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THE APOSTLE PAUL – LESSON 49

THE JOURNEY TO ROME PART 3

FELIX AND FESTUS

Paul's journey to Jerusalem to Rome took nearly three years from summer 58 A.D. to spring 61 A.D. and two years of it was spent in Caesarea. This port city on the coast of eastern Mediterranean Sea was very important to the Roman Empire as seen by being named for Caesar.

Caesarean Governor Felix did not see any fault in Paul. Although held captive by Felix for two years, Paul had a lot of freedom and privileges. Paul's message had penetrated deep enough that Felix "trembled" at his message. (Acts 24:23-27.) Felix' wife was a Jew named Drusilla, so he had a little knowledge of Judaism, and also had some familiarity with these Christ-Followers of the Way.

During the two years, Felix often called for Paul to talk (commune) with him. He clearly hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe to let him go free. Paul knew he must somehow reach Rome, so freedom was not on his agenda.

After two years, Festus replaced Felix as Governor of Caesarea. Three days after taking over, Festus went to Jerusalem to inquire of the high priest and the chief of the Sanhedrin about the prisoner he had inherited from Felix. (Acts 25:1-5.)

The Jews told Festus their grievances. They asked him for a favor, namely that Festus would send Paul back to Jerusalem. Their secret plan was to lay in wait to kill him upon entrance to the city. Festus denied the request. He said Paul would be kept under his jurisdiction in Caesarea rather than turning him over to the Governor of Judea (Jerusalem). He invited them to return with him to Caesarea and make their case there. Upon the return to Caesarea, Paul was brought to the judgment seat and grievously accused by the Jews, but they could not offer any proof.

Willing to do these Jews a favor, Festus asked Paul if he would be willing to be tried in Jerusalem. Paul said, "no!" He knew the "deck" would be stacked against him there. Besides it was in the opposite direction from Rome.

More on that tomorrow about Paul's appeal, and about Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice.