and the "liberals." That is easy to do.

— There never has been a time when you couldn't get these two groups at each other's throats

9 And a great uproar occurred; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *started* arguing heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

9 And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *began* to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

9 There was a great deal of shouting until some of the scribes who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and argued forcefully, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

- The Pharisees sided with Paul and the Sadducees opposed him

— Paul's strategy of division worked like a charm, throwing his trial into chaos, with the Sanhedrin unable to even agree on the charges against him

10 And when a great dissension occurred, the commander was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, and he ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

10 The quarrel was becoming violent, and the tribune was afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces. So he ordered the soldiers to go down, take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

- For the second time, Claudius could not determine what Paul had done, or why so many Jews hated him

— Pilate had a similar problem with Jesus (John 18:28–19:15)

— To protect Paul, Claudius took him into protective custody back into the Fortress

- This is the last sermon Paul would preach in Jerusalem, never again to set foot in the City of David. This is the third time the Romans rescue Paul.

The Lord Encourages Paul

11 But on the following night, **the Lord stood near him** and said, *"Be courageous! For as you have testified to the truth about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome also."*

11 But on the night *immediately* following, the Lord stood at his side and said, *"Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."*

11 That night the Lord stood near Paul and said, *"Have courage! For just as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, you must testify in Rome, too."*

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, *Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.*

- "...the Lord stood near him" - the Lord appeared to Paul again (Cf. 9:4-6; 16:9; 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 27:23-24; Gen 15:1)

— The Lord's appearances to Paul occurred at times of great crisis in his life

— The Lord assured Paul that he would bear witness in Rome, just as he had done in Jerusalem

When Jesus' witnesses were previously imprisoned, prison doors were wondrously opened for them (5:17-21; 12:1-11; 16:23-26). That is no longer the case. The Lord's reassurance must take the place of miraculously opening doors. The divine power that rescues from prison has become a powerful presence that enables the witness to endure an imprisonment that lasts for years.

"Lo, I Am With You Always" (Matt 18:20)

A few years after Paul's conversion, when Paul's life was in danger in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to him in the temple and told him what to do (22:17-21). When Paul was discouraged in Corinth and contemplated going elsewhere, Jesus appeared to him and encouraged him to stay (18:9-10). Here, when Paul was at a low point in his ministry, Jesus appeared once again to encourage and instruct him. Paul would later receive encouragement during the storm (27:22-25) and during his trial in Rome (2 Tim 4:16-17).

(d) The conspiracy to kill Paul (23:12-22)

12 When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and put themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

12 When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

12 In the morning, the Jewish leaders formed a conspiracy and took an oath not to eat or drink anything before they had killed Paul.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 There were more than forty who formed this plot.

13 There were more than forty who formed this plot.

13 More than 40 men formed this conspiracy.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have put ourselves under an oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.

14 They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.

14 They went to the high priests and elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to taste any food before we have killed Paul.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly; and as for us, we are ready to kill him before he comes near *the place*."

15 Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near *the place*."

15 Now then, you and the Council must notify the tribune to bring him down to you on the pretext that you want to look into his case more carefully, but before he arrives we'll be ready to kill him."

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

- Paul's adversaries (Cf. 21:27-29) took an oath not to eat or drink again until Paul was dead (Cf. John 16:2)

— Their plan was to have the chief priests and elders of Israel ask the Roman commander to return Paul to the Sanhedrin for further questioning. Assassins planned to kill him somewhere on the streets: between the Fortress of Antonia and the Hall of the Sanhedrin. These two buildings were not far apart.

— The plotters surely realized that Paul's Roman guards might kill some of their number in the process

16 But the son of Paul's sister heard about their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul.

16 But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul.

16 But the son of Paul's sister heard about the ambush, so he came and got into the barracks and told Paul.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Paul called one of the centurions to himself and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him."

17 Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him."

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune, because he has something to tell him."

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him and led him to the commander and *said, "Paul the prisoner called me over to him and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."

18 So he took him and led him to the commander and *said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you."

18 So the centurion took him, brought him to the tribune, and said, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you."

