

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

“A study of the application of theology to the work of the church as a group”

### **God Continues in Plan A The Trial Before Felix**

#### **Chapter Twenty-four**

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**Acts 24:1 “And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with a certain attorney named Tertullus; and they brought charges to the governor against Paul.**

The time interval indicates that the Jews had about three days of planning involved before coming for the “trial”. They had hired a “mouthpiece”, named Tertullus who would have been able to state their case in the language of the justice system.

**Acts 24:2 And after Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, "Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation,**

**Acts 24:3 we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.**

**Acts 24:4 "But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.**

The lawyer opened his case with flowery comments about the ruler, Felix. Although Felix would have easily recognized these comments as intending to get him into their favor, he listened anyway. The man probably enjoyed hearing people talk of him with much praise for he did also get a lot of criticism. The comments by Tertullus were pure hierocracy but that would not have bothered the lawyer. The Sanhedrin hated Felix but they hated Paul even more and any comments to put Felix in a mode to accept their charges against Paul were allowed.

**Acts 24:5 "For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.**

**Acts 24:6 "And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [And we wanted to judge him according to our own Law.**

The lawyer said that they found this man to be a real pest and such a comment is not humorous. The term even carried with its meaning possible treason. He then stated three concrete accusations against Paul:

- 1.) He was a cause of uprisings among all the Jews all over the Roman Empire.
- 2.) He was a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.
- 3.) He attempted to violate the sanctity of the Temple.

For the first charge Paul had been the center of turmoil in Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus. Of course his teachings were religious and no charge of any treason against Rome had ever been proven. There were many uprisings in the Roman Empire by people attempting to cause a rebellion against Rome but Paul was never involved in any of those actions.

For the second charge the lawyer would not even use the name Jesus. He said that he was a ringleader of the Nazarenes. Felix did have a lot of knowledge about “the Way” and probably knew more about the religious situation than the Jewish accusers.

The final charge was more definite and serious for it could carry a death penalty by Roman law. Calling the charge an attempt would be difficult to prove. Of course Paul was not there to cause trouble but to go through a Jewish cleansing and sacrifice service and it was the Jews themselves who caused the trouble. Paul was actually in the Temple to appease the Jewish Christians who did not want to cause trouble with the weak Jewish Christians who still wanted to keep the law (attempt to keep the law). This final charge is then a bit ironic and would be humorous except for the serious nature of the charge.

**Acts 24:7 "But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,**

**Acts 24:8 ordering his accusers to come before you.]And by examining him yourself concerning all these matters, you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him. "**

**Acts 24:9 And the Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so."**

Of course the lawyer gave a greatly exaggerated view of the way that Lysias tried to bring calm into the situation. It was the Jews who were treating Paul with much violence and Lysias came onto the scene to rescue Paul from them. Lysias was then trying to determine what the charges against Paul were so he was really trying to bring order into the situation. The lawyer then tells Felix that when he examines Paul he will determine that the accusations are correct. Rather than trying to reach an unbiased conclusion about the actions of Paul, the lawyer is trying to influence Felix to agree with them. At the end of his accusations the Jews “did the wave with much cheering and agreement”!

**Acts 24:10 “And when the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense,**

Paul’s greeting was not nearly as flowery as the lawyer for he did have something of substance to say and did not want to waste anyone’s time with such meaningless dribble.

**Acts 24:11 since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.**

Paul tells Felix that it is very easy for him to understand some of what has recently happened. For the past three days he had been a prisoner under Felix. Previously he had spent seven days in a cleansing ceremony and was going to then offer a sacrifice. The other two days were taken up with his visit with the Jerusalem church and his time in the care of Lysias. Prior to that occasion it had been at least five years since he had been in Jerusalem. There was no way for him to be guilty of the charges.

**Acts 24:12 "And neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot.**

**Acts 24:13 "Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me.**

**Acts 24:14 "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets;**

**Acts 24:15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.**

**Acts 24:16 "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.**

**Acts 24:17 "Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;**

**Acts 24:18 in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, without any crowd or uproar. But there were certain Jews from Asia—**

**Acts 24:19 who ought to have been present before you, and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me.**

**Acts 24:20 "Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council,**

**Acts 24:21 other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them,' For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.' "**

Paul states that he is not a troublemaker. In fact he always lived his life in such a way as to be blameless before God and before man. He had only come to Jerusalem to bring the offerings he had collected for the local church. He then had gone in the temple for a purification ceremony during which time there was no uproar. He said that the real accusers were the Jews from Asia who had followed him on several occasions trying to cause him trouble. The proceedings here are considered a legal ceremony and no second-hand accusations can be made in such an instance. Since these other Jews were not present to make their accusations then the charges should be dropped. As in our current legal system a person must be allowed to confront his accusers in a court of law. He concluded by saying that he was really on trial for a purely religious charge of being in agreement with the concept of the resurrection of the dead. This last reference was also a statement about Jesus.

**Acts 24:22 "But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case."**

**Acts 24:23 And he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him."**

Being a true politician he delayed his decision! He had a great deal of knowledge of the Way and he was not going to make any ruling on something that was purely a religious matter. He wanted to hear directly from Lysias about the events in the temple area. From what is to follow it seems that his real reason was to have some further discussions with Paul.

**Acts 24:24 “But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.**

**Acts 24:25 And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."**

Felix and his Jewess wife then came to Paul to hear him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. Since the issues involved religious actions of the Jews, he apparently wanted his Jewess wife with him to aid in his understanding of Paul’s message. Paul no doubt gave him a clear presentation of the Gospel message and that message always involves our actions. We don’t come to Jesus just for “fire insurance” and then go off and live like the devil! After our salvation we must then live like a child of God or else our profession of faith is false. Felix knew that he was under judgment but he refused to address the issue. This is the case for many people as they hear the truth and become convicted that they are wrong but they refuse to give up the “good life” for the truth.

*Mark 8:36 “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?”*

**Acts 24:26 At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him.**

**Acts 24:27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.”**

He then had two years to talk with Paul but he never accepted the truth of Jesus Christ and Paul never gave him any money. Perhaps he was thinking that the money Paul brought for the Jerusalem church could be given to him as a bribe. We do not know what happened to the money that Paul so thoroughly collected and brought for the church. However Paul certainly would not have given any of it to Felix. He finally did show that he was a typical “crowd pleaser” as he left him in prison after he lost his position.

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