

The Book of Acts

Chapter 24

Acts 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

- I. Review of chapter 23
 1. Paul began his defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin council, and with his opening sentence, the high priest had him slapped.
 2. Although Paul pointed out the hypocrisy of the court for this act, he also demonstrated biblical respect for the high priest.
 3. But then Paul wisely divided the council remarking that he was a Pharisee who believed in the resurrection.
 4. After nearly being torn apart in the council, he was removed by the Roman soldiers and

later Jesus appeared to Paul and told him he would preach in Rome.

5. The next day a plot to assassinate Paul was uncovered and reported to Paul and the Roman captain, so in the early morning, 470 soldiers escorted Paul out of the city to the political capital of Caesarea, where the governor would hear his case.
6. That is where chapter 24 begins.

II. Paul's Trial Before Felix: (Verses 1- 9)

A. Accurate record of Acts

1. From verse 1 we see the accuracy of the details Luke provides in Acts, down to the counting of days.

Acts 24:1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

2. After Paul arrived in Jerusalem and met James (Acts 21:18), seven days later a vow was completed (Acts 21:27) and Paul was

arrested. In this verse, it refers to this trial happening 5 days later. How many days is that? 7 days plus 5 days is 12 days. In verse 11, Paul testifies it has been 12 days since he went up to worship in Jerusalem. Small details like this over and over in the Bible add up to a very accurate record!

- B. Collapsed assassination and defense of Tertullus
 - 1. The Jews plot to kill Paul collapsed when the one they wanted to assassinate was secretly taken to Caesarea and committed to the jurisdiction of the Roman governor Felix.
 - 2. Remember the assassins had vowed that they would not eat or drink till they had killed Paul. I guess they just went hungry!
 - 3. So five days after Paul had been transported to Caesarea, Ananias, the high priest, and the elders of the council arrived

in Caesarea, taking with them their lawyer, Tertullus to plead their case.

4. Governor Felix convened court and brought Paul before his accusers. Tertullus was given first right to speak. Notice his use of flattery, no doubt to gain favor of the judge:
Acts 24:2-4

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words [I request that you hear us briefly with your customary graciousness].

5. Then launching from this apologetic attitude, Tertullus accused Paul of several things:

*Acts 24:5 For we have found this man a **pestilent fellow**, and a **mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world**, and a **ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes**:*

6. **Definitions:**

- a. **Pestilent fellow:** a plague, one who causes all sorts of trouble, troublemaker, pest
- b. **Mover of sedition:** one who starts an uprising, riot, revolt or rebellion. Paul's preaching through many cities did cause riots among Jews and Gentiles.
- c. **Ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:** The inhabitants of Nazareth were called Nazarenes, and Jesus grew up in Nazareth so He was referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth," and was also called a Nazarene (Matt 2:23). The term Nazarene also became associated with Jesus' followers, and Paul was a ringleader of them.

7. But that language was likely inserted to grasp Felix' attention because his job was to stop ringleaders who caused public disturbances.
8. Tertullus next mentions the accusation that had risen against Paul from the very beginning, that of profaning the Temple: *Acts 24:6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.*
9. If you remember, he had been accused of bringing the Gentile convert from Ephesus, Trophimus, into the Temple (Acts 21: 27-29).
10. That was a misrepresentation of what actually happened, but it was a story that kept being repeated and had stirred up the anger of the Jews.
11. Tertullus admitted that they had taken Paul and would have judged him, but he failed to mention how they had dragged him out of the temple, how a mob began violently

beating him to death, and would have succeeded if it hadn't been for the Roman soldiers under Captain Lysias who rescued him.

c. Tertullus' twisted accusation

1. But notice who Tertullus did accuse of violence:

Acts 24:7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

2. A clear misrepresentation of the facts in order to prove a point. It is important to note that Tertullus' accusation against Lysias may have been strategic. Captain Lysias was not there at this hearing and could not defend himself.
3. Secondly, because Governor Felix is now learning that one of his direct reports was being accused, a sentence would have to wait until he could be summoned to defend himself against this accusation.

4. Of course, the Jewish elders were very unhappy that Captain Lysias anyway because he had learned of and had stopped their plot to kill Paul. But of course they could not admit that publicly, but they could try to tarnish his character with a false accusation.
 5. He closed his opening statement by inviting the governor to examine Paul himself to learn of the truth of their accusation:
Acts 24:8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.
 6. The rest of the Jews, no doubt including the high priest, Ananias, agreed with Tertullus:
Acts 24:9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.
- III. Paul's Answer to Tertullus' Charge (Verses 10-21)
- A. No proof of accusations

1. After Tertullus had presented the Jews' charges against Paul, Felix gave Paul the opportunity to answer the charges.
Acts 24:10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:
2. Paul now refuted the charges that Tertullus had made. But in addition, to defending himself, he also laid a foundation to talk with Felix' about Jesus.
3. Notice that Paul also graciously acknowledged the governor's many years judging the nation, and because of those years of experience, Paul was now pleased to answer him.
Acts 24:11-13
11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. [7 days

on a vow + 5 days since arrest—no time to stir up an insurrection]

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

4. Also look at:

Acts 24:17-18

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

5. He explained that he had worshipped in an orderly way obeying all the law and prophets. He had not disputed with anyone, he hadn't raised up any riots or rebellions in synagogues or in the city.
6. He was there to bring an offering to the poor—paying the costs associated with the

Nazarite vow made by the men as James had asked.

7. And was in fact purified according to Jewish law, and had not gathered crowds or raised a tumult.
8. The Jews had no proof for the charges they had made against him.

