

ACTS CHAPTER 24

The accusations against Paul

A FLATTERING SPEECH AND A FALSE CHARGE

Acts 24:1-9

"Five days afterwards Ananias the high priest came down with some of the elders and with a pleader called Tertullus. They laid information against Paul before the governor. When Paul was called, Tertullus began to accuse him in these terms, 'Since through you we enjoy much tranquillity and since through your foresight many reforms have been brought about for this nation in every place and in every way, Felix, your excellency, we welcome it all with gratitude. But not to trouble you any longer, I ask you in your kindness briefly to hear us. When we had found this fellow a pest, a man who fomented disturbances among all the Jews throughout the civilized world, a man who is the ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes--and he tried to defile the Temple, too--we arrested him. By examining him yourself, you can learn from him the charges of which we accuse him'; and the Jews agreed with him, alleging that the facts were as stated."

The Jews assemble their case against Paul

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.

The leadership (Ananias the high priest and the elders) bring a man named Tertullus - a skilled lawyer to present their case.

The presence of all three at the court of Felix reminds us of how serious they are about obtaining a conviction against Paul.

Tertullus began his speech with a passage of almost nauseating flattery, every word of which he and Felix knew was quite untrue.

"In reality he [Felix] had put down several insurrections with such barbarous brutality that he earned for himself the horror, not the thanks, of the Jewish population."

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.

Felix had begun life as a slave.

His brother Pallas was a friend of the emperor Claudius;

through such influence, he rose in status as a free man became the first slave in history to become a governor of a Roman province.

But his slave mentality stayed with him;

Tacitus, the Roman historian, describes Felix as "a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave."

Their specific charges against Paul are stated

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.

Tertullus claimed that the Jews had arrested Paul.

The scene in the Temple court was far closer to being a lynching than an arrest.

The three charges against Paul were essentially:

- He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes

The reference to Paul being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes is intended to be a disparaging reference to both Jesus and His followers;

Remember that Nazareth had a poor reputation:

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

That coupled Paul with Messianic movements;

The ancient world of Judea was filled with would-be messiahs and revolutionaries against Rome;

The Romans knew what havoc false Messiahs could cause and how they could whip the people into hysterical risings which were only settled at the cost of blood.

Rome could not afford to disregard a charge like that.

Tertullus knew it was a lie but it was an effective charge.

Tertullus gives Paul an unintended compliment as he describes the breadth of his ministry (among all Jews throughout the world).

- Paul had profaned the temple.

The priests were Sadducees, the collaborationist party;

to defile the Temple was to infringe the rights and laws of the priests; and the Romans,

Tertullus hoped, would take the side of the pro-Roman party.

The only specific charge against Paul is that he tried to profane the temple;

but no evidence is given of the charge (because none existed);

it was a fabricated charge based on rumor only.

Acts 21:26-29 *Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.*

[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,*

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

- Paul was a fomenter of troubles and a pest; he was politically dangerous

That classed Paul with the insurrectionaries who continually inflamed the inflammable populace into rebellion.

Tertullus well knew that the one thing that tolerant Rome would not stand was civil disorder, for any spark might become a flame.

Tertullus knew it was a lie but it was an effective charge.

Tertullus concludes his statement against Paul

8) *By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him."*

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

The Roman commander Lysias, who rescued Paul, is put into a bad light; clearly,

The Jews regret that the case has come this far, having preferred to settle it with mob justice.

Tertullus doesn't even pretend to offer outside evidence of the charges;

his only hope is that Paul will incriminate himself under examination by Felix

The other Jewish accusers present (the high priest and the elders) agree with the charges, but neither offers any supporting evidence.

PAUL'S DEFENCE

Acts 24:10-21

"When the governor had given him the sign to speak, Paul answered, 'In the knowledge that you for many years have been a judge of this people, I confidently offer my defence of my case, for you can ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I came up to Jerusalem to worship. Neither in the Temple nor in the synagogues nor throughout the city did they find me arguing with anyone or collecting a crowd; nor can they provide any truth of the accusations which they make against me. This I do admit to you--that, according to The Way, which they call a sect, I worship my ancestral God. At the same time I believe in all things that are written throughout the Law and in the prophets, and I have the same hope towards God as they themselves accept--I mean that there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust. Because of this, I too train myself that I may always have an unharmed conscience towards God and towards men. After many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my people. In the course of these offerings they found me purified in the Temple, not with a crowd and not the centre of any disturbance. But some Jews from Asia--who ought to be present before you and who ought to be bringing whatever accusation they had against me--or let they themselves say what offence they found in me as I stood before the Sanhedrin, other than in regard to this one expression I used as I stood amongst them--'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am on trial today before you.'"

Paul's defence is that of a man whose conscience is clear

--it is simply to state the facts.

The tragedy was that it was when he was bringing the contributions from his churches for the poor of Jerusalem and when he was meticulously observing the Jewish Law that arrest came.

Paul exposes the weakness of the case against him

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.

Paul is happy to answer for himself, knowing that the facts of the case are in his favor.

It has been no more than twelve days so many witnesses should be easily found.

Paul's accusers provide no witnesses to demonstrate that he was in fact in the temple disputing or inciting the crowd;

There is simply no proof for their accusations.

Paul states his case in the affirmative

One of the greatest things about Paul is that he speaks in his own defence with force and sometimes with a flash of indignation, but never with the self-pity or bitterness that would have been so natural in a man whose finest actions had been so cruelly and deliberately misinterpreted.

