

Chapter 24 recounts Paul's time in Caesarea before the Roman Governor Felix. If you remember, having been arrested back in Jerusalem, the Roman Commander sent Paul to Felix having become privy of a Jewish plot to kill him. We left Paul last week (at the end of chapter 23), in Herod's Praetorium awaiting the arrival of his accusers. Thus, chapter 24 contains three parts: Paul is accused (vv1-9), he defends himself (vv10-21), and he reasons with Felix (vv22-27).

- I. Paul is Accused (vv1-9)
- II. Paul Defends Himself (vv10-21)
- III. Paul Reasons with Felix (vv22-27)

- I. Paul is Accused (vv1-9)

1. V1—"Now after five days Annanias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul."
2. We learned last week from 24:35, that Felix kept Paul in Herod's Praetorium until his accusers arrive.
3. Now in 25:1, after five days, his accusers arrive—Luke describe them as—Ananias the high priest, the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus."
4. We first met Ananias the high priest back in 23:2, where we learned he was the leader of the Council (Sanhedrin).
5. By "the elders" is meant some of the men on the Council (or Sanhedrin) (who were likely Sadducees).
6. With these we learn about another man by the name of Tertullus who is described as "a certain orator."
7. While the name Tertullus is Roman, some have suggested he was Roman, others believe he was a Hellenistic Jew (a Jew raised as Roman).
8. Either way, he was hired by Annanias (and the Council) to argue their case against Paul before the Governor.
9. John Gill—"This man, by his name, seems to have been a Roman; and because he might know the Roman, or the Greek language, or both, which the Jews did not so well understand, and was very well acquainted with all the forms in the Roman courts of justice, as well as was an eloquent orator (debater); therefore they pitched upon him, and took him down with them to open and plead their cause."
10. The first thing he does is give honor and praise to Felix (no doubt as a means of flattery and smooth talk).
11. V2b—"Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness."
12. He then accuses Paul of three crimes—disturbing the peace (v5a), promoting a faction (v5b), and profaning the temple (v6a).
13. (1) Disturbing the peace, v5a—"For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world."
14. There was some truth to this accusation—as Paul preached the gospel it did make a division among the Jews (some believed and others didn't).
15. But that he was a "creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world" was simply not true.

16. (2) Promoting a faction, v5b—"and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes"—the followers of the Nazarene.
17. As Christ came from Nazareth, he refers to Christians "the sect of the Nazarenes" likely in a mocking way.
18. Nazareth was a small and rather insignificant town—thus, he implies they are of no true significance.
19. (3) Profaning the temple, v6—"He even tried to profane the temple"—likely by bringing Gentiles into the temple.
20. If you remember, this was a charge they previously laid upon Paul (though, as we saw, it was not true).
21. In vv6b-8, he describes how they seized Paul and would have judged him if it were not for the Roman soldiers.
22. He then claims that these accusations could be verified by Felix if he merely examined Paul for himself.

II. Paul Defends Himself (vv10-21)

1. Verses 10-11—"Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: 'Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.'"
2. Here Paul summarizes the events that led him to Caesarea and brought him before Felix the governor.
3. He says this entire controversy started "no more than twelve days" ago when he went up to Jerusalem.
4. He then defends himself in three ways—he asserts his innocence (vv12-13), summarizes his beliefs (vv14-16), and reviews the history (vv17-21).
5. (1) He asserts his innocence (vv12-13)—this is the first thing he does—he clearly asserts his innocence.
6. V12—"And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city."
7. This is in contrast to his accusers, who claimed he was a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world.
8. (2) He summarizes his beliefs (vv14-16)—"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets."
9. Notice, Paul makes clear two things—first, he worshiped God "according to the Way which they call a sect."
10. Second, he believed all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets—that is, he believed them rightly.
11. Thus, Paul is basically asserting that the God of the OT (the God of his fathers), was one and the same with the God of the Christians.
12. Furthermore, a right understanding of the OT (the Law and the Prophets) aligns with the teaching of the Christians.
13. If you don't believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the promised Messiah of the OT, you don't rightly understand the OT.

