

## Acts 24 Decide or Hide

**Big Bible Picture...** Get to know God, & His will for us, shows us our inability to be righteous, have self control, Bible not only shows our need for a Savior, it tells us who that Savior is, and what He has done for us. Reading the Bible is the number one way we grow in relationship with the Lord who loves us!

**Big Act Picture...** Acts of the apostles, acts of the HS *Spirit driven church*. *Authentic Church* Acts 1-12 show us life after the resurrection in local Israel, HS given, the “church” began & started to grow.

Acts 13 took a turn for the church. Paul and Barnabas start traveling fulfilling the commission of Christ by going into the known Roman world, preaching and teaching the love of Christ through the cross, and in a risen Savior! There were 3 responses, accept, reject, & defer. Opposition arose wherever Paul planted, but that didn’t slow Paul’s mission down, it seemed to give it steam and momentum!

**Paul in Acts.** Man on mission. Driven man. Obedient man.

Paul, who once ordered the hit on Saint Stephen, Paul who ransacked homes and villages trying to flush out believers of Jesus. Paul who wasn’t saved by how good he was, but was saved just by goodness of God...That Paul, had a message to share.

That God loves you, good news. “You were separated from his love, bad news. Jesus died & rose for you to be brought back again” back to the Good News again...this is Gospel News!

### Characters

Paul preacher, Ananias Holy Roller High priest, Tertullus skilled orator lawyer, Lysias Roman commander, Felix Roman Governor, Drusilla his Jewish wife, Festus succeeding gov

**Setting,** 59AD, Israel, Caesarea by the seaside

**Background & Plot...** Paul has been safely by the hand of God been transported under Roman army protection from Jerusalem to Caesarea, the Jewish leaders of all Israel catch up to him after their wicked plot to have 40 assassins kill Paul is totally thwarted by the providential hand of God, Paul saved by natural ways, people, plans, not miraculous, but providential... **God is behind all of the scenes of life but he is moving all of the scenes that he is behind.**

**Ch 24** Paul is in Caesarea under close watch by Felix the wicked Roman governor. The Sanhedrin, Jewish leaders come to the coastal city to go after Paul through Roman law, since they couldn’t murder him contrary to the law. What we will see is Paul on trial, flattery of the Jews, lies, false witnesses. Paul brings his case in a neatly wrapped pinpointed package of truth to Felix the gov. Who hears out both sides...the accusers and the accused.

Felix has enough evidence to see this is a sham, that Paul had done nothing against Roman law, but he lacks the courage to make a decision TWICE. Once on Paul’s guilt or innocence, then another when faced with what to do about “the Way”, what to do about Jesus Christ, His resurrection, and offer of salvation.

1 Five days later Ananias, the high priest, arrived with some of the Jewish elders and the lawyer Tertullus, to present their case against Paul to the governor. 2 When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented the charges against Paul in the following address to the governor:

The sanhedrin wasted no time at all pursuing Paul's prosecution. Paul made it out of the woods, safe from Jerusalem to the seaside city of Caesarea. Just 6 days before this Jesus showed up and told Paul while in jail in Jerusalem ... Paul, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." The Lord promised to be with Paul in this mission, but HE didn't promise it would be easy.

Paul is put on trial before Felix the gov, Ananias the high priest stands by seemingly silent while an interesting character named Tertullus acts as the prosecuting attorney against Paul. He's the big wig, big mouth, skilled speaker of his day. Great with words, and knee deep in bogus flattery! Tertullus is about to present the case against Paul to Felix the Roman Governor...

**Felix, background**, was a former slave, but his brother Pallus who was very close to the Emperor Claudius, who quickly rose to power. Felix was eventually freed, then given the position as the Roman governor by his brother, becoming the first slave to ever become a Roman Gov.

Said of Felix... Tacitus, the Roman historian, described Felix as "a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave"

"The picture drawn by Tacitus of Felix's public and private life is not a pretty one. He indulged in every license and excess, thinking 'that he could do any evil act with impunity'

This is the guy Tertullus say this to..

