

Paul has been unsuccessful in defending himself against the accusations of the Jews while in the jurisdiction of Jewish authorities. He has now been sent to Roman authorities and will be given his opportunity to give his defense before various Roman rulers. It is God's will that Paul go to Rome and so He sovereignly guides Paul's circumstances in order to cause this to happen.

Acts 24:1-9: The chief captain (Claudius Lysias) in charge of the Roman garrison at Jerusalem has sent Paul to Felix the governor at Caesarea in order to have his case heard in a more safe environment. The Jews hire a lawyer named Tertullus who stands before Felix and states the Jews' accusations against Paul. They accuse Paul of being a plague, guilty of sedition, and "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (those that follow Jesus of Nazareth). The governor then gives Paul the opportunity to speak for himself.

Acts 24

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

"Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered" – The Jews were given time to state their accusations against Paul through their orator Tertullus (v. 2-9). Now Felix the governor gives Paul the opportunity to speak in his own defense.

"Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation" – Paul recognizes the many years of experience that Felix has had as a judge over the Jewish nation, making him familiar with Jewish laws, customs and beliefs.

"I do the more cheerfully answer for myself" – Felix's experience as a judge familiar with the Jews encouraged Paul to think that he would get a more fair hearing, unlike his experience when before the Sanhedrin council (Acts 23:1-5). He should be able to understand that Paul's beliefs were rooted in Jewish scripture.

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

Paul wants Felix to understand that he had neither the time or the opportunity to cause the trouble that he was being accused of creating. He had only arrived in Jerusalem twelve days prior in order to practice his faith. The first seven of those days had been spent being involved in purification rites with four men who were concluding their Nazarite vows (Acts 21:26-27). His last five days was spent at Caesarea with Felix awaiting his accusers (v. 1).

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Paul points out that he was not doing anything wrong when the Jews found him in the temple. Neither was he causing problems in any of the synagogues in Jerusalem, nor anywhere else in the city. They also had no proof of any of the things that they were accusing him of.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

"But this I confess unto thee" – There is one thing that Paul will admit to being guilty of...

"that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers" – "The way" was a description of Christianity that was based on Jesus' description of Himself as "the way" (John 14:6). Paul's accusers considered following Jesus Christ to be heresy, but what they considered heresy was the way that Paul worshiped the God that his ancestors worshiped.

"believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" – Paul's belief in Jesus Christ was based on the OT scriptures ("the law and the prophets"). Paul's phrase "believing all things written" implies that his accusers were overlooking and/or ignoring some of the OT scriptures and that believing all the things that were written would lead them to faith in Christ. The Pharisees were guilty of ignoring portions of scripture that did not support their ideas, but it was especially true of the Sadducees, who rejected most of the OT and only accepted the Pentateuch as divinely inspired.

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Paul's belief in the OT scriptures gave him the hope (an earnest expectation) that God would resurrect both the just and the unjust. The belief in the resurrection was one that at least some of his accusers shared (specifically the Pharisees – Acts 23:6-9).

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

His belief in the OT scriptures guided Paul's life as he lived by faith in what God promised through them. That belief in the OT scriptures guided him to live in a manner that avoided sinning against God and man.

Verses 17-23: Paul continues his defense, saying that when he came to Jerusalem after an absence of many years in order to bring alms and offerings, but certain Jews found and accused him despite the fact that he was minding his own business in the temple and not causing any trouble. These Jews who initially accused and apprehended him had not come to Felix's judgment hall to give their testimony, which demonstrated that their accusations lacked merit. Nor could those who were present in Felix's judgment hall testify that Paul had done anything wrong when he stood in front of the Sanhedrin council except for his statement that he was being held in question concerning the resurrection (Acts 23:6-9). Felix then decided to postpone the proceedings until Lysias, the chief captain from Jerusalem, could come and give his testimony on the events in question. However, we have no record that Lysias was ever summoned.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Drusilla was the daughter of King Agrippa I (father of the King Agrippa that Paul speaks to in the next chapter). Being a Jewess, she may have been curious about Paul's belief in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and so Felix may have sent for Paul so that she might satisfy her curiosity.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance [self-control], and judgment to come, Felix trembled” – Paul no doubt spoke about the reason we need a Savior: God’s standard of righteousness that we can’t reach without self-control (of which we are incapable), and the coming judgment for sinners. Apparently Felix was feeling conviction for his sins and trembled in fear as he realized that he was in danger of God’s judgment.

“and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” – However, rather than repenting and coming to faith in Jesus Christ, Felix instead sent Paul away and postponed dealing with his own spiritual condition. We have no record that Felix ever became a believer in Christ.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

Felix could have released Paul at any time, but he hoped that Paul might be willing to buy his freedom. He kept Paul in custody and sent for him often in order to give Paul plenty of opportunity to offer him a bribe.

Acts 24:27-25:5: Emperor Nero replaced Felix with Porcius Festus as governor because of the complaints of the Jews. However, before he was replaced, Felix had attempted to curry favor with the Jews by keeping Paul incarcerated for two years. Soon after taking office, Festus visited Jerusalem where the Jews requested that he send Paul back to Jerusalem to trial. They secretly planned to kill him as he was being transported. Since he was soon returning to Caesarea, Felix refused their request and declared that Paul would be tried there.

Acts 25

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. 7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

Festus took his time returning to Caesarea and when he did arrive over ten days later, he called his court into session by sitting on the judgment seat and having Paul brought out. The Jews from Jerusalem began making their accusations against Paul, despite having no proof.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

This verse summarizes Paul’s response to the accusations, during which he stated that he was innocent and had committed no crime against the Jews, the temple or against Caesar himself.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

“But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul” – Some ten days earlier the Jews had wanted Festus to send Paul to be judged at Jerusalem but he had declined their request (vs. 1-5). Festus’ predecessor, Felix, had been replaced because the Jews had complained to Caesar about how Felix had treated them, so Festus may have decided that it would be a good idea to remain favorable in the eyes of the Jew. Thus, he was inclined to do as they asked if both parties agreed (the Jews and Paul).

“and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?” – Festus would be the judge whether he was doing so in Caesarea or in Jerusalem, with the location being the only difference. The only reason for doing this would be to please the Jews but the change in location would be a disadvantage to Paul.

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

“Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged” – Paul was a Roman citizen and he had the right to be judged at a Roman judgment seat with a Roman official (representing Caesar) officiating. Perhaps Paul suspected that the Jews would be waiting to murder him during the journey to Jerusalem, but he also knew that he would not get a fair trial in Jerusalem.

“to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest” – During the past two years since his arrest in Jerusalem, no evidence had been found to prove Paul’s guilt (v. 7), a fact that Festus was well aware of.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

“For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die” – Paul was willing to die for his crimes if he had committed any.

“but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them” – Since none of the accusations against him were true, justice demanded that he not be turned over to the Jews for punishment.

“I appeal unto Caesar” – This statement is like someone appealing to the Supreme Court to hear his case. As a Roman citizen, Paul is appealing to the highest court in the land to be heard where the Jews could not sway justice.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

“Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council” – Apparently Paul’s appeal surprised Festus and he wasn’t sure how to handle it until he discussed it with “the council” (his advisors).

“answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go” – Festus decided to turn Paul’s case over to Caesar.