

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it – but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”

Vance Havner

Text

Acts 24:1-27

Topic

Governor Felix seems to be convicted by Paul’s preaching but tells him to go away until he has a more “convenient time” to listen

Title

An Inconvenient Truth

Acts 24:1 Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator *named* Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

Acts 24:2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight,

Acts 24:3 we accept *it* always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

Acts 24:4 Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.

Acts 24:5 For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Acts 24:6 He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.

Acts 24:7 But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took *him* out of our hands,

Acts 24:8 commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

Acts 24:9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

Acts 24:10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,

Acts 24:11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

Acts 24:12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

Acts 24:13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

Acts 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

Acts 24:15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust.

Acts 24:16 This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

Acts 24:17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,

Acts 24:18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.

Acts 24:19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

Acts 24:20 Or else let those who are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,

Acts 24:21 unless *it is* for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

Acts 24:22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of *the* Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case."

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

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

Acts 24:25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Acts 24:26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

Acts 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

Introduction

"All roads lead to Rome," and in fact they once did. The road system of the ancient Romans was an engineering marvel with over fifty-thousand miles of pavement. Some roads remain to this day. You may remember from your study of history the most famous of the

Roman roads, the Via Appia which translates into English as the Appian Way.

It's that word, "way," that we're interested in. The early Christians we're studying in the Book of Acts were called "the Way." In an empire that was all about roads, where all roads led to Rome, the Christians spoke about the road, or the way, to Heaven. It was a natural metaphor the people could understand.

We encounter the title, [the Way](#), twice in our reading of chapter twenty-four – once in Paul's defense against his accusers and again in his private talks with Governor Felix. It's as if Paul, while on [the Way](#), stopped to give directions.

That's a good way to understand our encounters with folks. We're on [the Way](#) and they need directions. I'll thus organize my thoughts about chapter twenty-four around two points: #1 Tell The Self-Righteous People You Encounter Along The Way That They've Stopped Short Of The Resurrection, and #2 Tell The Unrighteous People You Encounter Along The Way That They've Stopped Short Of Righteousness.

#1 Tell The Self-Righteous People You Encounter Along The Way That They've Stopped Short Of The Resurrection (v1-21)

The apostle Paul was taken into protective custody after almost being torn apart limb-from-limb by the Jews at Jerusalem. After a plot to assassinate him was discovered he was moved under heavy guard from Jerusalem to Caesarea and handed over to Governor Felix. The Romans were still trying to find out what it was he had done and so a contingent of Jews from Jerusalem was summoned to accuse Paul in front of the governor.

[Acts 24:1](#) Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator *named* Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

[Acts 24:2](#) And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight,

[Acts 24:3](#) we accept *it* always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

Tertullus was a hired attorney. He began his prosecution by flattering the governor.

We ought to be encouraging to one another but without flattery.

Acts 24:4 Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.

Acts 24:5 For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Acts 24:6 He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.

Acts 24:7 But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took *him* out of our hands,

Acts 24:8 commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

Acts 24:9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

If you've been with us for the previous studies you see how the lawyer distorted the truth to fit his accusations. Nevertheless these were serious accusations.

Paul was accused of three things:

1. He was accused of creating **dissension among the Jews** against the government. We'd call it sedition.
2. He was accused of belonging to an unlawful religious **sect of the Nazarenes**. We'd call it sectarianism.
3. He was accused of profaning the **Temple**. We'd call it sacrilege.

There's an expression, "The man who represents himself has a fool for a lawyer." But when you are accused for being a Christian, you are not really the one on trial. Jesus is! You are there to be a witness and give testimony on His behalf. To the extent you are accused Jesus is your Advocate and can adequately represent you.

Acts 24:10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,

Instead of beginning with flattery Paul stated a fact that was in his favor. Felix knew a great deal about Jewish affairs on account of his **many years [as] a judge**.

As to the charge he was causing dissent Paul said,

Acts 24:11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

Acts 24:12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

Acts 24:13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

The charge was false and, besides, Paul had not been in Jerusalem long enough to mount any rebellion.

As to the charge he belonged to an unlawful sect Paul said,

Acts 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

Acts 24:15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust.

Rather than being some off-shoot of Judaism Paul described **the Way** as the foundation and the fulfillment of Judaism. It was nothing new; it was God's plan from the beginning.

- being changed to bring change -

As to the charge he had profaned the Temple Paul said:

Acts 24:16 This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

Acts 24:17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,

Acts 24:18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.

Paul's whole purpose in going to Jerusalem was to deliver a financial gift to the Jews. His whole purpose for being in the Temple was to complete a vow according to the Law. While there he respected all the Jewish laws and customs.

All the charges were false. So Paul concluded his defense:

Acts 24:19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

Acts 24:20 Or else let those who are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,

No witnesses were presented thus there was no evidence – only accusations.

Then Paul injected the Gospel:

Acts 24:21 unless *it is* for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.' "

The real issue was Paul's belief that Jesus Christ of Nazareth had risen from the dead and was the promised and prophesied Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world. The Jews accusing him were looking for their Messiah but rejected the claims of Christ and His followers.

