ACTS
Chapter 24

Paul Before Felix at Caesarea

And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul. 2 And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 5 For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him." 9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so. 10 And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. 11 You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 12 and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. 17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. 18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— 19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 21 other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'"

24:1 *after five days.* After the departure from Jerusalem. This would allow just enough time for a messenger to go from Caesarea to Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin to appoint their representatives, and the appointees to make the return journey to Caesarea. (CSB)

Ananias. The high priest himself made the 60-mile journey to supervise the case personally. (CSB)

elders. The Sanhedrin was made up of 71 elders. The designation was used of both the religious and the political councils. (CSB)

a spokesman. Lit. "orator." In a court trial one trained in forensic rhetoric would serve as an attorney at law. (CSB)

Tertullus. A common variant of the name Tertius. Possibly he was a Roman but more likely a Hellenistic Jew familiar with the procedures of the Roman court. (CSB)

Mentioned only here in the NT; functions almost as a lawyer on behalf of the Jewish delegation. (TLSB)

24:2–4 Typical for the times, Tertullus begins his speech by attempting to capture the goodwill of Felix. Most of the praise is undeserved: Felix had caused much conflict, which eventually led to the revolt of the Jews in AD 66. (TLSB)

24:2–3 *since through you we enjoy much peace… with all gratitude.* The expected eulogy with which to introduce a speech before a judge. In his six years in office Felix had eliminated bands of robbers, thwarted organized assassins and crushed a movement led by an Egyptian. But in general his record was not good. He was recalled by Rome two years later because of misrule. His reforms and improvements are hard to identify historically. (CSB)

With his powerful connections in Rome, however, Felix felt he could conduct a government of extortion, cruelty, and oppression in Palestine and get away with it, as even the Roman historian Tactus admits in pointing to Felix as a prime cause of the great Jewish rebellion against Rome in A.D. 66. (LL)

24:5 *a plague … ringleader of the Nazarene sect.* To excite dissension in the empire was treason against Caesar. To be a leader of a religious sect without Roman approval was contrary to law. (CSB)

"Public enemy"; same word as "scoffers" (Ps 1:1) and "worthless men" (1Sm 2:12) in LXX. Tertullus is accusing Paul of being harmful to the well-being of the Jews. (TLSB)

the Nazarene sect. Christianity. (CSB)

Gk *hairesis*, "religious party," source of Eng "heresy"; used negatively. *Nazarenes*. Used only here in the NT to describe Christians; refers to Jesus' hometown. The Jews considered Christians to be another party within Judaism, such as the Pharisees or Sadducees. Luther: "We are not impressed when our opponents are offended and shout that no good will come of the preaching of the Gospel.… We who believe see the enormous and innumerable benefits and results of the Gospel, even though outwardly and temporarily we are oppressed by many evils, despised, despoiled, slandered, condemned … put to death, and inwardly crushed by the consciousness of our sin and vexed by demons. For we are alive in Christ, in whom and through whom we are kings and lords over sin, death, the flesh, the world, hell, and every evil.… Therefore the doctrine of justification must be learned diligently; it alone can strengthen us against those endless offenses and comfort us in all trials and persecutions" (AE 26:452–53). (TLSB)

24:6 *tried to profane the temple.* The charge is now qualified by "an attempt," rather than the former claim (see note on 21:28). (CSB)

Apparently the Jews had failed to substantiate this charge. (TLSB)

24:9 *Jews*. Ananias and the elders accompanying him. (TLSB)

24:10 Paul's reserved introduction lacks the flattery employed by Tertullus (vv. 2–4). (CSB)

Paul matches Tertullus's rhetorical style and attributes to Felix broader experience than simply that of governor, expressing that Felix's knowledge of the Jewish people and their ways is a benefit. Paul appeals to Felix to be a fair judge. (TLSB)

24:11 *twelve days since.* Paul answers each accusation. He was not a troublemaker, and he had not been involved in disturbances. He had but recently arrived in Jerusalem. He had spent five days in Caesarea and nearly seven in Jerusalem. (CSB)

24:13 *Neither can they prove*. If Paul had truly been a "plague" throughout the entire world (v 5), they should have been able to come up with proof of his guilt. (TLSB)

24:14 *according to the Way...i worship … God of our fathers.* Paul admits to his part in the Way, but he still believes the Law and the Prophets. He shares the same hope as the Jews—resurrection and judgment (v. 15). (CSB)

Lk 24:44. Paul states his adherence to God's Word, especially as it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

24:15 *will be a resurrection* – In defense before Felix, before Festus (25:1-12) and before Agrippa (25:13-26:32) Paul tried each time to lead to the message that God raised Jesus from the dead. Also, Paul's reminder that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked was really a call for all who heard him to repent. (PBC)

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection, as did most of the Jews. (TLSB)

24:16 *clear conscience.* Paul expresses his commitment to avoid offending either God or other people in his work as an apostle. (TLSB)

He knew that deliberate sin can destroy faith. (PBC)

24:17 *to bring alms to my ntion.* The only explicit reference in Acts to the collection that was so important to Paul (see note on 20:4). (CSB)