"You have provided a long period of peace for us Jews and with foresight have enacted reforms for us. 3 For all of this, Your Excellency, we are very grateful to you. 4 But I don't want to bore you, so please give me your attention for only a moment.

Long periods of peace? Wow... truth of the matter, Felix dealt with some Jewish uprisings by ordering the slaughter of thousands of Jews, then looting their homes. The lawyer Tertullus offers gratitude to Felix for the years of peace when he should be offering him his dread and horror instead!

Tertullus was really laying it on thick & buttering up the governor

**Flattery** is an evil and slippery slope to slide upon. Flattery defined.. as excessive and *insincere praise*, especially that given to further one's *own interests*.

Bible Flattery...

- Flattery often **divides and deceives** people for the flatters personal gain...

**Romans 16.18** For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Flattery can be to attract attention to ourselves, or we can flatter our friends to gain acceptance...or flatter the pastor with insincerity (usually out of love and respect, we love one another here at CCCC, but let us be family that is engaged in sincere acts of love, not empty flattery)

**Proverbs 20.19** He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets. Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.

**Flattering God**, (insincere praise)

**Psalms 78 34** When He slew them, then they sought Him; And they returned and sought earnestly for God. **35** Then they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer. **36 Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue; 37** For their heart was **not steadfast with Him**, Nor were they faithful in His covenant.

God wants our true praise, not fluffy, shiny, pretty empty praises....

Flattery is just a trap, people know when your shoveling out the bull patties, the stench of insincerity gives it away every time. I imagine the stench of the stable was filling Felix's nostrils by now

Tertullus was on a mission to win this case by flattery for he knew his evidence was about as weak as his sincerity....It's been said... when the law is on your side you argue the law, when the facts are on your side you argue the facts. When neither are on your side you argue to confuse the judge in the jury.

**5** We have found this man to be a troublemaker who is constantly stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a **ringleader** of the cult known as the Nazarenes. **6** Furthermore, he was trying to desecrate the Temple when we arrested him **8** You can find out the truth of our accusations by examining him yourself." **9** Then the other Jews chimed in, declaring that everything Tertullus said was true.

Pause & note, what was Paul thinking? Smile upon his face, hears the whole world is hearing the gospel, and he is known as the leader?

Tertullus has appealed to Felix's pride rather than his intellect...because he doesn't have a case against Paul and he knows it!

"Well this guy is a troublemaker, stirring up riots all around the world" Where are the eyewitnesses? Isn't that an important piece of evidence in any court case? In our current court systems today, when you get the witness of 2 people we will send a man or woman to jail for decades if the crime warrants it.

There really wasn't any real evidence to prosecute Paul... just like Pilot who held Felix's position 30 yrs prior, had no evidence against Jesus, but he was afraid of what men might think rather than what God our Creator thinks...

**Food for thought**, Jesus had over 500 eyewitnesses see him resurrected and alive after his death which was witnessed by and testified of by Christians, Romans, Non-believing Jewish historians even wrote of a man named Jesus who people claimed was raised from the dead... the evidence is heavy when you start to unravel it and unpack it... but the god of this age has put blinders.... **Pray and pity those who oppose you and the gospel!** Ask God to free them, maybe you're blinded, wondering how people can believe all this? It takes vision to see a vista, ask God to give you gospel lenses, gospel vision. The evidence is there, hidden in plain sight...

Tertullus calls Paul the ringleader of the Nazarenes... not a nice term, Nazarenes were looked down upon...

**John 1 45 Philip** went to look for **Nathanael** and told him, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph ...from Nazareth.” **46** “Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. **“Can anything good come from Nazareth?”** Philip...“Come and see for yourself,”

Tertullus goes on now with lies...says he desecrated the temple too, ya that's it! But there was no evidence or explanation. Then the bobble heads chimed in **Then the other Jews chimed in, declaring that everything Tertullus said was true.** These aren't even the Jews that were in Ephesus, Galatia, Lystra, Derbe, Corinth or Jerusalem where all the riots and desecrating supposedly happened...

