

Acts

# Book of Acts

## Chapter 24

*Theme: Paul before Felix*

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**McGee Introduction:** This chapter opens and closes with Paul a prisoner in Caesarea. As we have seen, he was brought here secretly from Jerusalem to elude the Jews who had plotted his murder.

Candidly, Paul had failed in gaining the sympathies of his brethren for the gospel ministry in which he was engaged. I suspect that there was a time of mental depression and discouragement for him, because the Lord came to him in the night to give him encouragement (Acts 23:11). He told His faithful servant that he would witness to Him in Rome also. The Lord did not promise him that it would be easy. Many trying experiences and hardships were immediately before him. In fact, from here to his final martyrdom there was nothing but peril and danger—actually that had been the pattern since the day he was let down in a basket over the wall at Damascus.

In this chapter we will learn that the high priest Ananias and the elders come down from Jerusalem to accuse Paul before Felix. Paul is accused of sedition, rebellion, and profaning the temple.<sup>1</sup>

### **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.**

Ananias' speech.

[**orator**] Greek: *rhetor* (GSN-4489), advocate. a *speaker*, i.e. (by implication) a forensic *advocate* :- orator.

**The high priest himself went down to Caesarea** as well as **some of the elders** of the Sanhedrin. They had hired an attorney (rhētoros, “a public speaker, orator,” used only here in the NT), **Tertullus**, who was to present the case **before** Felix.<sup>2</sup>

**Barnes: With a certain orator named Tertullus.** Appointed to accuse Paul. This is a Roman name, and this man was doubtless a Roman. As the Jews were, to a great extent, ignorant of the Roman customs and laws, and of their mode of administering justice, it is not improbable that they were in the habit of employing Roman lawyers to plead their causes.<sup>3</sup>

**LAN:** The accusers arrived—Ananias, the high priest; Tertullus, the lawyer; and several Jewish leaders. They traveled 60 miles to Caesarea, the Roman center of government, to bring their false accusations against Paul. Their murder plot had failed (Acts 23:12-15),

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<sup>1</sup>McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:617). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

NT New Testament

<sup>2</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:421). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

but they persisted in trying to kill him. This attempt at murder was both premeditated and persistent.<sup>4</sup>

**McGee:** The accusers didn't waste time. They came down after five days in order to press charges against Paul. They brought with them a man named Tertullus who would act as the prosecuting attorney. He was a clever and well-prepared man. The charge he brought was very well prepared, too. It was brief and to the point. I think he did the best he could with the charges he had.

### **Acts 24:2**

**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,**

[**Tertullus**] This is a Roman name, yet he spoke as a Jew (Acts 24:2-9). But the theory that he was a proselyte to the Jewish faith and employed by them as their lawyer is no doubt false. Had he been a proselyte the governor would have considered him at once both an apostate from Roman religion and a fool. Thus, it would have been unwise of the Jews to employ him.

[**saying, Seeing that by thee ...**] Three parts to the oration:

1. Praise for the governor (Acts 24:2-3)
2. Accusation of Paul (Acts 24:5)
3. Narration of the charge (Acts 24:6-8)

**LAN:** Tertullus was a special orator called to present the religious leaders' case before the Roman governor. He made three accusations against Paul: (1) he was a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews around the world; (2) he was the ringleader of an unrecognized religious sect, which was against Roman law; and (3) he had tried to desecrate the temple. The religious leaders hoped that these accusations would persuade Felix to execute Paul in order to keep the peace in Palestine.

[**great quietness**] Much peace. Regardless of his wickedness and poor government, he had rendered Judea a great service in that he had suppressed the robber gangs (Josephus, Antiquities, 20:8:5), had put down the Egyptian prophet (note, Acts 21:38), and had quelled a civil strife between Jews and Syrians in Caesarea. This had brought peace to the country.

[**providence**] Greek: *pronoia* (GSN-4307), care or oversight. Only here and in Romans 13:14.

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<sup>4</sup> Life Application Bible Notes

**Clarke: Tertullus began to accuse him**—There are three parts in this oration of Tertullus:—

1. The exordium.
2. The proposition.
3. The conclusion.

The exordium contains the praise of Felix and his administration, merely for the purpose of conciliating his esteem, Acts 24:2-4; The proposition is contained in Acts 24:5. The narration and conclusion, in Acts 24:6-8.<sup>5</sup>

**Clarke: By thee we enjoy great quietness**—As bad a governor as Felix most certainly was, he rendered some services to Judea. The country had long been infested with robbers; and a very formidable banditti of this kind, under one Eliezar, he entirely suppressed. Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 6; Bell. lib. ii, cap. 22. He also suppressed the sedition raised by an Egyptian impostor, who had seduced 30,000 men; see on Acts 21:38 (note). He had also quelled a very afflictive disturbance which took place between the Syrians and the Jews of Caesarea. On this ground Tertullus said, By thee we enjoy great quietness; and illustrious deeds are done to this nation by thy prudent administration. This was all true; but, notwithstanding this, he is well known from his own historians, and from Josephus, to have been not only a very bad man, but also a very bad governor. He was mercenary, oppressive, and cruel; and of all these the Jews brought proofs to Nero, before whom they accused him; and, had it not been for the interest and influence of his brother Pallas; he had been certainly ruined.

**2-4.** The lawyer spent almost as much time on his introduction as he did on the specific charges against **Paul**. His description of **Felix** was obviously fawning flattery, for Felix was known for his violent use of repressive force and corrupt self-aggrandizement. Felix had been a slave, won his freedom, and curried favor with the imperial court. Tacitus, a Roman historian, bitingly summed up Felix's character with the terse comment, "He exercised royal power with the mind of a slave."<sup>6</sup>

**ESV: Tertullus** began with flattering words designed to secure the goodwill of the governor. **we enjoy much peace**. His remarks had little resemblance to reality: Felix had the least peaceful term of any Roman administrator up until his time, was hated by the Jews, and was noted more for his bribe taking than his benevolence.

### **Acts 24:3**

**We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.**

**Clarke: We accept it always, and in all places**—We have at all times a grateful sense of thy beneficent administration, and we talk of it in all places, not only before thy face, but behind thy back.

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<sup>5</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

<sup>6</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:421). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**Barnes: With all thankfulness.** In this, there was probably sincerity, for there was no doubt that the peace of Judea was owing to Felix. But at the same time that he was an energetic and vigilant governor, it was also true that he was proud, and avaricious, and cruel. Josephus charges him with injustice and cruelty in the case of Jonathan, the high priest, (Ant. b. xx. chap. viii. \_ 5 ;) and Tacitus, (Hist. b. v. ch. 9,) and Suetonius, (Life of Claudius, ch. 28,) concur in the charge.

**BBC:** The prosecution would always begin first, both in Roman and in Jewish trials. Tertullus begins his speech with a standard *captatio benevolentiae*—flattery to secure Felix’s favor. (Rhetoric manuals emphasized winning the judge’s favor, and speeches before public officials always opened by praising them.) Although flattery was sometimes true, this example is blatantly false: revolutionaries had escalated under Felix’s corrupt and repressive administration, bringing neither peace nor reforms.<sup>7</sup>

### **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.**

[**be not further**] That I may neither trespass on your time, nor enumerate your many deeds.

**Clarke: That I be not farther tedious unto thee**—That I may neither trespass on thy time, by dwelling longer on this subject, nor on thy modesty, by thus enumerating thy beneficent deeds.

[**tedious**] Greek: *engkopto* (GSN-1465), hinder (Acts 24:4; Romans 15:22; Galatians 5:7; 1 Thes. 2:18; 1 Peter 3:7). to *cut into*, i.e. (figurative) *impede, detain* :- hinder, be tedious unto.

[**clemency**] Greek: *epieikia* (GSN-1932), mildness, gentleness, fairness (2 Cor. 10:1). *suitableness*, i.e. (by implication) *equity, mildness* :- clemency, gentleness.

**Clarke: Hear us of thy clemency**—Give us this farther proof of thy kindness, by hearkening to our present complaint. The whole of this exordium was artful enough, though it was lame. The orator had certainly a very bad cause, of which he endeavored to make the best. Felix was a bad man and bad governor; and yet he must praise him, to conciliate his esteem. Paul was a very good man, and nothing amiss could be proved against him; and yet he must endeavor to blacken him as much as possible, in order to please his unprincipled and wicked employers. His oration has been blamed as weak, lame, and imperfect; and yet, perhaps, few, with so bad a cause, could have made better of it.

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<sup>7</sup> Bible Background Commentary of the New Testament

**BBC:** Speakers could apologize for wearying the official as if they had not really finished praising him (e.g., the Letter of Aristeas 8—see glossary entry for Aristeas); this was a rhetorical technique for flattering someone even beyond the limits of one’s own rhetorical skills or credibility.

### **Acts 24:5**

**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:**

**[found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader]** Four accusations of Paul:

1. A pest. Greek: *loimos* (GSN-3061), a plague, pestilence. Only here; Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11. It was a term used by current authors of a very bad or profligate man. He did not say he was a pestilent fellow, but pestilence itself. He is an exceedingly bad and wicked man.
2. Sedition. Greek: *stasis* (GSN-4714), a stirring up of sedition among all Jews (Acts 24:5)
3. Ringleader of heresy (Acts 24:5) He is the chief of the sect of the Nazarenes, who are a very bad people, and should not be tolerated.
4. Defiler of the Jewish temple (Acts 24:6) He has endeavored to pollute and profane the temple, and we took him in the fact.

