

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 24:10-27 | Session 67 | More Defense in Caesarea | A.D. 60-62

Verse 10,11—

If the rule of law is consistent and justice is meted out fairly, then one should never fear standing before a judge and presenting his case. Paul seems to be confident in a fair trial. On the other hand, social justice never guarantees justice; one would never know if he or she would be judged fairly; social justice is arbitrary and subjective. Justice is getting what you deserve with no favoritism; it is impartial and objective. Social Justice is not getting what you deserve because you are favored. Social Justice is not justice and it is forbidden in Scripture (Ex. 23:2). God is a God of Justice (Deuteronomy 16:20; Isaiah 30:18).

While Paul seems confident in defending himself, it had been just 12 days since the riot in the Temple which was not a lot of time to prepare for a trial in the first place. Paul arrived in Jerusalem (21:17) and almost immediately went to the Temple for seven days of purification ritual (21:27). He was taken in secret to Caesarea in order to avoid an assassination plot by the Jews, where now, five days later he is standing trial before Felix the governor.

Verse 12, 13—

When an accuser starts with a personal attack, it is fairly certain he has a weak case. Paul had been called a *pestilent fellow* (vs. 5), yet he ignores the personal attack and focuses on the two main charges filed against him: **sedition** (rebellion against authority) and **ringleader of the sect** (Greek: *hairesis*, which we call *heresy* in English; same word in verse 14) **of the Nazarenes**. He defends his position by saying he did not even **dispute** (*dialeomai*) **with any man. Neither raising** (epistasis) **up the people**. He did not incite anyone while he was in Jerusalem; not at the Temple, or in the synagogues, or in the city. Furthermore, **they can't prove any of their accusations**.

Verse 14, 15—

I confess...so I worship the God of my fathers. Paul is claiming that he follows, **believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets**. He was completely faithful to the Jewish faith which included following the Law of Moses. This helps solidify our assumption that there is a transition in the book of Acts and an overlap of the national gospel of Israel (based on works), and the individual gospel of grace (no works allowed). Paul is addressing accusations from Jews in this trial, so he is focused on his Jewish heritage and faith. For a Jew during this period, their salvation rested in a resurrection of the dead; that they would be raised into the Kingdom of God. Today, our salvation is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our belief in his offer of everlasting life for anyone who believes. Therefore, Paul is not being held on charges of teaching salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Verse 16—

Paul often offended people, so he is not saying “Don't ever offend anyone.” Rather, Paul never did anything with the intention of offending. And with that he had a clear **conscience**.

Verses 17,18—

During Paul's missionary journeys, he often took a **collection for the saints** (Example: 1 Corinthians 16:1-3). He testifies to Felix that up until 12 days ago he had not been in Jerusalem for **many years**, and he had come to **bring alms, and offerings**. And that he was peacefully in the Temple for his **purification** when the **certain Jews from Asia** (Probably Ephesus) found him (2 Timothy 1:15). He was not with **multitude, nor with tumult**. Again, he was not inciting anyone.

Verse 19—

Those Jews that grabbed him in the Temple? **They ought to have been here** standing **before** Felix if they had anything **against** Paul. Amazingly, there are no witnesses present to accuse him of the alleged crime. Paul is an excellent defense lawyer for himself.

Verse 20, 21—

Those standing there today accusing him cannot even point out any **evil doing**, he says, **while I stood before the council** (Acts 22:30). Unless they want to point out that Paul **cried** out in the council **regarding the resurrection of the dead** (Acts 23:6). That can be the only thing these accusers could point to. Their case was very weak.

Verse 22, 23—

It appears **Felix** knows how weak this case is. He knew of **that way**, (He doesn't use the word sect or heresy as the Jews did) meaning he knew about Jews who followed Peter and the other apostles and had recognized Jesus as the Messiah. In other words he understands this is a religious matter and he would like to hear more from the *chief captain, Lysias, who had arrested Paul*. Did **Felix** actually intend on bringing Lysias to Caesarea? Maybe, maybe not. We don't see Lysias appear again in the narrative, and there isn't any evidence he came. Was **Felix** using that as a threat or a tactic to get the high priest and the elders to drop the case and go home? We don't know all the details. But that ended the trial, it appears they did go back to Jerusalem, and Paul is kept under watch, but is given **liberty** and was to be allowed to have **his acquaintance** (literally, *his own*), visit him and provide for his needs.

Verse 24—

Felix was married to **Drusilla, a Jewess**. This might be one of the reasons **Felix** had a **more perfect knowledge of that way**. **Drusilla** was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa, king of Judea, making her the great-granddaughter of Herod the Great. She was previously married to a Jew, but **Felix** persuaded her to break Jewish law and leave her husband to marry him. **Drusilla** and **Felix** had a son and named him Agrippa; he is said to have perished in Pompeii at the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. (See Josephus, Antiquities XX, vii, 2).

Verses 25-27—

Paul preaches the kingdom gospel (righteousness, temperance, judgment; this is not grace). The message of the kingdom is fear (Rev. 20:11), the message of grace is good news (Rom. 8:1). **Felix** seems to be a typical crooked politician and a man pleaser. He **left Paul bound**. And two years will pass until the narrative picks up again...next week.