

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 24

Let's pray...

So, just a really quick recap of where we are –

So here at the beginning of chapter 24, we find Apostle Paul in Caesarea.

What was Paul doing in Caesarea?

He was in protective custody.

The Jewish mob wanted to kill him at the temple.

God used a Roman commander to rescue him

The Roman commander brings him before the Sanhedrin – and they flip out when Paul is presented before them – they want him dead.

So Paul was thrown in prison for his own safety – and then in our study two weeks ago, his nephew brings word that the Sanhedrin has conspired along with Jewish assassins to ambush Paul.

So the Roman soldiers escort Paul out of Jerusalem as he begins his journey to Rome.

Remember that Jesus paid Paul a visit in Jerusalem to encourage him and tell him that he was not going to die there in Jerusalem – that he still had work to do and that was to proclaim the gospel in Rome.

First stop Caesarea – where he is going to stand trial before the governor, Felix.

[Act 24:1-27 NKJV] 1 Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator [named] Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

Now, a couple of things to take notice of here in verse 1.

Ananias, the High Priest, is in his 80's at this time –

It is about 60 miles from Jerusalem to Caesarea -

So, we see how determined he was to get rid of Paul.

He wanted him dead.

So not only do the elders accompany him to Caesarea, they hire the most eloquent and persuasive attorney that money can buy.

The religious rulers bring in the big guns.

This guy, Tertullus – knows all the legal proceedings, he knows the right terminology to use, he spoke perfect latin.

He was good at what he does.

So they bring him along.

And I also had you make a note where it states that “these gave evidence”

And the reason I point this out is because as well will see – they actually provide no evidence at all.

2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, 3 "we accept [it] always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 "Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.

So Tertullus begins his arguments – by flattering Felix. He is pouring it on.

Felix was none of those things.

The Roman historian Tacitus says of him that “with all cruelty and lust he exercised the power of a king with the spirit of a slave.”

Felix was known for accepting of bribes, which actually led to an increase of crime in Judaea.

He was known for secretly encouraged bandits in Judea, and then sharing the plunder with them.

He was immoral.

His current wife is his third wife.

She had been married to someone else, but he convinced her to marry him instead.

He was also violent.

History tells us that later on – he hired assassins to kill the next High Priest (Jonathan) and then as an act of justice, he arrested the same assassins he hired only to put them to death.

He was a horrible governor who didn't know how to rule –

He was unpopular with the Romans, he was unpopular with the Jews – he hated the Jews.

Which makes what Tertullus is saying more amazing.

And verse 4 – pretty much states the following,

“I could go on and on praising you, but I know how busy you are – so if you give me a few minutes of your precious time, I will cut to the chase.”

Church, we are supposed to be on guard against those who come to us with flowery words of praise.

We need to be on guard of those who tell us how wonderful we are, how great we are.

Because in most cases - flattery is merely a prelude to manipulation.

[Pro 29:5 NKJV] 5 A man who flatters his neighbor Spreads a net for his feet.

This is what Tertullus is doing – he is only saying these things in order to manipulate Felix.

If it is done as a simple expression of appreciation and respect – then it is ok – any other motives, it is wrong.

5 "For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 "He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. 7 "But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took [him] out of our hands, 8 "commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

So Tertullus brings up three accusations against Paul.

1. Paul was accused of creating dissension among the Jews and more importantly against Rome. Paul is a troublemaker who is stirring up the Jews to rebel against Rome.

But notice that Tertullus doesn't provide evidence of any disturbance or riot that Paul had instigated. First of all – Paul didn't instigate the riots we read about in

the book of Acts – it was the people’s response to what Paul was preaching the were responsible.

And there is a reason he does not – If he had referred to a riot in any specific area, the responsibility for the case would have been removed from Felix's jurisdiction. The Jews wanted Felix to render an immediate decision against Paul.

2. a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes –

Now, a Nazarene is an inhabitant of Nazareth. This is one of the ways that the Jews referred to the early church, as followers of Jesus who was from Nazareth. However, historically – many of the revolts that had occurred against Rome originated in the area around Galilee – so by accusing Paul of being the ring leader of the Nazarenes, Tertullus knew he would get the attention of Felix.