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 The commander took him by the hand, and stepping aside, *began* to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?"

19 The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, *began* to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?"

19 The tribune took him by the hand, stepped aside to be alone with him, and asked, "What have you got to tell me?"

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him.

20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him.

20 He answered, "The Jewish leaders have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the Council tomorrow as though they were going to examine his case more carefully.

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are in hiding to ambush him, and these men have put themselves under an oath not to eat or drink until they kill him; and now they are ready and waiting for assurance from you."

21 So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you."

21 Don't believe them, because more than 40 of them are planning to ambush him. They've taken an oath not to eat or drink before they've killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent."

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 Then the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."

22 So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."

22 The tribune dismissed the young man and ordered him not to tell anyone that he had notified him.

22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

- The commander took the advice of Paul's nephew seriously. He probably knew Ananias well enough to know the high priest would go along with such an assassination plot.

(B) Paul in Caesarea (23:23—26:32)

(a) Paul's transfer to Caesarea (23:23-35)

23 And he called to him two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen."

23 And he called to him two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen."

23 Then he summoned two centurions and ordered, "Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight, along with 70 mounted soldiers and 200 soldiers with spears.

23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

- The commander also realized that Paul's enemies would stop at nothing to see him dead. Since he did not want the killing of a Roman citizen on his record, he took precautions to protect Paul.

— As long as Paul was in Jerusalem, there was a danger of rioting

— For protection, Claudius sent Paul to the Roman provincial capital with a heavy guard, under cover of night

- The garrison at Antonia had approximately 1,000 men

— Paul's detachment: 200 infantry, 70 cavalry, 200 spearmen

24 *They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor.

24 *They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor.

24 Provide a mount for Paul to ride, and take him safely to Governor Felix."

24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

Lysia's Letter to Felix

25 And he wrote a letter with the following content:

25 And he wrote a letter having this form:

25 He wrote a letter with this message:

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

- The commander sent Felix, the governor of the Roman province of Syria, a letter containing the background of Paul's case, along with Paul himself

26 "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

26 "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings.

26 "From: Claudius Lysias To: Governor Felix Greetings, Your Excellency:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.

27 When this man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, after learning that he was a Roman.

27 "When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.

27 This man had been seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I went with the guard and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

- New information in this letter is the mention of Paul's arrest by the Jews ("taken of the Jews")

- Claudius put himself in the best possible light in view of the facts

— He mentioned his "rescue" of Paul in the temple courtyard, but did not include the fact that he almost flogged Paul

— He also didn't mention that the commander only learned of Paul's Roman citizenship *after* he had arrested ("rescued") him (21:34; 22:26-27)

28 And wanting to ascertain the basis for the charges they were bringing against him, I brought him down to their Council;

28 "And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council;

28 I wanted to know the exact charge they were making against him, so I had him brought before their Council.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 and I found that he was being accused regarding questions in their Law, **but was not charged with anything** deserving death or imprisonment.

29 and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment.

29 I found that, although he was charged with questions about their Law, there was no charge against him deserving death or imprisonment.

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

- "...but was not charged with anything" - it is clear that Claudius Lysias never did know exactly what the charge was against Paul; the only thing he knew was that it pertained to Jewish law

— Under Roman law, Paul was not guilty of anything worthy of death or imprisonment

— This was yet another judgment favoring Christianity by a Roman official (Cf. 19:40; 23:9; 25:25; 26:31-32)

— Every Roman magistrate before whom Paul appeared (Gallio, Lysias, Felix and Festus) declared him innocent

30 When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you."

30 "When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you."

30 Since a plot against the man has been reported to me, I'm sending him to you at once, and I've also ordered his accusers to present their charges against him before you."

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.

Felix

Antonius Felix was Pilate's successor as Governor of Judea: He was made a free man by Antonia, mother of the emperor, Claudius, and was the brother of another liberated slave, Pallas. He was married to Drusilla, a Jewess and a daughter of Herod Agrippa I (12:1), who left her husband to become Felix's third wife. She was a sister of Herod Agrippa II (25:13ff).

