

**Acts 24****Lesson 23  
Paul Before Felix****Outline****I. The Charge** (vv. 1-9)

- A. *The Accusers* (vv. 1-4)
  1. High priest and elders (v. 1)
  2. Hired an orator – Tertullus (vv. 1-2)
  3. Used flattery (vv. 2-4)
- B. *The Accusations* (vv. 5-7)
  1. Four charges (vv. 5-6)
    - a. He is a plague (v. 5)
    - b. He is a creator of dissension (v. 5)
    - c. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (v. 5)
    - d. He tries to profane the temple (v. 6)
  2. We would have given him a fair trial, but Lysias took him by violence (vv. 6-7)
- C. *The Evidence* (vv. 8-9)
  1. Your examination (v. 8)
  2. Jews agreed with Tertullus (v. 9)

**II. The Defense** (vv. 10-21)

- A. *Glad to answer for myself* (v. 10)
- B. *They cannot prove the accusations* (vv. 11-13)
  1. The reason is that I didn't do these things – thus no evidence (vv. 11-12)
  2. They can't prove it (v. 13)
- C. *Confess that I am of the Way they call a sect* (vv. 14-15)
  1. Worship according to that way (v. 14a)
  2. Believe all that is in the law and prophets (v. 14b)
  3. Have hope that there will be a resurrection (v. 15)
- D. *Have always tried to have a clear conscience* (v. 16)
- E. *Where are the witnesses* (vv. 17-20)?
  1. Reason I came from Jerusalem (v. 17)
  2. They didn't find me doing wrong (v. 18)
  3. If I have done wrong, they should be here (v. 19)
  4. Let those from the council say what I did wrong there (v. 20)
- F. *The reason I am being judged – is the resurrection* (v. 21)

**III. The Delay** (vv. 22-23)

- A. *Because of his knowledge of the Way* (v. 22a)
- B. *Deferred until Lysias would come* (vv. 22b)
- C. *Kept Paul in prison – but gave him liberty* (v. 23)

**IV. The Sermon** (vv. 24-25a)

- A. *It was requested* (v. 24a)
- B. *It concerned the faith in Christ* (v. 24b)
- C. *The content* (v. 25a)
  1. Righteousness – God’s plan for being righteous
  2. Self-Control – submission to God’s will
  3. Judgment to come – Reason one needs to be right

**V. The Wait** (vv. 25b-27)

- A. *Was afraid* (v. 25b)
- B. *Waited for convenient time* (v. 25b)
- C. *While he waited* (vv. 26-27)
  1. Hoped for a bribe (v. 26)
  2. Talked often with Paul (v. 26)
  3. Left Paul bound for two years (v. 27)

**Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter****Acts 24:21**

Unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them,  
'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'

Paul now appears in Caesarea before Felix, who is the Governor (procurator) of Judea and was appointed by the emperor (A.D. 52-60). Paul has the opportunity to defend himself and to preach the gospel to Felix and his wife. Perhaps what we remember most about Felix is that he was looking for a convenient season (v. 25). He, along with King Agrippa (Acts 26) are notable cases of non-conversion.

**The Charge (vv. 1-9)**

*The accusers* (vv. 1-4). Five days after Paul’s arrival in Caesarea the high priest along with the elders (members of the Sanhedrin council) came to present their case before Felix (v. 1). They hired an orator named Tertullus to present their case (vv. 1-2).<sup>1</sup> He started immediately with flattering Felix (vv. 2-4). He praised Felix for the peace and prosperity the nation enjoyed by his foresight (v.2).<sup>2</sup> He thanked him for what he had done for the nation and begged him to hear a few words from the Jews (vv.3-4).

