

When People Are Unfair **Acts 24:1-9**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-3-2009

Introduction

How do you react when you have been falsely accused of something? Does it make you bitter, anxious, frustrated, or stressed out? Does it make you want to get even? We are going to be looking at some false accusations that were made against Paul in this chapter. But in about six years things would become much worse because not only would the Jews be making false accusations against Christians, but Rome would too. In July of 64 AD (just six years later), Nero (according to Roman historians) burned down Rome and then blamed it on Christians. Immediately rumors began to circulate amongst the Romans that Christians were cannibals who ate babies and that they were atheists. Those are outrageous accusations, but they were common for over one hundred years. I have seen some of the most loving people accused of being hate mongers because they think that homosexuality is a sin. And the question is: “How do you react when people are unfair in their attacks against you?” It’s hard to react in a godly way. We need God’s grace to be able to do so.

Some people become very emotionally agitated, and if their name is not quickly cleared, they sink into great despondency. In fact, I want to tell you a story about that in England. On the east coast of England there is a little village called Robin Hood’s Bay. And the reason it was called that is that it had been a smuggler’s haven at one time with all kinds of underground tunnels that people could smuggle their goods through. But by the 1920’s it did not have that reputation. It had a population of about 800 people in it. In 1928 almost every villager began receiving letters accusing them of various crimes, including the killing of babies, prostitution and incest. Not only were there charges, but also there were threats made along with those charges. You can imagine the emotional anxiety that some of these people had. The receivers of the letters had no idea that anyone else was receiving these letters, and not knowing what to do about the horrible accusations, they kept silent. It created such fear that some people moved. Three successive preachers left the town church because of the false accusations that they had received. This happened for twenty years, until in 1948 someone started talking about their letters, only to find that others had received the same, and soon, almost every villager was telling about the

© Copyright 2009 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to all readers to download, print, and distribute on paper or electronically any Sermons, provided that each reprint bear this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed to the public without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

horrible fear, frustration, anger, bitterness, and desires for revenge that these false accusations had created. They still have not found out who sent the letters. It's a mystery. But it stands in England as an example of the misery that can happen when people are unfair. All kinds of health problems can result. And I think Paul is a godly example of how to react when people are unfair.

I. The Unfair Accusers (v. 1)

A. The high priest, Ananias (see 23:2-5) – one of the real power brokers that controlled the Sanhedrin

Let's look first at the accusers. Verse 1 says, "**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.**"

The first one is Ananias. He was one of the real power brokers who controlled the Sanhedrin. You might compare him to one of the big boys on the Bilderberg organization. Even though these power brokers did not control a third of the Sanhedrin, Ananias really did pull the strings on what happened in the Sanhedrin. In the last chapter, he temporarily lost control, but he's back again and he is only bringing the people whom he can trust.

It really is unfair that Ananias should even be there. He should have been impeached. Interestingly, some Jews tried to impeach him earlier, and Ananias was called to Rome to answer for his crimes. But Herod Agrippa stood up for Ananias, and he came back still a high priest. He probably also took it out on those who tried to get him impeached. But he was an incredibly wicked man! I think most authors would agree that he was guilty of treason, but that doesn't stop him of accusing Paul of treason. Hypocrisy! Everyone acknowledges that Ananias was a murderer, and yet here he has the audacity of calling Paul a plague. Ananias was a total apostate who didn't believe the Bible, and yet here he is accusing Paul of blasphemy against the temple!/? It's crazy! He constantly used lies against his enemies, yet he pretends to truthfully give evidence before a court. That hurts. I'm sure it was painful for Paul to experience this.

