

Reasoning and Convenience (Slide 1)

Acts 23, 24

Reading: Acts 24:1-21

Reasoning is sometimes a very challenging premise. Sometimes in earnest we try but eventually say; “*You just can’t reason with some people.*”

Reasoning is often difficult for a variety of reasons: *Differences in belief or interpretation, moral differences, motives, objection to change, threat of the loss of authority or position, hatred, a person’s ingrained background, and many other factors.*

After his conversion the Apostle Paul spent much of his time reasoning in the synagogues with the Jews.

Perhaps one of the most well known instances Apostle Paul spent reasoning was in Athens as he observed all the idols within the city.

Acts 17:16-17 (Slide 2)

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

We might think that the word *reasoned* means to argue or to force someone to accept a particular point of view. However, that’s not the case and it’s important to understand what it means as we try to convey the *Gospel* to others.

(Slide 3) Reasoning comes from a *Greek* word that means to “*engage in dialogue.*” It’s actually a mutual back and forth conversation where each person conveys their distinct viewpoint based upon what they know or have been taught that has often become a strongly held belief. For that reason it is difficult for either side to be convinced.

So it is extremely important when reasoning with others about the scripture that we know what we are talking about and that we have evidence to

support what we believe..... (Slide 4) ***always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you*** (1 Peter 3:15b)

Apostle Paul always reasoned using the scriptures and because *"in the truth is the proof."* Therefore, many were convinced.

Acts 17:2-4 (Slide 5)

2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." (Slide 6) 4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

In **Acts 24** we find Apostle Paul reasoning with Felix and after sometime in "dialogue" with the Governor, we hear his response.

But before we get to that I would like to highlight what happened in **Acts 23** and as well, share what is historically believed about Felix's character.

In **Acts 23**, Apostle Paul is brought before the high priest and the ruling body of the Jews, the *Sanhedrin*. It is important to note that this ruling class is divided into two distinct sects of the Jews. The Pharisees and the Sadducees.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were united in accusation toward Apostle Paul but were divided in belief. Paul used that fact in his defense:

Acts 23:6 (Slide 7)

1 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!"

His statement had the desired effect:

Acts 23:7-9 (Slide 8)

7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that

there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. (Slide 9) 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?"

So boistres and chaotic was the outcry from both sides, that the Roman commander in charge of keeping these Jews "in line" feared violence toward Paul and by force took him from them. For now, Paul was rescued.

Obviously, there simply was no *reasoning* with the ruling class of the Jews and so often is the case with the ruling class in our own society.

(Slide 10) How sad and just how appropriate that one sect of rulers was called: "SADDucees!"

When I think of the other sect, that is the Pharisees; what comes to my mind is "hypocrites!"

Apostle Paul had escaped danger and was reassured by the "**Lord**" that He was with him:

Acts 23:11 (Slide 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."

However, the Jews could not let it go. They plotted to ambush Paul and enlisted the help of the high priest and council to help carry out Paul's murder.

But, the Lord was with Paul and their plans were thwarted by the keen ear of Paul's nephew who reported what he heard to Paul and then to the Roman commander.

Paul was then escorted to Governor Felix who had Paul held until his accusers could show up.

What we know from historians is that Felix was once a slave. He is described as evil, unscrupulous, lustful, guilty of taking bribes, murdering a

high priest, an adulterer, and the list goes on and on.....He was just a bad person without **self control**, which we will see is significant reasoning point Apostle Paul will employ.

When Paul's accusers arrive, that is **Ananias** the high priest, the elders and a man named **Tertellus**, they give their evidence before Felix.

Tertellus, from my understanding, was a hired orator. We might equate him as a prosecutor. In that role he was to bring an argument against Paul and then call upon witnesses to back up his accusations.

But this man was *unscrupulous* and became both the *accuser* and *witness* against Paul. He first used words of "*flattery*" toward Felix in order to turn his favor toward the accusers and away from Paul.

His accusation:

Acts 24:5-6 (Slide 12)

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.

The Jewish presence before Felix all agreed with *Tertellus*. Then Felix signaled to Paul that he might speak and defend himself.

The Apostle denies all of these assertions and states that he went into Jerusalem to worship with no intent of causing dissensions or riots. In fact, he states that if anyone would have anything against him it would be that he follows the "*Way*" in which many claim is a sect.