**[sect]** Greek: *hairesis* (GSN-139), heresy (note , Acts 5:17). properly a *choice*, i.e. (special) a *party* or (abstract) *disunion* :- heresy [*which is the Greek word itself*], sect.

**[the Nazarenes]** Only here is this term applied to believers. Jews would not call them Christians (Acts 11:26), as this word was derived from the Greek word for Messiah. They agreed to call them Nazarenes before Felix (cp. Acts 6:14; Acts 22:8). This was the name usually given to Christians by way of contempt. They were so called because Jesus was of Nazareth.

**Barnes: We have found this man a pestilent fellow.** This word is commonly applied to a plague, or pestilence; and then to a man who corrupts the morals of others, or who is turbulent, and an exciter of sedition. Our translation somewhat weakens the force of the original expression. Tertullus did not say that he was a pestilent fellow, but that he was *the very pestilence itself*. In this he referred to their belief, that he had been the cause of extensive disturbances everywhere among the Jews.

**Barnes: And a ringleader.** This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is properly a military word, and denotes one who stands first in an army, a standard-bearer, a leader, or commander. The meaning is, that Paul had been so active, and so prominent in preaching the gospel, that he had been a leader, or the principal person, in extending the sect of the Nazarenes.

While the charge that Paul was a troublemaker was insulting to Paul, it was too vague to be a substantial legal charge. The Nazarene sect referred to the Christians—named here after Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth.

**JNTC:** Tertullus presents the accusation against Sha’ul briefly but not well. Being a **pest** is hardly an indictable crime. “**World**” renders Greek *oikoumenê*, “the inhabited earth”; but Felix is not Caesar and does not have jurisdiction beyond his own district.

**The sect of the *Natzratim*,** a Hebrew word derived from “*Natzeret*” (Nazareth), the town where Yeshua the Messiah lived most of his life. The Greek word used here is “*Nazôraios*”; it is used six times in Acts and five times in the Gospels as descriptive of Yeshua himself, and in these places the *JNT* renders it “from Natzeret.” Today a similarly derived Hebrew word, “*Notzrim*,” is the ordinary word for “Christians”; after two thousand years it no longer refers to a group considered to be within Judaism. Most English translations use the term “Nazarenes” in this verse. See also Mt 2:23&N.

Greek *airesis* gives us the English word “heresy,” but its meaning here is “**sect.**” It is used in Jewish literature to refer to other groups, including the *P.rushim*—it does not necessarily have a negative connotation.

Tertullus wants Felix to understand the *Natzratim* as a Messianic group, and that any group supporting a Messiah is loyal to a different king and subversive of Roman hegemony.<sup>8</sup>

**ESV:** Tertullus accused Paul of three crimes: stirring up **riots**, being a Christian **ringleader**, and profaning “the temple” (v. 6). To a Roman the first charge would have been the most serious, amounting to a charge of sedition, threatening the Roman peace. The second charge Paul readily accepted (v. 14), but the first and third he flatly denied (vv. 12–13).

**Chuck Smith:** These are very serious charges that Tertullus is pressing against Paul, because one thing that the Roman government did not tolerate and that was an uprising in the provinces against Rome. The Jews had a history of rebellion that the Roman Empire had to already put down in the past, and they knew that there were those who were constantly inciting the people to riot against the Roman rule. And so the charges of a pestilent fellow, one who stirs up sedition among the Jews--the idea is that he is stirring up sedition against the Roman rule and he is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

There were many religious uprisings in Israel, many men who would gather together groups of men around them and who would then in their religious fanaticism inspire them to rebel against Rome. So he is saying, "You've got a fellow here who is the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes and as such, he is apt to stir them into a religious fervor to rebel against Rome."

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<sup>8</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:5). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

## Acts 24:6

**Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.**

**[profane the temple]** This was the most weighty charge, for Romans permitted Jews to put anyone to death who profaned the temple. If it could be proved on Paul this alone would condemn him, but since it was false and based upon the lie of Acts 21:28-29, it could not be proved.

**Clarke: Hath gone about to profane the temple**—This was a heavy charge, if it could have been substantiated, because the Jews were permitted by the Romans to put any person to death who profaned their temple. This charge was founded on the gross calumny mentioned, Acts 21:28, 29; for, as they had seen Trophimus, an Ephesian, with Paul in the city, they pretended that he had brought him into the temple.

**[whom we took and would have judged according to our law]** We would have judged fairly had the chief captain not taken him from us; and following our judgment would have killed him on the spot.

**BBC:** Compare the analogously triple charge of Luke 23:2; some historians liked to parallel different historical figures. Paul's accusers make themselves out to be allies of the Romans, who especially in these years were concerned about Jewish unrest throughout the empire. Profaning the temple was a capital charge, and inciting people to riot against Rome was *maiestas*, high treason. Tertullus could accuse Paul only of *trying* to desecrate the temple, because no witnesses could prove that he had actually taken Trophimus inside (Acts 21:29).

If one's opponent in court were known to be a persuasive speaker, it was also common to warn about his crafty speaking ability; and character defamation was a major part of winning Roman lawsuits.

"Sect" is not a derogatory term in itself. "Nazarenes" (a term Jewish Christians in time generally applied to themselves) was perhaps originally an insult, calculated against the obscurity of Jesus' hometown (cf. John 1:46).

**Barnes: According to our law.** Their law, which forbade the introduction of strangers into the temple.

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**JNTC: He tried to profane the Temple.** The Asian Jews thought he had actually done so (21:28), but by this time even his accusers realized he had not. Attempted profanation of the Temple is a reduced charge.

**We arrested him.** This is a gross understatement—they wanted to lynch him (21:30–32&N).<sup>10</sup>

### **Acts 24:7**

**But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,**

Here Lysias, the chief captain, was accused of wrongdoing as well as Paul. But he had many soldiers to testify for him and thus help Paul. Their cause was hindered but, as usual, the devil overstepped himself through his agents. It became necessary to postpone the trial until Lysias came (Acts 24:22).

**Clarke: With great violence—** I rather think, means with an armed force. Tertullus intimates that Lysias interfered contrary to law, and brought soldiers to support him in his infringement on their constitution. This is what he seems to say and complain of; for the Jews were vexed with Lysias for rescuing the apostle from their hands.

**Barnes: But the chief captain,** Tertullus pretends that they would have judged Paul righteously, if Lysias had not interposed; but the truth was, that, without regard to law or justice, they would have murdered him on the spot.

**But ... Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him out of our hands—**a wilful falsehood and calumnious charge against a public officer. He had commanded the Sanhedrim to meet for no other purpose than to “judge him according to their law”; and only when, instead of doing so, they fell to disputing among themselves, and the prisoner was in danger of being “pulled in pieces of them” (Ac 23:10)—or as his own letter says “killed of them” (Ac 23:27)—did he rescue him, as was his duty, “by force” out of their hands.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Ac 24:5). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>10</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:6). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

<sup>11</sup>Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 24:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

## 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.**

**Clarke: Commanding his accusers to come, etc.**—Here Tertullus closes his opening and statement of the case; and now he proceeds to call and examine his witnesses; and they were no doubt examined one by one, though St. Luke sums the whole up in one word—The Jews also assented, saying, that these things were so. Whoever considers the plan of Tertullus’s speech, will perceive that it was both judicious and artful. Let us take a view of the whole:—

1. He praises Felix to conciliate his favor.
2. He generally states the great blessings of his administration.
3. He states that the Jews, throughout the whole land, felt themselves under the greatest obligations to him, and extolled his prudent and beneficent management of the public affairs every where.
4. That the prisoner before him was a very bad man; a disturber of the public peace; a demagogue of a dangerous party; and so lost to all sense of religion as to attempt to profane the temple!
5. That, though he should have been punished on the spot, yet, as they were ordered by the chief captain to appear before him, and show the reason why they had seized on Paul at Jerusalem, they were accordingly come; and, having now exhibited their charges, he would,
6. proceed to examine witnesses, who would prove all these things to the satisfaction of the governor.
7. He then called his witnesses, and their testimony confirmed and substantiated the charges. No bad cause was ever more judiciously and cunningly managed.

**5-8.** The accusations were three: (1) Paul was a worldwide **troublemaker, stirring up riots** everywhere. (2) **He was a leader of the Nazarene sect.** (3) He attempted to **desecrate the temple.**

The first charge had political overtones because Rome desired to maintain order throughout its empire.

The second charge was also concerned with the government because Tertullus made it appear that Christianity was divorced from the Jewish religion. Rome permitted Judaism as a *religio licita* (a legal religion), but it would not tolerate any new religions. By describing Christianity as a “sect” (*haireseōs*, “faction, party, school”; whence the Eng. “heresy”) of the Nazarenes, the attorney made Paul’s faith appear to be cultic and bizarre.

Desecrating the temple also had political overtones because the Romans had given the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who went inside the barrier of the temple (cf. 21:28). At this point Tertullus modified the original charge made in 21:28. There Paul was accused of bringing a Gentile (Trophimus the Ephesian) into the temple courts; here Paul is said to have attempted desecration. The truth was severely damaged in the clause

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Eng. English  
cf. *confer*, compare

so we seized him, the implication being they took Paul to arrest him. (The NIV marg. gives some words that are added in vv. 6-8 in a few less-reliable Gr. mss.)<sup>12</sup>

### **Acts 24:9**

**And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.**

[assented, saying that these things were so] A masterpiece of court procedure:

1. Felix praised to get his favor.
2. Jews well pleased with his government and felt under obligation to him.
3. Prisoner pictured as an exceedingly bad man; a disturber of public peace; a demagogue of a dangerous party; and so irreligious as to profane the temple.
4. He should have been punished at once, and would have been if the chief captain had not interfered.
5. They were lawful citizens who had come to present charges that could be proved to the satisfaction of the governor.
6. The calling of many witnesses—the highest civil and religious leaders of the nation, who confirmed the charges in every detail.

