

## Acts 24 (#38) 2.14.2021 (21013)

### Splitting the Old Wineskin

**I. The gospel changes everything.** Jesus said that the new wine of the gospel would split the old wineskin of religion. Mk.2:22. Acts is the record of the first 30 years of this phenomenon.

### II. Background. Late May (Feast of Pentecost) 57 AD.

#### A. Paul is in Roman custody because of a Jewish riot in Jerusalem. Acts 21-23

1. They rescued Paul from the Jews in the temple. (21-22)
2. They rescued him again the next day from the Sanhedrin. (23:10)
3. They protected him at night from the 40 fasting assassins. (23:12-35)

#### B. The Romans don't know what to charge Paul with, but need to do something.

1. Because the Jews are insisting that Paul is a criminal.

#### C. The Procurator is Antonius Felix.

1. Got this job because his brother, Pallus was a honcho in the Roman court. (52-59 AD)
2. Notoriously violent and inept ruler.
3. Married to his third wife, Drusilla.
  - a) Youngest daughter of Agrippa I (the one who had James executed and Peter imprisoned in Acts 12).
  - b) Sister of Agrippa II, (Acts 26:28)
  - c) Jewish, beautiful, young. 16 when she married Felix.

#### D. So now Paul is on trial in Caesarea before Governor Felix.

1. The Jewish delegation includes the High Priest (Ananias) and the co-conspirators who planned on killing Paul in Jerusalem. (23:12-15)

### III. Acts 24. Paul at Felix's court in Caesarea.

#### A. Prosecution's Case: Rome should execute Paul because he is a criminal. 1-9.

1. Flattery. 1-4
  - a) Tertullus knew that Felix was inept and roundly hated by the Jews.
2. Falsehood. Paul is an insurrectionist (sedition). 5-9
  - a) A Plague. trouble-maker (NIV) and "Pest" (NAS)
    - (1) Pestilence. Cancer, Covid, virus.
  - b) An Agitator: One who causes riots among the Jews
  - c) A Heretical leader. "ringleader"
    - (1) The sect (heresy) of the Nazarenes
  - d) A Temple Desecrator. (21:28-29)
    - (1) By supposedly bringing a Gentile (Trochimus) into the inner Jewish part of the temple. (not true)

#### B. Paul's case. Not one of these charges is true or provable. 10-21.

1. I am not seditious. 10-13
  - a) I have only been in the country for 12 days (before my arrest)
  - b) I came here to bring alms and worship at temple. 11, 17-18
  - c) I disputed with nobody. 12
  - d) They have no proof of any of their accusations. 13
2. I did not defile the temple. 17-21
  - a) I brought alms and offerings and was ceremonially pure.
  - b) Had done the ceremonial cleansings.

3. I am a leader of the Way, but it is not a Jewish heresy. 14-18.
  - a) The Gospel is the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets. (Mtt.5:17; Luke 24:27, 44-47)
    - (1) High view of Scripture: Believing the Law and the Prophets. (Matt.5:17)
    - (2) Hope in God. Mk.1:15
    - (3) Coming resurrection. (Jn.5:27-29)
    - (4) Universal judgment. 25. (Matt.25:41, 46)
  - b) *Which is I try to maintain a blameless conscience with God and men. 16.*
4. I did not start the ruckus at the temple, the Asian Jews did. 17-21
  - a) And they are conspicuous by their absence here!
5. This is not about **insurrection**; it is about the **resurrection!** 21.
  - a) Not a political threat to Rome, but an intramural, theological debate within Judaism, legal religion.
  - b) But the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a world-shaking, life-changing, transforming, reality.
  - c) *If the resurrection is true, the whole gospel is true.*

**C. Felix's response. Stall for time. 22-23.**

1. Felix knew about Christianity (the Way), so he knew Paul hadn't broken any Roman laws, and he already had Lysias's letter that Paul was not a criminal (23:29), but he was not popular with the Jews, so he didn't want to further alienate them.
2. He decided to pretend to wait for more information. Really, he was just stalling.

**IV. Up close with Paul and Felix: 24-27.**

**A. Four Things to Note.**

1. Faith in Christ—The Gospel. (Luke's gospel)
  - a) Repentant faith in Jesus as the risen Messiah.
  - b) The life, death, burial, resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.
2. The need for righteousness: What we do not have. (Rom.3:23)
  - a) Faith in Christ is about how to come into right standing with God.
    - (1) It is a gift given to people who put their faith in Christ.
    - (2) It results in a lifestyle characterized by moral goodness.
3. The issue of self-control: slaves to sin outside Christ. (Rom. 3:23; 7:19; Eph.2:1-3)
  - a) Faith in Christ is about turning from the Self to God.
4. The guarantee of judgment. All humans. (Jn.5:27-29)
  - a) We will all be audited ... and our document shredder is broken.

**B. Alarmed, Felix dismisses Paul. 25b**

1. Paul was advising Felix and Drusilla to repent and come to Christ.
2. He talks with Paul several more times. But Drusilla isn't mentioned again. Was she offended at Paul?

## V. What do we learn from this passage?

### A. Christians can learn to navigate this controversial world. Like rafting white-water. Four things:

#### 1. Trust the Scriptures. 14. Rom.15:4-5

- a) These are the source of hope. God Has Spoken!!! Listen to Him!!!
- b) Do what is necessary to keep your mind in the Word. Ps.1
- c) Get behind any institution that promotes the gospel and the biblical worldview. Churches, Missions, Educational institutions, media outlets.
- d) We are in an avalanche of “news” “entertainment” “opinions” “political anger” etc. shut it down and listen to the Lord.

#### 2. Remember your primary citizenship. 14. The Way. 1 Pet.1:1-2 (Col.1:13-14; 3:1-4)

- a) Chosen Expats = members of an invisible kingdom first.
- b) Salt and Light here and now, but always because our eyes are open to eternity. Matt.5:13-16; 6:19-24
- c) We are citizens of the resurrection and the next age. Citizens of the future, the New Creation.
- d) This is our real and eternal identity. 2 Cor.5:17-21

#### 3. Keep your conscience clear. 16. 1 Pet.2:11-12

- a) Open to the Lord’s conviction.
- b) Am I thinking like Jesus about this...? Part of our responsibility is to constantly seek to live in God’s goodness morally, ethically, spiritually while at the same time seeking to live honorably within a fallen world.
- c) Not claiming perfection, but always wanting to do what is right.

#### 4. Focus on the gospel. 21, 24. Paul did...

- a) Paul could have pleaded his case, begged for release, talked about himself and his “violated rights.”
- b) He could have focused on how much he disagreed with Judaism and Roman Paganism...
- c) Instead, he talks about the need for faith in Jesus, the reality of righteousness, self-control, judgment.
- d) He wants Felix and Drusilla to come to Christ (Acts 26:27-30. This is Agrippa II, Drusilla’s brother)

### B. Pre-Christians learn not to procrastinate. Don’t be a “Felix.” 25

1. Admit that you need forgiveness, righteousness, self-control, and an expunged record—forgiveness in Christ and a new Destiny.