Interestingly enough, many today claim the *church* which Jesus built is simply a sect or *cult*.

Paul states that he serves the God that is described in the scripture, The God that his forefathers followed and the God spoken about in great detail by the prophets.

He further states that even these Jews cherish their *hope* in God, but in reality they do not know Him. And just like these Jews, many today who

want to be religious or appear religious, create their own God and fail to get to know the true God that we are so fortunate to read and study about in His Holy Word. It is in ignorance that they follow a God that they define with their own desires and that they wish to bring down to their own level.

Apostle Paul then states that those Jews from Asia should be there in person to bring their accusations. If they cannot be there then those who stand before Felix today should bring an accusation with proof. Yet, he knows they cannot because this is why he is on trial:

Acts 24:21b (Slide 13)

“For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.”

After Paul’s defense, which by the way was conducted boldly and with confidence, Luke then records what happens next:

Acts 24:22-27 (Slide 14)

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 Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, (Slide 15) and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.

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 But as he was discussing (Slide 16) 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; (Slide 17) 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.

Paul’s case continued without the commander and Paul, knowing his audience, delivered the Gospel message, and how one should live and judge according to righteousness. He delivered to Felix sound doctrine and the finality of the Judgement to come.

We don't have all of what Paul said but since we know the "Way" more accurately it isn't hard to imagine of what Paul spoke:

(Slide 18) ***Faith in Christ***-the Gospel message. The story of Christ that produces faith.

Righteousness - not the righteous of our own making but that of God. How we should live and conduct ourselves on earth, particularly in our relationships with others.

Self-control-of which Felix nor Drucilla exercised. Their union came to fruition by means of fleshly lust in which Felix took advantage of his rule over the Jews and took Drucilla from her husband, a Jew, seemingly without her resisting whatsoever.

The judgement to come-in which undoubtedly Paul tied the lifestyle, lustful mind, and evil life Felix and Drucilla had lived to the impending doom they now faced. Of which caused Felix to *tremble* but not change: Since he was accustomed to getting bribes he hoped the same from Paul to secure his release. His lust was dominated by every aspect of the flesh. ***the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life***

Acts 24:25b (Slide 19)

Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Paul stop it!! I've heard enough for now!! I gotta get out of here!! I'm not comfortable with what you say!! I don't know for certain but I do not believe a more convenient time ever came.

I believe that many live their lives this way. When it is something hard to wrap our minds around we try to get away from it. *"I gotta get out of here!"* Perhaps it will simply go away!!

Often when we know we need to do something we wait for a more convenient time, we put it off. I believe so many after hearing the word, adopt this approach and for a variety of reasons. Probably the most popular reason for not doing what we should do is that we think, *"Oh, I have plenty of time!"* or *"Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow!"* For someone who procrastinates, the best day of the week is tomorrow!!

Young adults and even older adults don't visit their parents because it is inconvenient to fit it into their schedule. And the next thing you know it's too late!!

Sometimes people need to make amends with someone else, folks they worship with, even family members that they need to apologize to.....just to simply say I'm sorry, but they wait for a more convenient time and it becomes too late!!

Sometimes people who have heard the Gospel sit through invitation after invitation waiting for a more convenient time ("Oh, I have plenty of time") but it never comes and then it's too late.....

"Here is water. What Hinders me to be baptized?"

It is urgent!!! A more convenient time is right now, today!!!

2 Corinthians 6:2 (Slide 20)

For He says:

***"In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."***

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Today is "that more convenient time!!"

Invitation

Waiting for a more convenient time is procrastination. Procrastination is knowing we have something we need to do, should do and putting it off. Today is the "more convenient time" to become a child of God. If you have heard the Gospel message and are convinced that Jesus is The Christ, don't delay arise and be baptized.

If you are a child of God but have something weighing on your heart and need the prayers of your Brethren for whatever reason, please make that known so we might pray for you.

Please let your wish be known today.....

Reading:**Acts 24:1-21**

1 Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, 3 we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. 5 For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. 7 But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands, 8 commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him." 9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, 11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. 16 This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, 18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the

temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. 19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. 20 Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, 21 unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

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