Donations Paul had been collecting from churches he had started; these were intended to help fellow Christians in and around Jerusalem. Bringing money into the area while it was experiencing economic troubles would likely endear Paul to the hearers. (TLSB)

24:18 *Jews from Asia.* See 21:27–29. The absence of these Asian Jews would seem to suggest that they could not substantiate their accusations. (CSB)

Roman law required that one's accusers be present to make their case. (TLSB)

24:21 *wit respect to the resurrection.* Paul again introduces the point of contention between the Pharisees and Sadducees. (CSB)

24:1–21 Paul defends himself before the Roman governor, Felix. He claims to follow what is written in the Scriptures, focusing especially on the resurrection of the dead. Paul uses the opportunity to bear witness concerning Jesus, who has given him new life. Through Jesus' sacrificial death and His resurrection from the dead, God forgives us and builds us up. He empowers us to proclaim His mercy. • Lord, forgive us for wrongful speech, and give us a clear conscience toward You and our fellow man. Help us always to believe Your unchanging Word and to hope in the resurrection. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul Kept in Custody

22 But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." 23 Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs. 24 After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you." 26 At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. 27 When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

24:22 *having rather accurate knowledge of the Way.* Felix could not have governed Judea and Samaria for six years without becoming familiar with the place and activities of the Christians. (CSB)

Felix may have had this knowledge because his wife was Jewish (v 24) and because of the large numbers of Christians in Judea. (TLSB)

24:23 *have some liberty.* Perhaps Paul was under house arrest similar to what he experienced while waiting trial in Rome (28:30–31)—in recognition of the fact that he was a Roman citizen who had not been found guilty of any crime. (CSB)

The custody into which Felix placed Paul was akin to house arrest. Paul was allowed to have visitors who could provide for his basic needs, such as clothing and food. He was held in Caesarea for two years (v 27). (TLSB)

24:24 *Drusilla.* Felix's third wife, daughter of Herod Agrippa I. At age 15 she married Azizus, king of Emesa, but deserted him for Felix a year later. Her son, also named Agrippa, died in the eruption of Vesuvius (A.D. 79). (CSB)

Daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who was ruthless in his treatment of Christians (cf 12:1). Drusilla was only 19 but had already left her first husband (King Azizus of Syria) to marry Felix. (TLSB)

faith in Christ Jesus. Paul teaches the basics of the Christian faith, stressing certain applicable aspects (v 25). (TLSB)

24:25 *Felix was alarmed.* Hearing of righteousness, self-control and the judgment, Felix looked at his past life and was filled with fear. He had a spark of sincerity and concern. (CSB)

A fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23). Restraint of desires (esp sexual) is key to understanding this term. (TLSB)

coming judgment. God will judge each of us when we die (Heb 9:27); His decision will be made public on Judgment Day (cf Mt 25:31–46). (TLSB)

alarmed. Clearly Felix and Drusilla needed to hear of these important matters. (TLSB)

When I get an opportunity. Lust, pride, greed and selfish ambition made it continually inconvenient to change. (CSB)

24:26 *hoped that money would be given him by Paul.* Felix supposed that Paul had access to considerable funds. He had heard of his bringing an offering to the Jewish Christians in Palestine (see v. 17). So he wanted Paul to give him money in order to secure his release. Paul no longer had the money, nor would he offer a bribe if he had it. (CSB)

Though illegal, Felix was hoping for a bribe, knowing Paul had come to Judea with considerable money (v 17). (TLSB)

conversed with him. While Paul undoubtedly kept preaching God's Word to Felix, Felix continued to be interested in obtaining a bribe from Paul. (TLSB)

24:27 *Felix was succeeded by … Festus.* Felix was recalled to Rome in A.D. 59/60 to answer for disturbances and irregularities in his rule, such as his handling of riots between Jewish and Syrian inhabitants. Festus is not mentioned in existing historical records before his arrival in Palestine. He died in office after two years, but his record for that time shows wisdom and honesty superior to both his predecessor, Felix, and his successor, Albinus. (CSB)

Festus became governor of Judea in AD 59 or 60. Felix may have been trying to avoid complaints from the Jews to Emperor Nero. (TLSB)

do the Jews a favor. Felix did not want to incite more anger among the Jews, whom he would be facing in Roman court shortly. To release Paul from prison would do just that. (CSB

The next two years were not time lost. Paul was busy with his letters to the churches. Friends like Philip the Evangelist, who was also in Caesarea, would surely have visited him. (LL)

24:22–27 Although Felix listens as Paul proclaims God's Word, Felix is most interested in a bribe. So he ignores Paul's message and leaves him in custody. God's Law can hurt our pride; we would rather avoid hearing about our sins and eternal judgment. Though God's Law and judgment are sharp, His Gospel grants full release. Rather than eternal death, Jesus grants us the riches of eternal life. • We praise You, O God, for giving us many opportunities to listen to Your Word and for giving us fullness of life in Christ. Thank You for making us spiritually rich in this life and in the life to come. Amen. (TLSB)