

“Examine Him For Yourself”

Acts 24:1-27

Easter March 27, 2016

VIDEO: *“It Is Finished”*

INTRO: *“Jesus paid it ALL... ALL to Him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow”
It IS finished!*

This Easter-Resurrection Sunday, let me ask:

Do YOU *supernaturally* BELIEVE...

- a. *Jesus paid it ALL?*
- b. *ALL to Him you owe?*
- c. *It IS finished!?*

Over the next hour, I hope the Holy Spirit of God will help to *INFORM*, *INSPECT*, and *INSPIRE* your **Answers**, **Attitudes**, & **Actions!**

...as we come to the court-house with Christ (Matthew 28:20) and watch as His Word, Way, & Worshipping-Worker go on trial for teaching & telling the truth...in love.

BIG IDEA: Everything is *always* about **Easter!**

PREVIEW: **A. DEVILISH Deceit**
 B. DIVINE Defense
 C. DEFINING Decision(s)

CONTEXT:

Book of Acts... “God’s birth & building of His Church”
Acts 1:8

Paul’s life... misery to ministry; minister to missionary

- Back to Jerusalem after 3 empathetic trips
- He is Christ-like... BUT, not Christ.
- Went to church... ended up in court...

The primary emphasis remains that of Paul’s witness

T/S: Let’s go into the courtroom and watch this trial unfold

I. DEVILISH Deceit (sin & a fallen world)

(watch for how this passage parallel’s Jesus’ injustice)

- **Stacked deck**
- **Slippery Sam**
- **Sin-saturated accusations**

¹ *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.*

THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH the Jewish leaders took this case is apparent in that the high priest himself made the sixty-five-mile journey to Caesarea along with the elders

It was not uncommon for Jews to hire pagan lawyers who would be more familiar with complex Roman law than they.

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.*

Don't dismiss the deeper danger!

- They claim... but by their acts deny...
- Children of Devil, father of lies...
- They hate the light...
- Friends with the world, enemy of God
- Contend for the faith...

Tertullus's address was particularly long and considerably stretched the truth of the matter.

- 1.** He praised the governor for the peace he had brought the nation. In fact, there was less peace in Judea during Felix's administration than for any procurator until the final years before the outbreak of the war with Rome. But the Romans prided themselves in preserving the peace (the *pax Romana*), and such a comment was sure to win the governor's favor.
- 2.** Equally strained was Tertullus's appeal to Felix's "foresight" (*pronoia*) in bringing many "reforms" (perhaps better, "improvements") to the Jewish nation. Felix had scarcely done this. He had, in fact, made life miserable for the Jews, as was witnessed by the proliferation of rebellious movements during his term in response to his total lack of sympathy for or understanding of them. But again, the Romans liked to be called benefactors; and their "foresight" (Latin *providentia*) was often inscribed on their coins.
- 3.** Tertullus continued his formal flattery, referring to how the Jews "everywhere and in every way" acknowledged (literally "welcomed") his **beneficial rule** (v. 3). Few Jews would have felt much gratitude for Felix, and Tertullus's bestowal of the title "most excellent" was hardly deserved.

⁴ *But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly.*

"a flattering mouth works ruin" - Prov. 26:28

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.*

⁷ *"But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,*

*They would take seriously any threat to the *pax Romana*.*

Felix in particular would have become attentive at the hint of such a charge. His entire administration had been marked by having to put down one insurrection in Judea after another.

Felis had done so decisively and cruelly. He maintained the peace at any cost.

Tertullus implied that the Christians as a whole were a dangerous and seditious sect and that Paul was one of their main collaborators. The ramifications of the Jewish charges now became infinitely clear. Should such a charge be made to stick for Paul, the whole Christian community would be viewed as a dangerous, revolutionary movement.

Had Tertullus substantiated the “Temple Staining” charge, it would have obligated Felix to turn Paul over to jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin and almost certain death.

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.*

VIDEO: *John 19:1-16* (see Paul paralleling Jesus!)

- *** See Paul’s parallel with Jesus ***
- Looks good but IS bad... (palms)
 - Role of "chief priests"
 - Crowds vs churches/Christians
 - God's sovereign plan (Isaiah 53:6)

T/S: **Vance Havner** used to say, *"Wherever Paul went, there was either a riot or a revival!"*

(Just like Jesus!)
Romans 1:16-18

II. DIVINE Defense (see John 8:32 & 36)

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.*

Lies, lies, lies!!!

- * Practical impossibilities
- * Zero, substantiated proof
- * No witness(es)
- * In fact, it was the opposite!

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,*

What separated him from his fellow Jews was that he was a follower of “the Way,” that he believed that the Messiah had come and the resurrection had begun in Christ.

The stakes were high.

Paul was on trial for nothing less than his Christian faith.

Paul would not deny his affiliation with the group, but he preferred another term. He preferred to be seen as a follower of “the Way,” not a party, not a “Jewish denomination,” but the true, the *only* way of the Lord for his people.

His was no offshoot tangential faith but right at the center of Jewish religion. He believed the Scriptures

Paul and the early Christians did not see themselves as "former Jews" but as "fulfilled Jews."

the only acceptable way to worship the Father is through Jesus Christ (John 5:23).

¹⁵ *having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.*

The best defense is a strong offense!

In vv. 14–16 Paul responded to the charges that somehow his treasonous behavior was bound up with his being a ringleader of the “Nazarene sect.”

He used the opportunity to deliver a sort of mini-sermon, changing his defensive posture into more of a positive witness.

VIDEO: “Repentance”

It is not enough for a person to know the facts about Christ, or to have an emotional response to a message. He or she must willingly repent of sin and trust the Saviour.

His faith was still founded on the Old Testament Scriptures, and they bore witness to Jesus Christ.

Paul's words had a certain ominous tone.

To mention the resurrection of the unjust could only imply one thing—the coming judgment.

Paul was not about to miss the opportunity for witness

Paul's reference to the resurrection is the high point of his witness in all the speeches of [Acts 23–26](#).

This was not by accident.

Paul's conviction in the resurrection constituted the real point of contention with the other Jews.

In the present passage this was precisely Paul's point.

He believed the same Scriptures, worshiped the same God, shared the same hope. But it was precisely at this point that “the Way” parted ways with the rest of the Jews.

The Christians believed that the resurrection already had begun in Christ.

¹⁶ *So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.*

Blameless spokespersons. As noted above, the early Christians not only outthought their opponents, they also outlived them. Paul said of himself, "*I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man*" (24:16). In the writings of the early Christian apologists, the behavior of the Christians was a key aspect used in defense of Christianity.

The force of blameless lives has been powerful in defending Christianity against attacks from outside in every age.

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.*

Verses 17–19 constitute Paul's response to Tertullus's third charge—the accusation that he had desecrated the temple.

Paul had scored a rather telling legal point, and Felix was bound to have observed it. For Tertullus to have made an accusation against Paul with the total absence of the witnesses for the prosecution was a serious breach of court procedure.

There was simply no evidence to counter Paul's own defense.

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.’”*

***** One should observe how the theme of the resurrection unfolds in Paul’s successive speeches. *****

1. Before the Sanhedrin the theme was set, but there Paul merely enunciated the idea of a resurrection, the belief in and hope for the coming resurrection
2. In [24:15](#) he was more explicit. The resurrection was more precisely defined as including both the just and the unjust, implying thereby a coming judgment.
3. Paul again made clear in his Caesarean trial what the real issue was between him and his Jewish accusers—it was the resurrection ([24:21](#)).
4. The resurrection reached its fullest treatment in the final, climactic scene before Agrippa II. Again ([26:8](#), [23](#)), **the apostle constantly focusing on what was the real issue...** Christ’s resurrection

For Paul, Luke's church, and for contemporary Christians the resurrection of Jesus Christ remains the primary dividing line...

Remember... the Book of Acts is a record of the early church's witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ

(Acts 1:22).

T/S: Paul's (and Jesus') missional posture...

- On mission...
- NO compromise!
- Witness beyond words...
- God's sovereign plan (see Acts 9:15 & 23:11)

III. DEFINING Decisions

A. Public

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.*

24:22–23 The outcome of the trial could only be described in terms of the procurator's indecision, his refusal to give a verdict.

Manifestly, he was waiting for Lysias to come and give his report. Lysias had already sent his report and indicated that he saw the whole thing as a matter of Jewish religious law.

Lysias had even stated that in his opinion Paul had done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment (23:29).

Felix wasn't waiting for Lysias's report.

There is no indication that Lysias ever came or that Felix even sent for him.

Felix was putting the whole matter off.

B. Private / Personal

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.*

When the couple came to Paul, the apostle used the opportunity to share the gospel with them and “spoke about faith in Christ” (v. 24).

Drusilla’s family had been involved with "the Way" on several occasions. Her greatgrandfather tried to kill Jesus in Bethlehem ([Matt. 2](#)); her great-uncle killed John the Baptist and mocked Jesus ([Luke 23:6-12](#)); and [Acts 12:1-2](#) tells of her father killing the Apostle James.

For this particular couple, he focused on the prospect of the coming judgment (v. 25). His emphasis on “righteousness” (dikaiosynē) was surely intended in its more strictly ethical connotation of measuring up to God’s standards, which will ultimately be the basis for the coming judgment.

The relevance of “self-control” (enkrateia) to this subject and to their own particular situation must have been self-evident for Felix and Drusilla. It surely explains Felix’s alarm and abrupt curtailment of the conversation with Paul.

His alarm at Paul’s message was real (v. 25).

A thorough skeptic would have dismissed Paul’s reference to the judgment as sheer fantasy, but not Felix. His fear was genuine.

He was at the point of conviction.

But he was never willing to go beyond that point and take the leap of faith. In the end his greed, his lust, and his desire to preserve his power carried the day.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).

As His agents, we can become the medium through which He performs that role.

QUOTE:

The failure to bring up the important topics of righteousness, self-control, and judgment can result in people professing commitments to Christ but without a change in lifestyle.

The evangelist's role is to keep challenging people with the truth of God's Word so that people may come to their senses and be delivered from any enslavement.

