

ACTS – Lesson 24

Acts Chapter 24

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Memory verses for this week: *Joshua 14:11 As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.*

Introduction: In Chapter 23, we saw Paul in danger of his life by a plot of many Jews to put him to death. The captain sent Paul under guard to Felix in Caesarea. The governor read the letter that the captain had sent, and after questioning Paul, agrees to hear him when his accusers came forth.

I. Paul Before Felix

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.

We see that it was five days after Paul arrived in Caesarea before the high priest comes down to make his accusation. We see that both he and the elders came along, as well as a great spokesman, Tertullus. They were very organized and intended to see that they made a case against Paul.

II. The Accusation

Acts 24:2 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,

Acts 24:3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

We see quite a contrast in speeches here between Tertullus and Paul. Tertullus was an orator, a man trained in speaking and very effective in choosing his words. He starts out the accusation by throwing a great deal of praise towards the governor Felix. None of this had anything to do with the accusations against Paul, but it was a psychological ploy to get Felix on his side. He truly was playing up all the good and doing his best to butter up Felix.

While this shows Tertullus' great skills as a lawyer, we find that most of the things he has to say are not true. He gives credit to Felix for bringing peace to their nation. The nation was in great upheaval during his rule. According to

historians, Tacitus and Josephus, this man's deeds were infamous. He says in verse 3 that they have accepted his deeds with all thankfulness, when in reality they didn't accept anything that he did. He was truly a hated man by the Jews.

Acts 24:4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

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:

Tertullus makes his accusation against Paul. He first says he is a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world. He accuses him of sedition that was against Roman law. According to him, this caused much trouble and disturbance to the Jews. He also accuses Paul of heresy which is against the Jewish law by being a ringleader of a sect of Nazarenes. A person labeled a Nazarene would of course be from Nazareth. We know that Jesus dwelt in a city of Nazareth and was called a Nazarene.

Mat 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

We find the people of Israel had a bad opinion of the Nazarites.

John 1:46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Acts 24:6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

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

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.

Being an excellent lawyer and speaker, Tertullus now says that the Jews, under the Roman law, had a right to try a man for offences against the Jewish law. Paul was such an offender, and he declares that they had arrested him and were proceeding to give him a trial when Captain Lysias came with violence and took him away. We know that Paul's life was in jeopardy, and the captain did this to try and protect him from being killed by the mob. The captain had been the one that had sent Paul to Felix to be tried. It sounded really good, but if we look back at the facts, we find that the Jews were not trying him according to the Jewish law.

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,

Acts 21:28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

Acts 21:29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

Acts 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

Acts 21:31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

Acts 21:32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

Effectively, the mob was about to put Paul to death by beating him. That is when the chief captain proceeded in and took Paul. As we can see, there was no trial at all, much less one that was done according to the law. What Tertullus was shooting for was to have Felix send Paul back to Jerusalem where they could try Paul outside of the Roman jurisdiction. So in conclusion, their position was that Paul was a mover of sedition, a leader of a rebellious sect, and he had profaned the temple.

Acts 24:9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

We see the religious leaders all agree that this is the way it was.

III. Paul's Defense before Felix

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:

Acts 24:11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

Paul tells Felix that he is very happy to speak in his own defense. He mentions how that Felix had been a judge for the Jewish nation for several years, which of course was true. Paul wants Felix to hear the truth concerning the people that have come to accuse him.

Acts 24:12 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:

*Acts 24:13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.
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:*

Paul tells Felix that he was not found disputing with any man in the synagogues nor in the city, and all the accusations they were making were unfounded and could not be proved.. Paul wants Felix to know that he understands both the Jews and most of all the Christian religion. Paul begins by pointing out that he had only been in the city for 12 days , and Felix could find out that was true if he checked it out. Paul's reason for coming to Jerusalem was to worship the Lord, not to cause trouble.

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.

W. A. Criswell said Paul had a firm conviction in regards to the resurrection.

24:15 "A resurrection ... both of the just and the unjust" was a source of comfort and a firm conviction of Paul. As he went through what was perhaps the greatest crisis of his life, he seemed to be seized by the conviction that the purpose for all his sufferings and persecutions was the revelation and experience he had concerning the resurrection of the dead. He had seen Christ alive. This he called "the hope of Israel" several times, with only slight variations in terminology (cf. 23:6; 24:15; 25:19, in which Festus quotes Paul; and 26:6–8; 28:20, in which "the hope of Israel" refers to the resurrection from the dead).

Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Acts 24:17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

Paul tells Felix that he loves God's word and believes all that is written in it. He also declares that his hope rests in God which was the same hope that each of them had expressed in the resurrection of the dead. Paul said he had a good conscience, and had served God and lived properly towards all men.

Matthew Henry said this about Paul's good conscience.

"Paul was conscious to himself that he had not yet attained perfection, yet he was innocent from any great transgression. Sins of infirmity are uneasy to conscience, but they do not wound it, and wast it, as presumptuous sins do. Paul says he has a good conscience both to God and all men. His conscientious care extended itself to the whole of his duty, and he was afraid of breaking the

law of love either to God or his neighbor. We should all be very cautious that we do not think, or speak, or do anything amiss to either God or man.”

Paul goes on to explain how that he had been on a mission of mercy and kindness to bring funds to Jerusalem that had been collected for the poor saints who lived there. Each of us need to be known as a Christian who loves others.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Acts 24:18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

Acts 24:19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

Paul declares that the Jews in Asia had seen him in the temple and apparently were the ones who had accused him. And he makes a good point. If they had accusations, why did they not come in person and make those against him to Felix.

Acts 24:20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

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.

Paul asks anyone who had seen him do evil before the council to speak out. The only thing they can accuse him of that was true was his stand about the resurrection of the dead that he had made there in Jerusalem, a belief that many of the Jews acknowledged as truth.

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.

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.

The record says that Felix had a more perfect knowledge of that way. He deferred them, making us believe that Felix had learned from Phillip and possibly Paul about the Christian faith.

Acts 21:8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

Felix realized that the Jews had made an accusation against Captain Lysias and he would send for him to hear the full account of all that went on. By deferring the case, this left it unsettled, and he perhaps hoped that Paul would pay him some money. Perhaps he had heard of the large sum of money Paul had brought to the saints there in Jerusalem, and thought that some of Paul's friends would bring money to him to pay Felix to let him off.

IV. Felix Before Paul

Acts 24:24 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.

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.

Acts 24:26 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.

The bible says that Felix had Paul come before he and his wife Drusilla to hear him concerning his faith in Jesus Christ. This was not a trial, but Paul effectively made it into one by reasoning with Felix about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. All during the trial, not once did Paul shake or tremble, but was confident and trusting in God. Felix was not so, but rather trembled when he say his true position before God.

Felix was under conviction of sin, and instead of repenting and turning to Christ, he says for Paul to go his way, and he will call for him at a more convenient season. This is the major trick of Satan to keep a lost man or woman from obtaining salvation. Just put it off another day, and tomorrow there will be a better time to be saved. The truth is that the bible says "Today is the day of salvation." When we are drawn of the Spirit, we should repent and come to God at our first opportunity. We may never have a second opportunity.

John 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 3:20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

John 3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

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

We see that Paul stays here bound in prison for two full years. We have no record that Felix ever found that “convenient time”, and probably died without ever knowing Jesus as his Personal Savior. What a tragedy, and we know so many today that are just like Felix. Good intentions of being saved “some day”, but some day may never come except for the Grace of God.

Matthew Henry said this about Felix.

Many lose all the benefit of their convictions for want of striking while the iron is hot. If Felix, now that he trembled, had but asked, as Paul and the jailer did when they trembled, *What shall I do?* he might have been brought to the faith of Christ, and have been a *Felix* indeed, *happy* for ever; but, by dropping his convictions now, he lost them for ever, and himself with them. [2.] In the affairs of our souls, delays are dangerous; nothing is of more fatal consequence than men’s putting off their conversion from time to time.

They will repent, and turn to God, but not yet; the matter is adjourned to some more convenient season, when such a business or affair is compassed, when they are so much older; and then convictions cool and wear off, good purposes prove to no purpose, and they are more hardened than ever in their evil way. Felix put off this matter to a more convenient season, but we do not find that this more convenient season ever came; for the devil cozens us of all our time by cozening us of the present time. The present season is, without doubt, the most convenient season. *Behold, now is the accepted time. To-day if you will hear his voice.*

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.