### **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:**

Paul's defense against Felix. Paul's rhetorical skills prove as effective as, or more effective than, those of his paid accuser Tertullus.

[answered, Forasmuch as I know ...] Paul's defense was in three parts:

1. Introduction: respect for the qualifications of justice in his judge.
2. Refutation of charges. This consisted of four parts to answer four accusations:
  - (1) I am not a plague or a pestilence but a true worshiper of God (Acts 24:11).
  - (2) I am not a defiler of the temple.
  - (3) I am not a trouble maker among the Jews in any place (Acts 24:12).
  - (4) They cannot prove one violation of any law (Acts 24:13)
3. Affirmation. This consisted of a 12-fold Pauline confession:
  - (1) I am a heretic, according to them.

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marg. margin, marginal reading

vv. verses

Gr. Greek

mss. manuscripts

<sup>12</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:421). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- (2) I am a true worshiper of God.
- (3) I believe all that is written in the law and the prophets (Acts 24:14).
- (4) I have hope in God (Acts 24:15).
- (5) I believe in the resurrection of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15).
- (6) I strive for a conscience void of any offense to God or man (Acts 24:16).
- (7) I brought alms and offerings to the poor of my nation (Acts 24:17).
- (8) The only wrong they caught me doing was purifying myself in the temple according to the law of Moses (Acts 24:18).
- (9) I was doing this privately and without any tumult (Acts 24:18).
- (10) These men are not my accusers, as they of Asia were (Acts 24:18-19).
- (11) These men have not accused me of sin before their council (Acts 24:20).
- (12) The only evil I committed in their council was a confession that I believed in the resurrection (Acts 24:21).<sup>13</sup>

**[many years a judge unto this nation]** About 7 years, since 52 A.D., which could thus be called due to the frequent changes in governors of provinces (Josephus, Antiquities, 20:7-8).

**BBC:** The defendant spoke after the accuser in Roman trials, as soon as he was given permission to do so. Paul also includes a *captatio benevolentiae* (see comment on Acts 24:2-3), although a much more modest and believable one than that of Tertullus. Proclaiming one's confidence in the judge's fairness was an implicit statement of innocence, and other trained speakers appealed to this in court cases as well.

**Clarke: Then Paul—answered—**The apostle's defense consists of two parts:—

1. The exordium, which has for its object the praise of his judge, whose qualifications to discern and decide on a question of this nature he fully allows; and expects, from this circumstance, to have a favorable hearing.
2. The tractation, which consists of two parts:
  - I. REFUTATION:
    1. of the charge of polluting the temple;
    2. of stirring up sedition;
    3. of being a leader of any sect who had a different worship from the God of their fathers.
  - II. AFFIRMATION:
    1. that he had lived so as to preserve a good conscience towards God, and towards men;
    2. that so far from polluting the temple, he had been purified in it, and was found thus worshipping according to the law of God;
    3. that what Tertullus and his companions had witnessed was perfectly false; and he defied them to produce a single proof, and appeals to those who had been witnesses of his conduct in Jerusalem, who should have been there could they have proved any thing against him.

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<sup>13</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

**Clarke: Thou hast been of many years a judge**—Cumanus and Felix were, for a time, joint governors of Judea; but, after the condemnation of Cumanus, the government fell entirely into the hands of Felix; and from Josephus we learn that this was now the sixth or seventh year of his administration, which might be called many years, when the very frequent removals of the governors of the provinces are considered. A.D. 53, Felix made procurator over Judea, and see Jos. Antiq. lib. xx. 7.

**LAN:** Tertullus and the religious leaders seemed to have a strong argument against Paul, but Paul refuted their accusations point by point. Paul was also able to present the gospel message through his defense. Paul's accusers were unable to present specific evidence to support their general accusations. For example, Paul was accused of starting trouble among the Jews in the province of Asia (Acts 24:18-19), but the Jews in the province of Asia (western Turkey) were not present to confirm this. This is another example of Paul using every opportunity to witness for Christ (see Acts 24:14, 24).

**Clarke: The more cheerfully**—With a better heart or courage, because, as thy long residence among us has brought thee to a thorough acquaintance with our customs, I may expect a proper decision in my favor, my cause being perfectly sound.

**Barnes: Hast been of many years.** Felix and Cumanus had been joint-governors of Judea; but after Cumanus had been condemned for his bad administration of the affairs, the government fell entirely into the hands of Felix. This was about seven years before Paul was arraigned before him, and with might be called many years, as he had been long enough there to become acquainted the customs and habits of the Jews; and it might also be called long in comparison with the short time which any of his immediate predecessors had held the office. See Josephus, Ant. b. xx. ch. vi., vii.

**Barnes: A judge.** This word is evidently used here in the sense of magistrate, or one appointed to administer the affairs of government. To determine litigated matters was, however, one part of his office. It is remarkable that Paul did not begin his speech as Tertullus had done, by any flattering address, or by any of the arts of rhetoric. He founded his plea on the justice of his cause, and on the fact, that Felix had had so much experience on the affairs of Judea, that he was well qualified to understand the merits of the case, and to judge impartially. Paul was well acquainted with his character, Acts 24:25 and would not by flattering words declare that which was not strictly true.

**Barnes: I do the more cheerfully,** Since you are so well acquainted with the customs and habits of the Jews, I the more readily submit the case to your disposal. This address indicated great confidence in the justice of his cause; and was the language of a man bold, fearless, and conscious of his innocence.

### **Acts 24:11**

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

**[twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship]** Four days of the seven purifying himself in the temple (Acts 21:27). The fifth day he gave his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10). That night he saw the Lord (Acts 23:11). The sixth day the forty Jews plotted to kill him (Acts 23:12-22). That night the soldiers took him to Antipatris (Acts 23:23-31). The seventh day he was brought to Caesarea and presented to Felix (Acts 23:32-35). Five days later he was on trial before Felix (Acts 24:1).

**Clarke: There are yet but twelve days**—This is his reply to their charge of sedition; the improbability of which is shown from the short time he had spent in Jerusalem, quite insufficient to organize a sedition of any kind; nor could a single proof be furnished that he had attempted to seduce any man, or unhinge any person from his allegiance by subtle disputations, either in the temple, the synagogues, or the city. So that this charge necessarily fell to the ground, self-confuted, unless they could bring substantial proof against him, which he challenges them to do.

### **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:**

**Barnes: And they neither found me,** The first charge of Tertullus against Paul was, Acts 24:5, that he was "a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition." The charge of his being a *pest* was so general, that Paul did not think it necessary to attempt to refute it. To the specification, that he was a mover of sedition, he replies by a firm denial, and by a solemn declaration that they had not found him in any synagogue, or in the city, or in the temple, either disputing or exciting a tumult. His conduct there had been entirely peaceable; and they had no right to suppose that it had been otherwise anywhere.

**JNTC: Sha’ul raised no commotion in the Temple but went about his business quietly, in a manner consistent with his purpose of placating those Messianic Jews who were “zealots for the *Torah*” (21:20ff.). It would have been counterproductive for him to have done anything which did not demonstrate that he “stays in line and keeps the *Torah*” (21:24).<sup>14</sup>**

### **Acts 24:13**

**Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.**

**Barnes: Neither can they prove the things,** That is, that I am a mover of sedition, or a disturber of the peace of the people. This appeal he boldly makes; he challenges

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<sup>14</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:12). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

investigation; and as they did not offer to specify any acts of disorder or tumult excited by him, this charge falls of course.

### **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:**

[**God of my fathers**] Roman law forbade any man to introduce any new religion or object of worship. Paul's reference to the "God of my fathers" was a defense for both judge and accusers to hear.

**Clarke: So worship I the God of my fathers**—I bring in no new object of worship; no new religious creed. I believe all things as they profess to believe; and acknowledge the Law and the Prophets as divinely inspired books; and have never, in the smallest measure, detracted from the authority or authenticity of either.

**Barnes: The God of my fathers.** My fathers' God; Jehovah; the God whom my Jewish ancestors adored. There is something very touching in this, and fitted to find its way to the heart of a Jew. He had introduced no new object of worship, (comp. Deuteronomy 13:1-5;) he had not become a follower of a false or foreign God; and this fact was really a reply to their charge, that he was setting up a new sect in religion. The same thing Paul affirms of himself in 2 Timothy 1:3: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience."

**Barnes: In the Law and in the Prophets.** Commanded in the law of Moses, and foretold by the prophets. That Paul had ever disbelieved any of these things, they could not prove; and his whole course had shown that he fully credited the sacred records. Most of his arguments in defending Christianity had been drawn from the Jewish writings.

**BBC:** Roman lawyers also had defenses for those who confessed their guilt, admitting that the deed was wrong (*concessio*); they could claim they meant well (*purgatio*) or simply beseech pardon (*deprecatio*). But when Paul admits a deed, he does not admit that it is wrong or ask pardon for it. Instead, he creates a masterful defense: First, this is an issue of internal Jewish law, not a crime under Roman law, and therefore worthy neither of Roman trial nor of Roman execution at Jewish instigation. Further, the Christian faith springs from the Old Testament and is thus an ancient religion, which should be protected as a form of Judaism under Roman toleration. Confessing what was not a crime was a typical masterful rhetorical move; it would heighten one's credibility while doing nothing for the opponents' charge that the defendant had broken the law.