**Paul presents his case** gladly to Felix...

**10** The governor then motioned for Paul to speak. Paul said, “I know, sir, that you have been a judge of Jewish affairs for many years, so **I gladly present my defense** before you. **11** You can quickly discover that I arrived in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago to worship at the Temple. **12** My accusers never found me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor stirring up a riot in any synagogue or on the streets of the city. **13** These men cannot prove the things they accuse me of doing.

Why is Paul happy to present his defense...One...he's innocent and he knows it, but there is an underlying truth here, that lies so close to the surface. If you look back at the last 11 chapters in Acts, Paul's mission, Paul's heart was to bring the gospel hope to all the world.

It was his job to win souls to Christ. **1 Corinthians 9:22** I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means **save some.** **23** Now this **I do for the gospel's sake...**

What an unbelievable opportunity, sharing before the leaders of Israel, high up officials of Rome. Don Richardson, missionary would go into a foreign lands to bring the good news Of Jesus. He said he would **look for the leaders** of the indigenous group & build relationships with them, because he knew if they came to know Jesus they would have such a strong influence on their own community....Paul had such an opportunity...

of course he was happy to share, regardless of the circumstances (something to be said about this gang, when life hands you lemons... we are on “Mission Possible”)

Paul's intention at this hearing in Caesarea, the intention of his entire life was to do the work and will of his Father...So, Paul preaches finding **common ground and cultural connections!** But he never compromises the truth of the gospel, he never shies away from his faith and foundation Jesus Christ resurrected...

**14** “But I admit that I follow **the Way**, which *they* call a cult. I worship the God of our ancestors, and I firmly believe the Jewish law and everything written in the prophets. **15** I have the same hope in God

that these men have, that **he will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous.** 16 Because of this, I always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and all people.

Paul openly admits that one thing Tert said is true, but he clarifies for moments ago Tert. calls Paul a derogatory term, Nazarene. "I admit I follow the WAY!"

Christian....used only 3 times in bible. Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1 Peter 4, a term meant to demean followers of Christ ...

Shyla & Ella comparison.... "Christian" means "Little Christ" to be like Jesus, look like him, act like him....not a put down at all, actually. The early church adopted this term shortly after the NT was complete...

While Christ's followers were called Christians in a demeaning way at first... Paul says they are people of **The Way**. I like that...

We live in a desperate state, a fallen world that needs hope, needs to be saved from a spiralling tailspin of despair. To the point, we have been separated from our true form, what we were meant to be, separated from our true Father and our true faith. We've gotten lost! The world was searching for a way back to good, a way back to Eden. A way back to truth, reality, way back to closeness with our Creator...

....Jesus bust in on the scene and dropped a bomb on the world!

In **John 14:3-7** 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know **the way** to where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know **the way**?"

6 Jesus said to him, "**I am THE WAY, and the truth, and the life.** No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also From now on you do know him and have seen him.

**This WAY**, this is **the Way** Paul was referring to. This is the WAY Paul was pointing towards...only the way wasn't a direction, it wasn't a living style or simply a mentality or awareness... the Way Paul referred to was a Person..Jesus Christ. Why the WAY? Jesus is the only way to righteousness, self control and the pathWAY into heaven, to the Father!

Jesus is so much more than a philosophy, a set of codes and teachings only...who He is and what HE did for us is so beyond anything this world has to offer in the realm of hope. There is no system, religion, way of thinking, living, no code of conduct or set of morals that can possibly bring us back to good Back to God again.

