

THE APPEAL TO CAESAR

– **OCTOBER 15. – ACTS 25:1-12. –**

FESTUS THE NEW ROMAN GOVERNOR OF JUDEA – ST. PAUL'S ENEMIES ON THE ALERT TO INJURE HIM – A NEW PLOT AGAINST THE APOSTLE'S LIFE – ST. PAUL UNWILLING TO ACCEPT A DISCHARGE RESPECTING THE ROMAN COURT AND TO STAND TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN – HIS APPEAL TO CAESAR'S COURT – FESTUS PUZZLED AS TO WHAT CHARGE HE COULD FORMULATE – ST. PAUL CALLED TO GIVE HIS VERSION OF HIS PEOPLE'S ENMITY AGAINST HIM.

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Teacher, and the servant as his Lord." – Matthew 10:25. R.V.

FELIX, the Roman governor of Judea, was succeeded by Festus; and, willing to carry favor with the Jews, he left St. Paul a prisoner, although confessedly he had found the Apostle not guilty of any infraction of the Roman law and was persuaded that his enemies were frantically jealous of him. The two years of St. Paul's imprisonment doubtless afforded excellent opportunities for his mature study of the Divine Plan set forth in the Scriptures.

It is impossible for us at this distance even to surmise with any accuracy what may have been the Lord's object in permitting His faithful representative to be thus isolated and debarred from the privileges of service. On the one hand, it may have been to give the Apostle rest, quiet, opportunity for further study of the Truth. On the other hand, it may have been to teach him a lesson of patience, submission and confidence in God – that his services were not indispensable; that while the Lord had not let go of him and would ultimately deliver him, yet he was not indispensable to the Divine Plan. These are important lessons for all of God's people to learn –

particularly all who are in any prominent way identified with His service.

Or it may have been that the Lord had a work for the Apostle to do at Caesarea, where possibly he had contact with the officers of the garrison, and where they would have opportunities for observing the man and for appreciating the power of God to uphold him in his adversities. We may be sure that the Apostle let his light shine on every proper occasion; and we may be sure also that his labor was "not in vain in the Lord," whatever it was and however it was accepted or made useful in the interests of others. Even if he had no opportunity for serving others and if the work of grace were accomplished in his own heart, it was not in vain; and faith commands us to accept the matter without doubt respecting the wisdom of the arrangement.

ST. PAUL'S CASE BROUGHT TO FESTUS

Festus, the new governor, went at once to Jerusalem, the center of his province, there to become acquainted with the chief men of the people amongst whom he must preside as governor and judge. He was of a totally different character from his predecessor. St. Paul styles him "noble Festus," and history confirms the appellation.

St. Paul's enemies were on the alert to accomplish against him through the new governor what they had failed to do with Felix. Taking advantage of the fact that a new official would naturally desire to make a favorable impression in respect to prompt dealings with prisoners charged with sedition, rioting, disloyalty, the Jewish rulers quickly brought St. Paul's case to the attention of Festus. However, after setting forth the arguments of Tertullus to prejudice the governor's mind, they feared to have a trial before him because of the weakness of their cause; for they had no witnesses to any wrong-doing on the Apostle's part which could be recognized as against Roman law or the privileges of a Roman citizen.

Apparently their explanation was that the Apostle's conduct had been an assault upon their religion, along lines which the Roman governor, unacquainted with their religious customs, would not be prepared to appreciate. Hence they proposed to Festus that, after all, their dispute with St. Paul was more along religious than civil lines, and that therefore the desirable thing would be that the prisoner should be delivered to the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem for trial according to Jewish Law. Meantime, plans had been matured whereby in the name of God and religion, and "the good of the cause," the Apostle was to be assassinated on the way to Jerusalem.

Alas, that such criminal injustice cannot be charged against the Jews of that Age alone; but in every Age, and in almost every religious system, the mental unbalance is such that in the heat of the moment atrocious crimes have been advocated and perpetrated in the name of God and holiness! What lessons we may learn from these excerpts of history! When will mankind learn that as Justice is the foundation of the Divine Government (Psalm 97:2), everything contrary thereto must be displeasing to God? When shall we learn that the results of injustice will ultimately be more injurious to the doer than to the injured?

ST. PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

Governor Festus acknowledged his ignorance of the religion of the Jews, and made no objection to the trial of the prisoner by the religious court of his countrymen. On his return to Caesarea, he placed the proposition of the Jews before St. Paul, asking him – because the Apostle was a Roman citizen – whether he was willing to accept a discharge as respected the Roman Court and to stand trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin.

The Apostle promptly replied that he would not consent to this; that as a Roman citizen he had a right to Roman privileges, and therefore appealed his case to Caesar's court at Rome, the imperial capital. He well knew the animosity of his countrymen, and realized

that those who were ready to assassinate him two years before were probably still unchanged in heart.

St. Paul's course furnishes a good example for all of the Lord's people in similar circumstances. It is a mistake, made by some well-meaning members of the Lord's family, to suppose that the Master's teaching of non-resistance signifies that His followers should put forth no efforts on their own behalf. It is our privilege to avail ourselves of every right granted to us by the laws of the country in which we live. It is proper for **page 283** us to appeal to higher or better courts if we can, to obtain that justice which might not be obtainable in lower courts. But having exhausted all such legal resources and remedies, the Lord's people are to be submissive to the results – not grumblers, not resisters of the decisions of the law.

Another matter worthy of notice is that, so far as the records show, the Apostle did not berate nor calumniate his people or the Sanhedrin or others associated as his prosecutors and persecutors. The lesson for the Lord's people today is to speak evil of no man. Take advantage of every legal right and privilege and opportunity, and accept the final results as of God.

KING AGRIPPA ASKED TO ASSIST FESTUS

Festus was placed in a peculiar position. In sending the Apostle to Rome, as he was obliged to do in the case of appeal of a Roman citizen, he must of necessity send some charges; and being a just man, he desired that the charges should be truthfully stated. Therefore he was puzzled to know what charges, if any, he could formulate against the Apostle.

Shortly after this, the ceremonies of the inauguration of Festus took place in Caesarea. King Agrippa of Galilee did his respects by attending. Although an Edomite, the king professed the Hebrew faith; and Festus, who had no knowledge thereof, embraced the opportunity to have assistance in formulating charges against St.

Paul, whose crime, if any, could be understood only from the Jewish standpoint, hence the Apostle was called to give, before the king, the chief captains of the military forces and the prominent citizens, his version of the enmity of his people against him.

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