**JNTC: The Way.** See 9:2&N; 18:25–26; 19:9, 23 22:4, where “the Way” is used in the same technical sense to refer to the beliefs and practices of Yeshua's followers. The term implies that “the Way” is the *right* Way. “**Which they call a sect**” implies that his accusers regard it as one way among several, and a way they do not like. Sha’ul refers

back to Tertullus' use of the word "sect" and neutralizes any possible negative overtone (v. 5&N).

**I worship the God of our fathers.** This is precisely the response a present-day Messianic Jew makes to Jews who consider him apostate. The God we worship is the only God, *Elohey-avoteynu*, "the God of our fathers" (the phrase is found in the first blessing of the *Amidah*, the central synagogue prayer). Likewise today's Messianic Jew, with Sha'ul, believes **everything that accords with the Torah** "as upheld by the Messiah" (1C 9:21&N, Ga 6:2&N) **and everything written in the Prophets**, including the prophecies pointing to Yeshua as the Messiah (see Section VII of the Introduction to the *JNT*, Mt 5:17&N, Lk 24:25–27&N).<sup>15</sup>

**ESV:** Paul proceeded to show how as a Christian he was a faithful Jew, accepting **the Law** and **the Prophets** and sharing the resurrection hope. That the resurrection will include both "the just and the unjust" (v. 15) implies a final judgment (see v. 25).

**Chuck Smith:** The term "the way" was the term used in the early church to describe themselves. They were living a new way of life with Jesus at the center of their life. Jesus had said to His disciples, "I am the way: no man comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). And so they picked up this term "the way" and they used it to describe the Christian fellowship in the early years of the church. At least six times this term "the way" is used to describe the believers in the book of Acts.

The term "Christian" was not at all a common term nor really a biblical term for Christianity in the beginning. It became a term used ultimately because Peter in writing his epistle said, "If any of you suffer as a Christian" (I Peter 4:16). But that is the only time the term "Christian" was used by Christians in the New Testament; whereas the term "the way" was used many different times and was a far more common name for the followers of Jesus Christ than the name "Christian." The name "Christian" is used only three times in all of the New Testament, where it mentions in Antioch that there the disciples were first called Christians.

Next week in the twenty-sixth chapter of Acts, as Agrippa challenges Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). So that there it was used not by the Christians themselves, but by others who were referring to those who were believers in Jesus Christ. But "the way"--the way to God through Christ. And so, "after the way which they call heresy, I worship the God of my fathers." Or, he had come to worship God through Jesus Christ recognizing that Jesus is the only way by which a man can approach God.

**Chuck Smith:** In making this declaration, he is declaring his belief in all of those prophecies concerning the Messiah and then his belief that Jesus was the Messiah. The Old Testament is full of prophecies all relating to the Messiah, prophecies that Jesus literally fulfilled. And if you will just take the chance factors of one man fulfilling these prophecies, you will find that it becomes solid proof that Jesus indeed was the Messiah.

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<sup>15</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:14). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.



Could not have fulfilled these unless He was indeed the Messiah. His place of birth, "And thou, Bethlehem, though thou be little among the provinces of Judah, yet out of thee shall come He who is to rule my people whose going forth is from old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). There's only one chance in 250,000 for a person to be born in Bethlehem. A little village, and yet, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. And right on down the line you can take prediction after prediction and find out that Jesus literally fulfilled them.

Paul said, "I believe the prophets and the law." All of the things which are written in the law and in the prophets. That's more than what you can say for a lot of ministers today who have sought to eliminate much of the law and the prophets, as well as much of the New Testament. Paul declared himself to be a believer in all of these things.

Paul the apostle, when he would go into a new community, would usually go into the synagogue and just take their scriptures and teach them concerning the Messiah out of their own scriptures, and then he would go about to show that Jesus was the Messiah. That can be done very easily with the scriptures of the Old Testament.

Jesus said, "You do search the scriptures because in them you think you have life, but actually they testify of Me" (John 5:39). And again, "I have come as it is written of Me in the volume of the book to do Thy will, O Lord" (Hebrews 10:7). And as you go through the Old Testament with the anointing and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, you find that Jesus is there in every page.

You remember how the Ethiopian eunuch was on his way back, and there in the Gaza strip when Philip met him, he was reading the scriptures and Philip began at that place and preached Christ unto him. That would be possible in just about any place in the Old Testament; you could begin at that verse and preach Christ. The volume of the book is written of Him.

Paul just declares, "I believe in those prophecies." And even in the law there were so many prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. And then Paul confessed:

### **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.**

[**just**] *dikaios*, **Greek 1342**, *dik'-ah-yos*; from Greek 1349 (dike); *equitable* (in character or act); by implication *innocent, holy* (absolute or relative) :- just, meet, right (-eous).

[**unjust**] *adikos*, Greek 94, *ad'-ee-kos*; from Greek 1 (a) (as a negative particle) and Greek 1349 (dike); *unjust*; by extension *wicked*; by implication *treacherous*; specially *heathen* :- unjust, unrighteous.

**Clarke: And have hope toward God, etc.**—I not only do not hold any thing by which the general creed of this people might be altered, in reference to the present state; but, also, I hold nothing different from their belief in reference to a future state; for, if I maintain the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, it is what themselves allow.

**Barnes: Which they themselves,** That is, the Pharisees. Perhaps he designated in this remark the Pharisees who were present, he held nothing in this great cardinal point, which they did not also hold. For the reasons why Paul introduced this point so prominently, and the success of thus introducing it, Acts 23:1, also Acts 23:2-9.

**JNTC: Which they too,** the *P.rushim* but not the *Tz.dukim*, **accept** (see 23:6).

**A resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.** Only here does Sha'ul mention the resurrection of the unrighteous. For his teaching on the resurrection of the righteous see 1C 15&NN, 1 Th 4:12-17&NN. Yeshua teaches the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous at Yn 5:29&N; it is mentioned clearly in the *Tanakh* at Daniel 12:2. This dual resurrection underlies all passages speaking of future judgment, including Mt 25:31-46, Yn 12:48, Ro 14:10, 2C 5:10 and Rv 20:4-6, 11-15. Also see v. 21 below.<sup>16</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** So Paul's belief in the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust. Of course, in the book of Revelation we find out that there will be actually two resurrections—one of the just and the second of the unjust. And there will be approximately a thousand years intervening between the two resurrections. "The rest of the dead live not until the thousand years were expired. Blessed is he who taketh part in the first resurrection; over him the second death has no power" (Revelation 20:5-6).

I believe that the first resurrection takes place over a period of time. That Jesus was indeed the firstfruits of those who rise from the dead and as He said, "He who lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:26). And that for the child of God, death is an immediate transition from this old tent into the new house, and that Revelation chapter nineteen is in fact the account of the first resurrection. That is, the completion of it. The final ones to enter into that first resurrection are those martyred saints during the tribulation period, and they complete the first resurrection.

But I believe that the minute a person's spirit has moved out of this body that it moves in to the new building of God, not made with hands. Paul the apostle, writing his Corinthian epistle, the second one, said that, "We know that when this earthly tabernacle or this earthly tent, our earthly body, this tabernacle, is dissolved" (that is, when my body goes back to dust), "that we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So then we who are in these bodies do often groan earnestly desiring to be delivered or earnestly desiring to move out of them, not that I would become unclothed, or not that I would be an unembodied spirit (my earnest desire isn't to be some ether essence in the atmosphere, unembodied spirit), but I desire to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven or I desire to move into my new house, the building of God not made with hands; so then we who are in this body do often groan earnestly desiring to be delivered, not that we would be unclothed but to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. For we know that as long as we are living in these bodies, at home in these bodies, we are absent from the Lord but we would choose rather to be absent from these bodies and be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:1-6).

Someday when you read in the paper, "Chuck Smith died," don't believe that. Jesus said, "If I live and believe in Him, I'll never die." So call the reporters and say, "That's poor

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<sup>16</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:15). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

reporting. Chuck Smith moved, out of an old worn out tent and into a beautiful new house." Building of God not made with hands.

The Bible teaches that man basically is spirit, not body. We relate to each other through our bodies and we've come to associate each other with our bodies, but the real me is spirit. The body is just the instrument by which my spirit can express itself. But the body isn't me, and one day I'm going to leave this body and I'm going to move in to a new house. This is an old tent; it's wearing out. But I'm going to move into the building of God.

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). People, I am sure, have a wrong concept of that, as you think of some beautiful estate on ten acres with beautiful gardens and a ten-bedroom mansion. Big columns in the front, and you each have your green mansion. I really believe that Jesus was referring to the building of God not made with hands, that new body that He has for me. He said, "I'm going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I'm going to come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

In my new body I'm not going to need a bathroom. Or a bedroom. So He's talking about the building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Notice the contrast: a tent is always considered as transient, temporal; the building of God, eternal in the heavens. The tent to the building of God.

Paul in writing his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter fifteen, uses nature to illustrate the principle of resurrection. How that the persons were asking, "How are the dead raised and with what body will they come?" And that is a question that people often ask. What kind of a body am I going to have and when this body is changed? A lot of people seem to be quite attached to these bodies, in their minds at least, and they want to somehow hold on to this body. I've held on to mine long enough. I'm ready to discard it for the new building of God not made with hands.

