

Acts 23 & 24

We pick up the story where Paul is in protective custody because of his Roman citizenship ... imprisoned in the Fortress of Antonio when a plot against his life is revealed to the Chief Captain by Paul's nephew:

Acts 23:18 So he took him, and brought [him] to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto [him], and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

This young man ...Same word is used of Paul about himself & Stephen

Acts 23:19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went [with him] aside privately, and asked [him], What is that thou hast to tell me?

Receiving the tip-off Chief Captain stopped murder of a innocent man.

Acts 23:20-21 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul tomorrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

Acts 23:22 So the chief captain [then] let the young man depart, and charged [him, See thou] tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

The Chief Captain acted with speed to checkmate the evil plot.

Acts 23:23-24 And he called unto [him] two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of

the night; 24 And provide [them] beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring [him] safe unto Felix the governor.

The whole force was either 270 or 470 men departing at 9pm ...

Provide beasts ... several mounts for Paul, which could be changed

Felix the governor ... one of the successors of Pontius Pilate.

FELIX: Felix Marcus Antonius, a brother of Pallas, the notorious favorite of Claudius, through influence at Rome, he was named procurator of Judaea about 52 AD an office he held until recalled by Nero in 59 A.D ... succeeded by Festus. This is another hard date in secular history of Acts. The events in this chapter occurred two years before the recall of Felix, 57 A.D. Thus a 55 AD date for Romans.

Felix, depending on his influence in Rome, was an unscrupulous scoundrel. Paul was innocent, and should have been released at once; Felix hoped to get a bribe, & kept Paul in prison. He put down certain brigands and robbers, "but he himself was worse than any of them."

The epitaph which history has written by his name is this: "With savagery and lust, he exercised the powers of a king with the disposition of a slave."

Felix' importance is seen in the fact that his unprincipled conduct did much to cause the war in 70 A.D. which led to the ruin of Israel. "His folly and cruelty goaded the nation into disaffection and rebellion."

Acts 23:25-26 And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix [sendeth] greeting.

Acts 23:27-30 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their

council: 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what [they had] against him. Farewell.

LYSIAS' LETTER

This is a classical example of a self-serving distortion of truth, to serve selfish and political ends. "Having understood that he was a Roman ..." implies that the rescue was made to prevent harm to a Roman citizen, whereas Lysias did not even know that he was a Roman until after he had illegally bound him prior to scourging ... a fact conveniently left out in his letter!

The genuineness of such a document as Acts is evident in every nuance of it. This was politics as it was played in the Roman Empire in those days ... same old game goes on times and in all places. OJ

Significantly, Paul is sent to Felix, not as a criminal, but as a fellow citizen rescued. Before an honorable judge Paul would have been released at once.

Acts 23:31-33 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought [him] by night to An-tip'-a-tris. 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

An-tip'-a-tris was rebuilt by Herod the Great ... from Jerusalem 38- 42

Came to Caesarea ... Philip and the other Christians of Caesarea must have been shocked to recognize the rapid fulfillment of the prophecy.

Acts 23:34-35 And when the governor had read [the letter], he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that [he was] of

Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

What province ...? This question was to determine if Paul really came under his authority; he postponed any action until he could ... \$ profit.

In Herod's judgment hall ... the Palace built by Herod the Great. We inferre Paul was honorably treated & given the best accommodations available for a man under detention. This was to be Paul's home for two years, giving Luke time to research Jerusalem & villages of Galilee Judaea, Samaria interviewing witnesses ... writing the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Note again: pagan man exercises a better sense of justice through the world ruler Rome ... than ... the Jews God's covenant people.

Religion when it is controlled by sin, proves more destructive to justice than humanity's natural instinct for justice.

Acts 24

The Jews take one more step down their moral and spiritual descent ... they thought that they were God's own chosen people and they looked with disdain and contempt on uncircumcised Gentiles. They hated with passion the Roman overlord. Yet here they stoop to fawning flattery in an effort to secure the silence of the Gospel messenger. These spiritual leaders of Israel hired an able lawyer, Tertullus no doubt a Roman to plead their case. In this Israel's advocate flatters the Gentile Roman to get a sentence against one who was guilty of welcoming gentiles "one" with the people of God.

