

History in the Making
Understanding the Book of Acts-Part Thirty-Seven

Introduction: Paul is in Jerusalem—Jews want desperately to kill him

- ✓ Split Sanhedrin—over resurrection
- ✓ Plot revealed by Paul's nephew (conspiracy of 40 to kill Paul/ambush)
- ✓ Nephew warns Roman commander of group's plan
- ✓ Determined that Paul must leave Jerusalem and be taken to Caesarea
- ✓ Plans for a nighttime escape—sends a letter to Felix

Who is Felix?

Full Name: Marcus Antonius Felix

Birth: A slave

Manumission: By Antonia-Mother of Emperor Claudius

Brother: Pallas served Imperial court helped get Felix position of Roman procurator of Judean province (Pilate too) from AD 52-60

Rule: Corrupt, took bribes, cruelty in putting down zealots, many internal feuds

A. Military escort set off 3 hours after sunset with Paul (from Jerusalem) on the way to Caesarea where Felix ruled

1. Arrived at Antipatris next morning (35 miles from Jerusalem)
2. Strong escort now left—conspirators left far behind
3. Infantry left—Cavalry accompanied Paul the rest of the way to Caesarea (27 more miles open country and mainly Gentile)

B. Paul handed over to Felix at Caesarea

1. Read the letter
2. Enquired about the province (might need to consult the ruler of that state jurisdiction)
3. But Paul came from a Roman province whose governor was Felix's superior (may have wanted to stay away from controversy)
4. Told Paul when accusers arrived he would hear the case

Two thoughts here

- Paul's movement toward Rome is further movement away from Jerusalem (a final movement)-their judgment is being sealed (Jesus toward it/church away from it, now Paul away from it)
- God's fingerprints are all over this. Pilate wanted to give Jesus to Herod-but prophesied to die in Jerusalem. Felix wants to send Paul away but Rome will be his destiny as God had planned.

I. The Trial Before Felix (24:1-21)

A. Paul accused before Felix

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. 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, 3 we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. 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. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. 7 But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands, 8 commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him." 9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

Acts 24:1-9 NKJV

1. 5 days after his arrival-Sanhedrin delegation, led by Annanias (high priest arrived)
2. Had a paid advocate (attorney) Tertullus
3. His speech began with lavish flattery of Felix

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, 3 we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Acts 24:2-3 NKJV

4. Levels charges against Paul (plague, creator of dissension, ringleader of sect called Nazarenes, tried to profane the temple).
5. Told of arrest by Lysias
6. Jews agreed with charges

NOTE: Paul had caused unrest, Nazarene sect (Jesus from Nazareth) serious charge-profaning the temple

B. Paul defends himself

1. Begins with denial of their accusations.

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, 11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. Acts 24:10-13 NKJV"

- a. Recognized Felix had good knowledge of Jews (ruled there many years)
- b. Was only in Jerusalem 12 days (last 12 in 5 years and 3 in jail). No time to cause such trouble

2. But, this is what I will confess

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. 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. 16 This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. Acts 24:14-16 NKJV"

- a. Worship the God of Israel (Yahweh)
- b. True Way (thru Jesus Christ)
- c. Cherish the Law
- d. Have hope in the resurrection (also Pharisees)
- e. Strive to have a clear conscience

3. Explains his reason for being in Jerusalem

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

4. Challenges his detractors

In the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. 19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. 20 Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council." Acts 24:18-20 NKJV"

- a. It was a set-up
- b. If they had a case should have been heard

5. Only real charge-I believe in resurrection

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 24:21 NKJV

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 24:15 NKJV

- a. This is true evangelism-resurrection of just/unjust
- b. Hope for believer-strikes fear in the unbeliever
- c. Reincarnation, Annihilation-was to run from truth! People don't want to hear

For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 NKJV

II. Felix Fails to Act (24:22-27)

A. Proceeding adjourned

But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." 23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him. Acts 24:22, 23 NKJV

1. Felix had some knowledge of The Way
2. Wanted to hear the report of Lysias
3. Waited to decide-Paul given freedom

NOTE: Knew case couldn't stand but feared the Sanhedrin

B. Paul's witness to Felix and Drusilla

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. 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 24:24-25 NKJV

1. Felix wanted to hear more
2. Drusilla-youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I
3. Paul explained Christian faith
 - a. Righteousness
 - b. Self-control
 - c. Coming judgment

NOTE: No Christian faith without ethical implications

4. Felix had enough-convenient time-I will call for you

C. Mixed motives

Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound. Acts 24:26-27 NKJV

1. Bribe hopeful
2. Festus replaces Felix
3. Felix left him in-good will to Jews
4. Paul would have to start over with Festus

NOTES

- Age of relativity-church must declare righteousness and raise the standard again.
- Sin is viewed as alternate lifestyle or psychological disturbance or disease-Gospel must call us to self-control
- Age of anxiety-people know something is wrong must find a way to see judgment is coming
- Paul always preached for decision (Felix convicted)
- Fear hides behind inconvenience (busy schedule)

III. Paul Before Festus (25:1-12)

A. Festus in Jerusalem

Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, 3 asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem — while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him. Acts 25:1-3 NKJV

1. Goes there to meet leading national authority
2. They try to exploit a favor from him to ambush Paul
3. Thought they had new opportunity
4. The awfulness of hate

B. Festus denies request but issues invitation

But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly. 5 "Therefore," he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him." Acts 25:4-5 NKJV

C. New trial

And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. 7 When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, 8 while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all." Acts 25:6-8 NKJV

D. Paul appeals to Rome

But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?" 10 So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. 11 For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!" Acts 25:9-12 NKJV

1. Festus was at a loss
 - a. Wanted to make points with the Jews
 - b. Offered a change in venue-Jerusalem
2. Paul rejects proposal
 - a. He would be in jeopardy again
 - b. If Festus makes one concession to Sanhedrin he might make another
 - c. Festus was Rome's representative
 - d. Paul appealed to Caesar

NOTE: Didn't appear with Felix because it was clear that Felix knew Paul was innocent. Not sure about Festus

E. Festus relieved-To Caesar you will go!

Conclusions:

Even when heat was on—pressure great, Paul stayed true! WE MUST FOLLOW!

When embroiled in battle

1. I must still confess Christ as the uniquely-exclusive way to God.

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 24:14 NKJV

2. I must still rest my entire hope on the certainty of Christ's resurrection!

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 24:15 NKJV

- Nothing is impossible
- This is not the end
- All enemies defeated

3. I must live my life with the awareness that my privileged position as a recipient of God's grace now calls me to great responsibility.

This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. Acts 24:15 NKJV