SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES

†
24:25

DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Twenty-Four, Verses 1–27

Go Away for the Present — a hired accuser, a prisoner with a clear conscience, and a governor who trembled and then put God off

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | THREE VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Five days after Paul reaches Caesarea, the high priest arrives with a hired orator who flatters the governor and calls Paul a plague. Paul answers point by point and confesses the Way, the resurrection and a blameless conscience. Later Felix and Drusilla send for him, hear about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come — and Felix, frightened, says, "Go away for the present." Read through three teachers — **David Guzik**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 24:1–27

accusation · defense · delay

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Three movements in the governor's court at Caesarea, over two years

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"In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men." — Acts 24:16

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 24:1–27

Go Away for the Present — Paul answers every charge before Felix — and then Felix hears about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 24 in 3 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 24:25

"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.""

† Before the Passage

Acts 23 ended with Paul delivered by night to Caesarea and kept "in Herod's Praetorium" until his accusers came (23:35). Acts 24 is the hearing Felix promised. "After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus" (v. 1) — the same Ananias who had ordered Paul struck on the mouth (23:2). The commander's letter had already told the governor that Paul was accused only "over questions about their Law" and of nothing "deserving death or imprisonment" (23:29).

Felix was a freedman who had risen to govern Judea. Guzik notes that he began life as a slave, that his brother Pallas was a friend of the emperor Claudius, and that he was the first former slave to govern a Roman province; he cites Tacitus (through Longenecker) that Felix was "a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave." Henry: "One of the worst of men is here applauded as one of the best of benefactors, only because he was the judge." His wife Drusilla (v. 24) was a daughter of Herod

Agrippa I and sister of Agrippa II and Bernice (25:13); Guzik says Felix had lured her away from her husband to be his third wife.

The charges are the ones raised by the Asian Jews in the temple: that Paul stirred up trouble everywhere, led "the sect of the Nazarenes," and defiled the temple (v. 5–6; compare 21:28). Paul's answer leans on facts the governor could check — "no more than twelve days ago" (v. 11), no crowd, no riot, no witnesses present (vv. 12, 18–19) — and then on a confession: he serves "the God of our fathers" according to "the Way" (v. 14). Luke has used that name for the faith since Saul hunted "any belonging to the Way" on the road to Damascus (9:2).

One textual note before reading. In verses 6–8 the NASB 1995 places a sentence in brackets — "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." NASB uses brackets for words probably not in the original writings. They are missing from the oldest Greek manuscripts and present in many later ones, which is why the King James Version prints them as ordinary text and many modern translations move them to a footnote. Verse 7 exists only in that longer reading. This study prints the NASB as it stands and explains the difference in Movement I.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 24:1–9

The Accuser's Speech

A hired orator, a flattering preface, and three charges

> [1] *After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul.* [2] *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,* [3] *we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.* [4] *"But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.* [5] *"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.* [6] *"And ⚠ he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law.* [7] *"But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,* [8] *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."* [9] *The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.*
>
> ACTS 24:1–9

FIGURE · ACTS 24:6–8 IN TWO FORMS

ACTS 24:6–8 · TWO FORMS OF THE TEXT

SHORTER TEXT oldest Greek manuscripts	LONGER TEXT many later manuscripts · KJV
v6 "… and then we arrested him." *(no verse 7)* v8 "By examining him yourself …"	v6 adds "We wanted to judge him according to our own Law." v7 Lysias "with much violence took him out of our hands"
"him" in v8 = PAUL Felix may question the prisoner	**"him" in v8 = likely LYSIAS** Felix may question the commander

NASB 1995 keeps the longer words in [brackets] — words probably not in the original writings.

No doctrine turns on it — only the question of whom Felix should examine.

Compare the columns: the bracketed words decide whom Felix is told to examine in verse 8 — Paul in the shorter text, probably Lysias in the longer.

ῥήτωρ

RHĒTŌR · "ATTORNEY, ORATOR" · G4489

A public speaker, a trained advocate — the KJV's "orator." The word appears only here in the New Testament. Tertullus followed the rules of courtroom rhetoric: a long compliment to win the judge (vv. 2–4), then the charges (vv. 5–6), then an appeal to the judge's own inquiry (v. 8). Guzik on the preface: "These were lies presented as flattery." Henry: "flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another." Paul, by contrast, offers one honest sentence about Felix's experience (v. 10) and then gets to the facts.