Paul said, "Don't you realize that when you plant a seed into the ground, the seed does not come forth into new life until it first of all dies? And then the body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted. Take special note of that. The body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted. For all you planted was a bare grain and now God has given to it a body that pleases Him; and so is the resurrection from the dead. You are planted in weakness but you'll be raised in power. You are planted in corruption; you'll be raised in incorruption. You're planted in dishonor; you'll be raised in glory. You're planted as a natural body; you'll be raised in a spiritual body" (I Corinthians 15:36,38,42-44).

For there is a natural body and a spiritual body and the difference between the celestial and the terrestrial. So that "even as we have borne the image of the earthen and have been earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavens" (I Corinthians 15:49). When God made this body for me, He made it and adapted it for the environmental conditions of the earth. My body withstands fourteen pounds of pressure per square inch. My body takes the oxygen out of the seventy-nine/twenty nitrogen-oxygen balance of the atmosphere. God designed the body for the earth. He didn't design it for heaven.

If man takes his body out of the earth's environmental conditions, he can only do it by taking artificial environment with him. Now God could give you a pressurized space suit, and He could give you nitrogen and oxygen tanks and He could revive this old body if He so desired. And you could go clomping around heaven with your weighted shoes to hold

you down in the clumsy, awkward spacesuit with the tanks on your back. But I would just as soon have that new building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. A new body designed for the heavenly conditions.

God wants me to be with Him in His kingdom. And so in order that I might transfer from the environment of the earth into the heavenly kingdom, I need this change of body, which shall take place at death when the earthly tent is dissolved and I move into the building of God not made with hands. Man says he died, the Bible says I moved.

So Paul said, "I believe in the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust." We will have part in the first resurrection. "Blessed is he for over him the second death has no power". This concept immediately puts to silence the ridicule of the atheist and the unbeliever who foresee horrible problems in the resurrection day when the bodies are trying to assemble themselves together again. Those that have been cremated and their ashes spread, or those that have been buried and their bodies decomposed and become a part of the soil, and the nutrients from their bodies feeding the roots of the grass that the cows eat to produce the milk, that you drink which assimilates and becomes a part of your body. So actually in your body are possibly chemicals from someone else's body of some previous age. Now in the resurrection, where do these chemicals go? Or more recently in the case of kidney transplants and heart transplants, who gets it? And so they foresee all kinds of problems with the resurrection. There would be if this body were to be the instrument in which I live. But thank God it isn't. I have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Paul said to the Philippians, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. Nevertheless, for your sakes, I need to stick around a while longer". But, "I believe," Paul said, "in the resurrection both of the just and the unjust."

The unjust will be resurrected at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the great white throne" (Revelation 20:11,12). Death and hell gave up the dead which were in them. The sea gave up the dead which was in it. And they all stood there before the throne of God and the books were opened and they were judged. This is the second resurrection, the resurrection of the unjust unto everlasting shame and contempt. So Paul believes in the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust, even as was declared by Daniel chapter twelve, verse two.

### **Acts 24:16**

**And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.**

[**exercise**] Greek: *askeo* (GSN-778), to practice as an art. Used of the healing art in medical writings and found only here.

[**toward God, and toward men**] Paul here declared that he held no doctrine contrary to truth, no worship contrary to God, and no malice to man.

**Clarke: And herein do I exercise myself**—And this very tenet is a pledge for my good behavior; for as I believe there will be a resurrection, both of the just and unjust, and that

every man shall be judged for the deeds done in the body, so I exercise myself day and night, that I may have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

**Barnes: Do I exercise myself.** I accustom or employ myself; I make it my constant aim and endeavour. It is the purpose of my constant study. Paul often appeals to his conscientiousness as the leading habit of his life. Even before his conversion he endeavoured to act according to the dictates of conscience. See Acts 26:9. Comp. Philippians 3:5,6.

**Clarke: Toward God**—In entertaining no opinion contrary to his truth; and in offering no worship contrary to his dignity, purity, and excellence.

**BBC:** Here Paul means that one who truly believed the hope stated in Acts 24:15 would be careful to do right before God and people. This is an implied argument from probability, a strongly favored line of argument in ancient law courts.

**Clarke: Toward men**—In doing nothing to them that I would not, on a change of circumstances, they should do to me; and in withholding nothing by which I might comfort and serve them.

**JNTC: To bring a charitable gift.** Not mentioned in chapter 21, but confirmed by Sha’ul in his own letters (Ro 15:25–31, 1C 16:1–4, 2C 8:1–9:15, Ga 2:10).

The gift was not only for Messianic Jews but for unbelieving Jews as well, since they too are included in “**my nation**” (see Ro 15:25–31&NN and Ga 2:10&N, where believing Jews and Gentiles are enjoined to show kindness and charity toward Jews specifically.) That Sha’ul considered the Messianic Jewish community in Jerusalem part of the Jewish **nation** is not even an issue, nor should there be any question today that Messianic Jews are part of the Jewish people. (In spite of this the State of Israel’s High Court of Justice in 1989 made Messianic Jews Israel’s *refuseniks*—the only Jews in the world not to be considered Jews for purposes of Israel’s Law of Return, which allows any Jew anywhere to immigrate to Israel and be a citizen.)<sup>17</sup>

### **Acts 24:17**

**Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.**

[**many years**] Paul had been gone from Jerusalem about six or seven years (cp. note, Acts 24:10).

[**alms to my nation**] Alms to the poor, which was always Paul's program (Romans 15:26; 1 Cor. 13:3; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15; Galatians 2:10). See Matthew 6:1.

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<sup>17</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:17). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

[offerings] Greek: *prospora* (GSN-4376), sacrifice (Acts 21:26; Acts 24:17; Romans 15:16; Ephes. 5:2; Hebrews 10:5,8,10,14,18; cp. Numbers 6:14-20).

**Barnes: Now after many years.** After many years' absence. Paul here commences a reply to the charges of Tertullus, that he had endeavoured to profane the temple, Acts 24:6. He begins by saying that his design in coming up to Jerusalem was to bring to them needed aid in a time of distress. It would be absurd to suppose, therefore, that his object in coming was to violate the customs of the temple, and to defile it.

**Clarke: Now, after many years, etc.**—And as a full proof that I act according to the dictates of this Divine and beneficent creed, though I have been many years absent from my own country, and my political relation to it is almost necessarily dissolved, yet, far from coming to disturb the peace of society, or to injure any person, I have brought ALMS to my nation, the fruits of my own earning and influence among a foreign people, and OFFERINGS to my God and his temple, proving hereby my attachment to my country, and my reverence for the worship of my country's God.

**Barnes: To my nation.** Not to *all* the nation; but to the poor saints or Christians who were in Judea, and who were suffering much by persecutions and trials.

**BBC:** Almsgiving was highly regarded in Judaism but would not impress Felix, although he would regard it as harmless. More impressive is its value as clear proof of Paul's solidarity with his people and their ancestral customs. Again on a probability argument (Acts 24:16), this point would make the charge of violating the temple absurd.

**Barnes: And offerings.** The word used here properly denotes an offering or gift of any kind; but it is usually applied to an oblation, or offering made to God in the temple—a thank-offering, a sacrifice. This is probably its meaning here. He came to bring aid *to his needy countrymen*, and *an offering to God*; and it was, therefore, no part of his purpose to interfere with, or to profane the worship of the temple.

### **Acts 24:18**

**Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.**

While engaged in the offerings of purification in the temple (Numbers 6:14-20).

**Clarke: Found me purified in the temple**—And the Jews of Asia, who stirred up the persecution against me in Jerusalem, found me purified in the temple, regularly performing the religious vow into which I had entered; giving no cause for suspicion; for I made no tumult, nor had I any number of people with me, by whom I could have accomplished any seditious purpose.

### **Acts 24:19**

**Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.**

**Barnes:** Who ought to have been here, They were the proper witnesses; as they had stayed away, it showed that they were not prepared to undergo a strict examination. Paul, therefore, justly complains that the very persons who alone *could* testify against him were absent, and showed that there was really no well-founded charge against him. They alone could testify as to anything that occurred in the temple; and as *they* were not present, that charge ought to be dismissed.

**JNTC:** But some Jews from Asia—they ought to be here .... Sha’ul interrupts his own more accurate report of what transpired in the Temple, perhaps to gain control of his hot temper before discussing in front of a non-Jewish judge the misbehavior of his fellow Jews. See 23:2–5&N.<sup>18</sup>

The real accusers, if there were any at all, are not even present. The charge that Tertullus makes is that Paul had been stirring up people in the temple. Why don’t the people who were being stirred up testify against Paul? They aren’t there, and Paul calls attention to it.

**ESV:** Paul began to relate the events of his being captured in the temple (21:27–36) but cut himself short when he realized his real accusers—the Jews from Asia—were not present. Roman law called for a “face-to-face” confrontation between the accusers and the accused.

### **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,**

**19-21.** Finally, Paul said his genuine accusers were not present, the **Jews from the province of Asia** who made the original false allegations and incited the riot in the temple (cf. 21:27). Since the Sanhedrin had not found him guilty (23:1-9), Tertullus’ speech did not really contain any legitimate charges.<sup>19</sup>

### **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.**

**[this one voice]** This one utterance of the resurrection (Acts 23:6).

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<sup>18</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:19). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>19</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:422). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**Clarke: Except it be for this one voice**—The Sadducees who belong to that council, and who deny the resurrection of the dead, may indeed blame me for professing my faith in this doctrine; but as this is a doctrine credited by the nation in general, and as there can be nothing criminal in such a belief, and there can bring no accusation against me relative to any thing else, this, of course, is the sum of all the charges to which I am called to answer before you this day.