3. They accuse Paul of trying to profane the temple. Now in Acts 21 – it states that the Jews from Asia – having seen Paul earlier with Trophimus, a Greek – supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. Which is a clear violation of Jewish law.

This is the reason that Jewish mob was about to kill Paul.

But notice here that they are not accusing Paul of bringing a Gentile into the temple – they are simply accusing him of **trying** – that is the key.

Because if they would have accused him of bringing a Greek in the temple – they would have to provide witnesses saying that they saw Paul bring so and so into

the temple. But by saying that he tried to do it - there was no way to prove that he didn't try to do it.

Tertullus then lies about the actions of the commander – he accused him of using great violence.

However, Luke tells us in Acts 21:31 that he didn't use great violence – he stopped the mob from it's great violence on Paul

9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

The religious rulers – including the High Priest – they all assented, meaning that they agreed with the false statement that Tertullus just made.

They perjured themselves

These religious rulers called themselves lovers of God and lovers of the law, yet they blatantly lied to preserve their religion and to execute a man they didn't want around.

10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered:

"Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,

When it is Paul turn to speak – notice, he does not flatter Felix.

He acknowledges that Felix has been a judge for a long time. He doesn't say whether he had been a good judge or a bad judge.

He is just happy to speak up knowing that Felix is familiar with the issues that are going on in Judea.

So keep in mind that all that the religious rulers have done is bring up speculations against Paul.

Personal speculations

Political speculations

Religious speculations

They have provided no proof.

11 "because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 "And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 "Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

Paul begins his defense by providing Felix with a timeline

Turn with me to Acts 21:8

[Act 21:8 NKJV] 8 On the next [day] we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was [one] of the seven, and stayed with him.

So twelve days ago, Paul was in Caesarea at Phillips house – they made their way to Jerusalem and from the time they meet with James until the riot at the temple – were seven days. (Acts 21:26 tells us)

And we know that Paul had been waiting in Caesarea for this trial to begin for 5 days. We see mention of these 5 days at the beginning of the chapter.

So what Paul is saying here is – I am being accused of creating dissension among the Jews. I was in Jerusalem for less than a week.

Do the math Felix!!!

Where is the evidence against me – where are my accusers. If I was creating dissension – there must be people that witnessed me doing it. Where are they?

I didn't go to Jerusalem to stir the Jews – I went to Jerusalem to worship.

14 "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 15 "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of [the] dead, both of [the] just and [the] unjust. 16 "This [being] so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

Regarding the accusation that he was the leader of this sect – the Nazarenes – the Christians,

Paul tells Felix that what the Jews are calling a sect – is not a sect.

You see, Christianity or the Way as Paul states it, is not an offshoot of Judaism.

Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism.

Paul is saying, “I believe in the entire bible (Old Testament) – and that includes all the scriptures which told of the Messiah being despised and rejected and all the scriptures which told of the Messiah’s death and resurrection.

He also says that he believes in the resurrection of the dead –

The prophet Daniel spoke about resurrection

[Dan 12:2 NKJV] 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame [and] everlasting contempt.

So Paul is declaring – I have the same hope as my accusers (resurrection)

By the way, the statement that Paul makes in verse 16 – it should sound familiar - because it was his opening statement before the Sanhedrin in Acts 23:1

And remember that Ananias ordered one of his goons to strike Paul in the mouth.

Ananias is once again standing in front of Paul as he says this – but this time, he can’t order anyone to strike Paul because they are in a Roman court.

17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, 18 "in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. 19 "They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

Regarding the accusation that he tried to defile the temple -

Paul says that his whole purpose in going to Jerusalem was to deliver a financial gift to the church in Jerusalem.

His whole purpose for being in the Temple was to complete a vow according to the Law.

While there he respected all the Jewish laws and customs.

All the charges were false.

Paul then tells Felix that the ones who really had a problem with Paul were the Jews from Ephesus.

Yet they weren't the ones standing before Felix.