I remember the pain that Edwin Meese was put through when Reagan appointed him to be the Attorney General. The ruthless slander he endured was breathtaking. And it came from people who were so corrupt that they should have been impeached. Some of you may remember the way that Judge Robert Bork was slandered. In fact, business as usual on that committee has come to be known as borking a candidate. Do you remember when they pulled out all the stops to keep Justice Clarence Thomas from

being approved? They accused him of adultery and other slanderous things. And some of these guys throwing these false accusations were *themselves* grossly immoral. It hurts to be unfairly treated. But it is almost guaranteed that at some point you will be. It is almost guaranteed that this church will come under attack at some point by the Ananiases of our own century. And we need to be prepared to respond in a godly way to such men and women. We must not be overcome by evil. We must not become bitter. And if we are prepared ahead of time to know that an Ananias might attack us, we can protect our hearts from sin when they are unfair.

B. The elders (see 23:14)

The next group that is mentioned in verse 1 is the elders. The elders were the aristocratic noblemen who were willing to side with the Sadducees.¹ They were the ones who enabled the Sadducees to maintain power, much to the frustration of the Pharisaic scribes. The Pharisees were always a minority on the Sanhedrin during this time. Interestingly, after the big fight that the Pharisees had with them in the last chapter, we don't hear from the Pharisees any more. This was the kind of power that Ananias wielded. He only brings along the elders whom he had had in his pocket. They were a group of sycophants. The dictionary defines a sycophant as “a person who seeks favor by flattering people of wealth or influence.” These elders knew the dangers of opposing Ananias and they knew the perks that could be theirs if they played along with his games. It's easy to sacrifice principle in order to get ahead. It happens all the time in politics. Why did so many congressmen and senators vote for the bailouts despite massive outcry from the public? Why did they vote in favor despite not having read the bills? They are beholden to someone, and in this case, that someone meant more than possibly not getting reelected.

C. The prosecutor, Tertullus, a Roman lawyer

Then the last guy mentioned is Tertullus, who is assumed by commentators to be a Roman lawyer. This prosecutor is not interested in truth. He's interested in doing his job, getting paid for his job, and he is willing to do anything to win, including lying. And there have been zealous prosecutors in American history who have allowed pride and the desire to win to get in the way of justice. They pull out all the stops to win. And if

¹ For the allegiance of these “elders,” see Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:17 where he speaks of them as part of the Sadducean party.

you are the recipient of false accusations through the services of such a lawyer, it can hurt.

So those are the unfair accusers. You may have a totally different set of accusers who have brought you pain through their unfair attacks. Your accusers might be a brother or sister. It might be a parent who has spanked the wrong child. It might be an IRS agent, a mother-in-law, or a boss. In fact, you can probably feel the rankling and bitterness inside of you as I preach about this. That is an indication that you have been overcome by evil, and you need to take this passage seriously. Whatever your situation, a close walk with God and daily drinking from the fountains of God's grace can enable you to stand strong even in the face of such pain. Once we get to the conclusion we will look at some steps that we can take for overcoming these feelings of unfairness, but just in case you think that your situation is worse than Paul's (and that you therefore have an excuse), I want to clearly show what was happening to Paul.

II. The Unfair Accusations (vv. 2-6)

A. *Unfair because of lying flattery to Felix (vv. 2-4)*

Let's look at the unfair accusations. And I've divided verses 2-6 up into two parts. These accusations were unfair first of all because of the skillful way in which Tertullus can use words to butter up and influence Felix. And they were unfair secondly because the accusations themselves were horrible lies.

But that first one can really be frustrating. Some of you who are not good with words can feel unfairly taken advantage of when you feel you are right, but you can't articulate yourself well enough to win an argument. You lose, not because you are wrong, but because the other person is so good with his or her words. The other person is always one up on you and always seems to have the last word and to be more convincing. And it's frustrating to you. You can take comfort in the promise in Proverbs 29:5 that a person who flatters will eventually be caught in his own net. So let's look at the lying flattery of Felix.

1. We "enjoy great peace" because of you (v. 2)

Verse 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."** What a bunch of hoey. Paul had to probably control himself to not let out a "Hah!" This was just breathtaking in its audacity!