**JNTC: Other than this one thing ... : “I am on trial ... because I believe in the resurrection.”** See 23:6–10&NN. Sha’ul not only believes in but has seen and heard the resurrected Yeshua. His point is that a Jewish community divided on whether resurrection takes place at all is in no condition to judge him or other Messianic Jews on whether Yeshua is the Messiah. It would be as if Ferdinand Magellan’s crew were to stand trial for claiming to have circumnavigated the globe before judges who differed on whether the earth is round or flat.

The principle can be applied today. For example, if a group of people, Jewish or not, is divided over whether or not the Bible is God’s inspired word to humanity, with most “right-wing” people, e.g., Orthodox Jews and Evangelical Christians, saying it is, and most “left-wing” people, e.g., Reform Jews, Liberal Christians and secularists, saying it is not or hedging, it would be confounding issues for a Messianic Jew to try to defend his faith before them all together; since they would already, for their own reasons, be in disagreement over a point that Messianic Judaism takes as given.<sup>20</sup>

**ESV: when I stood before the council.** Ananias and the elders were members of the Sanhedrin and thus could testify to Paul's earlier hearing before them (23:1–10). The key issue both then and here, before Felix, was the resurrection—not just the concept but the realization of the resurrection in Jesus.

### **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.**

**BBC:** Lysias, the commander, is the independent witness, who would not be expected to have bias for either side.

Neither Paul nor his accusers mention Jesus, and Paul’s words are acceptable Pharisaism; but Felix recognizes the religious issue involved. It would have been difficult for Felix not to have known of the massive Judean Jesus movement (Acts 21:20), but he and the Romans by this period were treating it as politically innocuous; the difference between Christians and the brigands who were assassinating people was finally clear.

Felix had been governor for six years and would have known about the Christians (“the Way”), a topic of conversation among the Romans leaders. The Christians’ peaceful lifestyles had already proven to the Romans that Christians didn’t go around starting riots.

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<sup>20</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:21). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.



### **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.**

**[liberty]** Greek: *anesis* (GSN-425), relaxation. Here; 2 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 8:13; 2 Thes. 1:7. This is proof that Felix knew he was not guilty of any crime. He would have turned Him loose but for two reasons: to please the Jews and hoping to get money from the apostle or his friends for his release (Acts 24:26-27).

**Clarke: He commanded a centurion to keep Paul**—He gave him into the custody of a captain, by whom he was most likely to be well used: and to let him have liberty; he freed him from the chains with which he was bound to the soldiers, his keepers. See on Acts 21:33 (note). And that he should forbid none of his acquaintance, of his own people, his fellow apostles, and the Christians in general, to minister or come unto him; to furnish him with any of the conveniences and comforts of life, and visit him as often as they pleased. This was an ample proof that Felix found no evil in him; and he would certainly have dismissed him but for two reasons:

1. He wanted to please the Jews, who, he knew, could depose grievous things against his administration.
2. He hoped to get money from the apostle, or his friends, as the purchase of his liberty.

### **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.**

Felix really was after a bride.

Felix was first slave to be freed and become a Roman Governor.

His wives:     1) Princess  
                  2) Granddaughter of Anthony and Cleopatra  
                  3) Drusilla. (Daughter of Herod Agrippa)  
                              Had been the wife of another king.

Delays Paul in prison to try and figure out what to do with him. Then he gets replaced by Festus, the new governor.

Acts 9:15. Paul does testify before kings.

**[Drusilla]** She was the daughter of king Herod Agrippa I, and had left her first husband, king Azizus of Emesa, and married Felix. It was no doubt through her that he had his knowledge of the way (Acts 24:22). The moment that Felix saw her he fell very deeply in love with her, and by means of a pretended Jewish magician, persuaded her to leave her husband. He then took her to be his wife. Josephus mentions that she and her son by Felix were consumed by an eruption of Mt. Vesuvius (Antiquities, 20:7).

**Clarke: His wife Drusilla**—We have already seen that Felix was thrice married: two of his wives were named Drusilla; one was a Roman, the niece or grand-daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, mentioned by Tacitus, lib. v. cap. 9. The other, the person in the text, was a Jewess, daughter to Herod Agrippa the Great. See Acts 12:1, etc. When she was but six years of age, she was affianced to Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, king of Comagene, who had promised to embrace Judaism on her account; but, as he did not keep his word, her brother Agrippa (mentioned Acts 25:13) refused to ratify the marriage. About the year of our Lord 53, he married her to Azizus, king of the Emesenes, who received her on condition of being circumcised. Felix having seen her, fell desperately in love with her, and by means of a pretended Jewish magician, a native of Cyprus, persuaded her to leave her husband; on which Felix took her to wife. She appears, on the whole, to have been a person of indifferent character; though one of the finest women of that age. It is said that she, and a son she had by Felix, were consumed in an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. See Josephus, Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 7, and see Calmet and Rosenmuller.

**BBC:** Paul is probably still kept in the procurator's own palace (Acts 23:35), making it easy for Felix to visit him—and also for Paul's friends to provide him money, some of which might later be used to Felix's advantage (Acts 24:26). Corrupt officials might keep someone imprisoned for their own ends; a later but partly analogous story is told of the Roman emperor Domitian acquitting a philosopher for his wisdom—then retaining him in detention so he could question him in private.

Drusilla was Herod Agrippa I's youngest daughter and Agrippa II's sister. She married the king of a small region in Syria, but at the age of sixteen divorced him at Felix's instigation to marry him instead. Although it violated normal Roman policy for a governor to marry a woman from his province, Felix had much power as long as his brother Pallas remained in favor in Rome (cf. comment on "Acts 23:24). Drusilla is about twenty years old here, and her Jewish faith may help influence her husband to listen to Paul.

**Clarke: Heard him concerning the faith in Christ**—For the purpose mentioned in the note on Acts 24:21, that he might be the more accurately instructed in the doctrines, views, etc., of the Christians.

**[heard him concerning the faith in Christ]** That He might be better informed to judge Paul's case, and to know of this way more perfectly (Acts 24:22).

### **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.**

**[trembled]** Greek: *emphobos* (GSN-1719). Translated "afraid" (Luke 24:5; Acts 10:4; Acts 22:9); "affrighted" (Luke 24:37; Rev. 11:13); here "trembled" or terrified.

**[reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come]**

**Paul's Sum of God's Requirements**

1. Greek: dikaiosune (GSN-1343), righteousness or right doing: the principles of justice and right between God and man and man and man in all relations and connections of life. Translated "righteousness" 92 times.
2. Greek: engkrateia (GSN-1466), self-control, chastity, or moderation with regard to the appetites, passions, and propensities of all kinds. Only here; Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6; cp. 1 Cor. 7:9; 1 Cor. 9:25; Titus 1:8.
3. Greek: krima (GSN-2917), judgment to come; a day of retribution, in which the unjust, intemperate, and incontinent must give account of all the deeds of the body, soul, and spirit. Translated "judgment" 13 times (Matthew 7:2; John 9:39; Acts 24:25; Romans 2:2-3; Romans 5:16; Romans 11:33; Galatians 5:10; Hebrews 6:2; 1 Peter 4:17; 2 Peter 2:3; Rev. 17:1; Rev. 20:4); "damnation" 7 times (Matthew 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47; Romans 3:8; Romans 13:2; 1 Cor. 11:29; 1 Tim. 5:12); "condemnation" 5 times (Luke 23:40; 1 Cor. 11:34; 1 Tim. 3:6; James 3:1; Jude 1:4); and "condemned" (Luke 24:20). Never did a man preach a sermon more fitting than to these two who lived under the power of avarice and unbridled lusts, intemperance, and injustice to others.

**[convenient season]** This is the sinner's excuse when he is under conviction and refuses to surrender.

**Clarke: And judgment to come—**; The day of retribution, in which the unjust, intemperate, and incontinent, must give account of all the deeds done in the body. This discourse of St. Paul was most solemnly and pointedly adapted to the state of the person to whom it was addressed. Felix was tyrannous and oppressive in his government; lived under the power of avarice and unbridled appetites; and his incontinence, intemperance, and injustice, appear fully in depriving the king of Emesa of his wife, and in his conduct towards St. Paul, and the motives by which that conduct was regulated. And as to Drusilla, who had forsaken the husband of her youth, and forgotten the covenant of her God, and become the willing companion of this bad man, she was worthy of the strongest reprehension; and Paul's reasoning on righteousness, temperance, and judgment, was not less applicable to her than to her unprincipled paramour.

**LAN:** Paul's talk with Felix became so personal that Felix grew fearful. Felix, like Herod Antipas (Mark 6:17-18), had taken another man's wife. Paul's words were interesting until they focused on "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come." Many people will be glad to discuss the gospel with you as long as it doesn't touch their lives too personally. When it does, some will resist or run. But this is what the gospel is all about—God's power to change lives. The gospel is not effective until it moves from principles and doctrine into a life-changing dynamic. When someone resists or runs from your witness, you have undoubtedly succeeded in making the gospel personal.

