

Acts Chapter 24

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."

“After five days”: This would be a very short period of time for the Jewish leaders to put their case together, hire an attorney, and make the trip to Caesarea. Perhaps they feared Felix would dismiss the case against Paul if they did not pursue it rapidly.

“The high priest Ananias” (see note on 23:2).

“Elders”: Important leaders of the Sanhedrin (see note on 4:5).

“Tertullus”: Possibly a Roman, but more likely a Hellenistic Jew (verse 6).

This is the same Ananias who had told one of his men to slap Paul in the mouth. Paul had called him a whited wall. We had already mentioned that he had probably proclaimed himself high priest.

Probably this Tertullus was a Roman and probably was hired, because he could speak the language of the governor, as well as the language of the high priest. He made his living as an orator. He told the governor the accusations against Paul.

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,"

This orator begins by flattering the governor to get him on the side of the high priest. He speaks of providence as being the reason worthy deeds had been done of their nation.

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

“Felix”: Governor of Judea from A.D. 52 to 59. Felix was a former slave whose brother (a favorite of Emperor Claudius), had obtained for him the position as governor. He was not highly regarded by the influential Romans of his day and accomplished little during his term as governor.

He defeated the Egyptian and his followers (see note on 21:38), but his brutality angered the Jews and led to his ouster as governor by Emperor Nero two years after Paul’s hearing (verse 27).

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."

This is just a very flattering way of asking Felix to hear their side of the story.

Verses 5-7: Having dispensed with the obligatory flattery of Felix, Tertullus set forth the specific charges against Paul. They included sedition (a violation of Roman law), sectarianism (a violation of Jewish law); and sacrilege (a violation of God's law).

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:"

“A pestilent fellow”: This statement, while reflecting the Sanhedrin's hatred of the apostle and Christianity, was not a specific charge of wrongdoing.

“A mover of sedition”: The first and (in a Roman court), most serious charge leveled against Paul: sedition (rebellion). The Romans did not tolerate those who incited rebellion (as the Jews present would learn a few years later in A.D. 66). Had the Jewish leaders been able to substantiate this charge, Paul would have faced severe punishment, possibly even execution.

Tertullus carefully avoided naming any specific incidents, since Felix could then have transferred Paul's case to the governor in whose jurisdiction the incident took place. The Jews wanted Paul tried before a governor over whom they had some influence.

“A ringleader ... sect of the Nazarenes”: The second charge brought against Paul was sectarianism (heresy). Tertullus' contemptuous reference to Christianity as “the sect of the Nazarenes” (6:14; John 1:46; 7:41, 52), was intended to portray Paul as the leader of a messianic sect posing a danger to Rome.

The “Jews” would not call the believers Christians, the people of the Christ (Messiah). They used other terms like “the sect of the Nazarenes.” This nickname was derived from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth.

Pestilent means nuisance here. There had been many riots instigated by rebellious Jews, and Felix was familiar with the problems they had caused. Now this paid orator has brought this up to try to get up a case against Paul.

The Jews used the name Nazarenes for followers of Jesus. They had previously made the statement, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" This was intended to be a slur against Paul. Their true complaint was that he was a follower of Jesus Christ from Nazareth.

Verses 24:6-8a: “Many ancient manuscripts omit this passage, raising the question of whom Tertullus was urging Felix to examine. If the passage is omitted, Tertullus would be asking Felix to examine Paul; but the apostle would merely have denied Tertullus' false accusations.

If the passage is genuine, Tertullus would be falsely accusing Lysias of overstepping his authority by claiming that an examination of Lysias would confirm the Jewish leaders' false

interpretation of the event. That would help explain Felix's decision to adjourn the hearing until he sent for Lysias (verse 22).

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

“Gone about to profane the temple”: The third accusation leveled against Paul was sacrilege, blasphemy against God. The Jewish leaders, through their spokesman, repeated the false charges of the Asian Jews (21:28). Trying to whitewash the angry crowd's savage beating of Paul, they claimed (falsely) to have arrested him.

Truly Paul had not profaned the temple. In fact, many Christians might have questioned why Paul had gone to the temple to sacrifice. I believe that down deep in Paul's heart, he had never truly given up trying to win his Jewish brothers to Christianity, and he was trying to make himself acceptable unto them by going through the Jewish rituals.

Verses 7-8a: Another falsehood, intended to shift the blame for the incident. Actually, it was the Jewish mob that was guilty of violence; Lysias put a stop to the riot and rescued Paul.

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

Nowhere do these accusers tell Felix that they had every intention to kill Paul. They do not mention that he is a Roman either. They also find it very convenient to hide the fact that Paul is really one of them, a Pharisee. They want to blame anyone, but themselves.

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."

They are showing their anger here in having to come to a higher court. They are reminding Felix here of his duty.

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

Up until now, the orator had spoken for them. But in verse 9, Jews which hired this orator have spoken out and said that what he had said was true.

