

**1189 Paul's accusation and defense before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa - Acts (24)1-(25)27  
(by Whirlwind)**

First, we see the Jewish attorney Tertullus bringing charges against Paul before Governor Felix, and we expose his lies by which. Second, it describes Paul's defense before the governor against the Jews, his admission of one matter, and his conduct, which was upright and did not involve the use of donations. Third, the text describes how Felix kept Paul in prison for two years and the reasons behind it. Fourth, it mentions the diligent new governor, Festus. Fifth, we examine the scene where Paul was compelled to appeal to Caesar before Festus. Finally, it discusses Paul's defense before King Agrippa.

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (5/10/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.

**1. The Jewish attorney Tertullus brought charges against Paul before Governor Felix**

"After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney (G4489, orator) named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul. After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, "Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing. For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, ordering his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him." The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so."(Acts 24:1-9)

The word "orator" (G4489) appears only once here, but we can tell from his actions what kind of work he was engaged in; clearly, he was a skilled speaker, as evidenced by his opening remarks to the governor. He first flattered the governor, then immediately got to the point, asking for the courtesy to speak a few words. His sole aim was to win; he didn't care if he had to lie. This is somewhat like the teaching of some lawyers, whose only goal is to win, regardless of the truth. Notice that the Jews also joined him in lying, by "...asserting that these things were so."(Acts 24:9)

In contrast to him was Paul, who spoke the truth. So let us first consider what Paul said: "since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot. Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me."(Acts 24:11-13) By comparing the two men's statements, we can see which one is telling the truth.

We can point to a clear example of Theodorus's falsehood related to this passage: "For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple."(Acts 21:29) He said, "And he even tried (G3985, tempt) to desecrate the temple; ..." (Acts 24:6) He must have known by then that this was a misunderstanding, because no one had seen Trophimus enter the temple. Clearly, the fact is, "in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, without any crowd or uproar. But there were some Jews from Asia."(Acts 24:18) Indeed, there were Jews from Asia who went to Jerusalem with Paul, but there were no Gentiles in the temple. Note that this word G3985 appears 42 times, enough to grasp its meaning. Another instance is, "Others, to test (G3985, tempt) Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven."(Luke 11:16) This is why Tertullus would say such a thing here.

## 2. Paul's appeal to the Jews before the Governor

"When the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded:

"Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense, since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot. Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me. But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men. Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, without any crowd or uproar. But there were some Jews from Asia— who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, 'For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.'"(Acts 24:10-21)

We have already discussed the facts Paul presented earlier. As for the one thing he admitted, it essentially boils down to: "...For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today."(Acts 24:21) As for the part explicitly stated in the scripture, please read the passage for yourself, which is also kind of including the statement "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit."(Romans 9:1) We know that Paul was arrested because he took four men "...and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; ..." (Acts 21:24). Moreover, he himself "...came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings."(Acts 24:17)

Some who saw the fees he paid claimed he had misappropriated the collection funds, which is unreasonable, for how could one in good conscience embezzle such funds? Especially since he said, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting

for me to go also, they will go with me."(1 Corinthians 16:1-4) He conducted himself with complete integrity; if he could not afford the expenses himself, he would refuse their requests.

I suspect those who say such things probably think Paul was penniless, but the Bible does not say that. His principle was, "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me."(Acts 20:33-34) That is why he would say, "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."(2 Thessalonians 3:7-10) When in need, he also took provision, as the verse says, "You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs."(Philippians 4:15-16) Paul would not have been penniless.

### 3. For two years, Felix kept Paul in prison.

"But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case." Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.

But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned."(Acts 24:22-27)

We note that Lysias, the commander, did not go to Philip in the end; this was indeed an evasion, but the governor treated him with favor. Then, a few days later, an opportunity arose to preach to both him and his wife, and we saw that Philip was greatly afraid of what Paul said about righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment. But he would not listen; instead, he hoped Paul would give him money, and he repeatedly summoned him to converse with him. "But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned."(Acts 24:27)

### 4. The diligent new Governor, Festus

"Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him, requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way). Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to

leave shortly. "Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him."(Acts 25:1-5)

Here we see that Festus was a very diligent man, for "Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea."(Acts 25:1) He must have learned from the handover with his predecessor, Felix, that the Jews intended to kill Paul, so he refused to bring Paul to Jerusalem, saying instead that he himself was about to go to Caesarea and that they should bring charges against him there.

#### **5. Paul Was forced to appeal to Caesar before Festus**

"After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove, while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar." But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?" But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know. If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar." Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."(Acts 25:6-12)

As soon as Festus returned to Caesarea, he dealt with Paul's case the very next day, and the Jews brought many unfounded charges against him. From Paul's defense in the text, we can see that he had committed no wrongdoing; he stated clearly, "...I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know."(Acts 25:10) We can also see that he was compelled to appeal to Caesar because he knew he could not return to Jerusalem. This does not mean that Caesar himself presided over the trial, but rather that, as a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to be tried in Caesar's court.

As for his innocence, this is evident from the following passage: "The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."(Acts 26:30-32) This is just like Jesus: though He was sinless, He was crucified, yet thereby fulfilled God's will. Likewise, Paul was bound and sent to Rome though he was innocent, thereby fulfilling God's will.

#### **6. Paul's appeal before King Agrippa**

"Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus. While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix; and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him,

asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges. So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me. When the accusers stood up, they began bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting, but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters. But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him." So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer. But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you all and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write. For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him.'"(Acts 25:13-27)

The passage clearly explains how Festus told Agrippa that he had dealt with Paul's case very quickly; please read the text for yourself. "Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him.'"(Acts 25:22) "So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in."(Acts 25:23)

The "Bernice" mentioned here is not his wife; if she were, it would have been explicitly stated, just as it is clear that the Jewish woman Tushila was the wife of Felix. Here we can also see that Paul was being tried before King Agrippa according to Roman procedures. Festus had hoped that Agrippa and his party would, in the course of the prisoner Paul's transfer, specify his crimes, but this did not come to pass, for the Scripture says, "The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'"(Acts 26:30-32)