**Clarke: Felix trembled—**"The reason of Felix's fear," says Bp. Pearce, "seems to have been, lest Drusilla, who was a Jewess, and knew that what she had done was against the

law of Moses, might be influenced by Paul's discourse, and Felix's happiness with her disturbed. What is said of Felix, Acts 24:26, seems to show that he had no remorse of conscience for what he had done." On the head of Drusilla's scruples, he had little to fear; the king of Emesa, her husband, had been dead about three years before this; and as to Jewish scruples, she could be little affected by them: she had already acted in opposition to the Jewish law, and she is said to have turned heathen for the sake of Felix. We may therefore hope that Felix felt regret for the iniquities of his life; and that his conscience was neither so seared nor so hardened, as not to receive and retain some gracious impressions from such a discourse, delivered by the authority, and accompanied with the influence, of the Spirit of God. His frequently sending for the apostle, to speak with him in private, is a proof that he wished to receive farther instructions in a matter in which he was so deeply interested; though he certainly was not without motives of a baser kind; for he hoped to get money for the liberation of the apostle.

**BBC:** Although wealthy households often kept philosophers around for their interesting insights, God's prophets were not quite as pleasant as most philosophers (Jeremiah 38:14-23). Self-control was one of the favored topics of many moralists, but the future judgment was strictly Jewish teaching and probably not the side of Jewish teaching the procurator was accustomed to hearing. (Although there were Egyptian Jewish judgment oracles, most upper-class Jews under Greek influence would think like Sadducees or like a handful of aristocratic Pharisees such as Josephus [who could accommodate Platonic views of the afterlife] or like Philo, whose views accommodated Hellenism to the furthest possible extent.)

**Clarke: Go thy way for this time**—His conscience had received as much terror and alarm as it was capable of bearing; and probably he wished to hide, by privacy, the confusion and dismay which, by this time, were fully evident in his countenance.

**Barnes: And answered, Go thy way,** How different is this answer from that of the jailer of Philippi when alarmed in a similar manner. *He asked,* "What must I do to be saved?" and was directed to Him in whom he found peace from a troubled conscience, Acts 16:30,31. Felix was troubled; but instead of asking what he should do, he sent the messenger of God away. He was evidently not prepared to break off his sins, and turn to God. He sought peace by sending away his reprover; and manifestly intended *then* to banish the subject from his mind. Yet, like others, he did not intend to banish it altogether. He looked forward to a time when he should be more at leisure; when the cares of office should press less heavily on his attention; or when he should be more disposed to attend to it. Thus multitudes, when they are alarmed, and see their guilt and danger, resolve to defer it to a more convenient time. One man is engaged in a career of pleasure, and it is not now a convenient time to attend to his soul's salvation. Another is pressed with business; with the cares of life; with a plan of gain; with the labours of office, or of a profession, and it is not now a convenient time for him to attend to religion. Another supposes that his time of life is not the most convenient. His youth he desires to spend in pleasure, and waits for a more convenient time in middle age. His middle life he spends in business, and the toils of the world, and *this* is not a convenient time. Such a period he expects then to find in old age. But as age advances, he finds an increasing

disposition to defer it; he is still indisposed to attend to it; still in love with the world. Even old age is seldom found to be a convenient time to prepare for heaven; and it is deferred from one period of life to another, till death closes the scene. It has been commonly supposed and said, that Felix never found that more convenient time to call for Paul. That he did not embrace the Christian religion, and forsake his sins, is probable, nay, almost certain. But it is not true that he did not take an opportunity of hearing Paul further on the subject; for it is said that he sent for him often, and communed with him. But though Felix found this opportunity, yet

**JNTC: Righteousness, self-control and the coming Judgment.** Sha’ul delivered a complete salvation message suited to the condition of his hearer: the past, when Yeshua through his atoning death made righteousness available to everyone (Ro 3:21–26, 5:8); the present, when the Holy Spirit empowers believers to lead increasingly holy lives, with self-control being not only necessary but possible (Ga 5:22–23); and the future, when everyone—including Felix, you and me—will be judged (1C 3:10–15).

Felix was **frightened** enough not to want to hear more about judgment, but not frightened enough to believe the Gospel, which offers an alternative to the divine penalty for sin, death. “How will we escape if we ignore such a great deliverance?” (MJ 2:3) <sup>21</sup>

**McGee:** A sinner will never have “a convenient season” to hear the gospel.

This man Felix already knew something about the gospel, or “the Way,” which is synonymous with what we today call Christianity or the Christian faith. I personally would like to see the name “the Way” restored because *Christianity*, as it is used today, is a most abused word and has lost its real meaning.

I heard a man, actually a good preacher, say the other day that we live in a Christian nation. My friend, we don’t live in a Christian nation! This country is not Christian by any stretch of the imagination. We have a lot of church members, but the number of real Christians composes a small minority today.

Felix called Paul in to explain to him the gospel which had induced this entire situation. He called Paul in “and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.” Some Bible teachers caption this section “Paul’s Defense Before Felix.” I disagree with that. Paul was not defending himself here. What he was doing in this second appearance before Felix was witnessing to him, trying to win this man for Christ.

The scriptural record does not present this man Felix in the bad light that secular history does. I would like you to know what a rascal he really was. To know the man, we must turn to the record of that day. Felix was a freed slave who through cruelty and brutality had forged to the front. He was a man given to pleasure and licentiousness. By the way, his very name means “pleasure.” The Roman historian, Tacitus, says this concerning him: “Through all cruelty and licentiousness he exercised the authority of a king with the spirit of a slave.” This was the man into whose hands Paul was placed. Yet the Scripture does not condemn him.

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<sup>21</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:25). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

His wife Drusilla sat there alongside him. Again secular history turns the spotlight on her for us. She was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Her father killed the apostle James—we have already seen that in Acts 12:1–2. The great uncle of this woman had slain John the Baptist. Her great grandfather tried to kill the Lord Jesus Christ.

This couple of rascals, Felix and Drusilla, are in an exalted position. They probably would never have attended a church in which the gospel was preached, nor would they have gone to hear Paul the apostle if he had come to town to preach. Yet here are these two who have this great opportunity given to them under the most favorable circumstances. They have a private interview with the greatest preacher of the grace of God that the world has ever known. God gives them a private sermon. Their palace becomes a church and their thrones become almost a mourner's bench. Oh, the wonder of the grace of God to give these two a chance! The hour of salvation struck for them. The door of the kingdom was opened and they had their opportunity to enter. This is in fulfillment of the verse in the second psalm: "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth" (Ps. 2:10). It appears that they heard Paul with a great deal of interest. I think Felix would have liked to have made a decision for Christ. But he didn't make that decision. He wanted to wait for a convenient season. My friend, the sinner will never have a convenient season to hear the gospel. Man does not set the time; God does.

Paul reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. This makes a very good sermon, by the way. Righteousness here is, I think, the righteousness of the Law, which man cannot attain. In other words, the Law reveals that man is a sinner, and he cannot even present a legal righteousness that would be acceptable to God. A sinner must have a standing of legal righteousness before God and he cannot provide it for himself. So God provides it for him in Christ Jesus. That is the "robe" of righteousness which comes down like a garment over those who put their trust in Christ. That is the righteousness "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (Rom. 3:22). Paul reasoned with this man about the righteousness of the Law which he could not meet and the righteousness which Christ provides the sinner who puts his trust in Him. Then Paul talked of temperance, which is self-control. Felix was a man mastered by passion and cruelty. These two, Felix and Drusilla, great sinners, living in sin, did not know what real freedom was. Then Paul spoke about the judgment to come, which is the final judgment at the Great White Throne of Revelation 20:11–15.

Friend, today your sins are either on you or they are on Christ. If your sins are on Christ, if you have put your trust in Him, then He paid the penalty for your sins over nineteen hundred years ago. They do not lie ahead of you for judgment in the future. But if your sins today are still on you, then there is yet a judgment to come. People don't like to hear about judgment to come.

Felix and Drusilla did not like to hear about it either. But if your sins are not on Christ, that is, if you have not trusted Him as your Savior, then you are going to come up for judgment. You can close this book right now, but that doesn't alter a thing. You cannot escape the fact that you are coming up for judgment.

Very few preachers touch on this subject. Those who still teach the Bible are the only ones who mention it at all, and most preachers soft-pedal it. I received a letter from a college professor in Virginia who wrote, "I listened to you and I was about ready to tune

you out when I found out you were a hell-fire and damnation preacher. But I noticed that you didn't handle it in a crude way, and then I noticed that you did offer salvation; so I continued to listen to you." Hell-fire and damnation is a pretty good subject if it is used to lead one to Christ, friend. But it should never be used alone without the message of salvation which we have in Christ Jesus.

It is interesting to observe Felix here. When Paul had to appear before Felix, Ananias the high priest with the elders and with the great orator Tertullus came to bring their charges against him. Felix could immediately see that they had no real charge. He should have let Paul go free. But Felix was most of all a politician and did not want to antagonize the Jews. He did not do what was right but did what was politically expedient. Then Felix had this private interview with Paul, and Paul apparently really touched him. Yet he delayed his decision and postponed the day.