VIDEO: “And They Crucified Him” (Art Katz)

Dr. Luke has given us only the three points of Paul's sermon to this infamous couple: righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. But **what an outline!**

Paul gave them three compelling reasons why they should repent and believe on Jesus Christ.

QUOTE:

First, they had to do something about *yesterday's sin* ("*righteousness*"). In 1973, Dr. Karl Menninger, one of the world's leading psychiatrists, published a startling book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* He pointed out that the very word *sin* has gradually dropped out of our vocabulary, "the word, along with the notion." We talk about mistakes, weaknesses, inherited tendencies, faults, and even errors; but we do not face up to the fact of sin.... "People are no longer sinful," said Phyllis McGinley, noted American writer and poet. "They are only immature or underprivileged or frightened or, more particularly, sick." But a holy God demands righteousness; that's the bad news. Yet the good news is that this same holy God *provides* His own righteousness to those who trust Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). We can never be saved by our own righteousness of good works. We can be saved only through Christ's righteousness made available by His finished work of salvation on the cross.

The **second point in Paul's sermon** dealt with self-control:

we must deal with *today's temptations*.

Man can control almost everything but himself.

Here were Felix and Drusilla, prime illustrations of lack of self-control. She divorced her husband to become Felix's third wife, and though a Jewess, she lived as though God had never given the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Felix was an unscrupulous official who did not hesitate to lie, or even to murder, in order to get rid of his enemies and promote himself.

Self-control was something neither of them knew much about.

Paul's third point was the clincher: "judgment to come." *We must do something about tomorrow's judgment.*

Perhaps Paul told Felix and Drusilla what he told the Greek philosophers: God has "appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness" by the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31).

Those who are at the top feel that they have to please many people if they want to stay in their position and thrive in society.

This may hinder them from doing what they know to be right.

Jesus Christ is either your Savior or your Judge.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Judge? "He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31, NKJV). *Once again, the Resurrection!*

"Felix trembled" (Acts 24:25),

literally... "Felix became terrified."

He saw the light, but he preferred to live in the darkness.

Paul had diagnosed the case and offered the remedy.

It was up to Felix to receive it.

What did Felix do? *He procrastinated!*

"One of these days is none of these days."

When God speaks, men and women had better listen and obey.

Felix had a foolish attitude toward his sins. He knew he was a sinner, yet he refused to break with his sins and obey the Lord. He had a foolish attitude toward God's grace. The Lord had been long-suffering toward Felix, yet the governor would not surrender.

Instead of listening to Paul, Felix tried to "use" Paul...

CLOSE:

QUOTE: The governor's mind was enlightened (Acts 24:22), his emotions were stirred (Acts 24:25), but his will would not yield. He tried to gain the world, but, as far as we know, he lost his soul. He procrastinated himself into hell.

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION

Dr. Clarence Macartney told a story about a meeting in hell. Satan called his four leading demons together and commanded them to think up a new lie that would trap more souls...

- Tell the people there is no God....
- Tell the people there is no heaven...
- Tell the people there is no hell...
- Tell the people there is no HURRY.

*"Behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold,
NOW is the day of salvation"*

([2 Cor. 6:2](#)).

So friend... "examine Him for yourself..."

As Joshua said:

"as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!"

Why?

Because I KNOW He lives!

Because Easter/Resurrection Sunday is true!

The tomb is empty... but my heart is FULL!

VIDEO: **"Alive"**

Let's Pray!

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Acts 24:1-27

Easter March 27, 2016

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sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,

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The theme of Paul's witness continues in [Acts 24–26](#). The setting for his testimony shifted—from Jerusalem to Caesarea, from the Jews to the Roman officials. Still, the primary focus was on the Jewish antagonism toward Paul. The Roman officials became more and more convinced that Paul had broken none of their laws. Still, in the face of the strong Jewish opposition to Paul, they were hesitant to release him. Only an appeal to Caesar removed Paul from the very real prospect that the officials would ultimately give in to pressure and turn him over to the Jews.

Structurally, the section is built around the three major political figures before whom Paul appeared—the procurators Felix (chap. 24) and Festus ([25:1–22](#)) and the titular Jewish King Agrippa II ([25:23–26:32](#)).

In form it consists of two major speeches of Paul—in the context of a formal trial at the beginning of his Caesarean confinement ([24:1–23](#)) and in a hearing before Agrippa II and the Roman notables at the end ([25:23–26:32](#)). In between comes the pivotal event of Paul's appeal to Caesar ([25:6–12](#)).

Thematically, the major emphases are much the same as in the previous three chapters—Paul's innocence and his protection by the Roman procurators, combined with their equivocation in failing to release him.

The primary emphasis remains that of Paul's witness

—this time before the social and political notables of Palestine, the Roman procurators, and the Jewish king. Though the setting was that of Paul's defense before the Jewish charges, the end result was invariably Paul's witness to Christ. For this witness, the resurrection was primary.

(1) The Trial in Caesarea

24:1–23

When Paul first arrived in Caesarea under Lysias's guard, the procurator Felix put off hearing him until the arrival of his Jewish accusers ([23:35](#)). With their arrival he called Paul forth for trial. **It is the only formal trial scene in this heavily "legal" section of Acts, consisting of accusations by the prosecuting attorney Tertullus (vv. 1–9) and a response to each charge by the defendant Paul (vv. 10–21).**

Felix failed to reach a decision and formally adjourned the trial (vv. [22f.](#)).

TERTULLUS'S ACCUSATION (24:1–9).

24:1 In his letter to Felix, Lysias had related that he was sending Paul's accusers to Caesarea to present their case before the governor ([23:30](#)). Now they arrived, evidently five days after

Paul's own arrival in the administrative capital. **The accusing party consisted of the high priest Ananias, some "elders" who probably were members of the Sanhedrin, and a lawyer named Tertullus.** Whether Tertullus was a Jew or a Gentile hired by the Jews is uncertain. **It was not uncommon for Jews to hire pagan lawyers who would be more familiar with Roman law than they.** The evidence of the text is ambiguous. Tertullus seems to identify himself with the Jews by the use of "we" in vv. 3, 4, 6, but in v. 9 he seems to be differentiated from "the Jews." In any event, Tertullus showed himself fully skilled in Roman legal procedure, and he lived up to **Luke's formal designation of him as a "lawyer" (*rhētōr*).**

24:2–4 Felix formally convened the trial, perhaps using a "crier" to call forth the defendant (v. [2](#)).

Tertullus began with the convention of a *capitatio benevolentiae*, **a flattering appeal aimed at securing the goodwill of the governor.**

This portion of Tertullus's address was particularly long and considerably stretched the truth of the matter.

- 1. He praised the governor for the peace he had brought the nation. In fact, there was less peace in Judea during Felix's administration than for any procurator until the final years before the outbreak of the war with Rome. But the Romans prided themselves in preserving**

- the peace (the *pax Romana*), and such a comment was sure to win the governor's favor.
2. Equally strained was Tertullus's appeal to Felix's "foresight" (*pronoia*) in bringing many "reforms" (perhaps better, "improvements") to the Jewish nation. Felix had scarcely done this. He had, in fact, made life miserable for the Jews, as was witnessed by the proliferation of rebellious movements during his term in response to his total lack of sympathy for or understanding of them. But again, the Romans liked to be called benefactors; and their "foresight" (Latin *providentia*) was often inscribed on their coins.
 3. Tertullus continued his formal flattery, referring to how the Jews "everywhere and in every way" acknowledged (literally "welcomed") his beneficial rule (v. 3). Few Jews would have felt much gratitude for Felix, and Tertullus's bestowal of the title "most excellent" was hardly deserved.
 4. Tertullus's comment that he would be brief and not prevail too severely on the good graces of the governor was again quite conventional. Luke most likely only gave a precis of the proceedings. Judging from the length of his introductory flattery, one wonders just how much Tertullus stuck to his promise of brevity.

24:5–6 Finally he got down to the business at hand and set forth **the 3 Jewish charges against Paul** (vv. 5–6). These were three in number.

1. The first was that **Paul was a “troublemaker” (literally, a “pest” or “plague”), stirring up riots among the Jews throughout the entire civilized world.** At first glance this seems to be a ridiculous charge, a bit of name-calling with nothing specific to back it up. Actually it was **a carefully calculated move/accusation.** Compare the charge with that of the **Asian Jews in 21:28. They too had charged Paul with causing trouble “everywhere,” but they had correctly seen it as involving the Jewish law and temple.**

Tertullus attempted to broaden the scope a bit into that of provoking insurrection throughout the Roman world. It was the charge of sedition, a charge the Romans would not take lightly.

Roman officials would scarcely concern themselves with matters of Jewish religion. They *would* take seriously any threat to the *pax Romana*.

Felix in particular would have become attentive at the hint of such a charge. His entire administration had been marked by having to put down one insurrection in Judea after another.

Felis had done so decisively and cruelly. He maintained the peace at any cost.

2. Tertullus's second charge was really a variation on the same theme: Paul was "a ringleader of the Nazarene sect." This was certainly true. **Paul was a Christian leader.**

By linking the comment with the charge of provoking insurrection, however, Tertullus implied that the Christians as a whole were a dangerous and seditious sect and that Paul was one of their main collaborators. The ramifications of the Jewish charges now became infinitely clear. Should such a charge be made to stick for Paul, the whole Christian community would be viewed as a dangerous, revolutionary movement.

Fortunately, **Tertullus could not substantiate the charge, and Felix was already too informed about Christians to take it seriously** (v. [22](#)).

3. Tertullus's third charge was another matter—that Paul had violated the temple. Evidently the Romans did

grant the Jews the right to enforce their ban on Gentile access to their sacred precincts. Paul had been charged by the Asian Jews with violating the ban (21:28). **Had Tertullus substantiated this charge, it would have obligated Felix to turn Paul over to jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin and almost certain death.**

The accusation, however, was totally false and based on an erroneous conclusion by the Asian Jews (cf. 21:29). This probably is why they were not present to substantiate the charge (v. 19).

