

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

PROSECUTION (ACTS 24:1-9)

5 DAYS IN THE SLAMMER

Paul had been in prison in Caesarea for about 5 days awaiting his accusers from Jerusalem. After they showed up with their lawyer Tertullus, the trial began.

- The custom of the day was for lawyers to praise the judge and promise to make their case brief. Tertullus buttered up Felix quite well.

FELIX WASN'T EXACTLY WORTHY OF PRAISE

Though the lawyer said some flattering things, the truth is that Felix's reign of governor was actually pretty terrible. Insurrections and anarchy had increased and no significant reforms had been made during his tenure.

- The Jews actually despised Felix, but their hatred for Paul outweighed their hatred for Felix.

THIS IS NOT THE WAY WE DO THINGS

We see in this passage how the world works in manipulation and selfish ambition.

- **If we are not tightly connected with God and allow hatred and selfishness to take hold in our lives, we too can slide into dark and dangerous behaviors.**

THIS WAS ABOUT GETTING RID OF PAUL

The case against Paul was that he was upsetting the Pax Romana. Like Jesus, Paul was accused of political sedition, but they took it even further to say he was an inciter of riots and a global terrorist.

- The other accusation was that Paul was the ringleader of the Nazarene Sect, or people that follow Jesus of Nazareth.

"HE EVEN TRIED TO DESECRATE THE TEMPLE"

Tertullus gets to the main offense, Paul "tried to desecrate the temple." Here we see a problem. Formerly, they accused him of taking a gentile into the temple, now they are just saying he "tried."

- We don't know how many people "testified" against Paul, but we can see they all had their stories straight.

WHERE DID 7 AND 8 GO?

Many translations do not include v7-8 because it seems to have been added later and not in alignment with the narrative of the text. It is rare, but there are a couple of instances where later translators added minor changes. **This does not affect the integrity of the scripture.**

THE DEFENSE (ACTS 24:10-21)

PAUL GETS THE CHANCE TO SPEAK

Paul also begins with a formal intro. It doesn't flatter or exaggerate, but simply tells the truth about Felix's position over the last 10 years.

- As Paul defends himself, he simply invites Felix to look at the facts; the accusations and timelines simply don't line up.

LIVING IN A WAY THAT IS ABOVE REPROACH

Paul doesn't lose his cool or use eloquent language, he just points to the fact that he has kept his nose clean while in Jerusalem. In fact, Paul didn't even go to Jerusalem to evangelize, but to celebrate Pentecost and see the church.

- This reminds us **to live in such a manner that makes it hard to even be accused** (1 Timothy 3).

THIS WAS A SPIRITUAL THING (V14 - 16)

Paul wanted to establish that this wasn't a political argument or a matter of breaking Roman laws or Jewish laws. This was a spiritual/religious fight. Paul said he:

1. Worshiped the God of the Hebrews.
2. That he followed "The Way."
3. He believed in the OT.
4. He believed in the resurrection.

THE SWITCH FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE

Paul makes it clear that he has "always strive[d] to have a clear conscience." He switches from defending himself to being a witness for the good work Jesus has done through him.

- Paul also tells Felix about the offerings he brought for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

PAUL SEEMS TO BE WINNING THIS TRAIL

As Paul points the finger back at his accusers and asks them to "state what wrongdoing they found" in him, he moves on to his belief in the resurrection.

- The truth was winning in this conversation. Paul once again points to his beliefs, the real reason the Sanhedrin was falsely accusing him.

POSTPONED (ACTS 24:22-27)

WE DON'T COME TO A VERDICT

After both sides had been heard by Felix, he adjourned the hearing and said, "When Lysius comes down, I will decide your case."

- In the meantime Paul was on house arrest and was actually given a lot of freedoms and the opportunity to see his friends as they "meet his needs."

WAIT, IS THERE A CHANGE OF HEART?

"Several days later" Felix and his wife, a Jewish woman, went to Paul and "listened to him on the subject of faith in Christ Jesus."

- Has this awful politician had a heart change? Or, possibly his Jewish wife felt the call of God to see the revelation of Who Jesus Christ is? If it was either, the feeling didn't last long.

SOME PEOPLE DON'T WANT THE FULL TRUTH

Though Felix and his wife wanted to hear Paul tell them about Jesus, they were not prepared for a sermon on **righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.**

- **We love to talk about easy parts of Christianity; love, blessings, acceptance, and provision, but rarely want talk of sacrifice, discipline, and accountability.**

"WHEN I HAVE OPPORUNITY"

After hearing Paul talk about what a life of following Jesus would look like, Felix "became afraid" and asked to leave the conversation until he "had opportunity to call."

- Because of the fear of following Christ, Felix goes back to what he is comfortable with and even tries to get bribes from Paul as he is on house arrest.

"AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED"

Felix could have acquitted Paul, but that would've infuriated the Jews and hurt him politically. So, instead of making a decision, Felix just ran out the clock until Paul was transferred to another commander, Porcius.

- Paul spent two years in prison, but Luke had the opportunity to sit with him and more than likely write this book.

WHAT I WANT, WHEN I WANT IT

- It is very easy for us to demonize Felix for his refusal of the gospel because of the more difficult side of the truth. We can also easily criticize him for returning to his old corrupt ways so quickly after hearing about Jesus.
- Isn't this what we do? **We love Jesus when that relationship is easy and aligns with our schedule, but the moment we have to lay down our lives, we tend to manipulate the scriptures or turn away from Him altogether.**

IT ALL WORKS TO OUR BENEFIT

- What we need to understand is that all things work out for our benefit. Even through **sacrifice, discipline, and accountability, God is molding us into something greater and ultimately shaping us into perfection.**