*The accusations* (vv. 5-7). Four charges were leveled against Paul (vv. 5-6). (1) He is a plague (v. 5). He is a pest and a danger to the public. (2) He is a creator of dissension (v. 5). He is a

1 Tertullus was more of a spokesman skilled in the art of speaking than an attorney skilled in the law.

2 It is interesting that within two years Felix was called to Rome and removed from office. He wasn’t quite the leader Tertullus made him to be.

leader in rebellion. He is a troublemaker. (3) He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes<sup>3</sup> (v. 5). He is a ringleader of a faction. (4) He tries to profane the temple (v. 6).<sup>4</sup>

Tertullus claimed that the Jews would have given him a fair trial, but Lysias took him by violence (vv. 6-7).<sup>5</sup>

*The evidence* (vv. 8-9). No real evidence was cited by the orator. As evidence that these charges were true he suggested that Felix examine him himself (v. 8).<sup>6</sup> Then, the Jews agreed with Tertullus (v. 9).

### The Defense (vv. 10-21)

*Glad to answer for myself* (v. 10). As in other defenses he had given (Acts 22, 23), he was glad to speak for himself.

*They cannot prove the accusations* (vv. 11-13). The accusation against Paul could not be proved because he did not do those things, therefore, no evidence (vv. 11-12). Paul made attempts to reason this fact with them. The time frame for the charges had been within the last twelve days (v. 11). Thus, it shouldn't be hard to ascertain whether the claim was true or if there were witnesses. They didn't find him inciting a crowd in the temple, synagogue or in the city (v. 12). Thus, they couldn't prove the charges against him (v. 13).

*Confess that I am of the Way they call a sect* (vv. 14-15). Paul acknowledged that he worshiped according to the Way called a sect (v. 14a).<sup>7</sup> He acknowledged all that was written in the law and the prophets (v. 14b). He had hope that there would be a resurrection (v. 15).<sup>8</sup>

*Have always tried to have a clear conscience* (v. 16). He made the same point here that he did before the council (23:1): he had always been sincere and always tried to do what he thought to be right (cf. 26:9-10).

*Where are the witnesses* (vv. 17-20)? The reason he came to Jerusalem was to bring alms to people of his own nation (v. 17).<sup>9</sup> Thus, he was not opposing the Jews or his own nation.

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3 He seems to be trying to pit Paul against the Romans. He pictures Paul as leading a faction that could spell trouble for Rome.

4 The contention about Paul profaning the temple has modified. At the time of his arrest they said he had profaned the time by taking a Greek in with him (Acts 21:28). Now, Tertullus says that he *tried* to profane the temple.

5 That is the exact opposite of what really happened. The Jews were beating him when Lysias rescued him (Acts 21:32-33). Often what is reported is the opposite of what really happened.

6 There is a question among commentators as to whether Tertullus is talking about Felix questioning Paul or Lysias. The question is based on a textual issue. The NU text (the minority text) omits part of verse 6, all of verse 7 and part of verse 8. With those verses included, it appears that Tertullus is talking about questioning Paul.

7 Luke uses the terms "the Way" to designate Christianity, the way of the Lord (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

8 Premillennialism says that there will be two resurrections (one for the righteous and one for the wicked). Paul affirms that there will be "a" (one) resurrection that includes the just and the unjust.

9 This is the contribution that is discussed in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8-9, and Romans 15:25-31.

They didn't find him doing wrong (v. 18). When he went into the temple, he was purified (v. 18). He was not leading a revolt or causing a tumult (v. 18). Paul then concluded that if he had done wrong, the witnesses should be here (v. 19). Since they were not, then let those from the council that were present say what I did wrong there (v. 20).

*The reason I am being judged – is the resurrection* (v. 21). The question of a resurrection was a matter over which most of the Jews agreed. Furthermore, this was an issue that was of no real interest to Rome.

Paul took up each of the charges and gave a direct response. To the charges of (1) being a plague and (2) being a creator of dissension he showed that he quietly went about his work (vv. 12-13). To the charge of (3) being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes he responded that he was of the Way which believes in the resurrection (vv. 14-15). To the charge of (4) attempting to profane the temple he pointed out that he had gone into the temple (which was to prove that he was not against Moses) and also brought alms to the Jews (vv.17-19).<sup>10</sup>

### **The Delay (vv. 22-23)**

*Because of his knowledge of the Way* (v. 22a). Felix delayed a decision on the matter about Paul because he had a better understanding of Christianity than most. Felix was not deceived by Tertullus at all.