24:6 There is a major variation in the textual tradition at the end of v. 6, a number of witnesses adding after “so we seized him” the following words: “And would have judged him according to our law. But the Tribune Lysias snatched him from our hands with great force, commanding his accusers to come before you.” A number of commentators argue for the originality of this longer reading on the basis that it clarifies the Jewish position—namely, that they objected to the Romans intervening and taking Paul from what they felt rightfully came under their own jurisdiction. If one accepts the longer reading, then v. 8 would refer to Lysias. Tertullus would then have been instructing Felix to consult with Lysias, who would confirm all these accusations against Paul. The manuscript evidence, however, seems to support the shorter text followed by the NIV. Following the shorter reading, v. 8 refers to Paul. Tertullus told Felix to examine Paul carefully himself and he would be able to substantiate these charges: “Just give him enough rope, and he'll hang himself.” “Oh, yes,” joined in the rest of the Jewish delegation, “all these charges are true” (author's paraphrase).

PAUL'S DEFENSE (24:10–21).

24:10–13 Perhaps indicative of his sense of power, without a word, by a mere nod of the head, Felix gestured for Paul to enter upon his defense.

Paul also began with a *capitatio benevolentia*, but his was markedly contrasting to Tertullus's—no fawning, no stretching of the truth, only a reference to Felix's having for some time been judge over the Jewish nation, which should qualify him to handle the matter at hand (v. 10).

Paul then answered the charges.

1. **First came the charge of stirring up insurrection. Paul answered this with a threefold response.**
 - a. **First**, he had no history of inciting the Jews. He had only been in Jerusalem for twelve days at the time of his arrest and had been there solely to worship (v. 11). Twelve days was scarcely time enough to organize a rebellion, and pilgrims are not generally rabble-rousers. Paul turned Tertullus's word against him. The latter had said that by examining Paul, Felix would be able to verify the charges against him (v. 8). Paul responded that the opposite was the case; Felix would verify that Paul was worshiping, not inciting sedition.
 - b. **Second**, Paul stated that he had not stirred up any crowds—not in the temple area, not in the

Jewish synagogues, not anywhere in the city (v. [12](#)). There had been quite a crowd in the temple area, but it was the Asian Jews—not Paul—who incited it ([21:27](#)). If the Romans wanted to charge someone with disturbing the peace, they had best look elsewhere, not to Paul.

- c. In short, **Paul replied with his third response, the Jews simply could not give any proof for their accusations that would stand up in court.**

2. **24:14–16** In vv. [14–16](#) **Paul responded to the charges that somehow his treasonous behavior was bound up with his being a ringleader of the “Nazarene sect.”**

*He used the opportunity to deliver a sort of **mini-sermon**, changing his defensive posture into more of a positive witness.*

Tertullus may have referred to the Christians as a “sect,” a party within Judaism. **Paul would not deny his affiliation with the group, but he preferred another term. He preferred to be seen as a follower of “the Way,” not a party, not a “Jewish denomination,” but the true, the *only* way of the Lord for his people.**

His was no offshoot tangential faith but right at the center of Jewish religion. He believed the Scriptures—

just like the Pharisees—the Prophets as well as the Law. Just like the Pharisees, he shared the hope in the coming resurrection, the *total* resurrection of the wicked as well as the righteous.

Paul's words had a certain ominous tone.

To mention the resurrection of the unjust could only imply one thing—the coming judgment.

Paul was not about to miss the opportunity for witness.

Even the Gentiles present, who might not comprehend the idea of the resurrection, would have some understanding of judgment (cf. [24:25](#)).

Paul's reference to the resurrection is the high point of his witness in all the speeches of [Acts 23–26](#).

This was not by accident.

Paul's conviction in the resurrection constituted the real point of contention with the other Jews.

In the present passage this was precisely Paul's point.

He believed the same Scriptures, worshiped the same God, shared the same hope. But it was precisely at this point that "the Way" parted ways with the rest of the Jews.

The Christians believed that the resurrection already had begun in Christ.

***** One should observe how the theme of the resurrection unfolds in Paul's successive speeches. *****

1. **Before the Sanhedrin the theme was set, but there Paul merely enunciated the idea of a resurrection, the belief in and hope for the coming resurrection (23:6).**
2. In [24:15](#) he was **more explicit. The resurrection was more precisely defined as including both the just and the unjust, implying thereby a coming judgment.** That Paul so understood it is clear from v. [16](#), where he spoke of his own blameless conscience—blameless, that is, with regard to the judgment that all would eventually face.
3. **Paul again made clear in his Caesarean trial what the real issue was between him and his Jewish accusers—it was the resurrection (24:21).**
4. **The resurrection reached its fullest treatment in the final, climactic scene before Agrippa II. Again it was enunciated twice by Paul ([26:8](#), [23](#)), **the apostle constantly focusing on what****

was the real issue. This time it became clear that **it was not resurrection in general but specifically the resurrection of Christ that separated him from the Jews and constituted the focal point of his witness** ([26:23](#)).

For Paul, for Luke's church, and for contemporary Christians this remains the primary dividing line between Christian and Jew and the basic starting point for any dialogue between the two.

3. [24:17–19](#) Verses [17–19](#) constitute Paul's response to Tertullus's third charge—the accusation that he had desecrated the temple.

a. Paul briefly summarized the events covered in [Acts 21:27–30](#)—his presence in the temple for purification in connection with the vows of the four Nazirites and the disturbance created by the Asian Jews.

b. The absence of the Asian Jews at his trial comes as no surprise (v. [19](#)). Luke already had explained that their accusation that Paul had violated the temple was based on a totally false conclusion drawn from having seen him earlier in the city with Trophimus ([21:29](#)). **Paul was obviously quite incensed by the thought of these accusers, as is indicated by his breaking off in midsentence at the end of v. [19](#). They should have been there and brought**

charges against him face-to-face. That was good Roman legal procedure (cf. [25:16](#)). Instead, with their total lack of supporting evidence, they were now nowhere to be found.

c. **Paul had scored a rather telling legal point, and Felix was bound to have observed it.** For Tertullus to have made an accusation against Paul with the total absence of the witnesses for the prosecution was a serious breach of court procedure.

There was simply no evidence to counter Paul's own defense.

Far from having defiled the temple, he was himself in a state of scrupulous ceremonial cleanness (v. [18](#)). Far from desecrating the temple, he had come there to bring offerings (v. [17](#)).

[24:20–21](#) Having successfully demonstrated that all of Tertullus's accusations were totally without supporting evidence, **Paul proceeded to the one genuine charge that could be brought against him.**

There were even “witnesses for the prosecution” present to support this charge— namely, the high priest and elders who had come with Tertullus who had been present when Paul appeared before the Sanhedrin. They could testify to the one issue that surfaced in that hearing— Paul's belief in the resurrection of the dead (v. [21](#); cf. [26:8](#)).

Paul now had the whole trial scene in his own control. He had the issue where he wanted it, where it really was.

He had broken no law—certainly no Roman law, and not even the Jewish religious law. **The resurrection was the bone of contention with the Jews. And most Jews shared that conviction in principle.**

What separated him from his fellow Jews was that he was a follower of “the Way,” that he believed that the Messiah had come and the resurrection had begun in Christ.

The stakes were high.

Paul was on trial for nothing less than his Christian faith.

It was essential that the Roman courts realize this was a matter of Jewish religious conviction and not a matter involving Roman law.

FELIX’S INDECISION (24:22–23).

24:22–23 The **outcome of the trial could only be described in terms of the procurator’s indecision, his refusal to give a verdict.**

In rather technical legal language, Luke stated that Felix “adjourned” (*anebaletō*) the proceedings, meaning that he refused to pass judgment until he had gathered further evidence.

Manifestly, he was waiting for Lysias to come and give his report. Lysias had already sent his report and indicated that he saw the whole thing as a matter of Jewish religious law.

Lysias had even stated that in his opinion Paul had done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment (23:29).

Felix wasn't waiting for Lysias’s report.

There is no indication that Lysias ever came or that Felix even sent for him.

Felix was putting the whole matter off.

He didn't want to pass a verdict, for the verdict would surely have been one of acquittal. Luke seems to have hinted at this by noting that Felix was “well acquainted” with “the Way.” This

probably indicates that the procurator knew that the Jewish charges of sedition against Paul were totally without foundation and that “the Nazarene sect” was not a band of revolutionaries.

Like Lysias before him and Festus after him, he must have realized that Paul was guilty of no crime by Roman law. **Still he ruled over the Jews and had to live with them. And there were powerful Jews in this delegation calling for Paul’s condemnation.**

He didn't want to incur their wrath. It was easier to put off the whole matter, even if it meant that Paul would be jailed for it. Felix’s conscience might have bothered him for doing this, so he had Paul placed under the rather liberal sort of detainment known as “military custody” (“under guard,” NIV), which gave the prisoner considerable movement and allowed free visitation from family and friends (v. [23](#)). Also his awareness of **Paul’s Roman citizenship may have contributed to the special courtesy he granted this particular prisoner.**

(2) Paul and Felix in Private

[24:24–27](#)

[24:24–27](#) The concluding portion of Luke’s treatment of Felix provides a glimpse into the procurator’s personal life. The reader is first introduced to his Jewish wife Drusilla. Josephus related

the unusual circumstances of Felix's marriage to this strikingly beautiful woman, and the topic must have been a major source of gossip in Palestine. **Felix's third wife, Drusilla, was born around A.D. 38, the youngest daughter of Agrippa I (the "Herod" of [Acts 12](#)).**

At age fourteen, through an espousal arranged by her brother Agrippa II, she was wed to Azizus, the king of Emesa, a Syrian petty state. Struck by her beauty, Felix determined to have her for himself. Through the mediation of a Cypriot magician named Atomos, Drusilla, who was herself unhappy in her marriage to Azizus, was talked into leaving him for the procurator.

Josephus mentioned that Felix promised to make her "happy," doubtless a pun on his name *felix*, the Latin word for "happy." Drusilla was sixteen at the time of her marriage to the Judean procurator. She may have been the source of his information on "the Way" (v. [22](#)) as well as the driving force behind the desire to speak with Paul in private (v. [24](#)).