14. (3) He reviews his history (vv17-21)—"Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult."
15. Here he refers to his recent trip to Jerusalem which he described back in v11 as no more than twelve days ago.
16. If you remember, according to 21:26, the Jerusalem elders encouraged Paul to be purified with four other Jews who had taken a vow (21:23).
17. Various Jews from Asia (likely Ephesus) had come to Jerusalem and accused him of profaning the temple.
18. But if the truth be told, none of these Jews found him starting a mob or tumult within (without) the temple.
19. In vv19-21, Paul finished his defense by pointing out two facts—first, the fact that the Jews who earlier accused him were absent (v19); second, those present were unable to prove any wrongdoing before the council.

III. Paul Reasons with Felix (vv22-27)

1. V22—"But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, 'When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case.'"
2. In other words, Felix refused to decide the case until Lysias the commander himself comes to Caesarea.
3. And so he had Paul kept under house-arrest so that he could have his friends visit and provide for him.
4. V24—"And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ."
5. The inference being—as Governor Felix likely travelled all over Judea and possible was gone for some time.
6. And so after some days, likely months (even years), Felix returned to Caesarea this with his wife (Drusilla).
7. Luke informs us she was Jewish, which obviously means, she was in no way a devout or devoted Jew.
8. In fact, while her name is Roman, she was actually the daughter of King Herod and sister to King Agrippa (mentioned in the next chapter).
9. History tells us she was unlawfully wed to Felix (not only because he was not a Jew but she was already married to another man).
10. She was known for her outward beauty, and after Felix met her he convinced her to leave her former husband and marry him.
11. Luke says "he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ"—that is, the faith about Christ.
12. Having had a more accurate knowledge of the Way (v22), he now wanted further information about it.
13. V25—"Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come"—the reasoned or discoursed about three things.
14. Now obviously brethren, Luke merely summarizes the main points which Paul reasoned about before Felix.

15. (1) Righteousness—by this is meant, man's need of righteousness and God's provision of it in Christ.
16. Thus, I take this term to refer to righteousness in the fullest sense—man needs it and God provides it.
17. Thus, he no doubt spoke about how man was originally created righteous and became unrighteous by the fall.
18. He no doubt spoke about the righteousness of God and the fact that He demands that we become righteous.
19. And he no doubt also spoke about the righteousness of God in Christ and how its received by faith alone.
20. (2) Self-control—this word refers to the ability to master yourself—it implies the need to be controlled.
21. It's here put for the whole of the Christian life—the ability to live a life of moderation and self-control.
22. Albert Barnes—"The original word here denotes a restraint of all the passions and evil inclinations, and may be applied to prudence, chastity, and moderation in general."
23. Self-control implies a radical change that now provides the power and ability to control or govern ourself.
24. (3) Judgment to come—this refers to a future Day of Judgment wherein all men will give an account.
25. Scripture teaches that Christ Himself will be the Judge and all men, wicked and righteous, will be judged.
26. Furthermore, Scripture describes this event as a single judgment wherein all men will give account of himself.
27. Now, let me simply clarify, while all men will be judged not all men will be judged alike—God's people will be judged as Christians.
28. This means, they will be judged as those who have been judicially forgiven and declared righteous in Christ.
29. Following Paul's discourse, Luke informs us—"Felix was afraid and answered, 'Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.'"
30. Felix was "afraid," "became frightened," or "trembled"—he became terrified at the thought of judgment.
31. And he had good reason to be ashamed of both righteousness and self-control—he was unrighteous and self-indulgent.
32. And so he sent Paul away—"and when I have a convenient time I will call for you"—when I make time.
33. He put off the conviction that he felt and chose to return to his regular responsibilities as governor of Judea.
34. Luke then informs us, v26—"Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him."
35. Even though he was once fearful at the truth, he now heard it many times without any lasting concern.
36. In fact, Luke tells us, he often conversed with Paul with the hopes of being bribed by him to be set free.