The Way was lost to mankind, shrouded in the darkness and blinders of the enemy's lies... It's the gospel that has the power to save, open your eyes Felix, open your eyes Ananias,, open your eyes Calvary , God would you reveal to us the WAY, Truth and Life... Reveal **Jesus!**

In Paul's defense he finds the common ground, I worship the same God they do, I believe in the resurrection of the just and unjust... proof positive that Paul for one, believed in life after death for all people...the question remains, where are you going...we know the Way, through Jesus alone...we get to heaven. Over JEsus dead body we crawl to hell...

Paul goes on to continue his defense, retells the account of his journey back to Jerusalem, the happenings, and that none of these Jews who have the gripe against him are even there...

**17** “After several years away, I returned to Jerusalem with money to aid my people and to offer sacrifices to God. **18** My accusers saw me in the Temple as I was completing a purification ceremony. There was no crowd around me and no rioting. **19** But some Jews from the province of Asia were there—and they ought to be here to bring charges if they have anything against me! **20** Ask these men here what crime the Jewish high council found me guilty of, **21** except for the one time I shouted out, **‘I am on trial before you today because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!’**”

The resurrection is why I am here, Im on trial because of the resurrection Felix...

Ask around, many people believe in Jesus. They say he was a good teacher, prophet, like Buddah, Mohammed, Krishna, Gandhi. SOme may say He is the Son of God, not knowing that was a direct title assigned to mean He was one with God and is God. But ask if people believe in the actual physical resurrection...it becomes a stumbling block.

G Campbell Morgan...“Christianity is like an arch supported by two pillars”. One pillar is the death of Jesus. The other pillar is the resurrection. The two are essential to holding up the strongest structure known to mankind... the arch de true triumph...The Gospel!

Without the resurrection...there is no hope, without the death of Christ, there is no forgiveness.

**1 Corinthians 15:14-17** 14 And if Christ has **not been raised**, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, **your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**

**22** At that point Felix, who was quite **familiar with the Way**, adjourned the hearing and said, “Wait until Lysias, the garrison commander, arrives. Then I will decide the case.” **23** He ordered an officer to keep Paul in custody but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to visit him and take care of his needs.

Felix is familiar with the Way... Proof that Paul and the disciples had effectively reached the outer parts of Israel, reached the Gentile, Roman world leaders even...

Felix had knowledge of the way, the gospel preached from Paul was familiar. Paul was breaking cultural barriers.

Paul wasn't on trial, it was Felix on trial here. Paul was in charge because of the gospel he preached, the authority he received, the power that was in him. This verse reinforces the belief that Paul was doing so much more with his unfortunate situation than just trying to get out of it!

Paul was intentional about planting gospel seeds, winning souls for Christ!

Lysias commander that saved Paul would never come, never be sent for it seems.

Paul placed on house arrest, given liberties to come and go occasionally, have visitors, but Felix just didn't have the courage to let him go, even though he had to know Paul was innocent. Felix sends Paul away but ...

**24** A few days later Felix came back with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. Sending for Paul, they listened as he told them about faith in Christ Jesus. **25** As he reasoned with them about righteousness and self-control and the coming day of judgment, Felix became frightened. "Go away for now," he replied. "When it is more convenient, I'll call for you again." **26** He also hoped that Paul would bribe him, so he sent for him quite often and talked with him.

**Felix wife Drusilla**.... Was Jewish by blood, but not by faith it seemed. Said to be beautiful beyond belief, 20 years old, Felix seduced her away from her former husband, Assyrian King. Daughter of Herod, Herod who killed James, tried to kill Peter before jailbreak. Sister of Herod Agrippa 2nd. Drusilla great uncle killed JTB. Her Great grandfather tried to kill Jesus...

Great company for Paul the Christ follower to be in...but Paul was a man on mission

So, Felix sends for Paul and asks his wife to come and listen, maybe he wanted her opinion, maybe he wanted her to hear out this Jewish Roman man's word, IDK. Maybe there was nothing playing at the Roman theater downtown that night and he thought Paul would be good entertainment...