Whatever the driving force behind the desire of **the couple visit Paul, the apostle used the opportunity to share the gospel with them and "spoke about faith in Christ"** (v. [24](#)).

For this particular couple, **he focused on the prospect of the coming judgment (v. 25). His emphasis on "righteousness" (*dikaioynē*) was surely intended in its**

more strictly ethical connotation of measuring up to God's standards, which will ultimately be the basis for the coming judgment.

The relevance of "self-control" (*enkrateia*) to this subject and to their own particular situation must have been self-evident for Felix and Drusilla. It surely explains Felix's alarm and abrupt curtailment of the conversation with Paul.

Luke added an even more telling comment on the procurator by noting that he sent for Paul frequently in hopes of receiving a bribe. Such bribe-taking was frowned upon officially, even forbidden by law, but was rampant in the Roman administration. Other Judean procurators were known for their propensity to receive bribes, and Felix was not himself above the temptation.

In any event, Felix did nothing to hasten the disposal of Paul's case. He played the delaying game, keeping the apostle in prison for two years, to the very end of his administration (v. [27](#)).

His desire for a bribe may have played a part in this long delay, but it is far more

likely that the desire “to grant a favor [charita] to the Jews” was his primary motivation.

On the one hand, knowing there was no real case against Paul, he was unwilling to turn him over to Jewish jurisdiction.

On the other hand, fearful of the power of Paul’s Jewish opponents, he would not free the apostle either. So ultimately he took the safe way out and kept Paul in prison. He might have done so indefinitely had he not been removed from office.

The corruption and brutality of his administration finally caught up with him. An incidence of civil strife in Caesarea between the Jewish and Gentile communities there, which Felix mismanaged with a decidedly anti-Jewish bias, led to his downfall. This provoked the Jews to send an angry delegation to Rome protesting his actions, which ultimately resulted in his removal.

Luke’s portrayal of Felix presents a genuinely tragic plot. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his coming to Paul to inquire about faith in Christ (v. 24).

Neither was his frequent sending for Paul to converse with him likely to have been based *solely* on greed (v. 26). **Felix demonstrated a genuine concern to hear the apostle’s testimony.**

His alarm at Paul’s message was real (v. 25).

A thorough skeptic would have dismissed Paul's reference to the judgment as sheer fantasy, but not Felix. His fear was genuine.

He was at the point of conviction.

But he was never willing to go beyond the point and take the leap of faith. In the end his greed, his lust, and his desire to preserve his power carried the day.

With the change of administration, there was renewed hope for Paul. **New procurators generally undertook a quick disposal of the cases their predecessors left behind. Often prisoners were released.** With Festus's coming, there was the prospect that Paul's case would soon find a favorable resolution. Such was not to be.

- New American Commentary

The Trial Before Felix (24:1-23)

THE SERIOUSNESS WITH which the Jewish leaders took this case is apparent in that the high priest himself made the sixty-five-mile journey to Caesarea along with the elders and the lawyer Tertullus (24:1). The speeches of Tertullus and Paul

(as well as Paul's speech before Agrippa in ch. 26) follow the form of forensic speeches of the time.

Tertullus begins with a typical exordium (introduction), "acknowledging the judge's authority on the matter phrased to win favor and goodwill." He expresses the gratitude of the Jews for the peace that they have enjoyed under him. This was not really true, for there had been many insurrections that had been brutally stamped out by Felix. Gempf suggests that, rather than being nonsense (as some have alleged), this could be "Tertullus' attempt to remind Felix that the stability had been purchased through severe action against troublemakers, of which, he goes on to argue, Paul was one causing 'riots all over the world'" ([24:5a](#)).

Tertullus then brings several charges against Paul. His causing riots may refer to the trouble he supposedly caused in Asia. Paul is also charged with being a ringleader of the Nazarene sect, and he tried to desecrate the temple ([24:5b-6](#)). The term *Nazarene* probably derives from the fact that Jesus grew up in Nazareth ([Matt. 2:23](#)) and was used of Jesus in the Gospels ([Matt. 2:23](#); [Mark 14:67](#); [16:6](#)). This is the only time it is used of the church. **Tertullus asserts that an examination of Paul will show that the charges they bring are true** ([24:8](#)).

Paul's exordium also points to the competence of Felix to judge the case, but he is less lavish than Tertullus with his compliments ([24:10](#)). His speech is, in Bruce Winter's words, "a well ordered defense... Paul conducted his defense in an able manner against a professional forensic orator." Each statement recorded by Luke in this summary makes a telling point that convinces Felix of Paul's innocence (cf. [24:22-27](#)). Felix can

verify when Paul arrived in Jerusalem ([v. 11](#)). His accusers did not find him doing anything anywhere in Jerusalem that might suggest he was causing trouble ([v. 12](#)); they have no proof of any of their charges ([v. 13](#)). Paul does admit that he is a member of the Way, but he goes on to show that this sect has similar beliefs to the Jews ([vv. 14-15](#)); this is a sect just like the Pharisees and Sadducees. Next Paul asserts his blamelessness ([v. 16](#)). No one can point a finger at him regarding his personal life—a powerful state indeed for an ambassador of Christ to be in. **The word translated "strive" in [verse 16](#) (*askeo*) was originally used for athletic strife. It means "to engage in some activity, with both continuity and effort."**

Paul then gets specific about his visit to Jerusalem, giving the clearest reference in Acts to the gifts for the poor he brought with him ([v. 17](#)). He also mentions bringing "offerings," a statement that has been variously interpreted. This may be referring to the gifts for the poor, to offerings he presented at the temple possibly in connection with a vow, or to what he did in the temple in connection with the Nazirites, who had taken a vow. Kistemaker may be correct in saying that "since Luke often compresses material, the term 'offering' is a shortened form meant to bring to mind the episode in the temple ([21:26-27](#))."

Then Paul denies the specific charges against him. He was ceremonially clean when he was found in the temple, there was no crowd with him, and he was not involved in any disturbance ([v. 18](#)). If the charge about his causing trouble all over the world ([24:5](#)) refers to the trouble in Ephesus, then the people from Asia should be there to press charges ([v. 19](#)). **One by one he has refuted all the charges against him.**

But Paul has one more point to make: He was tried by the Sanhedrin, but they also found no suitable charge to bring against him (v. 20). In his full talk the apostle may have mentioned the confusion in the Sanhedrin during his trial. He certainly implies that when he says that he had to shout a statement about the resurrection (v. 21), which divided the Sanhedrin. He admits to one possible point against him—a doctrinal issue that really was not within Felix's jurisdiction.

Felix should have released Paul, but he was reluctant to displease the Jews (see 24:27). So he delayed making a decision until the commander came (v. 22). But he gave Paul relative freedom (v. 23). Felix's delaying tactics went on for two whole years, at which time he was removed from his job (v. 27). **Luke leaves us with no doubt that this Roman governor thought Paul was innocent of any crime against the state.**

Felix and the Gospel (24:24-27)

THE CONVERSATIONS PAUL had with Felix and his wife give us a good description of how many top officials respond to the gospel (see discussion below). **Included in Paul's discussions about the gospel (v. 24) was discourse about "righteousness, self-control and the judgment"** (v. 25a). These discussions made Felix afraid, which expressed itself in a couldn't-care-less attitude ("When I find it convenient, I will send for you"—v. 25b). We also see how mixed his motives were, for he was looking for a bribe (v. 26) and did not want to displease the Jews even if that meant being unjust to

Paul ([v. 27](#)). He probably thought that one who was a Roman citizen and who had just brought a substantial gift for the poor must have had access to substantial wealth. Josephus tells us that Felix would have been severely punished after he was removed from office if not for the influence of his brother, Pallas.

Blameless spokespersons. As noted above, the **early Christians not only outthought their opponents, they also outlived them.** Paul said of himself, "*I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man*" ([24:16](#)). **In the writings of the early Christian apologists, the behavior of the Christians was a key aspect used in defense of Christianity.**

The force of blameless lives has been powerful in defending Christianity against attacks from outside in every age.

The challenge to the church today to be blameless before the world has become acute, considering the great moral crisis facing the world today.

In the West, there has been a general rejection of the Christian worldview that formed its moral basis for centuries.

Many of its structures were based on moral absolutes. For example, much of American society operates on the principle of trust. With the current rejection of moral absolutes in postmodern Western society, one wonders how it can survive without deteriorating into serious confusion.

Theologians like Carl Henry and scholars like Allan Bloom have been charting this trend. One can imagine that sooner or later many millions of Westerners are going to look for an alternative to this confusion. When they realize the ravages of sexual indiscipline and seek a purer sexual morality, will they see Christians as people who not only remain pure but have a wholesome enjoyment that is much more refreshing than the extreme asceticism that many opt for? When they realize the ravages of living without integrity, will they see Christians as people who live with a clear conscience before God and humankind?

Although many Westerners, tired of the materialism and moral indiscipline of Western society, are turning to Eastern spirituality for answers, they will soon realize that this resource is equally bankrupt. There is no ethical system within Hinduism that enables people to live holy lives. While Buddhism has a strong ethical system to strive for, Buddhists are finding that they do not have the spiritual resources to overcome the

onslaught of modern immorality to which they are being exposed in the media. Most countries in the so-called Third World are unable to make progress because of rampant corruption. There is a growing disenchantment with existing structures since people have not been able to shake off the corruption destroying the fabric of many nations.

I spoke about this recently with theologian Bruce Nicholls, a New Zealander who has been a missionary for forty years in India. He observed that the recent growth of fundamentalist movements among Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists is an attempt to stem this tide of moral degradation sweeping Asian nations. He felt that this is a time of unprecedented opportunity for the church to demonstrate the power of the gospel.

We do have a dynamic from the Creator of human nature that alone can satisfy this homesickness for morality in the human soul. But how have we fared? The church seems to have become a reflection of the maladies of society rather than a witness to these maladies. We have been so enslaved by pragmatism that morality has been subsumed in our quest for results. Elsewhere in this book we have spoken of the valuable place that signs and wonders have as means of attracting people to Christ. But it is easy to be so enamored by such display of power that we neglect the priority of holiness over power.