*Deferred until Lysias would come* (vv. 22b). Felix dismissed the proceedings saying he would make a decision when Claudias Lysias came. He didn't want to punish an innocent man or to get cross ways with the council. What Felix really wanted was a bribe (v. 26). We have no indication that Lysias ever came.

*Kept Paul in prison – but gave him liberty* (v. 23). While he waited he kept Paul in prison, but gave him liberty allowing friends to visit and provide for him. Such treatment was not unusual, but suggested he thought Paul was innocent.

Felix is not unlike a lot of people today. He knows enough to make him miserable. He knows what is right, but lacks the courage to do it!

### **The Sermon (vv. 24-25a)**

*It was requested* (v. 24a). After some time had passed, Felix, along with his wife Drusilla<sup>11</sup> called for Paul to come and speak to them. They wanted to know more about the faith. Was it genuine interest? Was he thinking of obeying? Was it mere curiosity? We can't be sure, but it seems from his talking with Paul time and again (v.26), that there was at least some interest.

*It concerned the faith in Christ* (v. 24b). They were about to hear a sermon on the gospel, the faith and what it means to believe in Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> Credit given to Robert Harkrider for developing these points more thoroughly (*Acts*, 116-117).

<sup>11</sup> This was the daughter of Herod Agrippa (*Acts* 12). She was married to a king of an insignificant country. She left him and married Felix. Thus, their marriage was adulterous. They needed the sermon they are about to hear.

*The content* (v. 25a). There were three points to Paul's message:

1. **Righteousness** – God's plan for being righteous. This plan is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). It is by faith in Christ (Rom. 3:20-21). It requires submission (Rom. 10:1-3).
2. **Self-Control** – Submission to God's will. Self-control involves a suppression of one's own will and yielding to the will of God. It involves abstaining from and ceasing sin. That includes the adultery that Felix and Drusilla were in. Faith in Christ involves a dramatic change.
3. **Judgment to come** – The reason one needs to be right. Sinners must repent in view of the judgment day coming (Acts 17:30-31). All must appear before the judgment bar of God (2 Cor. 5:10).

Consider the boldness of Paul as he presented the gospel before this couple. He addressed two people who were living in adultery! He addressed one who had the power to release him or execute him. None of that mattered to Paul. He preached the truth!

### **The Wait (vv. 25b-27)**

*Was afraid* (v. 25b). Upon hearing this message Felix was afraid. He "trembled" (KJV). He was "terrified" (ASV). He saw the truth and it scared him!

*Waited for convenient time* (v. 25b). Though he was bothered by the message, he postponed any response until a convenient time. When the time was right, he would call for Paul. There is no evidence that he ever found that convenient time.

*While he waited* (vv. 26-27). While he was waiting for the convenient time, he kept hoping for a bribe from Paul (v. 26), he talked often with Paul (v. 26), and he left Paul bound for two years (v. 27).<sup>12</sup>

### **Questions**

1. Who was Felix? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Who was Tertullus and what role did he play? \_\_\_\_\_

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12 A.D. 58-60.

3. What were the accusations brought against Paul? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What evidence was presented by Tertullus of his charges? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
5. How did Paul answer each of the four charges?
  - First charge: \_\_\_\_\_  
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  - Second charge: \_\_\_\_\_  
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  - Third charge: \_\_\_\_\_  
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  - Fourth charge: \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What was the reason Paul was being questioned? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. Is there any indication of what Felix thought about the presentation of Tertullus? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. Why did Felix delay his decision about Paul? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. What was the content of the sermon Paul presented before Felix and Drusilla? \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. What reaction did Felix give to the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
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