

Acts 24b verses 14-27

14 The early Christian movement was called The Way because Jesus declared Himself to be the way to God. (John 14:6) Paul addressed the fact that the Jewish leaders call it a sect, but denied that that was the case by saying that He believes the words of the Law and prophets. He certainly interprets much of the Scriptures differently than the Jewish system, but to Paul this was true Judaism.

15 Paul's belief in the Law and prophets includes hope in the resurrection. (Daniel 12:2) That hope encompasses a descendent of David as the Messiah. (John 5:28-29; 2Corinthians 5:10)

16 If we believe we will give an account for our earthly life to our righteous Maker who is our Judge, shouldn't we all strive to keep our conscience clear before God and man? We should make sure we are clear with God and man each night before we sleep. "If I should die before I wake..."

17-18 Paul was in Jerusalem 5 years earlier for the Apostolic Council of A.D. 49. His stated intention for coming contradicts all the accusations against him. He was doing what any Jew would do, and in fact, doing what devout Jews would do. He was remembering the poor as Peter had asked him to do when (Galatians 2:10) he had brought a gift 12 years earlier (11:27-30) "Offerings" may refer to the financial help for the men that took the vows.

19-21 The problem is with his enemies from Asia (Ephesus) who were jealous of the converts to The Way. Why didn't they appear to testify in this important case? Did they have to return to Ephesus or did they realize their false accusations of Paul bringing Trophimus (a Gentile) into the Temple would not stand up under investigation? Roman Law was hard on those who dropped charges. When Paul previously stood before the Sanhedrin they already knew that charge was baseless or they would have brought it up. Instead, the commotion was about belief in the resurrection. 23:6-7

22-23 Felix had to know about the religious movements in his region. Christianity was growing rapidly. He surely knew that The Way was not a violent movement. He probably also knew of the animosity the Jews held toward this new direction within their religion. A comparative adjective (well- acquainted) is used so it could be translated that he knew more about The Way than the Sanhedrin did. He put the trial off, probably waiting for more information from Lysias.

Given some freedom does not mean that he is not chained. He is most likely kept in a cell and manacled to soldier. Romans did not feed or provide any needs for prisoners. The friends of Paul, the church in Caesarea and possibly those travel companions that came with Paul to Jerusalem, including Luke, would have met

his daily needs. Perhaps Cornelius assisted as well. (See Acts 10) Early Christians risked imprisonment and life to care for believers in prison. (Hebrews 13:3)

24 Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I whose death is recorded in 12:19-23. She was only 14 when she married Felix and 19 at this trial. One of Felix previous wives was the granddaughter of Anthony and Cleopatra. Drusilla had previously been married to King Azizus, the king of Emesa, a small territory of Syria. When Felix saw her, he was overcome with desire for her and hired a Jewish magician to win her away from the king. His promises to make her happy won out and she left Azizus to marry Felix.

Paul used the opportunity to share that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecies. He was exhorting them to become believers.

25 Righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come – these were Paul's topics. (John 16:8) They are often the subject of witnessing. We must first realize righteousness is not religious ritual but a matter of the heart. Our standard is not other men, but the life of Jesus. When we realize how short we come to being like Him, we see the need for self-control that is a fruit of the Spirit. If we will not let Christ into our life, who brings the Spirit of self-control, we will face judgment. This would help Felix and Drusilla recognize their need of the saving work of Jesus.

26 Felix asked for Paul to come talk frequently, not because he is concerned about his own soul, but hoping for a bribe. Felix probably investigated the gift Paul brought to the Jerusalem church and thought he had access to large sums of money. Bribery was illegal but often overlooked. You just bribe the investigator or share some of the proceeds with your superior.

27 Paul is kept incarcerated in Caesarea for 2 years. Luke is in Caesarea gaining valuable information for his Gospel and the book of Acts. It was probably during this time that Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. Felix was removed from office because of his heavy-handed way of dealing with the Jews. After some fighting in the streets between the Jews and the Syrians over citizenship, Felix ordered the Jews to stand down. They would not. He slaughtered a great number and pillaged their homes. If it were not for family connections (his brother Pallas was a friend of Nero), he would have been dealt with much more severely.

Felix left Paul imprisoned. If Felix released him, he would have only antagonized the Jews further. Handing him over to the Sanhedrin would have resulted in a Roman's death. The smartest political move was to leave him in prison. Drusilla and her son died in the Pompey eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. Porcius Festus took Felix place.