Many churches that emphasize the miraculous today are weak in their teaching and reflections on Christian morality. As a result, people who are testifying to miraculous answers to prayer are underpaying their workers, are guilty of racial prejudice, or lie to make a sale. Evangelists who minister in the miraculous can get so enamored by their power that they give little attention to

pursuing holiness. They find refuge in their ministries and thus ignore the voice of conscience that tells them that all is not well in their lives.

This neglect of moral instruction is seen in other branches of the evangelical movement too. Some churches are afraid to confront members who are living privately in sin. In keeping with the thinking of society around us, they do not want to pry into the private lives of others. Preachers are afraid to speak forthrightly against sins condemned in Scripture, fearing that they will be branded as bigoted and will lose members as a result.

I am thankful that prayer has seen a resurgence in many evangelical churches. There is much talk about the place of prayer and fasting in mission. Warfare prayer for breaking down strongholds and the place of prayer in evangelism are receiving fresh emphasis today. But there is little emphasis on praying for personal holiness, on fasting and praying for the revival of holy living in the church. If we examine the New Testament letters that teach about living the Christian life, we will find much more teaching on holy living than on warfare. While we do not discount the value of instruction on warfare and rejoice over its return to the life of the church, we must keep a scriptural balance.

We may be neglecting one of the most urgent warfares that has to be waged for the Christian worldview and ethic. This is an intellectual and moral warfare that influences the spiritual lives of us all. Carl Henry describes it well:

A half-generation ago the pagans were still largely threatening at the gates of Western

culture; now the barbarians are plunging into the oriental and occidental mainstream. As they seek to reverse the inherited intellectual and moral heritage of the Bible, the Christian world-life view and the secular world-life view engage as never before in rival conflict for the mind, the conscience, the will, the spirit, the very selfhood of contemporary man.

Paul spoke of striving (*askeo*) to keep his "conscience clear before God and man" ([24:16](#)). The pursuit of holiness is an exercise that must be carried out with utmost diligence. If we exaggerate in the pulpit, we must correct it in the pulpit, even though it may be humiliating. If we fail at home in front of our children, we must apologize in their presence. We must strongly refuse any temptation to pay a bribe or tell a lie to get something done. We must follow the laws of the land even if they may seem silly. We must do our work conscientiously in our offices even if no one else is doing so and it may be embarrassing for us to be the only ones. Though all the churches nearby underpay their custodians, we must refuse to do so even if we are financially less stable. We must openly admit personal weaknesses to our Christian colleagues and spouses and have them check on us so that they may "spur [us] on toward love and good deeds" ([Heb. 10:24](#)).

The church, then, must rediscover the priority of holiness and look for the ways prescribed in the Scriptures to release the dynamic of the Holy Spirit, who enables Christians to live holy lives. This is why Christianity is so unique. Other religions also teach us to be good, but Christianity gives us the power to

become good. Note Paul's words: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through" ([1 Thess. 5:23](#)).

Why the rich and powerful find it hard to enter the kingdom. We now examine the principles from Luke's portrayal of the interaction between Felix and Paul, which shows us features typical of the response of rich and powerful people to the gospel.

(1) Felix showed an interest in the gospel by sending for Paul and listening "to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus" ([24:24](#)). Top officials and powerful people commonly show a cordial interest in what religious leaders say. We can use this as a stepping-stone to sharing the gospel with them, as Paul did with Felix and Agrippa. But we must remember that, though many such people will be interested in the gospel and testify to being blessed by it, they may not be willing to repent of their sin and turn to God alone for salvation. Nebuchadnezzar saw God's hand acting powerfully on two occasions and even praised God and made pronouncements about him ([Dan. 2-3](#)). But he was not converted until he was brought to the end of himself and was forced to affirm that the Most High God reigns ([Dan. 4](#)).

We should therefore be careful about proclaiming that a famous person has been converted until there is evidence of conversion. Too often we assume that because a famous person did something (e.g., ask a preacher to come and see him or testify to an answer to prayer), that means that the individual has become a Christian. In reality, some professions of religious commitment made by famous people are nothing more than public relations gimmicks.

(2) Paul brought up the topics of "righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come" with Felix so that he even became afraid ([24:25](#)). The Bible offers ample evidence that one of the ways to present the gospel to powerful people is to confront them with the reality of judgment. God did this with Nebuchadnezzar ([Dan. 4](#)); John the Baptist did this with the Pharisees and Sadducees ([Matt. 3:7](#)); Peter did this with Cornelius ([10:42](#)) and Paul with the Athenians ([17:31](#)). But we tend to neglect this today. Leaders often call for Christians and ask them to pray for them. We must respond positively to such requests and pray for the person. Participating in prayer can open powerful people to the gospel. But we must not forget to confront them with the challenge of a holy God, who calls them to leave their sin behind in order to follow him. **The role of the Holy Spirit is to "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).**

*As His agents,
we can become the medium
through which He performs that role.*

These topics are relevant to powerful people, for they respect power. Many of them look at Christians as weak people who need the crutch of a merciful God to enable them to face up to the strains of life. They regard themselves as "self-made

persons," who do not need that crutch. They must be confronted with the holiness and sovereignty of God, to be told that "it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" ([Heb. 10:31](#)), who is "a consuming fire" ([12:29](#)).

In their careers they have learned to respect and negotiate wisely with powerful forces and people. They must be made to realize that they also need to come to grips with the power of Almighty God if they want assurance of a secure future.

The failure to bring up the important topics of righteousness, self-control, and judgment can result in powerful people professing commitments to Christ but without a change in lifestyle.

When the idea of being born again had become almost a fad in North America in the 1970s, the publisher of a famous pornographic magazine made much news by professing a born-again experience. Unfortunately he did not think it was necessary for him to stop publishing pornography. During this same era a powerful aide to President Richard Nixon, Charles Colson, professed conversion and with that confessed to an obstruction of justice charge in connection with the Watergate affair. As a result, he was imprisoned for seven months. It is no accident that Colson is one of our generation's greatest spokespersons for the holiness of God. Throughout history other wealthy and powerful people, when confronted with the holiness of God and their own sin, have responded with repentance and

restitution and thus brought honor to God (e.g., the king of Nineveh [[Jonah 3](#)] and Zacchaeus [[Luke 19:8-10](#)]).

(3) Felix's behavior gives us at least three reasons why it is so hard for the rich and powerful to enter the kingdom of God (cf. [Luke 18:24-25](#)). **(a) They are able to camouflage their insecurity by pretending to be in control of their lives.** [Verse 25a](#) says that Felix was afraid after Paul had talked to him about righteousness, self-control, and judgment. But he was able to brush off his unease through his power to control his schedule. "That's enough for now!" he said, "You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you" ([24:25b](#)). We must be aware of such bluffs and, if possible, keep exposing the powerful to the primacy of their relationship with God. We must tell them, ***"You may be sure that your sin will find you out"*** ([Num. 32:23](#)).

(b) The rich and powerful are often controlled by an insatiable greed, and they usually find convenient ways to express this. Felix was so blinded by greed that he even hoped for a bribe from the one who had talked to him about righteousness, self-control, and judgment ([24:26](#))! Paul gave a severe warning about this when he wrote, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" ([1 Tim. 6:9-10](#)). **The power of these traps are often so strong that people come to their senses only after they have fallen into a deep pit of failure.**

The evangelist's role is to keep challenging people with the truth of God's Word so that people may come to their senses and be delivered from any enslavement.

(c) Those who are at the top feel that they have to please many people if they want to stay in their position and thrive in society.

This may hinder them from doing what they know to be right.

Ultimately, Paul was denied justice "because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews" ([24:27](#)). Ironically, Felix could not stay on like this, for he was finally dismissed from his job, and a deputation of Jews went to Rome to accuse him of wrongdoing. He avoided punishment for his failures in Judea only because of his influential brother, Pallas. But in the present passage we see how difficult it was for him to do justice by Paul.

The three factors that make it difficult for the rich to come into the kingdom are true of all people, but they particularly come into focus with the rich since they have greater opportunities to give in to their evil desires.

Christian communicators must warn the rich about the deceit of wealth. As Paul says, we must "command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in

wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" ([1 Tim. 6:17](#)). One good way to avoid this trap is to become lavish in generosity: "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" ([6:18](#)).

Generosity is not only an antidote to the maladies associated with wealth, it is also a wise investment: "In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" ([6:19](#)).

How true it is! The reality of judgment colors our attitudes to wealth. Wealth is fleeting in comparison to eternity, and the wise person prepares for eternity.

- NIV Application Commentary

[Acts 24](#)

Law was the most characteristic and lasting expression of the Roman spirit," wrote historian Will Durant in *Caesar and Christ*. **"The first person in Roman law was the citizen." In other words, it was the responsibility of the court to protect the citizen from the State; but too**

often various kinds of corruption infected the system and made justice difficult for the common man. Paul would soon discover how corrupt a Roman governor could be.

QUOTE:

"The secret of Roman government was the principle of indirect rule," wrote Arnold Toynbee. This meant that the real burden of administration was left pretty much on the shoulders of the local authorities. Imperial Rome got involved only if there was danger from without or if the local governing units were at odds with one another.

In this chapter we see the Roman legal system at work and three men each making his contribution.

Tertullus: False Accusations (Acts 24:1-9)

In the Bible record, when people go *to* Jerusalem, they always go up; but when they go *from* Jerusalem, they always go down. This explains why the official Jewish party "descended" when they came to Caesarea. With Ananias the high priest were some of the Jewish elders as well as a lawyer to present the case and defend their charges. **Roman law was as complex as our modern law, and it took an expert to understand it and know how to apply it successfully to his client's case.**

Tertullus began with the customary *flattery*, a normal part of the judicial routine. After all, before you can win your case, you must win over your judge. Tacitus, the Roman orator and politician, called flatterers "those worst of enemies"; and **Solomon wrote that "*a flattering mouth works ruin*" (Prov. 26:28, NKJV).**

The lawyer complimented Felix because the governor's many reforms had brought quietness to the land. (Question: Why did it require nearly 500 soldiers to protect one man in transit from Jerusalem to Caesarea?) It was true that Felix had put down some revolts, but he had certainly not brought peace to the land. In fact, **during the time Felix was suppressing robbers in his realm, he was also hiring robbers to murder the high priest Jonathan!** So much for his reforms.