λοιμός

LOIMOS · "PEST" · G3061

Literally a plague or pestilence — Luke uses the plural for the "plagues" of the last days (Luke 21:11). Tertullus calls Paul a walking epidemic, a man who "stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world." Then he names him "a ringleader of the sect (*hairesis*) of the Nazarenes" and charges that he "tried to desecrate the temple" (v. 6) — Guzik: "This was a fabricated charge based on rumor only (Acts 21:26-29)." The bracketed words that follow (vv. 6b–8a) are explained in the figure.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik is unimpressed by Tertullus' opening: "These were lies presented as flattery," for "Felix did not bring peace or prosperity to those he governed." The temple charge was invented: "This was a fabricated charge based on rumor only (Acts 21:26-29)." And the prosecution brought nothing but assertion — "Tertullus did not even pretend to offer outside evidence of the charges." Reading verse 7 as part of the speech, he notes that "The Roman commander Lysias, who rescued Paul, was here put into a bad light." Guzik does not discuss the bracketed text itself.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is scathing about the compliments: "One of the worst of men is here applauded as one of the best of benefactors, only because he was the judge." The whole speech "is made up of flattery and falsehood; it calls evil good, and good evil," and he draws a line every Christian needs: "flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another." On the complaint against Lysias in verse 7 (which his King James text includes), Henry says the commander had in fact done Paul justice, and done the Jews "the greatest kindness that could be" by keeping them from murder.

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 24:10–21

The Way, the Hope and a Blameless Conscience

Paul answers every charge and makes his confession

10 *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, 11 *since you can take note of the fact that no more than*
twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 *"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. 13 *"Nor can they prove to*
you the charges of which they now accuse me. 14 *"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; 15 *having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall*
certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 *"In view of this, I also do my best to*
maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men. 17 *"Now after several years I came to*
bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; 18 *in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been*
purified, without any crowd or uproar. But there were some Jews from Asia— 19 *who ought to have been present*
before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. 20 *"Or else let these men themselves*
tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, 21 *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

"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."

DANIEL 12:2

FIGURE · THE CHARGES AND THE ANSWERS

THE CHARGES AND THE ANSWERS · ACTS 24:5–21

TERTULLUS CHARGES (vv5–6)	PAUL ANSWERS (vv10–21)
"a real pest … stirs up dissension among all the Jews"	only twelve days in Jerusalem; no discussion, no riot (vv11–13)
"a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes"	"the Way which they call a sect" — I serve the God of our fathers (v14)
"tried to desecrate the temple"	came with alms, purified, no crowd; accusers from Asia absent (vv17–19)
(the real issue, unspoken)	"For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial" (vv15, 21)

Paul denies what is false, admits what is true, and makes his confession the center of his defense.

Read across each row: every accusation of Tertullus meets a checkable fact or an honest confession in Paul's reply.

αἵρεσις · ὁδός

HAIRESIS · "SECT" · G139 · HODOS · "WAY" · G3598

Hairesis is a choosing, then a party or school that people choose — Luke uses it of the Sadducees (5:17) and the Pharisees (15:5; 26:5). Our word "heresy" comes from it, and the KJV renders verse 14 "the way which they call heresy." Tertullus used it of the Christians (v. 5); Paul refuses the label and uses Luke's own name for the faith, *hodos*, "the Way" (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22). Guzik: "Paul called it the Way." It is not a breakaway party but the road the God of the fathers laid down in the Law and the Prophets.

ἀσκῶ ἀπρόσκοπον συνείδησιν

ASKŌ · "DO MY BEST" · G778 · APROSKOPOS · "BLAMELESS" · G677

Askeō (only here in the New Testament) is to exercise or train — the word behind "ascetic." *Aproskopos* means "not causing to stumble, without offense": Paul uses it again for "Give no offense" (1 Corinthians 10:32) and "blameless until the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10). The KJV catches both: "herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence." A clear conscience (*syneidēsis*, G4893; see 23:1) is not automatic. It is a daily workout, "both before God and before men."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes the change of name in verse 14: "Tertullus called Christianity the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) Paul called it the Way." Paul's hope is specific: "Paul clearly believed in a resurrection for both the righteous and the unrighteous," and Guzik draws the doctrinal line — "The idea of soul-sleep or annihilation for the unrighteous is not accurate according to New Testament teaching." Paul's closing appeal to the resurrection (v. 21) is a model for every believer under pressure: "Christians should never be timid about or ashamed of the truth or of the evidence."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry hears Paul's confession in its King James form: "in the way which they call heresy—or a sect, so worship I the God of my fathers." Paul is no innovator; he believes the Law and the Prophets and shares Israel's hope. That hope looks to a day when "It shall be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust, the sanctified and the unsanctified." And because of it, Paul keeps a daily aim — Henry repeats the phrase as a goal for every believer: "To have a conscience void of offence."