First, they did *not* enjoy great peace through Felix. Felix had almost lost his job because his cruel policies had led to riots, insurrections, and anarchy to a height that had not been seen in centuries. This statement is ridiculous. According to Josephus, Felix had crucified countless people. Some of them were insurgents, but many of them were innocent people. His tyranny produced such hatred for him in Israel that rebels and assassins freely roamed the countryside so that it was no longer safe to travel. I don't think even Felix believes what is being said by Tertullus here. He's trying to flatter, but he is going overboard. It's as ridiculous as our present administration promising to balance the budget and cut taxes and give trillions of dollars all at the same time. It's nonsense. It's as crazy as affirming that the same people who have created America's financial problems will fix them.

2. The prosperity/reform you have brought (v. 2)

The second flattery is that Felix has brought prosperity. That would definitely not be true because he has been sucking the people dry with taxes. So some people translate it as reforms, but he hasn't brought reforms either. As one commentator said, "Jews would be hard pressed to mention any beneficial reforms that Felix had initiated."² Instead bribery was on the rise, assassinations had occurred, properties of political opponents were being confiscated, and if there was tourism, you can be sure that tourism was down. This chapter ends with the recall of Felix because of his incompetence. His rule was so terrible that most commentators credit Felix with pushing Israel over the brink into the war that destroyed the nation in 70 AD. For Tertullus to talk about prosperity or reform is sort of like speaking of a Congressional ethics committee (which is almost an oxymoron), and praising their so-called reforms (which is a misuse of the English language).

3. Your "providence" (v. 2 – literal Greek)

Verse 2 goes on to say that this prosperity or reform (whichever way you translate it) "**is being brought to this nation by your foresight.**" The word foresight is the word for providence. In fact, it is translated "your providence" in the NASB and five other translations. Here's the problem: Only God has providence. Only God has all-seeing foresight that enables Him to control all things for our good. Government may try. Socialism definitely tries, but any government that tries their hand at providence ends

² Simon Kistemaker, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p. 835.

up with the mess we are in America. Kistemaker says, “He uses the word *foresight*, a theological expression that in its Old Testament context refers to God’s care for his people.”³ But isn’t this why people praise Obama? He is caring for his people in health care, mortgages, and any other needs that our nation may have. It’s the all-benevolent Messianic state. Even the Jews were capable of being liberals. These guys were liberals. The Pharisees would have called this expression blasphemy, but the Sadducees and elders kept wealthy by getting along with Rome and being like Rome. They acted like a divine state.

4. We always accept these things from your hands (v. 3)

Going on to verse 3: “...we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.” This is what a Messianic state wants – accepting its control always, and in all places, and with thankfulness. Only God deserves such complete and total submission. Let me repeat that part of the verse: “**We accept it** [that is, your providence] **always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.**” That is a sign of slavery. People are joyfully signing up to be on a giant slave plantation, all the while thinking that they are signing up for freedom. That’s America!

5. “most noble Felix” (v. 3)

He calls him the “**most noble Felix.**” I’m not going to criticize Tertullus for that, since it might be a simple term of respect such as we would say to a judge: “your honor,” but it is worth noting that both Josephus and the Roman historian Tacitus said that Felix was anything but noble or good.

6. We are very thankful (v. 3)

And then the statement, “**we are thankful.**” He knows what Felix wants to hear. Felix wants people to be thankful for his rule. Protest was brutally suppressed. Thankfully in America we can still protest – we don’t have to accept tyranny with thankfulness to the state. We don’t know how long that will last, but such servile attitudes toward a Messianic state are unacceptable for the Christian. Being law-abiding, yes. We must be law-abiding citizens. But being sycophants is utterly unworthy of a Christian.

³ *Ibid*, p. 835.