The Roman historian Tacitus said that Felix “exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave.” Felix was called “a vulgar ruffian” and lived up to the name: a scoundrel who exploited political situation, encouraged conflicts, and confiscated any loot that became available. During his rule, the countryside became a center of anarchy and the mountains of Judea became havens from which guerilla fighters operated. He was hated by everybody.

Paul’s Trip Back to Caesarea

31 So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to **Antipatris**.

31 So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

31 So the soldiers, in keeping with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

- “...Antipatris” - 37 miles northwest of Jerusalem

- Paul’s departure from Jerusalem was the first leg on his journey to Rome

32 But on the next day they let the horsemen go on with him, and they returned to the barracks.

32 But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks.

32 The next day, they let the horsemen ride with Paul while they returned to their barracks.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

- Caesarea was 60 miles from Jerusalem, 23 miles from Antipatris

- The foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem from Antipatris, and the 70 remaining cavalry soldiers escorted Paul the rest of the way to Caesarea

The delivery of Paul to Caesarea marked the beginning of a two-year imprisonment in that city. During this period, he stated his case, and also the case for the Gospel, to two provincial governors and a king, fulfilling one aspect of the Lord’s prediction about his ministry (9:15).

Ministry in Caesarea (Acts 23:33—26:32)

33 When these *horsemen* had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to **thegovernor**, they also presented Paul to him.

33 When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

33 When these men came to Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.

33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

- "...the governor" - Antonius Felix; procurator of Judea from 52-59 AD

- Pontius Pilate occupied this office from 26-36 AD

- Felix had a reputation for being a harsh ruler who rose from a lowly background: he was a freed man, having previously been a slave. He received his freedom from Emperor Claudius' mother, Antonia. He was the first slave to ever become the governor of a Roman province.

34 Now when he had read *it*, he also asked from what province *Paul was*, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,

34 When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,

34 After reading the letter, the governor asked which province Paul was from. On learning that he was from Cilicia,

34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;

- Felix inquired concerning Paul's home province for the following reason: If Paul had come from an area in the empire that had its own ruler, in addition to a Roman governor, then that local authority had a right to witness the proceedings (Cf. Luke 23:6-12).

- Cilicia was not such a place, however, so Felix could deal with Paul himself

35 he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive as well," giving orders for Paul to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

35 he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

35 he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers arrive." Then he ordered Paul to be kept in custody in Herod's palace.

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

- Because he needed to hear the testimony of Paul's accusers, Felix kept Paul in the governor's palace, "Herod's Praetorium," which Herod the Great had built, until those Jews arrived and he could conduct a hearing

- The steps are being laid to bring Paul face-to-face with Emperor Nero...

The Silent Periods in Paul's Life

Several periods in the life of Paul, after his conversion, are passed over in a silence, which is itself significant: the journey into Arabia, from which the Apostle returned in full possession of the Gospel explanation as set forth in Galatians and Romans, and the two silent years in prison in Caesarea, between his arrest in the temple at Jerusalem and his deportation to Rome.

It was inevitable that a trained intellect like that of Paul, a convinced believer in the *Torah*, and, until his conversion on the Damascus Road, an eager opposer of Christianity, must seek the underlying principles of the Gospel.

Immediately after his conversion, he preached Jesus as the Messiah, but the relation of the Gospel to the Law, and, in a lesser degree, to the great Jewish promises, needed clear adjustment if Christianity was to be a reasonable faith and not mere dogma.

In Arabia, Paul sought and found that adjustment through revelation by the Spirit. Out of it came the doctrinal explanation of salvation by grace through faith, wholly apart from the law, as embodied in Galatians and Romans. But the Gospel also brings the believer into great relationships—to the Father, to Christ, to other believers, and to the future purposes of God. It is not only a salvation from sin and the consequences of sin, but into an amazing place in the Divine counsels.

Furthermore, the new thing, the "church," an organism with its various aspects and functions, demanded clear revelation. It is contrary to the method of inspiration, as explained by Paul himself, to suppose that these crowning revelations were made apart from deep meditation, demanding quietness, and earnest seeking. These are the chief themes of the "Prison epistles" written by Paul from Rome: Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.