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 24:22–27

When I Find Time

A delayed verdict, a private sermon, and a governor who trembled and waited

22 *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." 23 *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. 24 *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. 25 *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."
26 *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. 27 *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

"Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near."

ISAIAH 55:6

FIGURE · THREE TOPICS FOR ONE GOVERNOR

THREE TOPICS FOR ONE GOVERNOR · ACTS 24:24–27

RIGHTEOUSNESS dikaiosynē · G1343	SELF-CONTROL enkrateia · G1466	JUDGMENT TO COME krima · G2917
a judge known for cruelty and a hand out for money (v26)	a wife taken from another man — Drusilla beside him (v24)	the judge of Judea standing before the Judge of all

FELIX'S RESPONSE

"became frightened" → "Go away for the present" → "when I find time I will summon you"
sent for him "quite often," hoping for money (v26) → two years → "left Paul imprisoned" (v27)
Henry: "we do not find that this more convenient season ever came"

Paul's three subjects each pressed on Felix's own life; read the bottom panel left to right to see how fear turned into delay.

ἐγκράτεια

ENKRATEIA · "SELF-CONTROL" · G1466

Literally "holding power within" — mastery of one's own desires; the KJV's "temperance." Four New Testament uses: here, the last fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), and twice in Peter's ladder of virtues (2 Peter 1:6). Paul preached it to a man who, by Guzik's account, had taken Drusilla from her husband, with Drusilla sitting beside him. With it came *dikaiosynē* (G1343), righteousness, and "the judgment (*krima*, G2917) to come." Spurgeon: "the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse."

ἔμφοβος · καιρός

EMPHOBOS · "FRIGHTENED" · G1719 · KAIROS · "TIME" · G2540

Emphobos is "in fear," terrified — the KJV's "Felix trembled." The fear was real; what he did with it was not. His excuse uses *kairos* (86 New Testament uses), the opportune moment rather than clock time: literally "having received an opportunity, I will call you." The KJV's "a convenient season" is close. Paul elsewhere uses the same word for the moment of salvation that must not be put off (2 Corinthians 6:2). Henry: "we do not find that this more convenient season ever came."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees a governor who wanted it both ways: "Felix avoided a decision under the pretense of waiting for more evidence," and "Felix tried to walk a middle ground," granting Paul liberty while keeping him in custody. Paul preached three points to Felix and Drusilla, and "Hearing this message made Felix afraid. … However, Felix was unwilling to declare his decision against Jesus." The lesson is plain: "It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe." Felix's later visits were not seeking — "He hoped to be paid off with a bribe."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached "Paul's Sermon Before Felix" (No. 171) at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, on 10 January 1858, under three heads: THE APPROPRIATE SERMON, THE AFFECTED AUDIENCE, THE LAMENTABLE DISAPPOINTMENT. Paul chose his subject on purpose: "Felix had been an unjust extortioner, and the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse." He preached the judgment until "He made Felix think he saw the great white throne," and "Well do I conceive that then Felix began to tremble." Then the tragedy: "Go thy way" "was all that Paul had." Spurgeon's appeal: "I charge you, by your own immortal welfare, lay these things to heart."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry calls the adjournment what it was: "It is a wrong not only to deny justice, but to delay it." Paul preached to Felix "with clearness and warmth of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and "Felix for the present could fasten upon nothing to pacify his conscience, and therefore trembled." But he put it off, and Henry's sentence is the chapter's epitaph: "we do not find that this more convenient season ever came." Two years later, "Though he would not deliver him to death, to please them, yet he would continue him a prisoner rather than offend them."