This is the third of five defenses which marked the early part of Paul's period of imprisonment is given in this chapter, this being a formal arraignment and trial before the Procurator Felix at Caesarea, about 58 AD, in which the high priest Ananias and his company from

Jerusalem were legally represented by a lawyer named Tertullus, and in which Paul convincingly spoke on his own behalf.

PAUL'S THIRD DEFENSE: THE SPEECH BEFORE GOVERNOR 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.

And after five days ... this may mean "either five days from Paul's departure from Jerusalem, or five days after his arrival in Caesarea.

An orator, one Tertullus ... Having been foiled as at mob murder, and their forty conspirators having been left fasting and holding the bag. The high priest and company now tried another approach. "Cunning, assassination and conspiracy having failed ... they tried a flattering speech by a spellbinding lawyer.

Informed the governor against Paul ... The word Luke employed here is a technical one, having "the nature of a formal indictment."

Acts 24:2-3 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, 3 We accept [*it*] always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

There are three charges 1 sedition, 2 heresy, 3 profaning the temple.

As De Welt said, "Tertullus was doing his mercenary best!" Some of the "evils" which Felix had corrected were well known, for example, his defeat of the Egyptian false prophet (Acts 21:38). But of course, "If a man lacks arguments, he will flatter the judge. " "Felix was a man of the most infamous character, and a plague to all the provinces over which he presided."

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.

Hear us ... In this, Tertullus, in good legal style, associates himself with his clients, continuing to use the first person plural pronoun throughout.

Thy clemency ... Felix would indeed bestow clemency, not upon the accusers, but upon Paul in the mild manner of his imprisonment.

Tedious unto thee ... Here is the art of a self-seeking flatterer

Acts 24:5-6 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: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

“...we have found this man [a] pestilent ...” Greek pestis or plague or pestilence itself. Paul is pestilence personified.

Briefly stated: Paul was accused of being: (1) a pest, (2) an insurrectionist, (3) a ringleader of the Nazarenes, and (4) one who had attempted to profane the temple. All these charges except No. 3 were unspecific, and even it was unsupported by any evidence whatever. "The weak part of Tertullus' case was that he produced no evidence to support his charges."

“...a ringleader ...” a military phrase meaning the officer who stands on the right of the first rank.

The sect of the Nazarenes ... "This is the only place in the New Testament where this term is used of the followers of Jesus." In no sense whatever is Christianity "a sect."

Assayed to profane the temple ... Note how this is changed from "profaning the temple" as they at first alleged (Acts 21:28).

By examining him thyself ... Agreement is felt with McGarvey who construed this as "a hint of examination by scourging," as indicated by their careful avoidance of giving any information regarding Paul's Roman citizenship, not knowing, of course, that Lysias had already informed the governor on that point.

Acts 24:6 And we would have judged him according to law.

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

**"...with great violence took [*him*] away out of our hands ..."
contrary to our right to try him ourselves.**

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.

We assume he proceeded to call the Jews who came with him to testify, which Luke sums up as following with one word "so".

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

Of course, the very presence of the high priest with a group of prominent elders from Jerusalem, all arrayed in glorious apparel on the plaintiff's side of the court would IPSO FACTO be their "affirming" the charges.

Evidently the high priest Ananias and the group were counting on the social prominence to sway the governor ... they brought no witnesses! Perhaps they considered themselves successors to the witnesses; but events proved that not even the pagan court of Felix would

tolerate any such thing as a "successor" to witnesses. That is called "hear-say evidence" today. There is a message here regarding the claims of those who say they are "successors" to the apostles.