Verses 10-21: Paul's third of 6 defenses (22:1-21; 22:30 – 23:10; 25:1-12; 26:1-29; 28:17-19).

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:"

“Many years a judge”: Both as governor, and before that during his service under the governor of Samaria. Unlike Tertullus, Paul was not flattering Felix, but reminding him of his acquaintance with Jewish laws, customs, and beliefs. Felix was thus bound to give a just verdict.

Paul is a wonderful orator himself. He also begins with a little flattery of the governor. Paul says; I know you are fair, I am happy to bring my case before you.

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

“Twelve days”: Five of which had been spent at Caesarea waiting for his accusers to arrive (verse 1). Several of the remaining 7 had been taken up with his purification rites (see notes on 21:24, 27). Paul’s point was that, even if he had wanted to, he had not had the time to incite a revolt.

Paul tells this governor that twelve days ago, he went to Jerusalem for one purpose (to worship). He had no evil intent at all.

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:"

Paul is not making inflammatory remarks about his accusers. He is just quietly denying any wrong doing. Paul really did not try to minister on this particular trip to the temple. These Jews were accusing him of things he had taught in other cities, before he came back to Jerusalem. The Jews of Asia were really the ones who had stirred this whole thing up.

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

These are all false accusations.

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:"

“The way” (see note on 9:2).

“The law and in the prophets”: The “Law and the Prophets” refers to the Old Testament (see Matt. 7:12). The Sadducees rejected much of the Old Testament (see note on 23:8), while both they and the Pharisees rejected the Old Testament’s witness to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:45; 5:39, 46).

In contrast, Paul viewed the entire Old Testament as the inspired Word of God, and believed everything it taught.

Sect is used in the sense of one’s philosophical belief. This covers sect of the Sadducees, etc.

Here it just means that Paul is a follower of the Nazarene Jesus Christ. This he admits. He does not call him Jesus Christ here; it would just tend to inflame the Jews more. He does say that he believes the law and the prophets. I believe he included the prophets, because they prophesied of Jesus.

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."

“Hope toward God”: The great hope of the Jewish people was the resurrection (Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2). It was Paul, not the skeptical Sadducees, who stood in the mainstream of traditional Jewish theology.

Of course, not all of the Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, but the Pharisees do, as we read in (23:8 of Acts). The Sadducees tolerate this belief of the Pharisees somewhat however as they are both Jews.

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

“Void of offence” (see note on 23:1).

Paul says; I have a clear conscience before God.

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

“Alms ... offerings”: The only reference in Acts to the delivery of the offering Paul had been collecting for the poor saints in Jerusalem (see note on 19:21). Far from seeking to stir up strife, Paul had gone to Jerusalem on a humanitarian mission.

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

“Purified” (see note on 21:24).

“Jews from Asia” (see note on 21:27).

Paul had gone to the temple and been purified with the four men who had shaved their heads, stating that Paul walked orderly and kept the law (Acts 21:24). There were no large numbers with Paul. He was not causing trouble either.

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

Paul says here, why did these men not come and testify against me to you, if they had a complaint.

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,"

You see, they had not proved any evil doing of Paul at all to the council. They were just mad, because Paul followed Jesus.

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."

“The resurrection of the dead”: Belief in the resurrection was not a crime under either Jewish or Roman law. Nor was Paul responsible for the longstanding feud between the Sadducees and Pharisee that erupted into open dissension when he made his statement.

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."

“Having more perfect knowledge of that way”: Probably from his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish (verse 24).

“Deferred them”: The witnesses to Paul’s alleged crime (the Jews from Asia), had failed to show up for the hearing. Nor could the Jewish leaders prove him guilty of a crime. The only verdict Felix could render consistent with Romans law was not guilty, which would infuriate the Jews, and possibly lead to further trouble.

Since as governor, Felix’s primary responsibility was to maintain order, he decided the best decision was no decision, and adjourned the proceedings on the pretext of needing further information from Lysias.

“Chief captain shall come down”: Lysias’ written report had already stated that the dispute involved questions of Jewish law (23:29), and that Paul was not guilty of any crime (23:29). It is difficult to see what more he could have added, and there is no evidence that Felix ever summoned him.

Felix could not make his mind up who was right, so he just put off deciding until Lysias, the captain from Jerusalem comes to give him some more information.

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."

We see that Luke and the others were allowed to come and visit Paul while he was imprisoned. He was not chained or restrained at all. He was just kept in the prison, until the next trial. It appears that Paul was treated more as a guest than a prisoner. His friends could come and see him and bring things to him. He just couldn't leave.

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."

“Drusilla,” the “wife” of “Felix”, was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I (chapter 12), and the sister of Agrippa II and Bernice (25:23). Though Felix possessed no nobility of his own, he successively married three wives of royal birth.

Felix, struck by her beauty, had lured her away from her husband. At the time of Paul’s hearing, she was not yet 20 years old.