37. David Peterson—"Felix is presented as a confused and divided man, with some understanding of the great issues at stake, but unwilling to take the steps required of him by the challenge of Paul's gospel."
38. V27—"But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound."
39. Luke mentions Felix's replacement to instruct us, that for two full years Paul remained under house-arrest.
40. The chapter ends with a further revelation of Felix's character—though he likely knew Paul was innocent he left him bound anyways (thinking it would give him greater political help than letting him go).

IV. Lessons

1. In the time remaining, I suggest there are three examples within this chapter that provide practical lessons for us.
2. (1) An example of proper self-defense—we learn two related things from Paul's defense before Felix—we will all be lied about and it's not wrong to defend ourselves.
3. Brethren, the true of Scripture is sobering—man by nature is a lying creature who will false accuse others.
4. Ps.58:3—"The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."
5. And thus, we find Paul repeatedly throughout his response, exposing their lies and maintaining his innocence.
6. Now it is true that our Savior refused to defend Himself before His accusers (but that was rather unusual as He was beginning to bear the sins of His people).
7. But whenever our good name or the glory of the gospel are at stake, it's always proper for us to defend ourselves.
8. We simply have to make sure of two things—first, that we are innocent, and second, that we are defending ourselves for proper reasons (our good name and the glory of God).
9. (2) An example of personal evangelism—here I am thinking about Luke's summary of Paul's conversation with Felix.
10. From v24 we learn he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ, and this is then summarized by righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.
11. In other words, these three terms were a summary of the major tenets of "the faith" as found in Christ.
12. There is no way to start the Christian life without righteousness (something that we all lost in Adam).
13. And there's no real advancement in the Christian life without self-control (controlling that remaining principle of evil).
14. Furthermore, we should all live with an eye to the day of judgment (a day which is both sober and joyful for the Christian).
15. But here I want to suggest we find within these three words (or concepts) an effective way of evangelism.
16. Start by telling people about God's righteousness, their unrighteousness, and the righteousness of Christ.

17. Then warn them that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Neither shall fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners (1Cor.6:9-10).
18. This means, people who fail to live with self-control don't go to heaven but they shall be shut out of the kingdom.
19. Dear brethren, it's not improper to point out, that those who live contrary to God's law don't go to heaven.
20. (3) An example of resisting the Holy Spirit—here of course I am thinking about how Felix "was afraid."
21. The words spoken to him by Paul had some effect upon his conscience but it proved to be temporary.
22. Now it's true that we believe in irresistible grace—the fact that the Spirit's overtures are beyond resisting.
23. But this refers to that effectual work of the Spirit upon and within the hearts of God's beloved elect people.
24. This doesn't deny that sinners resist the Spirit, in fact, by nature, every sinner (even the elect) resist the Spirit.
25. Acts 7:51—"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."
26. You see, historical Reformed theology makes a distinction between the common and saving work of the Spirit.
27. The difference between these two is this—His common work eventually fades while His saving doesn't.
28. The fact that he was concerned only to be unconcerned, proves it was merely the common work of the Spirit.
29. And here's the tragedy—there's no promise that the Spirit will ever work again in any way or degree.
30. While he was at one time concerned, he went on to hear the same word many times with little or no concern (three helps).
31. Help 1—Don't ignore conviction of sin—instead of sending Paul away, Felix should have continued to dwell on those things that caused his fear.
32. He should have dwelt upon his unrighteousness, lack of self-control, and reality of a future judgment.
33. If I were to liken this conviction to a dagger, don't pull it out but instead push it deeper into your soul.
34. Don't say to the word and Spirit—"Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."
35. Help 2—Don't be content with carnal fear—that is, with a fear that is more afraid of perishing than of God Himself (fear God who can destroy both body and soul in hell).
36. Because when you fear God and not merely His judgment, you will also have hope (as He is both just and merciful).
37. Help 3—Don't delay salvation—while temporarily concerned, Felix allowed other things to replace that concern.
38. Don't allow the cares and riches of this world to overtake your heart (Lk.14:17 – 'Come for all things are now ready').