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:

Here Paul was abruptly asked to defend himself without any prior knowledge of the charges, except as he might have surmised what they would be; and the eloquent and convincing manner in which he devastated the plaintiffs' case must be understood as a fulfillment of Jesus' promise to the Apostles cf:

Luke 21:12-15 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute [you], delivering [you] up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. 13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14 Settle [it] therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

Many years a judge ... Felix's career had included other assignments prior to his becoming procurator, and Paul by these words took a sweeping view of it all. "If these events took place in 58 AD, Felix had been governor six years." Tacitus also expressly states that Felix "was joint procurator with Cumanus. Note Paul's use of "judge" rather than "procurator, or governor." None of the disgusting flattery such as Tertullus offered appeared in Paul's defense.

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

So there go the first charge. Not enough time to ferment a rebellion. I have only been in the country twelve days, six in the temple and six in prison.

Because that thou mayest understand ... By such a remark, Paul said in effect that "You are far too intelligent to be taken in by the unsubstantiated charges and wild allegations of the plaintiffs."

The only allegation made against Paul that would have been of any interest whatever to the governor was the charge that he was an "insurrectionist." It was to that point which Paul immediately replied, proving by a single statement that it was a false charge, saying:

It is not more than twelve days since I went up ... (1) No insurrection was ever perpetrated in twelve days. (2) Paul was there to worship, and even paid the charges for certain men who had vows. He was in the temple when Lysias rescued him from the mob who were casting him out of the temple; and if Paul was causing an insurrection, the center of it would have had to be in the temple. Furthermore, Felix well knew, as did Pilate, that if Paul had been trying to stir up an insurrection, the temple Jews would have supported it. The charge, therefore, was a flimsy unsupported lie.

Scholars have busied themselves endlessly, counting up the twelve days Paul mentioned:

- 1. Reception by James and the elders; first day of purification.**
- 2-4. Second, third, and fourth days of purification.**
- 5. Fifth day of purification; riot; Paul's speech on the steps of Antonio.**
- 6. Meeting of the council (Paul's dream that night).**
- 7. Plot to slay Paul is arranged.**

8. He starts to Caesarea before midnight, reaches Antipatris before dawn: Ananias learns of Paul's departure: first of the five days (Acts 24:1).

9. Paul is handed over to Procurator Felix in Caesarea: second day.

10-11. Paul in Caesarea: third and fourth days.

12. Fifth day (Acts 24:1): arrival of Ananias and Tertullus in Caesarea: Paul denounced and the investigation begun. (This is also the twelfth day of Acts 24:11.)

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's emphasis here is still directed to the charge of creating an insurrection, the only thing Felix would have been the slightest concerned about.

Paul had been in Jerusalem only twelve days, and five of them had been spent in Caesarea. No! An insurrection against Rome in less than a week? Impossible! Paul put the final torpedo in their charges with his next sentence.

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

With this blast, Paul clinched his defense against the only charge that might have seemed important to the governor. He then moved to refute the others.

They have no evidence and they have presented no evidence.

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:

Heresy cannot be true because:

I believe what they believe about God the Law and the Prophets.

The way which they call a sect ... The "way" as a designation of Christianity occurs frequently in Acts. Cf: Acts 9:2; 16:17,25; 18:26; 19:9,23; 20:4; 24:14. Implicit in such a name is the trueness and rightness of it. There are many ways of sin, but only one way of eternal life.

Sect ... "Tertullus applied this name to the Christians in a bad sense Acts 24:5; but "Christianity was never a SECT, is not a SECT today; The whole family in heaven and upon earth compose the one perfect entity of the body of Christ; and any thought of that precious and eternal spiritual body as, in any sense, a "sect" is a denial of sacred truth.

The God of our fathers ... Paul's use of this expression, has the meaning of "our hereditary God," had the design of establishing the legality of Christianity under Roman law.

Thus, Paul asserts that, according to Roman law which allowed all men to worship the gods of their own nation, he is not open to any charge of being irreligion or part of a sect.