14) However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15) and I have the same hope in God as these men, 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.

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 makes it clear that he has not abandoned the God of his father or the Law and the Prophets;

instead he is acting in fulfillment of them both.

The basis of Paul's belief is founded on something accepted by a large segment of devout Jews:

the resurrection of the dead (specifically, the resurrection of Jesus).

Paul clearly believed in a resurrection for both the righteous and the unrighteous;

the idea of soul-sleep or annihilation for the unrighteous is not accurate according to New Testament teaching.

Alms and offerings refers to the collection Paul made for Judean Christians among the Gentile churches of the West

Galatians 2:10; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8-9

Galatians 2:10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Romans 15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

Beginning at the passage, "But some Jews from Asia Paul's grammar went wrong.

He began to say one thing and in mid-thought changed to another, so that the sentence became quite disconnected.

This very disconnection shows the excitement and tension of the scene.

They ought to have been here before you to object reminds Felix that there is no eyewitness testimony to prove the assertions of Paul's accusers.

Because Paul is in the right, he consistently calls the case back to the evidence, the very thing his accusers are avoiding.

Christians should never be ashamed or timid of the truth, or of the evidence - if we are truly following God, the truth and evidence are our friends, not our accusers.

Felix's disposition of the case

PLAIN SPEAKING TO A GUILTY GOVERNOR

Acts 24:22-27

"But Felix, who had a very good knowledge of the facts about The Way, put them off, saying, 'When Lysias the commander comes down, I will go into your case.' He instructed the centurion that Paul was to be held under guard, that he was to be allowed some freedom, and he instructed him not to hinder any of his friends from rendering him service. Some days after, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and listened to him about the faith in Christ Jesus. While Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and judgment to come Felix was afraid and said, 'For the present, go your way. When I have time I will send for you.' At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul so he sent for him quite often and used to have conversation with him. At the end of two years Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; but Felix, wishing to ingratiate himself with the Jews, left Paul a prisoner."

Felix was not unkind to Paul but some of Paul's admonitions struck terror into his heart.

His wife Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa the

She had been married to Azizus, King of Emesa.

But Felix, with the help of a magician called Atomos, had seduced her from Azizus and persuaded her to marry him.

It is little wonder that when Paul presented him with the high moral demands of God he was afraid.

There was a longstanding argument as to whether Caesarea was a Jewish or a Greek city and Jews and Greeks were at daggers drawn.

There had been an outbreak of mob violence in which the Jews came off best.

Felix dispatched his troops to aid the Gentiles.

Thousands of Jews were killed and the troops, with Felix's consent and encouragement, sacked and looted the houses of the wealthiest Jews in the city.

The Jews did what all Roman provincials had a right to do--they reported their governor to Rome.

That was why Felix left Paul in prison, even though he was well aware that he should be liberated.

He was trying to curry favor with the Jews.

Felix avoids making a legal decision

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.

He does this under the pretense of waiting for more evidence through the Roman commander Lysias; but it is clear that he has enough evidence to make a decision in Paul's favor.

Yet, knowing Paul's innocence, he grants Paul generous liberty even while he is held in custody.

Felix avoids making a spiritual decision

24) Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. 25) As Paul discoursed on 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."

Felix wanted his wife to hear Paul's testimony, either as a curiosity or so that she could advise him (after all, he was claiming to have insufficient evidence for a decision).

Felix wives:

- 1) Princess
- 2) Granddaughter of Anthony and Cleopatra
- 3) Drusilla. (Daughter of Herod Agrippa) who had been the wife of another king.

Drusilla was a sister to Herod Agrippa II and Bernice mentioned in chapter 25.

Felix had seduced Drusilla, who was reported to be of great beauty, away from her husband, enticing her to become his third wife.

"The lax morals of Felix and Drusilla help to explain the topics on which Paul spoke to them."

Paul spoke to Felix and Drusilla about
the righteousness that is ours in Jesus Christ;
about the need for Christian ethics (self-control) and
about our eternal accountability before God (the judgment to come).

Hearing the gospel made Felix afraid; knowing his life, at least we can say that he probably understood it!

The gospel should make those who are intent on rejecting Jesus afraid.

Felix was unwilling to declare his decision against Jesus;

instead, he rejected Christ under the pretense of delaying his decision.

Many respond to the gospel in this way; they express their rejection through delay and procrastinating their decision to commit to Jesus Christ - but it is rejection none the less.

2 Cor. 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

The claims of Jesus are never convenient;

if we insist on waiting for a convenient time, we will wait for an eternity - in the judgment of hell.

The evil motive of Felix's heart is revealed: greed

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.

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.

Under Roman law, the type of custody Paul was in could only last two years;

Felix showed a blatant disregard for this by keeping Paul for such an extended period.

Though Felix met often with Paul, it was not honest inquiry; he was hoping to be paid off with a bribe.

Felix refused to release Paul, knowing his innocence, for the same reason Pilate condemned Jesus while knowing His innocence:

pure political expediency (wanting to do the Jewish leadership a favor).

People like Felix and Pilate are the most reprehensible rejecters of Jesus Christ;

they know what is right but refuse to do it purely out of the fear of man;

it is an eternally fatal lack of courage.

For 2 years Paul was in prison and then Felix went too far once too often and was recalled. Then Felix gets replaced by Festus, the new governor.

He was dismissed from his governorship and only the influence of his brother Pallas saved him from execution.

Acts 9:15. Paul does testify before kings. **Acts 24**