But **the prosecutor's accusations against Paul were no more truthful than his flattery.** He brought three charges: a personal charge ("he is a pestilent fellow"), a political charge (sedition and leading an illegal religion), and a doctrinal charge (profaning the temple).

As for Paul being "a pest," it all depends on one's point of view. The Jews wanted to maintain their ancient traditions, and Paul was advocating something new. The Romans were afraid of anything that upset their delicate "peace" in the Empire, and Paul's record of causing trouble was long and consistent. As **Vance Havner** used to say, ***"Wherever Paul went, there was either a riot or a revival!"***

This personal charge was based on the Jews' conflicts with Paul in different parts of the Roman world.

I have already pointed out that **it was his own countrymen, not the Roman authorities, who caused Paul trouble from city to city.**

The Jews from Asia ([Acts 21:27](#)) would certainly have stories to tell about Lystra, Corinth, and Ephesus!

This first accusation reminds us of the charges brought against the Lord Jesus at His trial ([Luke 23:1-2, 5](#)).

The political charge was much more serious, because no Roman official wanted to be guilty of permitting illegal activities that would upset the "Pax Romana" (Roman Peace). **Rome had given the Jews freedom to practice their religion, but the Roman officials kept their eyes on them lest they use their privileges to weaken the Empire.** When Tertullus called Paul "an instigator of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the Roman Empire" (wuest), he immediately got the attention of the governor. Of course, his statement was an exaggeration, but how many court cases have been won by somebody stretching the truth?

Tertullus knew that there was some basis for this charge because **Paul had preached to the Jews that Jesus Christ was their King and Lord. To the Romans and the unbelieving Jews, this message sounded like treason against Caesar ([Acts](#)**

[16:20-21](#); [17:5-9](#)). Furthermore, it was illegal to establish a new religion in Rome without the approval of the authorities. If Paul indeed was a "ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes," then his enemies could easily build a case against him.

At that time, the Christian faith was still identified with the Jews, and they were permitted by the Romans to practice their religion. There had been Gentile seekers and God-fearers in the synagogues, so the presence of Gentiles in the churches did not create legal problems. **Later, when the number of Gentile believers increased and more of the congregations separated from the Jewish synagogues, then Rome saw the difference between Jews and Christians and trouble began.** Rome did not want a rival religion thriving in the Empire and creating problems.

Tertullus' third accusation had to be handled with care because it implicated a Roman officer who had saved a man's life. **For the most part, Roman officials like Felix did not want anything to do with cases involving Jewish Law** ([John 18:28-31](#); [Acts 16:35-40](#); [18:12-17](#)).

The fewer Jews who ended up in Roman courts, the better it would be for the Empire. Tertullus had to present this third charge in a way that made the Jews look good without making the Romans look too bad, and he did a good job.

To begin with, he softened the charge. The accusation given by the Asian Jews was that Paul had polluted the temple ([Acts 21:28](#)), but Tertullus said, "He even tried to profane the temple" ([Acts 24:6](#), nkjv). Why the change? For at least two good

reasons. To begin with, Paul's accusers realized that the original charge could never be substantiated if the facts were investigated. But even more, the Asian Jews who started the story seemed to have vanished from the scene! **If there were no witnesses, there could be no evidence or conviction.**

When you compare Luke's account of Paul's arrest ([Acts 21:27-40](#)) with the captain's account ([Acts 23:25-30](#)) and the lawyer's account ([Acts 24:6-8](#)), you can well understand why judges and juries can get confused. Tertullus gave the impression that Paul had actually been guilty of profaning the temple, that the Jews had been within their rights in seizing him, and that the captain had stepped out of line by interfering. It was Claudius, not the Jews, who was guilty of treating a Roman citizen with violence! But Felix had the official letter before him and was more likely to believe his captain than a paid Hellenistic Jewish lawyer.

Tertullus knew that the Jews had authority from Rome to arrest and prosecute those who violated Jewish Law. True, the Romans thought that the Jews' devotion to their traditions was excessive and superstitious; yet Rome wisely let them have their way. **The Jews were even permitted to execute guilty offenders in capital cases, such as Paul's "offense" of permitting Gentiles to cross the protective barricade in the temple** ([Acts 21:28-29](#)).

Tertullus argued that if Claudius had not interfered, the Jews would have tried Paul themselves, and this would have saved Felix and Rome a great deal of trouble and expense.

In closing his argument, Tertullus hinted that Claudius Lysias should have been there personally and had not just sent the

Jewish leaders to present the case. Why was he absent? Could he not defend his case? Was he trying to "pass the buck" to others? As far as we know, during the two years Paul was detained in Caesarea, Claudius never did show up to tell his side of the story. We wonder why.

But Paul was there and Felix could get the truth out of him! "If you examine Paul," the clever lawyer said, "you will find that what I am saying is true." **The other members of the Jewish delegation united in agreeing with their lawyer, which was no surprise to anybody.**

Paul: Faithful Answers (Acts 24:10-21)

But the governor did not examine Paul. He merely nodded his head as a signal that it was now Paul's turn to speak. Paul did not flatter Felix (see [1 Thes. 2:1-6](#)); he merely acknowledged that the governor was a man of experience and therefore a man of knowledge. After this brief but honest introduction, Paul then proceeded *to* answer the charges of Tertullus ([Acts 24:10-16](#)), the Asian Jews ([Acts 24:17-19](#)) and the Jewish council ([Acts 24:20-21](#)).

As far as the temple charge was concerned, Paul was in the temple to worship and not to lead a disturbance. In fact, the temple records would show that Paul was registered to pay the costs for four Jews who had taken a Nazarite vow. **Paul had not preached in the temple or the synagogues, nor had he preached anywhere in the city. (Years before, Paul**

had made an agreement with Peter and the Jerusalem elders that he would not evangelize the Jews in Jerusalem. See [Gal. 2:7-10](#).)

Nobody could prove that he was guilty of leading any kind of rebellion against the Jews or the Romans.

Furthermore, since he had been in Jerusalem only a week (the twelve days of [Acts 24:11](#), minus the five days of [Acts 24:1](#)), there had hardly been time to organize and lead an assault on the temple! While students of Paul's life do not agree on every detail, the order of events was probably something like this:

- Day 1—Paul arrived in Jerusalem ([21:17](#)) Day 2—Met with James and the elders ([21:18](#)) Day 3—In the temple with the Nazarites ([21:26](#))
- Day 4—In the temple Day 5—In the temple Day 6—Arrested in the temple ([21:27](#)) Day 7—Met with the Jewish council ([23:1-10](#)) Day 8—Threatened; taken to Caesarea ([23:12](#), [23](#))
- Day 9—Arrived in Caesarea ([23:33](#)) Day 10—Waited (Felix sent for the Jewish leaders) Day 11—Waited for the Jewish leaders to arrive Day 12—VW—they arrived—hearing scheduled Day 13—The hearing conducted

The four men who had taken the Nazarite vow were evidently already involved in their temple duties when James suggested that Paul pay their costs ([Acts 21:24](#)). If they had started the day before Paul arrived in Jerusalem, then the day of Paul's arrest would have been the seventh day of their obligations ([Acts](#)

[21:27](#)). The *New American Standard Bible* translates [Acts 21:27](#), "And when the seven days were almost over." This implies that the events occurred on the seventh day of their schedule, Paul's sixth day in the city.

It would probably take two days for the official Roman messenger to get from Caesarea to Jerusalem, and another two days for Ananias and his associates to make it to Caesarea. They were not likely to linger; the case was too important.

Having disposed of the temple charges, Paul then dealt with the charges of sedition and heresy.

Even though the high priest was a Sadducee, there were certainly Pharisees in the official Jewish delegation, so Paul appealed once again to their religious roots in the Scriptures. The fact that Paul was a Christian did not mean that he worshiped a different God from the God of his fathers. It only meant he worshiped the God of his fathers in a new and living way, **for the only acceptable way to worship the Father is through Jesus Christ** ([John 5:23](#)).

His faith was still founded on the Old Testament Scriptures, and they bore witness to Jesus Christ.

The Sadducees accepted the five Books of Moses (the Law), but not the rest of the Old Testament. They rejected the doctrine of the Resurrection because they said it could not be found anywhere in what Moses wrote. (Jesus had refuted that argument, but they chose to ignore it See [Matt. 22:23-33.](#))

By declaring his personal faith in the Resurrection, Paul affirmed his orthodox convictions and identified himself with the Pharisees. Once again, the Pharisees were caught on the horns of a dilemma, for if Paul's faith was that of a heretic, then they were heretics too!

Paul and the early Christians did not see themselves as "former Jews" but as "fulfilled Jews."

The Old Testament was a new book to them because they had found their Messiah. They knew that they no longer needed the rituals of the Jewish Law in order to please God, but they saw in these ceremonies and ordinances a revelation of the Saviour. Both as a Pharisee and a Christian, Paul had "taken pains" always to have a good conscience and to seek to please the Lord.

Having replied to the false charges of Tertullus, Paul then proceeded to answer the false accusation of the Asian Jews that he had profaned the temple ([Acts 24:17-19](#)). He had not come to Jerusalem to defile the temple but to bring needed help to the Jewish people and to present his own offerings to the Lord. (This is the only mention in Acts of the special offering.)

When the Asians saw him in the temple, he was with four men who were fulfilling their Nazarite vows. How could Paul possibly be *worshipping* God and *profaning* God's house at the same time? A Jewish priest was in charge of Paul's temple activities; so, if the holy temple was defiled, the priest was responsible. Paul was only obeying the Law.

Now Paul reached the heart of his defense.

It was required by Roman law that the accusers face the accused at the trial, or else the charges would be dropped.