It seems that Felix's wife was interested in hearing about Jesus. Felix and Drusilla formed the entire congregation as Paul preached to them the gospel message of Jesus Christ. This was a private sermon for just these two in Felix's office.

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."

“Righteousness, temperance and judgment”: God demands “righteousness” of all people, because of His holy nature (Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15-16). For men and women to conform to that absolute standard requires “self-control.” The result of failing to exhibit self-control and to conform oneself to God’s righteous standard is (apart from salvation), “judgment.”

“Felix trembled”: Living with a woman he had lured away from her husband, Felix obviously lacked “righteousness” and “self-control.” The realization that he faced “judgment” alarmed him, and he hastily dismissed Paul.

“When I have a convenient season”: The moment of conviction passed, and Felix foolishly passed up his opportunity to repent (2 Cor. 6:2).

Men often put off receiving Christ as Savior, waiting for “a convenient season.” Rarely does that time come. There is no record that “Felix” ever found the right moment. God says, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

This is very like people of today. Felix was almost persuaded to become a Christian. He did not receive Jesus though. He said, perhaps next time. He was convicted in his heart, because he trembled. How sad that he waited.

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."

“Money should have been given him of Paul”: Roman law prohibited the taking of bribes, which was nonetheless commonplace.

Felix hoped that the detention of “Paul” might cause Paul to offer him “money.” Paul’s family probably did possess substantial resources, having sent Paul abroad to study at Jerusalem under one of the most prominent teachers of the day (22:3).

More likely however, Felix had heard of the large financial aid that Paul had brought for the Jews from the Gentile churches. Compare (verse 17, and see the note on 20:4).

Felix wanted to hear what Paul had to say, because he called Paul often to hear him. Felix was not honest, however. He wanted Paul to pay him a bribe to get out of jail. We do not see where Felix was converted to Christianity. Perhaps his greed for money kept him from receiving Jesus.

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."

“Porcius Festus came into Felix’ room” (see note on verse 3). Festus was a member of the Roman nobility, unlike the former slave Felix. Little is known of his brief tenure as governor (he died two years after assuming office), but the Jewish historian Josephus describe him as better than either his predecessor or his successor.

“Shew the Jews a pleasure”: He did this since Jewish complaints to Rome about his brutality eventually led to his ouster from office.

He had brutally suppressed a riot in Caesarea and infuriated the Jews who managed to complain to Rome and have him replaced. Emperor Nero recalled him to Rome where he would have faced severe punishment if his influential brother, Pallas, had not interceded for him.

“Felix” and “Festus” were successive procurators of Judea and Samaria during the time of Paul’s ministry just as Pilate had been during Christ’s earthly ministry, 30 years earlier. Procurators ruled over troublesome provinces (like Judea), and so were under the authority of the emperor rather than the Roman senate.

Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast was the seat of their government, though they often traveled to Jerusalem for such Jewish feasts as Passover and Pentecost. Felix was a greedy and cruel official; Festus was a just and capable one.

Felix unjustly left Paul in prison two whole years, hoping to receive a bribe and to appease the Jews (verses 26-27). Felix governed from A.D. 52 to 59; Festus from A.D. 59 to 62.

This Porcius was the successor of Felix. Felix was afraid of the Jews reporting him to the emperor, so he bound Paul for the benefit of these Jews right before he left office.

Acts Chapter 24 Questions

1. How long after Paul arrived in Caesarea, did the high priest come?

2. What was the high priest's name?
3. Who came with him?
4. Who would do the speaking for him?
5. How does the orator begin?
6. What adjectives does he use of Felix in verse 3?
7. What kind of a fellow did he call Paul?
8. What does the word mean?
9. He called Paul a ringleader of the sect of the _____.
10. What did he say Paul profaned?
11. What was the chief captain's name?
12. Who agreed with this orator?
13. In verse 10, what approach did Paul take to speak to the governor?
14. How many days had it been since Paul went to Jerusalem?
15. In verse 12, Paul states three things he did not do, what were they?
16. In verse 13, Paul says all the accusations were _____.
17. In verse 14, Paul proclaims belief in what?
18. In what sense is sect used in verse 14?
19. What hope toward God did Paul say that they had?
20. What is Paul saying in verse 16?
21. What had Paul come to do after many years?
22. Where were the Jews who started the trouble from?
23. In verse 19, Paul said these Jews should have done what, if they had anything against him?
24. Why did Paul say he was called in question?

25. What decision did Felix make in verse 22?
26. Who did Felix order to keep Paul?
27. What was he allowed that most prisoners were not?
28. What was Felix' wife's name?
29. Who did Paul preach to while he was in prison?
30. What one word lets us know Felix was almost persuaded?
31. Verse 26, tells us Felix wanted what from Paul to release him?
32. How long was Paul in prison until Porcius Festus took over?
33. What did Felix do to Paul to please the Jews right before he left office?