Biblical Christianity is not new. It was not founded by Jesus and His followers in the first century. It was 'founded' by God in eternity past. It was first explained in the Garden of Eden in response to Adam and Eve's sin. God promised to send a Savior. He promised to come Himself and be the substitute and sacrifice for sin for the entire human race. Later on, as the Scriptures unfold, you see that the nation God would come through was Israel. It was this **Way** that Paul was on. The Jews were the ones at fault – having stopped short of the resurrection of their promised Messiah.

The first century Jews were instead trusting in their own self-righteousness to get them to Heaven. They believed that by keeping God's Law perfectly they would earn eternal life. True – **except that no one can ever keep God's Law perfectly**. All fall short; all are sinners; all need the Savior Who died as their substitute and sacrifice then proved it by rising from the dead.

Jews today still fall short of the resurrection. But it's not just Jews. All the man-made 'world' religions fall short of the resurrection. They claim to be a way to God and to some afterlife but they are a broad way leading to Hell.

Even within Christianity many fall short of the resurrection. There are unsaved men, women, and children who attend church regularly. Some of them are leaders in their church; **some are its pastors!**

You are either on **the Way** or you've stopped short because you haven't personally acknowledged your sin and trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior.

1. If you haven't accepted Jesus Christ, *do so now!*
2. If you have trusted Christ and are saved be more aware of people who, though religious, may not be born-again. Ask them how and when they received the Lord. Ask them Who or what they are trusting in to get them into Heaven. **Be sure!**

You will also encounter many people who make no claim to any righteousness gained from religion.

#2 Tell The Unrighteous People You Encounter Along The Way That They've Stopped Short Of Righteousness (v22-27)

Felix was a rat! He was known for his cruelty. He was notoriously immoral on all levels.

Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa the First, the murderer of John the Baptist. She had been married-off to a Syrian prince but, at the age of only sixteen, she left her husband to become the third wife of Felix.

Felix and Drusilla were given a great opportunity by God to turn their lives around. They had unlimited access to the apostle Paul for nearly two years. Let's see how they responded.

Acts 24:22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of *the Way*, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case."

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

Felix's decision was politically motivated. He knew Paul was innocent but he was charged with keeping the peace among the Jews so he kept Paul in custody.

Paul would remain under house arrest for the next two years. Was it 'fair'? **Life's not fair!** Paul understood that life was not fair and instead saw it as God's providence. He made the most of it.

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

Acts 24:25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Paul didn't discuss **the Way** with them on a philosophical level. He presented it as something very personal. We need to remember that biblical Christianity **is** Christ. It is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ Who has risen from the dead and who lives.

Paul reasoned to them about **righteousness**. We might define **righteousness** in a simple way as what it takes to stand before God and enter Heaven. What it takes is perfection! Thus we all fall short; we are all sinners. We must be given **righteousness**; we must be declared righteous. How is that possible? Jesus Christ came as a man to take upon Himself our sin and give us His perfect **righteousness**. When we believe in Him we are declared righteous by God.

Paul reasoned to them about **self-control**. *They had none!* And that was precisely the point. Unless and until you are saved it is impossible to live godly lives. Accept Christ and you receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. You are enabled and empowered to live life as it was intended to be lived.

That's the offer. It's up to you to decide sometime before **the judgment to come**. One day you will want to get into Heaven. If you have rejected the free gift of salvation in Jesus you must and will be rejected from entering Heaven.

Felix and (we suppose) Drusilla felt something stirring in their hearts. But for many reasons they stopped short of God's righteousness. It

was summarized by saying "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Convenient can mean, *at the proper time*. A lot of people use this excuse. They put-off thinking about God until later – until they've had their 'fun' or established their lives in business or for some other reason. It seems inconvenient to them to become Christians. That may be due partly to their warped understanding of what it means to follow Jesus – that it means giving-up things rather than gaining everything.

It may seem inconvenient but the proper time to respond to God is always immediately! **Now is the accepted time... now is the day of salvation** (Second Corinthians 6:2).

Acts 24:26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

Bribery was a way of life. It was expected. Even if he had money Paul would not have stooped to it to gain his release. We need to think through some of the customs that society winks at that are really ungodly and should not be practiced by believers in Jesus.

I don't know if it's encouraging but here is a guy, Felix, who was witnessed to by the great apostle Paul for about two years and never got saved.

Acts 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

Here is what happened according to the historians. A riot broke out between the Romans and the Jews. Felix overreacted and showed extreme cruelty towards the Jews. The resulting outcry forced his recall to Rome. To try to soften their hatred Felix left Paul in custody.

Unrighteous people are not necessarily as evil as Felix and Drusilla. They need to be told there is a **judgment** coming. Their lack of **self-control** will prove they didn't know God even though He offered to declare them righteous because of the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, on their behalf.

Conclusion – Romancing the Saints

Let's take a final look at Paul. A group of accusers from Jerusalem had come against him. We might wonder why a group of defenders from Jerusalem did not come for him. After all, the events that landed him under house arrest were set in motion by well-meaning Christians who urged him to go into the Temple in the first place.

Why did none stand with him? We can't be certain. But we can be certain of this. Jesus stood with Him and it was sufficient for him.

When your life is not 'fair' and people are against you and no one stands with you... Look to the Lord Who promised to never ever leave you or forsake you.

Two years under house arrest seems a bummer but it was really no matter to Paul. If he was a prisoner, he was the Lord's prisoner.

Since Jesus is alive you can derive joy and strength from His presence no matter your physical circumstances. His love sustains you.



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