Where is the evidence?

20 "Or else let those who are [here] themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, 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.' "

The Jewish leaders had only heard gossip and rumors about Paul.

The only thing they themselves could testify to was that Paul had made the statement about the resurrection that had caused such division in the Sanhedrin. (23:6)

This was why the Sanhedrin had erupted in confusion.

The Pharisees all defended Paul's right to believe in the resurrection.

The Sadducees did not believe in any resurrection.

Church, we have seen over and over through the book of Acts how important the resurrection was.

It's the central message of the apostles.

It's the resurrection that sets Christianity apart from everything else.

It's what proved that Jesus was who He said He was – the Messiah.

It's the reason why Paul was a follower of Jesus.

It's why Paul did the things he did.

22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of [the] Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case."

I had you make a note of the word "but"

Because what the word but does here at the beginning of verse 22 is mark a sharp contrast between what he heard in the arguments by Tertullus and Paul – and what he chose to do.

The Jewish delegation provided no evidence

He knew Paul was innocent – but instead of letting him go free.

He decides to postpone his judgment until he speaks with the Roman commander.

Eventhough he knows what the roman commander has to say because it was Lysias who wrote the letter to Felix in the first place that accompanied Paul to Caesarea.

23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let [him] have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.

So Paul is placed under house arrest -

He had to sit and wait for the next trial –

24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now as he

reasoned about **righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come**, Felix was afraid and answered, **"Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."**

Now in order to understand what happening here – we need to understand the back story.

Drusilla, Felix's wife here – she was the granddaughter of Herod Antipas – the one who ordered the death of John the Baptist

And the daughter of Herod Agrippa I – he was the one that was eaten by worms in Acts 12 – because he didn't give glory to God.

Drusilla was actually someone else's wife – and Felix wooed her away from her husband.

So Felix and Drusilla had an unrighteous relationship.

And so as Paul was under house arrest – they would call Paul and he would begin to share with them.

First -

Paul reasoned to them about righteousness.

We might define righteousness in a simple way as what it takes to stand before God and enter Heaven.

What it takes is perfection!

Thus we all fall short; we are all sinners.

We must be given righteousness; we must be declared righteous.

How is that possible? Jesus Christ came as a man to take upon Himself our sin and give us His perfect righteousness.

When we believe in Him we are declared righteous by God.

Next,

Paul reasoned to them about self-control.

Why self control? They had none!

And that was precisely the point.

Unless and until you are saved it is impossible to live godly lives.

Accept Christ and you receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

You are enabled and empowered to live life as it was intended to be lived.

And finally he reasoned to them about the judgment to come

He already shared with them the offer of God's salvation – now it is up to them to make the decision and that decision has to be made before the judgment to come.

Those who stand before the Great White Throne judgment – are not going to be able to say that they change their mind and want to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior – it is too late.

So as Felix and Drusilla listened to Paul –

The Holy Spirit began to tug at his heart and he was convicted.

His eyes were opened up to the ugly truth of how he had been living and the thought of the consequences he would one day face because of his choices and actions made him tremble.

He had the conviction of sin – but not the repentance.

And then Felix makes the fatal mistake.

Rather than taking the salvation God has offered, Felix deferred his decision.

He sent Paul away until a “more convenient time”

And the “more convenient time” never came for Felix.

Church – when someone responds to the gospel with , “Not right now – I am not ready – or I’ll do it later”

They have made their choice.

To defer the decision is to reject the gospel

[2Co 6:2 NKJV] 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of salvation.

It may seem inconvenient but the proper time to respond to God is always immediately!

26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

So for two years, Felix was looking for a bribe to release Paul – and he never received it.

And eventually the same Jews that were flattering Felix – were the same people that reported him to Rome

To try to soften their hatred Felix left Paul in custody.

As I was reading this chapter – I couldn't help to raise the question

Where was Philip?

Where were the other apostles?

Where were James and the elders of the church in Jerusalem?

Why did none stand with him?

We can't be certain. But we can be certain of this. Jesus stood with Him and it was sufficient for him.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

