

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2026 // THE BOOK OF ACTS

ACCUSATIONS (ACTS 24:1-9)

WHO IS THIS GOVERNOR RECEIVING PRAISE?

Felix, the governor of Judea, was the first former slave to become governor of a Roman province. Felix's brother, Pallas, was a close friend of Emperor Claudius.

- Tacitus, a Roman historian, described the former slave turned governor as **"a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave."**

PAUL'S ACCUSERS ARRIVE IN CAESAREA

Five days had passed, and the high priest and elders brought their lawyer, Tertullus, to present their case to Felix.

- Tertullus began to present his case with lies about Paul and flattery directed towards Felix. Felix had not brought peace or prosperity to those he governed but had ordered the slaughter of thousands of Jews in Caesarea.

FLATTERY VS. GENUINE PRAISE

Flattery is an attempt to manipulate, gain an advantage, or inflate the ego of another by using smooth words for selfish reasons. **Genuine praise** is an attempt to build someone up with no expectation to gain something in return.

- The Bible actually speaks against this type of behavior more than we might think (Romans 16:18; Proverbs 29:5; Psalms 12:2-3; Job 32:21-22).

THE ACCUSATIONS MADE AGAINST PAUL

Paul was accused of being a political threat and a disruption to Rome's peace, as well as profaning the temple.

- Calling him the **"ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes"** was an attempt to insult both Jesus and his followers because **Nazareth had a poor reputation as a city** (John 1:46).

"BY EXAMINING HIM YOURSELF..."

Tertullus gave the only specific charge against Paul yet provided no evidence that he had tried to desecrate the temple. The accusation is most likely in reference to the claim that Paul brought a Gentile into the temple.

- Without evidence against Paul, it seems Tertullus's only hope was that Paul would incriminate himself under questioning from Felix.

DEFENDING HIMSELF? (ACTS 24:10-21)

PAUL'S CHARACTER WAS HIS DEFENSE

Paul was confident that the facts were in his favor and he had operated in **"accordance with the law"** and with a **"clear conscience towards God and men."**

- When we operate above reproach in all things, we too can stand with confidence before **our accusers because our character speaks for us.**

"BE CAREFUL TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT..."

Paul would not use flattery to sway Felix. He simply and respectfully stated facts, acknowledging the governor was a man with experience ("you have been a judge of this nation for many years").

- We are never to use the tools of our enemy to win a battle, regardless of what is at stake. **"Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good"** (Romans 12:21).

"I CAME TO BRING...GIFTS AND OFFERINGS"

Only 12 days had passed, so there were plenty of witnesses who had the events in the temple fresh on their minds, yet there was no one to provide proof of their accusations.

- After being gone for several years, Paul said he did not return to Jerusalem to cause an uprising but to bring relief to the Judean Christians.

UPHOLDING THE TEACHINGS OF THE WORD

Paul made sure in his defense to mention that **he had not abandoned the "God of [his] ancestors" or the law and prophets.**

- Paul is an example for us today. **"If you love Christ and if you love people, then you will never compromise His gospel"** (R.C. Sproul).

THE SPIRIT IS DEFENDING PAUL

It appears Paul is defending himself here, but we cannot forget that the Spirit has been guiding Paul, preparing Paul, and now is defending Paul.

- "But when they hand you over, don't worry about how or what you are to speak. For you will be given what to say at that hour, because it isn't you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father is speaking through you" (Mt. 10:19-20).

THE VERDICT (ACTS 24:22-27)

"FELIX WAS WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE WAY"

Felix was unwilling to let Paul go free and give the appearance of siding with him because it would upset the Jews. Having been unable to find Paul guilty, **he attempted to find a middle ground, holding him in custody with certain freedoms.**

- To be well informed about "the Way" means **a decision must be made: to accept or reject Jesus ("the Way").**

"FELIX CAME WITH HIS WIFE"

We do not know Felix's motivation for wanting his wife, Drusilla, to hear Paul's testimony, but we can use what we know about Felix to make a safe assumption.

- Felix had already shown a level of indecisiveness, so it is possible he wanted his wife to help him make his mind up about Paul and his message.

FELIX AND DRUSILLA

The sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (Acts 25:13), Drusilla would have been about 20 years old at this point. She was considered beautiful and ambitious. She left her husband to become Felix's third wife.

- The couple's lax morals show why Paul **"spoke about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come."**

"FELIX BECAME AFRAID"

The fact that Felix was afraid shows that at some level **he understood the message** Paul shared with him.

- Yet, again, instead of making a decision, he sent Paul away until a more convenient time. Felix was **deceived in thinking his delayed decision about Jesus was not a decision to reject Jesus.**

"HOPING THAT PAUL WOULD OFFER HIM MONEY"

Though we might be inclined to think Felix's meetings with Paul might have been genuine seeking, Luke tells us the motive of his heart was greed. Felix was hoping that Paul would pay him off with a bribe.

- **What is our motive for coming to Christ and His Church?** Is it what we can get or what we can give?

"AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED"

Roman law only allowed Paul to be in custody for two years, but Felix was willing to break the law, though he knew Paul was innocent.

- Felix, **"want[ing] to do the Jews a favor,"** kept Paul in custody. And Pilate condemned Jesus while knowing his innocence. Both men knew what was right but refused to **act purely out fear of man.**

FLATTERY

- Are we guilty of trying to use our words to manipulate others? What about God?
- Are even our prayers laden with disingenuous flattery towards God?
- Jesus spoke truth, whether it was popular or not, because it benefited those who listened. He never resorted to flattery for personal gain, and neither should we.

OPERATING ABOVE REPROACH

- Do our actions match our claims of a life submitted to Christ?
- Do the people in our community consider us to be trustworthy?
- Do we avoid decisions that bring valid criticism?
- We are not expected to be perfect, nor are we immune to criticism.

RESPONDING WITHOUT DELAY

- We cannot be indecisive when it comes to the tenets of our faith and the infallibility of the Word (2 Timothy 3:16; John 17:17).
- Delaying our decision to come to Jesus is rejection nonetheless. We are to come to Jesus with repentance and faith today. **"Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation"** (2 Corinthians 6:2)!