

SBCOD Bible Study Notes

5-27-26

Acts 24

The Jews Assemble Their Case Against Paul – Verses 1-4

¹ Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.

² When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: “We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation.

³ Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. ⁴ But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

24:1 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 (23:12-15), but they persisted in trying to kill him. This attempt at murder was both premeditated and persistent.

24:2-4 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 cult, which was against Roman law; (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.

Paul’s Accusers State Their Specific Charges – Verses 5-9

⁵ “We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect ⁶ and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. ^[7] ⁸ By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.” ⁹ The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

24:5 While the charge that Paul was a troublemaker was insulting to Paul, it was too vague to be a substantive legal charge. The “Nazarene sect” refers to the Christians— named here after Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth.

24:5-6 For we have found this man a plague: The charges against Paul were essentially that he was politically dangerous (a plague... a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes) and that he had profaned the temple. Ancient Judea was filled with would-be messiahs and revolutionaries against Rome. Tertullus wanted to put Paul in the same group with these kinds of terrorists. Paul had nothing to fear from the truth; but he knew that the truth does not always win out in a court of law.

20:8-9 By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him: Tertullus did not even pretend to offer outside evidence of the charges. His only hope was that Paul would incriminate himself under examination by Felix. The Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so: The other Jewish accusers present (the high priest and the elders) agreed with the charges, but they also offered no supporting evidence.

Paul Exposes The Weakness Of The Case Against Him – Verses 10-13

¹⁰ When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. ¹¹ You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. ¹³ And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. ¹⁴ However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

24:10-13 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 (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 24:14, 24).

Paul Explains His Ministry, And Why He Was Arrested – Verses 17-21

¹⁷ “After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. ¹⁸ I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. ¹⁹ But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. ²⁰ Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— ²¹ unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’”

24:17 I came to bring alms and offerings: This refers to the collection Paul made for Judean Christians among the Gentile churches of the West (Galatians 2:10, Romans 15:26 and 2 Corinthians 8-9).

24:20-21 They ought to have been here before you to object: In this, Paul reminded Felix that there was no eyewitness testimony to prove the charges of his accusers. “This was a strong point in his defense: the people who had raised a cry in the first instance, claiming to be eyewitnesses of his alleged sacrilege, had not troubled to be present.” Because Paul was in the right, he consistently called the case back to the evidence, the very thing his accusers avoided. Christians should never be timid about or ashamed of the truth or of the evidence. If we are truly following God, the truth and evidence are our friends, not our accusers.

Felix Avoids Making A Legal Decision – Verses 22-23

²² Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” ²³ He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

24:22 Felix had been governor for six years and would have known about the Christians (“the Way”), a topic of conversation among the Roman leaders. The Christians’ peaceful lifestyles had already proven to the Romans that Christians didn’t go around starting riots.

24:22-23 When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case: Felix avoided a decision under the pretense of waiting for more evidence through the Roman commander Lysias. But Felix clearly had enough evidence to make a decision in Paul’s favor (having more accurate knowledge of the Way). Yet, knowing Paul’s innocence, he granted Paul generous liberty even while he was held in custody. Felix tried to walk a middle ground. He knew Paul was innocent, yet he did not want to identify himself with Paul’s gospel and the Christians. So he made no decision and kept Paul in custody.

Felix Avoids Making A Spiritual Decision – Verses 24-25

²⁴ Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.”

24:25 Paul’s talk with Felix became so personal that Felix grew frightened. 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.

The Motive Of Felix’s Heart Is Revealed: Greed – Verses 26-27

²⁶ At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him. ²⁷ When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

24:27 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. 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.

24:27 Though God had promised that Paul would preach the gospel in Rome (23:11), the great apostle had to endure more than two years of Felix’s refusal to decide his fate. In addition to this custody, Paul was subjected to other long stretches of time during which he could do little but trust God and wait for him to act. What do you do when it comes to the issue of waiting on God? Do you become anxious? angry? discouraged? Few things test our patience and faith like being forced to wait— which perhaps explains why our sovereign God often puts us in situations where we have no other choice.