What did Paul do with his time? He told them about his own faith in Christ to start off. And they listened, he started with his testimony of who he was before Christ, his need for a savior, and how Jesus saved him, how his life was transformed and hope and joy leapt into his life alas! How do I know, doesn't say exactly that...go back and read the last 10 chapters...

But what Paul did and said after, how he preached was amazing, whether Paul knew the background behind these 2 or not (sure he did Drusilla), doesn't matter. Clearly God gave Paul the words and the power to preach them... To this power hungry, cruel, lewd, lust driven governor who seemingly held the power of life and death over Paul's head, to this man Paul preached a truth that must have pierced Felix to the heart...

Remember Paul preached to draw people to Christ, not to drive them away or act self righteous!

**Righteousness**....the third point Paul brings up to drop the bomb on Felix does talk about the judgment to come. "Felix, there is nothing righteous about you, me, any of us. We all fall short of God's glory. I was a chief sinner, I killed people of the Way myself, I thought I was right with God. Good news is, none of us is righteous no not one human, but let me tell you about this Jesus who I met along the Damascus Road....HE IS righteous. He is right with God. HE is the only way to the Father in heaven...."

**Self Control**, Self-control sermon. Felix with his nineteen-year-old trophy wife beside him. Can you imagine Paul's sermon here? I can't believe he's talking to me this honestly, Felix might say or think. At the same time they both know he's telling the truth. Felix you need to live in a way that show self-control on the way you're living your life shows you have no satisfaction in your life. You can't control your feelings your desires your lust your greed there's an emptiness inside you Felix you're looking and longing for something more Felix....

And Felix, you seduced this young girl next to you, killed Jews to prove your point, engage in sexual exploits that are just plain gross using your position and power to get and have whoever and whatever you want... it's not pleasing to God... where is your self control....let me tell you about Jesus, and how He gave His own Spirit, the HS to govern our hearts and give us a burden for His righteousness, that gives us a desire for self control....

**Day of Judgement to Come**, Felix, i have some good news and bad news. Bad news is...there will come a day when all you've ever done, all your sins written in a little (or really big) book will be brought out before you on judgment day. Yes, there really is a day when all our sin will be brought up, God is a righteous judge who can not let any crime or wrongdoing go without making a judgment on it...

But the good news, the gospel news is, that anyone found written in the Lamb's Book of Life won't receive the judgment for their sins at all. "What, why, that's not fair", Felix....

Remember that Jesus, the Way, the Door? He is also the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Come to Him Felix, Drusilla He is the Messiah you've been waiting for, the anointed and appointed one! God alone can forgive sins, Jesus is the sin taker, the bond breaker, He is the Way, truth the life....

Felix had some of the most amazing opportunities and time with Paul He was faced with a decision to make...

**27** After two years went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people, he left Paul in prison.

Paul spent 2 yrs in Caesarea until Festus took Felix spot as gov. Sadly Felix had the greatest opportunity to know Jesus, but rejected it, and exploited it, hoping for a pay of in exchange for Paul...

Paul was on a mission to Rome,,, to the leader of the entire known world!

Felix responds to Paul's sermon with fear first and then he puts Paul off. By not making the decision he was actually rejecting the message the gospel message the message of Hope. By not deciding he has decided to reject the calling to the cross.

**Facing Fate**...there will come a day when all of mankind will sit, alone, before God and be judged for our sin. We can stand in guilt and shame without Christ. Or we can stand in righteous white robes, no guilt or shame, sinless in God's eyes because of the cross and resurrection...

God gives every person a day and a moment to decide and opportunity to come to the Way, the person, the Savior JEsus and enter into heaven through Him. SOme say yes, some say no, but all decide. The reply that says, I'll answer tomorrow, is in reality a quiet rejection.

Come and receive today while it is still called today...we don't know what tomorrow holds.

Maybe you've been saved, accepted Christ, but He is asking you to put down a sin,or another way you may be following contrary to Christ. He is inviting you, asking you, commanding you to put away anything that isn't in His perfect will for your life. Time to decide whom you will follow!



