

Acts of the Apostles - Chapter 24 (NIV)

Paul's Trial Before Felix

24:1 Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.

At the end of Chapter 23, Paul was awaiting trial before Governor Felix. He was awaiting the arrival of his accusers. Many in the group that came from Jerusalem were the same men that Paul had spoken to before. This time they brought Tertullus, the NKJV calls him an orator but the NASB calls him a lawyer.

24:2 When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. 3 Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude.4 But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

The last time Paul stood before Ananias and the elders, it became heated. This time they brought someone to speak for them. The lawyer uses a lot of words to tell Governor Felix that he is going to be brief. The lawyer uses lots of Flattery or Schmoozing – definition of Schmoozing is to “talk in a cozy or intimate manner to (someone), typically in order to manipulate, flatter or impress them.”

“Most noble Felix: Antonius Felix began life as a slave. His brother Pallas was a friend of the emperor Claudius; through such influence, he rose in status – first as a child gaining freedom, and then through intrigue he became the first former slave to become a governor of a Roman province.” (Guzik)

“But his slave mentality stayed with him. Tacitus, the Roman historian, described Felix as “a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave” (*Historiae* 5.9, cited in Longnecker).”

During Paul’s third missionary journey, he wrote several letters including one to the Romans. Read Romans 10:18. Paul says that men like Tertullus are self-serving and not Christ serving and they use flattery to deceive the naïve or innocent man.

24:5 “We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect 6 and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him.

The charges against Paul were that he was politically a troublemaker and that he tried to desecrate the temple. To a Roman, these are hardly offenses deserving of death but remember Jesus was crucified for little more than this.

“Significantly, the same man who found it so easy to flatter also found it easy to accuse with no evidence. The two almost always go together; the person who flatters today will likely tomorrow accuse without evidence.” (Guzik)

24:7 But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, 8 ordering his accusers to come before you. (7 add from NASB) 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.”

9 The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

Some translations of the Bible omit verse 7. It speaks about what the Roman commander did in Jerusalem in Chapter 23. Remember that Felix has a letter, Acts 23:27-30, from the commander stating that he rescued Paul from his accusers. It also says that Paul is innocent of any crimes. In verse 9, we are told that others testified to what the lawyer had said. At least two must testify. (Deuteronomy 19:15) Missing from all of the Jewish leaders testimonies was evidence . They only used words with no proof.

24:10 When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. 11 You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. 13 And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. 14 However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Paul starts out by saying that he will cheerfully defend himself. He points out that when he arrived in Jerusalem, twelve days ago, he went to the Temple to worship God. At no point did he try to stir up the crowds. His accusers have no proof of their accusations. Paul does admit that he worships the same God as a member of the Way. He believes completely in the Law and what is written in the Prophets.

“Paul made it clear that he had not abandoned the God of my fathers or the Law and the Prophets. Instead, he acted in fulfillment of them both.” (Guzik)

In verse 5, Tertullus called Christianity “*the sect of the Nazarenes*” and here Paul called it the Way. Now his Pharisee and Christian background come in because his “*hope is for the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*” (NASB) Not all of the Jewish leaders believe in Resurrection. Remember Acts 23:8 tells us that the Sadducees do NOT believe in resurrection, angels and spirits. In Chapter 23, Paul stood before these same accusers and said that his conscience was clear before God and they struck him. He repeats that statement here, but this time in was in a Roman court with a few Jews and a large number of Roman soldiers. So the Jewish leaders dare not hit him here.

23:17 "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. 18 I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. 19 But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. 20 Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin—21 unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'"

Paul continues by adding some of the good things that he has done. He brought gifts to the poor and gave monetary offerings.

"This refers to the collection Paul made for Judean Christians among the Gentile churches of the West (Galatians 2:10, Romans 15:26, and 2 Corinthians 8-9)." (Guzik)

He brings up the Jews from Asia who have harassed him throughout his missionary journeys. They should be here as his accusers too. They were the ones that found him ceremonially clean and alone.

"This was a strong point in his defense: the people who had raised the hue and cry in the first instance, claiming to be eyewitnesses of his alleged sacrilege, had not troubled to be present." (Bruce) "Because Paul was in the right, he consistently called the case back to the *evidence*, the very thing his accusers avoided." (Guzik)

24:22 Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case." 23 He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

Governor Felix is like Pontius Pilate, he is unwilling to make a decision against the Jewish Leaders. He has heard enough to rule in Paul's favor but will wait until Lysias, the commander from Jerusalem comes to Caesarea. He orders Paul held but granted him some freedoms.

24:24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." 26 At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

Paul was able to witness to Governor Felix and his wife, Drusilla. Not only did he teach about Jesus, he taught them about righteous, self-control and the judgment to come. Felix's response was to be afraid or fear.

“With his wife Drusilla: This woman was the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice mentioned in Acts 25. Drusilla was beautiful, ambitious, and about 20 years old at this point. Felix seduced her away from her husband and made her his third wife.” (Guzik)

“The lax morals of Felix and Drusilla help to explain the topics on which Paul spoke to them.” (Stott)

It also explains the fear caused in Governor Felix regarding the judgment to come. Governor Felix tried to get Paul to offer him a bribe so he met frequently with Paul.

24:27 When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

Paul was kept at Caesarea by the Sea for two years. He could have been released when Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. He kept Paul in custody as a favor to the Jews. I wonder if the fact that his wife was Jewish kept him from ruling in Paul’s favor or releasing him. It definitely shows Felix’s bias against Paul.

“ We admire Paul’s bold preaching, directed right to the issues of Felix’s life: “Are there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment when we face thy tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might.” (Spurgeon)