This thought is further reinforced by Paul's declaration in connection with it, namely, that Christianity is the way of worshiping which is in all things according to the law of Moses and the writings of the holy prophets. Throughout all of Paul's epistles, as here, Paul never failed to present Christianity as fully identified with all the types and shadows of the Old Testament, being in fact the fulfillment of all that

was intended by everything in the old institution. Christians are the true Israel. Christ is the Prophet like unto Moses. Christ's teaching is the New Covenant ... And yet the New is identified with the Old.

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.

I hold the same hope as they do, the resurrection. The truth is Christianity is not some wild and irresponsible new religion, but that its roots reach back to Genesis 3:15 in Eden and includes all of the hopes which humanity ever had, such as the resurrection of the dead. To Paul was Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism, a fact to which the ancient leaders of Israel were totally blind.

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

I fulfill in my life what they confess with their lips and do not practice.

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

They charge of profaning the temple is not true because:

... Alms to my nation ... This shows that Paul's journey to Jerusalem was for the purpose of bringing alms to the poor of that city, and that "Thus it was no part of his purpose to interfere with or profane the worship of the temple."

They found me purified in the temple ... This was easily proved, and none of the opposition denied it; hence the conclusion was mandatory that Paul had in no way profaned the temple.

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

In the Temple I was purified and quiet as the Law requires.

The failure of any of those Asian Jews to appear proved their unwillingness to testify against Paul; and, as they were the ones who first initiated the charge of profaning the temple. The mention of the Asian Jews imposed upon the plaintiffs the necessity of either producing the witnesses or withdrawing the charges.

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

The whole trumped-up affair was, by this time, appearing to the governor as fraudulent and irresponsible. Felix could undoubtedly, see through the whole thing. "The Jews, pretending loyalty to Caesar, desired Paul condemned as a traitor to Caesar, whereas their real motive was to have him silenced as a gospel preacher.

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,

This brought their whole case crashing to the ground. They had already tried Paul before the Sanhedrin ... So Paul put his forefinger into a very sore spot when he asked them to explain to the governor what they found out when they had already tried him!

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.

Let the accusers bring charges about my conduct before the council since I believe in the resurrection as they do.

Except it be for this one voice ... Of course, in the eyes of these Sadducee priests, they consider me to have done wrong in advocating a resurrection of the dead. "But as this doctrine is credited by the nation in general, and is not criminal, they can bring no accusation

against me with reference to anything else." Paul here implied that his belief in the resurrection was the true basis of their hatred of him.

Paul made this last reference in order to taunt his Sadducee accusers, & to show they were moved against him by party jealousy.

Paul's challenge for the high priest to tell what happened at that trial they had already completed administered the COUP DE GRACE to the hopes of the Jews that they might force a guilty verdict from Felix.

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.

Felix compromised his responsibility claiming to need more information from the Captain in Jerusalem. But Felix was just pacifying the Jews since the Chief Captain had already written Felix Paul was "charged with nothing deserving of death or imprisonment".

The charges had been proved false, Paul's innocence established, and the governor was fully convinced on both points

When Lysias the chief captain shall come down ... This was only a delaying tactic. The governor's brain was already working on a bribe.

Having more exact knowledge of that way ... It should be remembered that Caesarea was the place where a prominent centurion, Cornelius, had been converted, where Philip the evangelist and his four daughters lived, and where there were doubtless many influential Christians.

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.

Paul's confinement allowed the utmost laxity and freedom the confinement can allow.

The centurion ... The use of the definite article he was the one who had special charge of the prisoners waiting for trial."

The favorable impression made by Paul on Felix is seen in the lenient treatment accorded the prisoner. "The indulgence did not include removal of his chains." "He seems to have been in what was called 'military custody,' in which the prisoner was bound by a long light chain to his arm, the other end of which was fastened to the officer."

minister ... as used here "is a common medical term for the cessation of pain or disease," thus showing the hand of a doctor of medicine.

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.

He sought to hear Paul's preaching.

Drusilla was a sensuously beautiful person, one of the ten descendants of Herod the Great whose names appear in the New Testament, and, like all the Herod's, possessed of a character marked by selfishness and wickedness. She was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I; and at this time 57 or 58 A.D.) she was not yet twenty years old. Her brother Agrippa II gave her in marriage to the king of Emesa when she was only fourteen or fifteen years of age.