It has been proven out in the history of the human family for nineteen hundred years that folk can keep postponing making a decision for Christ until they come to the place where they cannot make a decision for Him at all. That is the reason that most decisions for Christ are made by young people—we ought to try to reach young people for Christ. Also this is the reason a person need not think that because he is getting older he is becoming smarter. Older people just become more hardened to the gospel. Years ago I heard the late Dr. George Truett, a great prince of the pulpit in Dallas, Texas, tell an incident that illustrates this fact. It was at the celebration of his fiftieth anniversary that a lawyer friend, who was not a Christian, came to him. He said, "George, you and I came here to Dallas at the same time. You were a young preacher and I was a young lawyer. I must confess that when I first heard you, I was moved a great deal by your sermons. Very frankly, there were nights when I couldn't sleep. As the years wore on, the day came when I could listen to you and *enjoy* hearing you. Your message didn't disturb me at all. And you're a much greater preacher today than you were at the beginning." The lawyer chuckled about it. He didn't realize how tragic it was. He didn't realize the place to which he had actually come. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," said Felix. That time never came for Felix. That time never came for the lawyer in Dallas. That time does not come for a great many people who postpone receiving Christ.

Paul was tried before Governor Felix, whose wife was the Jewess Drusilla. The governor treated Paul with kindness, giving him liberty and allowing him visitors. Subsequently, he permitted Paul to languish in prison needlessly for two years, until his successor Festus arrived. It gave the Hebrews pleasure (v. 27) to know that Paul was kept in prison. In his appearance before Felix, possibly feeling that the presence of the Hebrew wife of Felix might give him a more sympathetic hearing, Paul came to the point and "reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come." The word "reasoned" can mean "to discourse, argue, or persuade"; it is from the same root word as that used when Paul "reasoned" in the synagogues with the Jews (17:2; 18:4). Paul preached the gospel, and he likely stressed the drama of redemption as enacted in Jerusalem a little over three decades before. Felix fell under great conviction, perhaps largely in response to the words "judgment to come." Felix had led a dissolute life. Not surprisingly he was "afraid." The Greek word *emphobos*, from which we get our English word "phobia," can be

translated “terrified.” “Convenient time” (*kairos*, Gk.) means, “when it suits me.” In any event, there is no record that the “convenient time” ever came to Felix again.<sup>22</sup>

### **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.**

**[He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul]** He saw that Paul had many friends and was head of a large part of Christianity so he hoped they would obtain his freedom with money.

**[communed with him]** Nothing is known of these conversations in particular, but no doubt the subjects of Acts 24:25 were continued.

**Clarke: He hoped also that money should have been given him**—Bp. Pearce asks, “How could St. Luke know this?” To which I answer: From the report of St. Paul, with whom Felix had frequent conferences, and to whom he undoubtedly expressed this wish. We may see, here, the most unprincipled avarice, in Felix, united to injustice. Paul had proved before him his innocence of the charges brought against him by the Jews. They had retired in confusion when he had finished his defense. Had Felix been influenced by the common principles of justice, Paul had been immediately discharged; but he detained him on the hope of a ransom. He saw that Paul was a respectable character; that he had opulent friends; that he was at the head of a very numerous sect, to whom he was deservedly dear; and he took it, therefore, for granted that a considerable sum of money would be given for his enlargement. Felix was a freed man of the Emperor Claudius; consequently, had once been a slave. The stream rises not above its source: the meanness of the slave is still apparent, and it is now insufferable, being added to the authority and influence of the governor. Low-bred men should never be intrusted with the administration of public affairs.

**Barnes: I will call for thee.** To hear thee further on this subject. This he did, Acts 24:26. It is remarkable that Drusilla was not alarmed. She was as much involved in guilt as Felix; but she, being a Jewess, had been accustomed to hear of a future judgment, until it caused in her mind no alarm. Perhaps also she depended on the rites and ceremonies of her religion as a sufficient expiation for her sins. She might have been resting on those false dependencies which go to free the conscience from a sense of guilt, and which thus beguile and destroy the soul.

**Barnes: That money should have been given him of Paul.** That Paul would give him money to procure a release. This shows the character of Felix. He was desirous of procuring a bribe. Paul had proved his innocence, and should have been at once released. But Felix was influenced by avarice; and he therefore detained Paul in custody, with the hope that, wearied with confinement, he would seek his release by a bribe. But Paul

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<sup>22</sup> Believer’s Study Bible



offered no bribe. He knew what was justice; and he would not be guilty, therefore, of attempting to purchase what was his due, or of gratifying a man who prostituted his high office for the purpose of gain. The Roman governors in the provinces were commonly rapacious and avaricious, like Felix. They usually took the office for the purpose of its pecuniary advantage, and they consequently usually disregarded justice, and made the procuring of money their leading object.

**Barnes: He sent for him the oftener.** It may seem remarkable that he did not fear again being alarmed. But the hope of money overcame all this. And having once resisted the reasoning of Paul, and the strivings of the Spirit of God, he seems to have had no further alarm or anxiety. He could again hear the same man, and the same truth, unaffected. When sinners have once grieved God's Spirit, they often sit with unconcern under the same truth which once alarmed them, and become entirely hardened and unconcerned.

**BBC:** Felix was not known to be particularly just; Josephus complained that he sent priests to Caesar on a trifling charge. Josephus also complained that the procurator Albinus, several years after Felix, released anyone—including revolutionaries—from jail whose relatives paid him something. Although Felix was not *that* corrupt, all ancient sources agree that he was corrupt, and this verse should not surprise us.

**JNTC: He hoped Sha'ul would offer him a bribe.** The “charitable gift” (v. 17) piqued his interest. Perhaps he thought the Gentiles who contributed to the Jewish nation might provide the funds to buy Sha'ul's freedom.<sup>23</sup>

### Acts 24:27

**But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.**

[two years] Paul could have been released for two years if he had paid a bribe (Acts 24:26).

[Festus] He was made procurator in 60 A.D. He wished to have the support of the priests so sought to send Paul back to Jerusalem for trial, perhaps not knowing the reason for the request of the Jews (Acts 25:3).

[willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound] As he had not received the bribe which he expected, he now left Paul bound to win favor of the Jews who planned making charges against Felix in Rome. They pressed their charges even to the emperor who would have punished him if it had not been for the pleadings of his brother who was a favorite with the emperor.

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<sup>23</sup>Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 24:26). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

**Clarke: Porcius Festus**—This man was put into the government of Judea about A.D. 60, the sixth or seventh year of Nero. In the succeeding chapter we shall see the part that he took in the affairs of St. Paul.

**Barnes: Left Paul bound.** Left him in custody to the charge of his successor. His object in this was to conciliate the Jews; that is, to secure their favour, and to prevent them, if possible, from accusing him for the evils of his administration before the emperor. The account which Luke gives here coincides remarkably with that which Josephus has given. He says, that Porcius Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero. He does not indeed mention Paul, or say that Felix sought to conciliate the favour of the Jews; but he gives such an account as to make the statement by Luke *perfectly consistent* with his character while in office. He informs us that Felix was unpopular, and that there was reason to apprehend that the Jews would accuse him before the emperor; and, *therefore*, the statement in the Acts, that he would be willing to show the Jews a favour, is in perfect keeping with his character and circumstances, and is one of those *undesigned coincidences*, which show that the author of the Acts was fully acquainted with the circumstances of the time, and that his history is true. The account in Josephus is, that

**"when Porcius Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero, the principal inhabitants of Caesarea went up to Rome to accuse Felix; and he had been certainly brought to punishment, unless Nero had yielded to the importunate solicitations of his brother Pallas, who was at that time had in the greatest honour by him."**

Antiq. b. xx. chap. viii.

The plan of Felix, therefore, in suppressing the enmity of the Jews, and conciliating their favour by injustice to Paul, did not succeed; and is one of those instances, so numerous in the world, where a man gains nothing by wickedness. He sought money from Paul by iniquity, and failed; he sought by injustice to obtain the favour of the Jews, and failed in that also. And the inference from the whole transaction is, that "honesty is the best policy," and that man in any office should pursue a course of firm, and constant, and undeviating integrity.

**BBC:** Cases often became backlogged, and it seems to have been unusual for procurators being removed to concern themselves with judging all cases still pending before their departure.

When Felix was being replaced by Porcius Festus (probably summer of A.D. 59), Jewish leaders from Caesarea finally went to Rome and accused him (Roman law had permitted provincials to accuse their governors since 149 B.C.). Fortunately for his sake, his powerful brother Pallas, although no longer in power in Nero's court, may have retained sufficient influence to protect him from Jewish retribution. "Wishing to do the Jews a favor" here (NASB) may mean that he needs all the Jewish mercy he can get.

**LAN:** Felix lost his job as governor and was called back to Rome. Porcius Festus took over as governor in late 59 or early 60. He was more just than Felix, who had kept Paul in prison for two years, in hopes that perhaps Paul would bribe him, and that by detaining Paul, the Jews would be kept happy. When Festus came into office, he immediately ordered Paul's trial to resume.

The Jews were in the majority, and the Roman political leaders wanted to defer to them to help keep the peace. Paul seemed to incite problems among the Jews everywhere he went. By keeping him in prison, Felix left office on good terms with the Jews.

**McGee:** Felix played politics to the very end. He left Paul in prison. Again we say that Roman justice was no better than the men who executed it. Either Paul was guilty or he was not guilty. If guilty of treason, he should have been put to death. If not guilty, he should have been freed. One or the other should have been done. Under no circumstances should he have been left in prison for two years.

**ESV:** Felix seems to have recognized Paul's innocence. Tragically, he was more concerned about currying the favor of his constituents than administering justice. Therefore, he kept Paul in prison for another **two years** (a.d. 57–59). He was removed from office in a.d. 60 for failing to deal properly with a dispute between the Jews and Gentiles in Caesarea.