

A Study in Acts

Chapter Twenty-Four – Paul’s Defense Before Felix.

ACTS 24:22-27:

In our previous lesson, Paul, having been accused by the Jews from Jerusalem, behind their hired advocate, gave his defense before Felix. It covered three primary points, I have only been here twelve days, there has been no time for trouble. That Paul was a member of the Way, not a ringleader, and lastly, that he was in the temple according to the law.

In this lesson, Felix, the governor, is going to keep Paul until the commander from Jerusalem comes, to hear directly from him concerning Paul. We will see Paul have the chance to speak to the governor concerning his soul, and powerfully state the reason he needs salvation from himself.

Text #1

Acts 24:22-24 *“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.”²³ So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.*

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

Note – Felix knows more about Jewish affairs than Lysias and knows that Paul is not guilty of anything. However, it is going to come to Felix’s attention, the mention of alms being brought to Jerusalem and will entertain hopes of being bribed.

Drusilla – This is the youngest of three daughters of king Herod Agrippa I. She was married at the age of fourteen to Azizus, king of Emesa. She would be seduced and stolen from him by Felix (it is rumored that Felix employed a sorcerer to assist him in the seduction). Plainly, she is not his wife and their relationship is purely immoral.

Emesa is a city in western Syria and the capital of ‘Hims’, about a hundred miles north of Damascus.

Text #2

Acts 24:25-27 *“Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”²⁶ Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.*

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

Note – Paul is going to preach to him concerning what he needs to hear to save his soul. He is not going to try and gain favor by tickling his ears or dancing around the issues.

Three topics which bore directly upon the character of Felix. Tacitus says of him that he "exercised the authority of a king with the spirit of a slave;" and that, because of the powerful influence at his command, "he supposed he might perpetrate with impunity every kind of villany." He had persuaded his wife Drusilla to forsake her husband and marry him. He had employed assassins to murder the high-priest Jonathan, and might well tremble at the preaching of the judgment to come.

Reasoned – Greek: "And he is discoursing" - διαλεγόμενου δὲ αὐτοῦ *'dialegomenou de autou'*. No argument should be drawn from the word that is used here to prove that Paul particularly appealed to reason, or that his discourse was argumentative. That it was so is, indeed, not improbable, from all that we know of the man, and from the topics on which he discoursed. But the word used here means simply as he discoursed, and is applied usually to making a public address, to preaching, etc.,

Righteousness – περὶ δικαιοσύνης *peri dikaiosunēs*. Of justice. Not of the justice of God particularly, but of the nature and requirements of justice in the relations of life the relations which we sustain to God and to man (to be right with God). This was a proper topic with which to introduce his discourse, as it was the office of Felix to dispense justice between man and man, and as his administration was not remarkable for the exercise of that virtue. It is evident that he could be influenced by a bribe **Vs. 26**, and it was proper for Paul to dwell on this, as designed to show him the guilt of his life, and his danger of meeting the justice of a Being who cannot be bribed, but who will dispense equal justice, alike to the great and the small. That Paul dwelt also on the justice of God, as the moral governor of the world, may also be presumed.

Self-Control – Temperance (*ἐγκράτεια*) is, properly, self-control, holding the passions in hand. The word "temperance" we now use commonly denotes "moderation or restraint" in regard to eating and drinking, particularly to abstinence from the use of worldly lust. 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. The particular thing in the life of Felix which Paul had probably in view was the indulgence of licentious desires, or self-indulgence. He was living in adultery with Drusilla, and for this Paul wished doubtlessly to bring him to repentance.

Judgment – The universal judgment that was to come on all transgressors. On this topic Paul also dwelt when he preached on Mars' Hill at Athens, **Acts 17:31**. These topics were admirably adapted to excite the alarm of both Felix and Drusilla. It demonstrated great boldness and faithfulness in Paul to select them, and the result showed that he correctly judged the kind of truth which was adapted to alarm the fears of his guilty examiner.

Afraid – If Felix and Drusilla intended this as a matter of entertainment or amusement, it quickly turned them from such and brought fear (**Vs. 25**). The Greek ἔμφοβος *'emphobos'* does not denote that his body was agitated or shaken, but only that he was alarmed or terrified. That such fear usually shakes the frame, we know; but it is not certain that the body of Felix was thus agitated. He was alarmed and terrified, and looked with deep apprehension to the coming

judgment. This was a remarkable instance of the effect of truth on the mind of a man unaccustomed to such alarms, and unused to hear such truth.

Go Away for Now – How different is this answer from that of the jailor 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.

John 3:19-20 *“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* ²⁰ *For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”*

The power of Felix’s greed brought Paul to him often. Luke shares that this was in hope of the possibility of a bride releasing him.

Two Years – Two things to note at this point in Luke’s record. First is that Paul was going to stay in Caesarea for two years and during that time Felix would be replaced.

Felix would be succeeded due to charges of misconduct by the Jews. This is brought on by his failure to give them what they wanted concerning Paul and his overall hard-hand and self-enrichment during his tenure as governor. He would be summoned to Rome and would barely escape execution at the hands of the emperor. He would instead be banished to Gaul where he would die poor and alone.

Second, it is during this two-year period that it is believed that Luke would write his gospel. We know that he would write it before he would write the book of Acts, as it is a continuation from the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. It is a favorable time and location for the writing of this gospel.