The young queen was only sixteen when Felix, with the help of Atomos, a Cypriot magician, persuaded her to leave her husband and marry him. She was Felix's third wife, and they had a son named Agrippa. After the recall of Felix, Drusilla and her only son by him perished in the eruption of Vesuvius. She was a woman of spectacular beauty.

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.

Such subjects as Paul discussed with Felix were calculated to inspire terror in any man who fully comprehends their meaning. God is righteous and the imperishable enemy of all wickedness. The entire book of Romans is given over to a discussion of this theme; and what is indicated here is but a summary of all that Paul said before Felix.

Self-control ... is a quality of character demanded of all who hope to be saved; and the persons who composed Paul's audience on this occasion were notoriously deficient in it.

Judgment to come ... This is one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity (Romans 2:1ff & Hebrews 9:27). Briefly stated, it means that Jesus Christ will summon all the dead and living of the entire world to the judgment of the Great Day. The Christian concept of a universal judgment day is essential to all sanity in this present life.

One may only grieve for the fact that widespread preaching on the subject of eternal judgment has subsided or disappeared altogether in many churches; but right here is the power that convicted sinners like those who heard Paul here; and if modern churches would have any convicting power, let them preach the word of God on such subjects.

A convenient season ... Felix or Drusilla "convenient day" never came

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.

Having learned guile as a slave in the court of an emperor, Felix pursued the vice with a singleness of heart. Pallas his brother was a "millionaire rich", a friend and favorite of the Emperor Claudius.

Felix managed to convey to Paul the message that some money might loosen up the wheels of justice, but we are sure what Paul's response would have been: he would have given him "another sermon on righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come"!

Paul's repeated preaching to Felix, with the result that Felix trembled, but delayed his repentance; and that Drusilla was made an irreconcilable enemy."

And communed with him ... "This word is used only four times in the Christian scriptures. "It indicates familiar conversation."

When avarice has taken deep root in the heart justice is sold for money; and the innocent receive no aid unless they pay for it, while the guilty who have bribed the judge, escape punishment

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.

The governor has trampled underfoot fairness for he allowed Paul to languish in prison for 2 long years.

Felix was succeeded ... The occasion of Felix's recall was the outbreak of strife between the Jewish and Gentile elements of Caesarea, Felix's put down with troops leading to the slaughter of many Jews, revealing, perhaps, his true feelings about them. Through His brother Pallas spoke for him and he received no punishment beyond that of removal from office, which was taken by Festus.

Luke's purpose is to tell the story of how the Gospel surmounted all barriers and road blocks in its unrelenting progress toward Rome. The weakness of Felix character was one important factor in the method Providence had in Getting Paul to Rome. Even as Felix left office he used Paul to carry the favor with the Jews.

PORCIUS FESTUS

This man was described by Josephus as wise, just and agreeable. However, nothing is known of his life before his accession to the Procurator-ship of Judea, in which office he died after about two years. The picture of Festus that emerges in Acts contradicts Josephus, for he is revealed as willing to sacrifice Paul to please the Jews; and he further deliberately exploited Paul the prisoner for the entertainment of Agrippa and Bernice. "Paul's appeal to Nero is the lasting condemnation of Festus."

The date of change of procurators is very important in determining New Testament chronology. The procurator-ship of Festus (60-62)

The year A.D. 59 is most likely for the arrival of Festus in Palestine; and some support for this date may be afforded by the sudden change of Procurator coinage in that year, attributed to the arrival of a new governor.

Desiring to gain favor with the Jews, left Paul bound ... the Codex Bezae text says Felix left Paul bound "for the sake of Drusilla," which is not an improbable statement.

Sources: KJV Bible, theWord.com, Burton Coffman, BW Johnson, Adam Clark, FF Bruce, McKnight and JW McGarvey, George Faull Commentaries, Wikipedia, and World Conquest.