IV
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The resurrection of the just and the unjust, the clear conscience, and the day that will not wait

> *"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."*
>
> DANIEL 12:2

> *"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."*
>
> JOHN 5:28–29

> *"and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."*
>
> ACTS 9:2

> *"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*
>
> ACTS 17:30–31

> *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10

> *"Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things."*
>
> HEBREWS 13:18

> *"He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.""*
>
> HEBREWS 4:7

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik's one sentence on verse 25 is the thread through every one of these texts: "It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Guzik supplies the history — Felix the freedman, Drusilla, Tertullus — and keeps pointing to the evidence; Henry sets flattery against loyalty and delay against justice; Spurgeon preaches verse 25 as a warning to every hearer who says "not yet." Sproul preached this chapter in May and June 2005, but no transcript is posted, so he has no column here. All three teachers agree that Felix's tragedy was not his fear but his delay.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The accusation	Lies presented as flattery; a fabricated charge; no outside evidence.	— (sermon audio only; no transcript sourced)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	The worst of men applauded as the best; flattery is not loyalty.
II · The defense	Not a sect but the Way; resurrection of righteous and unrighteous.	— (sermon audio only; no transcript sourced)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Worship in the way called heresy; a conscience void of offence.
III · Felix waits	A middle ground, a bribe, and a convenient time that is foolish to trust.	— (sermon audio only; no transcript sourced)	The appropriate sermon, the affected audience, the lamentable disappointment.	Delaying justice is a wrong; the convenient season never came.

ACTS 24:1–27 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Flattery is not loyalty.** Henry: "flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another." Tertullus praised a cruel governor for "much peace"; Paul offered one honest sentence and the facts (v10). HENRY
- **Accusation is not evidence.** Guzik: "Tertullus did not even pretend to offer outside evidence of the charges." Paul's reply names what could be checked: twelve days, no riot, no witnesses (vv11–13, 19). GUZIK
- **An honest bracket.** The NASB prints vv6b–8a in brackets as probably not in the original writings; the KJV prints them as text. The difference changes whom Felix is told to examine (v8), and no doctrine rests on it. THE TEXT
- **Not a sect but the Way.** *Hairesis* was Tertullus' word; Paul answers with Luke's name for the faith, *hodos* (9:2; 24:14, 22) — the road the Law and the Prophets point to. THE GREEK
- **Two resurrections, one hope.** "A resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (v15; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28–29). Guzik: soul-sleep and annihilation "is not accurate according to New Testament teaching." GUZIK
- **A conscience is trained.** *Askō* — "I exercise myself" — is athlete's language. Paul did not have a clean conscience by accident; he worked at it daily "before God and before men" (v16). THE GREEK
- **The sermon fit the sinner.** Spurgeon: "the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse." Righteousness for an extortioner, self-control for a man beside a stolen wife, judgment for a judge. SPURGEON
- **Fear is not faith.** Felix "became frightened" (v25) — the KJV says he trembled — and still sent the preacher away. Guzik: "Felix was unwilling to declare his decision against Jesus." Delay was his decision. GUZIK
- **The convenient season never came.** Henry: "we do not find that this more convenient season ever came." Felix kept talking with Paul for two years — about money (v26). HENRY

❖ **Right now counts forever.** Tabletalk quotes Sproul's famous saying in a study on the judgment (Romans 2:6–11): "right now counts forever." Felix's "Go away for the present" is its exact opposite. SPROUL

† Questions for the Table

1 **Tertullus flattered Felix to get what he wanted. Where am I tempted to flatter people in authority — or to be flattered — instead of telling and hearing the truth?**

Flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another (Henry).

24:2-4; Prov 29:5

2 **Paul admitted what was true ("this I admit to you," v14) and denied only what was false. When I am accused, how do I separate the two honestly?**

Paul answered with facts and with a confession.

24:10-16

3 **Paul said he worked at keeping "a blameless conscience both before God and before men." What would that daily exercise look like in my life this week?**

Askō — I exercise myself (v16).

24:16; 23:1; 1 Tim 1:19

4 **Paul preached righteousness, self-control and judgment to a man who needed exactly those words. Which of the three does God keep pressing on me?**

The sermon fit the sinner (Spurgeon).

24:24-25

5 **Felix felt the fear of God and said, "Go away for the present." What have I been putting off with God, telling myself I will deal with it "when I find time"?**

It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe (Guzik).

24:25; 2 Cor 6:2; Heb 4:7

6 **Paul spent two years in custody waiting on a governor who wanted a bribe. How do I stay faithful when I am stuck waiting on people who are not acting in good faith?**

Paul kept preaching to the man who kept him there.

24:23, 26-27; Phil 4:11-13

❖

Acts 24 sets two men side by side. The prisoner has a clear conscience, a living hope and nothing to hide; the governor has power, a stolen wife, an open hand for money and a trembling heart. Paul tells the truth and waits on God for two years. Felix waits on a convenient season that never comes. Today, if you hear His voice, do not say, "Go away for the present."

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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