7. We don't want to inconvenience you (v. 4)

Verse 4 goes on: “**Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.**” He admits that he is being tedious. In fact, one commentator states, “The irony of the situation is that the complaint against Paul is so flimsy that a lengthy oration of praise must give the charges the appearance of substance. By his own admission, Tertullus has little to say.”⁴ His compliments of the judge are as long as his argument. I think that says a lot. If you don't have much substance, be erudite. And many unfair attacks against Christians and their positions today often lack substance, but give the appearance of substance because of their eloquence. When I'm reading critiques of creationism, prolife positions, or anything else, I like to jot down the key arguments. Often the key arguments don't amount to much once the rhetorical flourishes are removed. Don't be sucked in by brilliant and entertaining speaking. Look for the substance.

8. Hear us out of your graciousness (v. 4)

And just a brief comment on that last phrase in his introduction: “**I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.**” Here's the hypocrisy - they didn't want Paul to be heard in the previous chapter. Remember that the high priest commanded Paul to be struck on the mouth. But here, *they* want to be heard. Sounds very much like the Democratic “Fairness Doctrine” of today that wants conservative talk radio shut down or at least wants to force them to share their “pulpits” with the liberals – of course, all in the interests of fairness. Never mind that the liberals have most of the TV, Radio, Magazine, and newspaper outlets. It's just not fair that their views are not *also* being represented on the Rush Limbaugh program or the Sean Hannity program, or any number of other conservative programs. As Ken said to me last week, the moment people utter the word “fair” in a public forum, you better watch out. Either your pocket is going to get picked or your freedom is going to be taken away. So that's the preamble.

B. Unfair because of lying accusations against Paul (vv. 5-6a)

1. Dangerous – Paul is a plague (v. 5a)

Let's look now at the four scary accusations that Tertullus makes against Paul. They are utterly unfounded, but if charges are made enough

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 836.

times, some people will begin to believe them. This is the sad thing about slander – it is believed by at least some.

Verse 5 gives the first three false accusations: **“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.”** He first of all calls Paul a plague. This was a word used in the first century to speak of dangerous individuals who were subversive of the public order. It was a very serious charge. For example, a similar charge was made against the Jews in Alexandria by the emperor Claudius. He said that if they persisted in their suspicious activities he “will proceed against them with the utmost severity for fomenting a general plague [same word] which infests the whole world.”⁵ So Paul is being accused of being dangerous and subversive to the Roman order.

Now in one sense it is true – Paul hopes to replace Roman humanism with Christianity. But in the sense meant by Tertullus, it is an unfair charge. This is sort of like the charge of right-wing extremism. It’s not designed to communicate the differences so that they can be discussed. It’s designed to poison people into not listening to you. It’s name calling. It’s an unfair tactic. And by the way, this label of rightwing extremism is being used by more and more states against conservatives and Christians in the last two weeks. Just log onto the Christian Anti-Defamation Commission, and you will see their documentation of outrageous name-calling. For example, just this past week Regent University was accused by the government of being a potential hotbed for terrorists. If you know anything about that school, you know that these statements are outrageous. Thankfully, Virginia’s governor, Tim Kaine, is trying to figure out who the crazies are that are writing this government propaganda. But it’s just as unfair as what Tertullus is saying here.

2. A Jewish revolutionary – Paul is raising sedition against Rome (v. 5b)

The second charge is that Paul is **“a creator of dissension [or as some translate it, “a fomenter of risings”] among all the Jews throughout the world.”** This is a particularly scary accusation because there *were indeed* a lot of Jewish revolutionaries who were trying to overthrow Felix and Rome. As a result of Felix’s tyranny, there were numerous risings among the Jews in the land. So this could have been taken as a credible accusation.

⁵ As quoted in F.F. Bruce, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 439, footnote 8.

It would be sort of like one of you being charged with being a terrorist in an American court. That would be kind of scary. And of course, the charge is absolutely false. But the mere mention of this charge would automatically scare Felix and make him want to find out the truth. He can't ignore something like this.