Ananias had wisely not brought any of the Hellenistic Jews with him, for he was sure that their witness would fall down under official examination. These men were good at inciting riots; they were not good at producing facts.

Paul closed his defense by replying to the members of the Jewish council ([Acts 24:20-21](#)).

Instead of giving him a fair hearing, the high priest and the Sanhedrin had abused him and refused to hear him out. Ananias was no doubt grateful that Paul said nothing about his slap in the face, for it was not legal for a Roman citizen to be treated that way.

Do we detect a bit of holy sarcasm in Paul's closing statement? We might paraphrase it, "If I have done anything evil, it is probably this: I reminded the Jewish council of our great Jewish doctrine of the Resurrection."

Remember... the Book of Acts is a record of the early church's witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22).

The Sadducees had long abandoned the doctrine, and the Pharisees did not give it the practical importance it deserved. Of course, Paul would have related this doctrine to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the Sanhedrin did not want that.

They had accused Paul of being anti-Jewish and anti-Roman, but they could not prove their charges.

If the Jewish leaders had further pursued any of these charges, their case would have collapsed. But there was enough circumstantial evidence to plant doubts in the minds of the Roman officials, and perhaps there was enough race prejudice in them to water that seed and encourage it to grow. After all, had

not the Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome? ([Acts 18:2](#)) Perhaps Paul would bear watching.

Felix: Foolish Attitudes (Acts 24:22-27)

If ever a man failed both personally and officially, that man was Felix, procurator of Judea. He certainly could not plead ignorance of the facts, because he was "well acquainted with the Way" ([Acts 24:22](#), NIV). His wife, Brasia, was a Jewess and perhaps kept him informed of the activities among her people, and as a Roman official, he would carefully (if privately) investigate these things. **He saw the light, but he preferred to live in the darkness.**

Felix saw to it that Paul was comfortably cared for while at the same time safely guarded.

“Liberty” in [Acts 24:23](#) means that he was not put in the common jail or kept in close confinement He had limited freedom in the palace, chained to a soldier. (The guards were changed every six hours, a perfect captive congregation!)

Paul's friends were permitted to minister to him (Greek: "wait on him as personal servants"), so people could come and go to meet his needs. What Paul's ministry was during those two years in

Caesarea, we do not know, but we can be sure he gave a faithful witness for the Lord.

The record of one such witness is given by Luke, and it makes Felix's guilt even greater. **Not only was Felix's mind informed, but his heart was moved by fear, and yet he would not obey the truth.**

It is not enough for a person to know the facts about Christ, or to have an emotional response to a message. He or she must willingly repent of sin and trust the Saviour.

"*But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life*" ([John 5:40](#), NKJV).

It must have been the curiosity of his **wife, Drusilla**, that prompted Felix to give Paul another hearing. She wanted to hear Paul; for, after all, **her family had been involved with "the Way" on several occasions. Her greatgrandfather tried to kill Jesus in Bethlehem ([Matt. 2](#)); her great-uncle killed John the Baptist and mocked Jesus ([Luke 23:6-12](#)); and [Acts 12:1-2](#) tells of her father killing the Apostle James.**

Dr. Luke has given us only the three points of Paul's sermon to this infamous couple: righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. But **what an outline!**

Paul gave them three compelling reasons why they should repent and believe on Jesus Christ.

QUOTE:

First, they had to do something about *yesterday's sin* ("righteousness"). In 1973, Dr. Karl Menninger, one of the world's leading psychiatrists, published a startling book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* He pointed out that the very word *sin* has gradually dropped out of our vocabulary, "the word, along with the notion." We talk about mistakes, weaknesses, inherited tendencies, faults, and even errors; but we do not face up to the fact of sin.... "People are no longer sinful," said Phyllis McGinley, noted American writer and poet. "They are only immature or underprivileged or frightened or, more particularly, sick." But a holy God demands righteousness; that's the bad news. Yet

the good news is that this same holy God provides His own righteousness to those who trust Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). We can never be saved by our own righteousness of good works. We can be saved only through Christ's righteousness made available by His finished work of salvation on the cross.

The **second point in Paul's sermon** dealt with self-control:

we must deal with *today's temptations.*

Man can control almost everything but himself.

Here were Felix and Drusilla, prime illustrations of lack of self-control. She divorced her husband to become Felix's third wife, and though a Jewess, she lived as though God had never given the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Felix was an unscrupulous official who did not hesitate to lie, or even to murder, in order to get rid of his enemies and promote himself.

Self-control was something neither of them knew much about.

Paul's **third point** was the clincher: "**judgment to come.**"

We must do something about tomorrow's judgment.

Perhaps Paul told Felix and Drusilla what he told the Greek philosophers: **God has "appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness" by the Lord Jesus Christ** ([Acts 17:31](#)).

Jesus Christ is either your Saviour or your Judge.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Judge? "He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" ([Acts 17:31](#), NKJV). **Once again, the Resurrection!**

"Felix trembled" ([Acts 24:25](#)),

literally... "Felix became terrified."

Roman leaders prided themselves in their ability to be stoical and restrain their emotions under all circumstances, but **a conviction from God gripped Felix's heart**, and he could not hide it.

Paul had diagnosed the case and offered the remedy.

It was up to Felix to receive it.

What did Felix do? *He procrastinated!*

"When I have a convenient time, I will call for you," he told the apostle. "Procrastination is the thief of time," wrote Edward Young. Perhaps he was thinking about the English proverb,

"One of these days is none of these days."

Procrastination is also the thief of souls. The most "convenient season" for a lost sinner to be saved is *right now*.

"Behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation"
(2 Cor. 6:2).

"I think there's a special time for each person to be saved," a man argued to whom I was witnessing. "I can't get saved until that time comes."

"What are the signals that your special time has come?" I asked.

"Well," he drawled, "I don't rightly know."

"Then how will you know when you are supposed to be saved?" I asked. But the stupidity of his position never bothered him. I do hope he was saved before he died.

Consider Felix's foolish attitudes. He had a foolish attitude toward God's Word, thinking that he could "take it or leave it."

But God "now *commands* all men everywhere to repent" ([Acts 17:30](#)).

When God speaks, men and women had better listen and obey.

Felix had a foolish attitude toward his sins. He knew he was a sinner, yet he refused to break with his sins and obey the Lord. He had a foolish attitude toward God's grace. The Lord had been long-suffering toward Felix, yet the governor would not surrender. Felix was not sure of another day's life, yet he foolishly procrastinated.

"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" ([Prov. 27:1](#), NIV).

Instead of listening to Paul, Felix tried to "use" Paul as a political pawn, either to get money from the church or to gain favor with the Jews. The fact that Felix had further discussions with Paul is no indication that his heart was interested in

spiritual things. Paul's friends were coming and going, and perhaps some of them had access to the large offering sent by the Gentile churches.

Certainly Paul gave further witness to the governor, but to no avail. When Felix was replaced, he left Paul a prisoner, but it was Felix who was really the prisoner.

QUOTE: The governor's mind was enlightened (Acts 24:22), his emotions were stirred (Acts 24:25), but his will would not yield. He tried to gain the world, but, as far as we know, he lost his soul. He procrastinated himself into hell.

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION

Dr. Clarence Macartney told a story about a meeting in hell. Satan called his four leading demons together and commanded them to think up a new lie that would trap more souls. "I have it!" one demon said. "I'll go to earth and tell people there is no God." "It will never work," said Satan. "People can look around

them and see that there is a God." "I'll go and tell them there is no heaven!" suggested a second demon, but Satan rejected that idea. "Everybody knows there is life after death and they want to go to heaven. "Let's tell them there is no hell!" said a third demon. "No, conscience tells them their sins will be judged," said the devil. "We need a better lie than that." Quietly, the fourth demon spoke. "I think I've solved your problem," he said. "I'll go to earth and tell everybody *there is no hurry.*" The best time to trust Jesus Christ is —*now!*

And the best time to tell others the Good News of the Gospel is —*now!*

- Bible Exposition Commentary

“Examine Him For Yourself”

Acts 24:1-27

Easter March 27, 2016

VIDEO:

INTRO:

CONTEXT:

*The **primary emphasis** remains
that of Paul’s witness*

I. DEVILISH Deceit

¹ *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.*

⁷ *"But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,*

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.*

The Trial Before Felix (24:1-23)

THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH the Jewish leaders took this case is apparent in that the high priest himself made the sixty-five-mile journey to Caesarea along with the elders and the lawyer Tertullus (24:1).

It was not uncommon for Jews to hire pagan lawyers who would be more familiar with Roman law than they.

Roman law was as complex as our modern law, and it took an expert to understand it and know how to apply it successfully to his client's case.

Tertullus's address was particularly long and considerably stretched the truth of the matter.

- 4. He praised the governor for the peace he had brought the nation. In fact, there was less peace in Judea during Felix's administration than for any procurator until the final years before the outbreak of the war with Rome. But the Romans prided themselves in preserving the peace (the *pax Romana*), and such a comment was sure to win the governor's favor.**
- 5. Equally strained was Tertullus's appeal to Felix's "foresight" (*pronoia*) in bringing many "reforms" (perhaps better, "improvements") to the Jewish nation. Felix had scarcely done this. He had, in fact, made life miserable for the Jews, as was witnessed by the proliferation of rebellious movements during his term in response to his total lack of sympathy for or understanding of them. But again, the Romans liked to be called benefactors; and their "foresight" (Latin *providentia*) was often inscribed on their coins.**
- 6. Tertullus continued his formal flattery, referring to how the Jews "everywhere and in every way" acknowledged (literally "welcomed") his beneficial rule (v. 3). Few Jews would have felt much gratitude for Felix, and Tertullus's bestowal of the title "most excellent" was hardly deserved.**

"a flattering mouth works ruin" - Prov. 26:28

They would take seriously any threat to the *pax Romana*.

Felix in particular would have become attentive at the hint of such a charge. His entire administration had been marked by having to put down one insurrection in Judea after another.

Felis had done so decisively and cruelly. He maintained the peace at any cost.