B. Paul's confession

1. However, Paul did confess that he worshiped God after **the Way** they called heresy.

Acts 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

2. What was heresy to the Jews was the preaching that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus.
3. But he tried to make it clear that he had not given up his faith in Yahweh, the God of

their fathers. In fact, quite the contrary was true.

4. Paul had found Yahweh in Jesus by believing all things written in the law and in the prophets.
5. When you open your mind to the whole Word of God and don't rule out parts that disagree with your traditions, you will end up worshiping Jesus in truth!
6. Paul had simply done what Jesus had asked, he searched the scriptures and found Jesus in there:

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

7. He also declared his belief in the resurrection of the dead:

Acts 24:15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

8. Paul felt that was the reason he was being called into question:
Acts 24:21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.
 9. Paul affirmed that he was driven by conscience, not malice or rebellion:
Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.
 10. That remark had gotten him slapped in the mouth when he was standing before the Jewish council. He could now get away with it standing before the court of the Roman governor.
- c. Original accusers absent
1. I want to point out the legal significance of an important observation Paul had made about the trial that day. The ones who raised the allegations against Paul weren't

even present at this trial:

Acts 24:18-19

*18 Whereupon **certain Jews from Asia found me** purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.*

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

2. Paul was referring to the moment he was taken into custody of the Jews in the temple. Who were they?:

*Acts 21:27 And when the seven days were almost ended, **the Jews which were of Asia**, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,*

3. Those Jews, similar to Paul, had left Asia to get to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. And it is likely that after they had gotten Paul arrested, they returned to Asia.
4. Yes, there had been a riot in Ephesus that we read about in Acts 19. Because multitudes had given up idol worship, the

silversmiths who molded the idol images had lost so much revenue, they raised a riot in the city against Paul.

5. But Acts 19:33 records that there was a Jew named Alexander from Ephesus, who was in the midst of the crowd of rioters (Acts 19:33).
6. Perhaps Alexander had stood against Paul making things even worse for him.
7. Paul would later write about one name Alexander who did him much evil:
2 Tim 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:
8. Perhaps Alexander was one of the Jews from Asia, who 12 days earlier had accused him in the temple, but his testimony would never be heard.
9. But that day, Paul was more focused on turning the attention to his hope in Jesus, and the resurrection of the dead.

- IV. Felix Adjourned the Trial (Verses 22, 23)
 - 1. Felix, after hearing Paul's testimony, manifested an understanding and sympathetic attitude toward him.
*Acts 24:22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of **that Way**, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.*
 - 2. A couple of weeks ago, I preached on "Show Me The Way." The Way, This Way, That Way, are phrases that referred to the early church.
 - 3. The governor was responsible for Jerusalem and the cities where The Way had spread to multitudes, so he was knowledgeable of The Way. And it is likely that he was aware of the influence of Peter and James the brother of Jesus in Jerusalem.
 - 4. Felix was impressed with Paul's testimony, but chose to defer a sentence at that time.

5. Tertullus had made a serious accusation against the chief captain Claudius Lysias, and Felix could not now make a proper settlement of the case until he had brought the captain in to defend himself against the charge.
6. So, Felix adjourned the trial until a later date when the captain might appear to testify for himself.
7. There is no record that Felix ever held the second trial for Paul.
8. Felix gave Paul into the hands of a centurion, which probably meant he was kept in a house arrest environment with extra liberties.
9. And Paul's friends were allowed to come to him to supply his needs and visit.
Acts 24:23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

- v. Felix Privately Inquired of Paul (Verses 24-26)
- 1. But what did happen during the waiting, was that Felix called for Paul many times to talk with him privately, and once with his wife who was a Jew.

Acts 24:24-26

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

*25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come **Felix trembled**, and answered, **Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.***

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

- 2. Felix' Jewish wife Drusilla, was, along with her sister Bernice, and her brother Agrippa,

were great grandchildren of Herod the Great. We will read about them in chapter 25 next time

3. Drusilla was a Jew so she might have been interested in Paul's testimony about Jesus (v. 24) and his reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (v. 25).
 4. Felix trembled at the preaching of Paul and judgment. But he decided to dismiss him and put him off for when he had "a convenient season."
 5. And he did come to him many times thereafter, but there is no record he again trembled under the convicting power of the Holy Ghost as in that earlier time.
 6. Instead, he pursued a more debased path, hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe for his freedom.
 7. Ultimately, Felix lost interest and left Paul in jail for two years.
- vi. Felix' Governorship Expired (Verse 27)

1. Felix' term as governor expired, and he was succeeded by a new governor, Porcius Festus.

Acts 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

2. Perhaps to please the Jews, he left him in prison until his term expired.
3. Paul was not accustomed to sitting idle. Up to this point, the record of Paul's life had been one journey after another in constant motion.
4. Even in cities where he remained for many months or years, he was very active in preaching.
5. But things went on hold for two years. Perhaps during this time, he remembered words of direction the Lord had given him.
6. Like the message of the Lord that Ananias had given him in Damascus:

Acts 9:15-16

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

7. His experience as a prisoner was giving him opportunities which he had not before had to bear the name of the Lord before kings and rulers.

8. And he could not have forgotten the assurance that Jesus gave him in Jerusalem that he would be brought to Rome:

Acts 23:11 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.

9. Paul had certainly learned to commit the direction of his life into the hands of the Lord, and he never lost faith that He would in His own way accomplish His will. Paul's

two years as a prisoner under the rule of Felix must have felt like it was dragging on pointlessly.

10. But Rome periodically changed who was in the office of governor, and when the time was right, Felix was replaced by Festus, and Paul's biggest preaching opportunity was set in motion, which we will see next time.