3. A ringleader of an unlicensed religion – Paul is a sectarian (v. 5c)

The third charge is that Paul is “**a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.**” This too was a serious charge, because “the Nazarenes” was not a listed religion that had been licensed by Rome. What difference would that make? It made a big difference in a court of law. Until Rome officially recognized a new religion, it was forbidden (or called *religio illicita*). This was treated as a serious crime by Rome. All religions had to get a license to operate or they could be brutally suppressed. There were Jewish synagogues that refused to get licensed, but most did, and those that did not had to operate underground. And that's the way the church operated. Christianity refused to get a license from the state and it refused to get incorporated. In another six years Rome would agree with Tertullus' charge and would no longer treat Christians as a part of Judaism. Christians would be treated as an unlicensed sect or cult.

It's easy to quickly read over this phrase, but it was a serious charge in Roman eyes. To this day churches struggle with this issue in China, Russia, America and other countries. In China they accuse a group of being a horrible cult. That is the same thing as Tertullus saying that Paul was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. The book of Acts deals with all the trials and issues that we face today.

4. A Treaty breaker – Paul committed sacrilege against temple, something for which Rome allowed the death penalty (v. 6a)

The last charge against Paul is brought in verse 6: “**He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law...**” This is a powerful argument because this was the one area where Rome gave the Jews free reign. The Romans allowed the Jews to execute anyone who defiled the temple.⁶ No Gentile could go beyond the dividing wall of partition, and some had earlier thought that

⁶ “The Roman authorities were so conciliatory of Jewish religious scruples in this regard that they authorized the death sentence for this trespass even when the offenders were Roman citizens.” Bruce, *Acts*, p. 409.

Trophimus had gone with Paul into that area. If that had been true, they would have had the Roman permission to kill Paul.

But this charge has already been refuted, they have no witnesses, it wasn't authorities arresting him, and he certainly *wasn't* being arrested to be tried. The mob was trying to kill him on the spot without investigation. If Tertullus accused Paul of defiling the temple, everyone would have known about it because the temple would have been closed down for ceremonial cleansing for eight days. So he can't say that Paul was successful in defiling the temple. So he just claims that Paul tried to defile the temple, but was stopped in the nick of time. It's not a real strong argument, but with a person like Felix who can be bought off, it might be strong enough.

III. The Testimony (vv. 6b-8a)

A. History

1. Jews had seized Paul in the temple (v. 6a)

Tertullus then buttresses the charges with a bit of history and supporting evidence. He says that the Jews seized Paul in the temple. Making that mob event into an orderly police arrest is dishonest and unfair.

2. The Jews wanted to judge Paul according to the law (v. 6b)

But saying that they wanted to judge Paul according to the law is an absolute lie. Can lawyers lie? You bet they can. And lawyers like Tertullus could do so without any negative repercussions. Even if his lie was shown to be a lie the lawyer wasn't prosecuted. It ought not to be that way. Lawyers ought to be prosecuted for lying. It's another unfair feature of the system.

3. Lysias unlawfully took Paul out of their custody (v. 7)

Then Tertullus makes a slam against Lysias in verse 7: "**But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands.**" The implication is that if Paul had violated the temple, his trial was out of Roman jurisdiction. Lysias would have had no right to take him away. Roman law made it quite clear that the Jewish leaders could try anyone who defiled the temple without Roman permission. For Lysias to take such a man out of their hands would have been unlawful.

Big problem: They were pushing the limits of the law. The law dealt with very concrete evidence of Gentiles going beyond the middle wall of partition. They didn't have that evidence. So they are pressing that law beyond its scope.

4. Lysias did violence against them (v. 7)

They also said, “**and with great violence took him out of our hands.**” That is a lie as well because it was the crowd that was being violent.

5. Lysias forced us to bring our accusations to Caesarea (v. 8a)

Then finally, they complain about not having the trial in the location where the crime had occurred. Verse 8 says, “**commanding his accusers to come to you.**” They want Paul sent back to Jerusalem so that they can assassinate him on the way back. That had been their goal all along, and by now the 40 men who have vowed not to eat or drink till they have killed Paul are either ill from thirst or have broken their vow.