Tertullus implied that the Christians as a whole were a dangerous and seditious sect and that Paul was one of their main collaborators. The ramifications of the Jewish charges now became infinitely clear. Should such a charge be made to stick for Paul, the whole Christian community would be viewed as a dangerous, revolutionary movement.

Had Tertullus substantiated the “Temple Staining” charge, it would have obligated Felix to turn Paul over to jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin and almost certain death.

Vance Havner used to say, *"Wherever Paul went, there was either a riot or a revival!"*

II. DIVINE Defense

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.'*”

The best defense is a strong offense!

In vv. 14–16 **Paul responded to the charges that somehow his treasonous behavior was bound up with his being a ringleader of the “Nazarene sect.”**

*He used the opportunity to deliver a sort of **mini-sermon**, changing his defensive posture into more of a positive witness.*

Paul would not deny his affiliation with the group, but he preferred another term. He preferred to be seen as a follower of “the Way,” not a party, not a “Jewish denomination,” but the true, the *only* way of the Lord for his people.

His was no offshoot tangential faith but right at the center of Jewish religion. He believed the Scriptures

the only acceptable way to worship the Father is through Jesus Christ ([John 5:23](#)).

His faith was still founded on the Old Testament Scriptures, and they bore witness to Jesus Christ.

Paul's words had a certain ominous tone.

To mention the resurrection of the unjust could only imply one thing—the coming judgment.

Paul was not about to miss the opportunity for witness.

Paul's reference to the resurrection is the high point of

*his witness in all the speeches of
Acts 23–26.*

This was not by accident.

**Paul's conviction in the resurrection constituted
the real point of contention with the other Jews.**

**In the present passage this was precisely Paul's
point.**

*He believed the same Scriptures,
worshiped the same God, shared the
same hope. But it was precisely at this
point that “the Way” parted ways with
the rest of the Jews.*

**The Christians believed that the resurrection
already had begun in Christ.**

******* One should observe
how the theme of the
resurrection unfolds in Paul's
successive speeches. *******

5. **Before the Sanhedrin the theme was set, but there Paul merely enunciated the idea of a resurrection, the belief in and hope for the coming resurrection (23:6).**

6. **In [24:15](#) he was more explicit. The resurrection was more precisely defined as including both the just and the unjust, implying thereby a coming judgment. That Paul so understood it is clear from v. [16](#), where he spoke of his own blameless conscience—blameless, that is, with regard to the judgment that all would eventually face.**

7. **Paul again made clear in his Caesarean trial what the real issue was between him**

and his Jewish accusers—it was the resurrection (24:21).

8. **The resurrection reached its fullest treatment in the final, climactic scene before Agrippa II. Again it was enunciated twice by Paul (26:8, 23), the apostle constantly focusing on what was the real issue.** This time it became clear that **it was not resurrection in general but specifically the resurrection of Christ that separated him from the Jews and constituted the focal point of his witness (26:23).**

For Paul, for Luke’s church, and for contemporary Christians this remains the primary dividing line...

Verses 17–19 constitute Paul’s response to Tertullus’s third charge—the accusation that he had desecrated the temple.

Paul had scored a rather telling legal point, and Felix was bound to have observed it. For Tertullus to have

made an accusation against Paul with the total absence of the witnesses for the prosecution was a serious breach of court procedure.

There was simply no evidence to counter Paul's own defense.

What separated him from his fellow Jews was that he was a follower of "the Way," that he believed that the Messiah had come and the resurrection had begun in Christ.

The stakes were high.

Paul was on trial for nothing less than his Christian faith.

Blameless spokespersons. As noted above, the **early Christians not only outthought their opponents, they also outlived them.** Paul said of himself, "I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man" (24:16). **In the writings of the early Christian apologists, the behavior of the**

Christians was a key aspect used in defense of Christianity.

The force of blameless lives has been powerful in defending Christianity against attacks from outside in every age.

It is not enough for a person to know the facts about Christ, or to have an emotional response to a message. He or she must willingly repent of sin and trust the Saviour.

Paul and the early Christians did not see themselves as "former Jews" but as "fulfilled Jews."

Remember... the Book of Acts is a record of the early church's witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:22).

III. DEFINING Decisions

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.*

24:22–23 The outcome of the trial could only be described in terms of the procurator’s indecision, his refusal to give a verdict.

Manifestly, he was waiting for Lysias to come and give his report. Lysias had already sent his report

and indicated that he saw the whole thing as a matter of Jewish religious law.

Lysias had even stated that in his opinion Paul had done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment (23:29).

Felix wasn't waiting for Lysias's report.

There is no indication that Lysias ever came or that Felix even sent for him.

Felix was putting the whole matter off.

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.*

Whatever the driving force behind the desire of **the couple visit Paul, the apostle used the opportunity to share the gospel with them and “spoke about faith in Christ”** (v. [24](#)).

It must have been the curiosity of his **wife, Drusilla**, that prompted Felix to give Paul another hearing. She wanted to hear Paul; for, after all, **her family had been involved with "the Way" on several occasions. Her greatgrandfather tried to kill Jesus in Bethlehem ([Matt. 2](#)); her great-uncle killed John the Baptist and mocked Jesus ([Luke 23:6-12](#)); and [Acts 12:1-2](#) tells of her father killing the Apostle James.**

Included in Paul's discussions about the gospel (v. 24) was discourse about "righteousness, self-control and the judgment"

For this particular couple, **he focused on the prospect of the coming judgment (v. 25).**

His emphasis on “righteousness”
(*dikaiosynē*) was surely intended in its
more strictly ethical connotation of
measuring up to God’s standards, which
will ultimately be the basis for the coming
judgment.

The relevance of “self-control” (*enkrateia*) to
this subject and to their own particular
situation must have been self-evident for
Felix and Drusilla. It surely explains Felix’s
alarm and abrupt curtailment of the
conversation with Paul.

His alarm at Paul’s message was real
(v. 25).

A thorough skeptic would have dismissed Paul’s
reference to the judgment as sheer fantasy, but not
Felix. His fear was genuine.

He was at the point of conviction.

But he was never willing to go beyond the point and take the leap of faith. In the end his greed, his lust, and his desire to preserve his power carried the day.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).

*As His agents,
we can become the medium
through which He performs that role.*

QUOTE:

The failure to bring up the important topics of righteousness, self-control, and judgment can result in powerful people professing commitments to Christ but without a change in lifestyle.

The evangelist's role is to keep challenging people with the truth of God's Word so that people may come to their senses and be delivered from any enslavement.

Dr. Luke has given us only the **three points of Paul's sermon** to this infamous couple: **righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come**. But **what an outline!**

Paul gave them three compelling reasons why they should repent and believe on Jesus Christ.

QUOTE:

First, they had to do something about **yesterday's sin** ("righteousness"). In 1973, Dr. Karl Menninger, one of the world's leading psychiatrists, published a startling book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* He pointed out that the very word *sin* has gradually dropped out of our vocabulary, "the word, along with the notion." We talk about mistakes, weaknesses, inherited tendencies, faults, and even errors; but we do not

face up to the fact of sin.... "People are no longer sinful," said Phyllis McGinley, noted American writer and poet. "They are only immature or underprivileged or frightened or, more particularly, sick." But a holy God demands righteousness; that's the bad news. Yet the good news is that this same holy God provides His own righteousness to those who trust Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). We can never be saved by our own righteousness of good works. We can be saved only through Christ's righteousness made available by His finished work of salvation on the cross.

The **second point in Paul's sermon** dealt with self-control:

we must deal with *today's temptations.*

Man can control almost everything but himself.

Here were Felix and Drusilla, prime illustrations of lack of self-control. She divorced her husband to become Felix's third wife, and though a Jewess, she lived as though God had never given the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Felix was an unscrupulous official who did not hesitate to lie, or even to murder, in order to get rid of his enemies and promote himself.

Self-control was something neither of them knew much about.

Paul's **third point** was the clincher: "judgment to come."

We must do something about tomorrow's judgment.

Perhaps Paul told Felix and Drusilla what he told the Greek philosophers: God has "appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness" by the Lord Jesus Christ ([Acts 17:31](#)).

(c) Those who are at the top feel that they have to please many people if they want to stay in their position and thrive in society.

This may hinder them from doing what they know to be right.

Jesus Christ is either your Saviour or your Judge.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Judge? "He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" ([Acts 17:31](#), NKJV). **Once again, the Resurrection!**

"Felix trembled" ([Acts 24:25](#)),
literally... "Felix became terrified."

He saw the light, but he preferred to live in the darkness.

Paul had diagnosed the case and offered the remedy.

It was up to Felix to receive it.

What did Felix do? *He procrastinated!*

"One of these days is none of these days."

When God speaks, men and women had better listen and obey.

Felix had a foolish attitude toward his sins. He knew he was a sinner, yet he refused to break with his sins and obey the Lord. He had a foolish attitude toward God's grace. The Lord had been long-suffering toward Felix, yet the governor would not surrender.

Instead of listening to Paul, Felix tried to "use" Paul...

CLOSE:

QUOTE: The governor's mind was enlightened (Acts 24:22), his emotions were stirred (Acts 24:25), but his will would not yield. He tried to gain the world, but, as far as we know, he lost his soul. He procrastinated himself into hell.

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION

Dr. Clarence Macartney told a story about a meeting in hell. Satan called his four leading demons together and commanded them to think up a new lie that would trap more souls. "I have it!" one demon said. "I'll go to earth and tell people there is no God." "It will never work," said Satan. "People can look around them and see that there is a God." "I'll go and tell them there is no heaven!" suggested a second demon, but Satan rejected that idea. "Everybody knows there is life after death and they want to go to heaven. "Let's tell them there is no hell!" said a third demon. "No, conscience tells them their sins will be judged," said the devil. "We need a better lie than that." Quietly, the fourth demon spoke. "I think I've solved your problem," he said. "I'll go to earth and tell everybody *there is no hurry.*" The best time to trust Jesus Christ is—*now!*

And the best time to tell others the Good News of the Gospel is—*now!*

- Bible Exposition Commentary

***"Behold, NOW is the accepted time;
behold, NOW is the day of salvation"
([2 Cor. 6:2](#)).***