B. Supporting evidence

1. Examine Lysias and check out our story (v. 8b)

Tertullus says that there is plenty of support for these accusations. First he says that you can check out our story with the Roman commander Lysias, “**By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him.**” This was a rather bold move because they know that Lysias will contradict everything that they say. But they also know that Lysias is 65 miles away, so it would be hard to ask him to come. They are perhaps hoping the Felix will be his usual capricious self and make a judgment in their favor on the spot. So they are trying to give the impression that they have a strong case.

2. This delegation will affirm the truth of our story (v. 9)

Then verse 9 says, “**And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.**” So they act as false witnesses. Have witnesses ever been unfair? Yes they have.

Hopefully you can now see why I have titled this sermon: “When People Are Unfair.” Trials usually aren’t fair to one side or the other. One side or the other is usually lying. And it can be very disheartening to be the butt end of such unfair tactics.

Conclusion – some tips we learn from Paul’s epistles

1. Take comfort in God’s care

Let me end with some suggestions of how you should respond when people are unfair to you. First, remind yourself that God knows, understands

and cares. Romans 8:28 is true even in situations of unfairness. You can always thank God that He is going to be bringing good out of your trials.

2. Realize that if Biblical saints could overcome negative attitudes when they were treated unfairly, you can too.

Second, God shows His care by including stories of unfairness in the Bible. Jesus can sympathize and empathize. I think that's why He includes stories like this in the Bible. You aren't the only one to face the suffering of false accusations and unfairness. He has recorded stories about Paul, Joseph being sold into Egypt, and David being persecuted by Saul in order to give us people we can identify with. If those people could triumph, you can too.

3. Pray the Psalms (Ps. 27,35,37, etc)

Third, pray the Psalms that lament life's unfairness. David had a lot of practice in this area, and His Psalms can be medicine to your heart. God shows you how to pray your sorrows to Him. I'm sure that Paul would have been able to identify with David when David said,

Fierce witnesses rise up; they ask me things I do not know. (Ps. 35:11)

Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say on the LORD! (Psalm 27:12-14)

It's hard to wait on the Lord when people are unfair, but when you pray the Psalms, it helps to align your thinking, your will and your emotions with God's. The Psalms help to release your emotions, to bring resolve in your mind, to focus on God rather than circumstances, and thus to increase your faith. I highly recommend that you pray the Psalms to God on your knees when people have treated you unfairly.

4. Realize the harm that comes to your soul and body when you allow unfairness to make you fret (Psalm 37:8)

5. Put off fretting, worry, bitterness, and frustration as quickly as possible (Psalm 37)

I'm going to take points 4 and 5 together. I would urge you to not fret and worry. That's easier said than done, and I have given entire sermons on the specifics of how to put off worry, anger and other negative emotions. But

it is important. Those negative emotions will tear you up spiritually and physically. Let me read Psalm 37:1,7,8. **“Do not fret because of evildoers... do not fret because of him who prospers in the way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret – it only causes harm.”** (vv. 1,7,8) James says it does not produce the righteousness of God. This passage says that it only causes harm. There is no good that will come from your stewing over how unfair life and people have been to you. It only causes harm.

Paul definitely followed David’s advice in the next verses (which Lord willing, we will look at next time). He gave a great defense, but he did not respond with anxiety, anger, or bitterness. It’s very important that we do the same.

In May of 2007 there was a report of a long study that had been done with 6,081 British civil servants. All of the subjects were healthy people who had no signs of coronary heart disease. Each person was asked to rate himself or herself on the following statement: “I often have the feeling that I am being treated unfairly.” They were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with that statement. Then the subjects were tracked for 10.9 years. In that time 387 subjects had either died of a heart attack, were treated for nonfatal heart attacks or were diagnosed with angina. I won’t go through all the statistics, but those who thought they had experienced the worst injustice were 55% more likely to experience a coronary event than those who thought life was OK. Those who reported moderate unfairness saw their risk rise by 36%. Those who reported very low levels of unfairness (but still had those bad feelings a little bit) were 28% more likely to have heart issues than those who had none. So on every level of these negative feelings that flowed from unfairness, however slight that feeling was, there were huge increases of coronary heart disease. People who had forgiveness and felt OK with life seemed to avoid the heart problems. It just illustrates the truth of Psalm 37 – fretting only causes harm.

If you find yourself described by that, I suggest you start diligently working on gaining a sense of joy, well being, and peace despite your circumstances. Paul did not die of a heart attack. He died by being beheaded. I’m not saying that all heart attacks come from bitterness or other negative emotions, but it appears that negative emotions are disastrous to our health. If he could learn to rejoice in the Lord always, you can too. Instead of saying, “It isn’t fair,” our lips should be saying, “Thank you Lord, for your mercies are new every morning.” Some people don’t like to think about the hell that God has saved them from by faith in Jesus Christ. But let me tell

you something - a daily fresh appreciation for how God has rescued you by His grace from an eternal hell (a hell that we all deserve) is a great remedy to give you perspective when you think you haven't gotten a fair shake. God's grace can rescue us from negativity. Anything we receive in this life is a mercy and a blessing compared to what we deserve. You need to be able to get to the place where Matthew 5 is true of you – where you can be exceedingly glad when people persecute you. Think of it this way: If you are praised for your good deeds you are likely to be robbed of your eternal reward because of pride. Why? Because you have your reward on earth. If you are never treated unfairly, you are likely to be robbed of some eternal rewards for the same reason. When people are unfair to you, don't let them get to your insides. Give it to God and in faith watch God work all things together for your good. Amen.

When People Are Unfair

Acts 24:1-9

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-3-2009

Introduction

- I. The Unfair Accusers (v. 1)
 - A. The high priest, Ananias (see 23:2-5) – one of the real power brokers that controlled the Sanhedrin
 - B. The elders (see 23:14)
 - C. The prosecutor, Tertullus, a Roman lawyer
- II. The Unfair Accusations (vv. 2-6)
 - A. Unfair because of lying flattery to Felix (vv. 2-4)
 1. We “enjoy great peace” because of you (v. 2)
 2. The prosperity/reform you have brought (v. 2)
 3. Your “providence” (v. 2 – literal Greek)
 4. We always accept these things from your hands (v. 3)
 5. “most noble Felix” (v. 3)
 6. We are very thankful (v. 3)
 7. We don’t want to inconvenience you (v. 4)
 8. Hear us out of your graciousness (v. 4)
 - B. Unfair because of lying accusations against Paul (vv. 5-6a)
 1. Dangerous – Paul is a plague (v. 5a)
 2. A Jewish revolutionary – Paul is raising sedition against Rome (v. 5b)
 3. A ringleader of an unlicensed religion – Paul is a sectarian (v. 5c)
 4. A Treaty breaker – Paul committed sacrilege against temple, something for which Rome allowed the death penalty (v. 6a)
- III. The Testimony (vv. 6b-8a)
 - A. History
 1. Jews had seized Paul in the temple (v. 6a)
 2. The Jews wanted to judge Paul according to the law (v. 6b)
 3. Lysias unlawfully took Paul out of their custody (v. 7)
 4. Lysias did violence against them (v. 7)
 5. Lysias forced us to bring our accusations to Caesarea (v. 8a)
 - B. Supporting evidence
 1. Examine Lysias and check out our story (v. 8b)
 2. This delegation will affirm the truth of our story (v. 9)
- Conclusion – some tips we learn from Paul’s epistles
 1. Take comfort in God’s care
 2. Realize that if Biblical saints could overcome negative attitudes when they were treated unfairly, you can too.
 3. Pray the Psalms (Ps. 27,35,37, etc)
 4. Realize the harm that comes to your soul and body when you allow unfairness to make you fret (Psalm 37:8)
 5. Put off fretting, worry, bitterness, and frustration as quickly as possible (Psalm 37)