ACTS 24

Go Away for the Present

a hired accuser, a prisoner with a clear conscience, and a governor who trembled and then put God off

> *"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.""*
> ACTS 24:25

A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Luke has brought us

1. Acts 23 ended with Paul delivered by night to Caesarea and kept “in Herod’s Praetorium” until his accusers came (23:35).

2. Felix was a freedman who had risen to govern Judea.

3. 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).

The Accuser’s Speech

A hired orator, a flattering preface, and three charges

ACTS 24:5

“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.

DAVID GUZIK

Lies presented as flattery; a fabricated charge; no outside evidence.

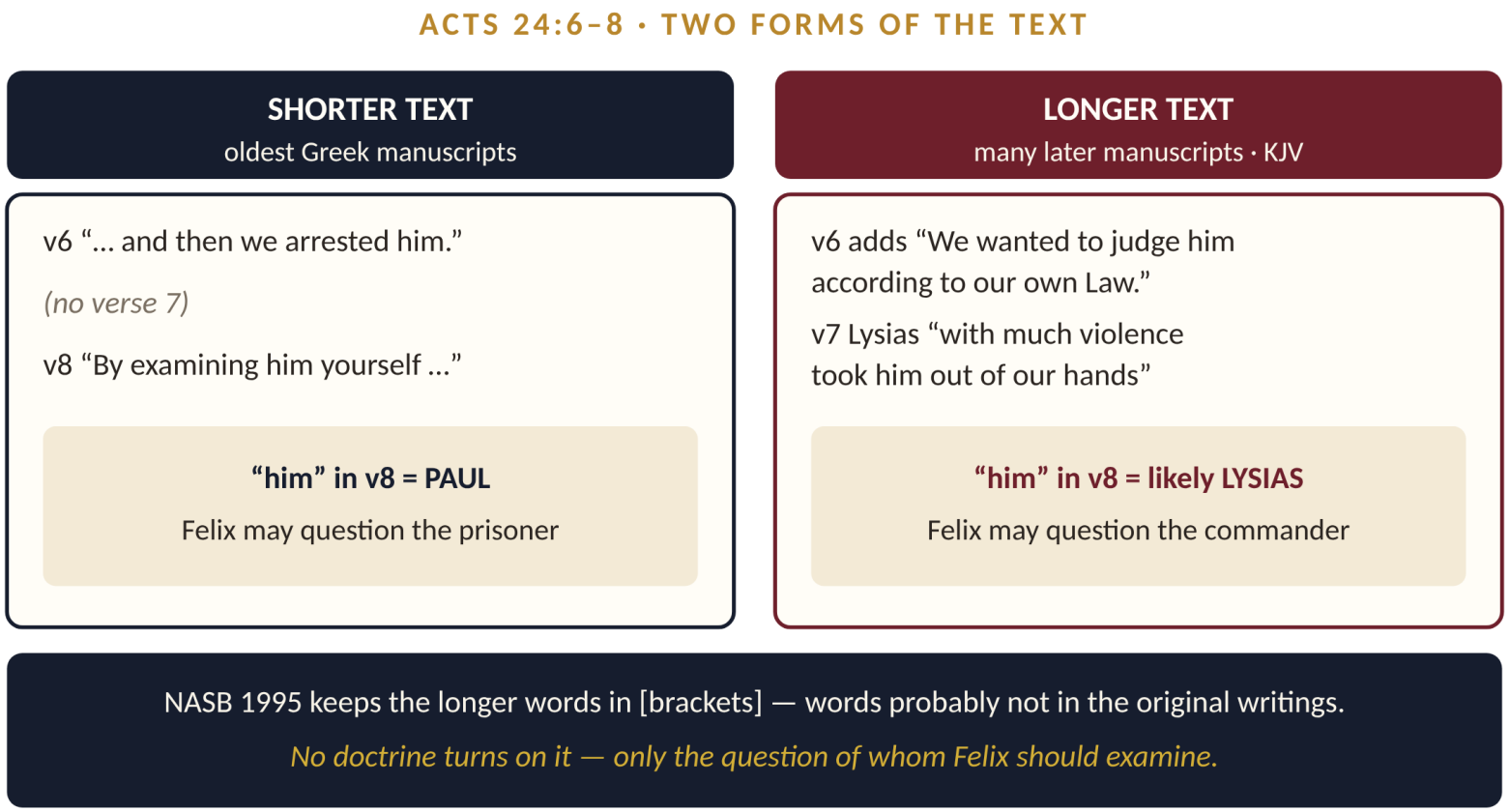
MATTHEW HENRY

The worst of men applauded as the best; flattery is not loyalty.

ῥήτωρ
RHĒTŌR · “ATTORNEY, ORATOR”

A public speaker, a trained advocate — the KJV’s “orator.”

Acts 24:6–8 in two forms



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.

The Way, the Hope and a Blameless Conscience

Paul answers every charge and makes his confession

ACTS 24:14

"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;

DAVID GUZIK

Not a sect but the Way; resurrection of righteous and unrighteous.

MATTHEW HENRY

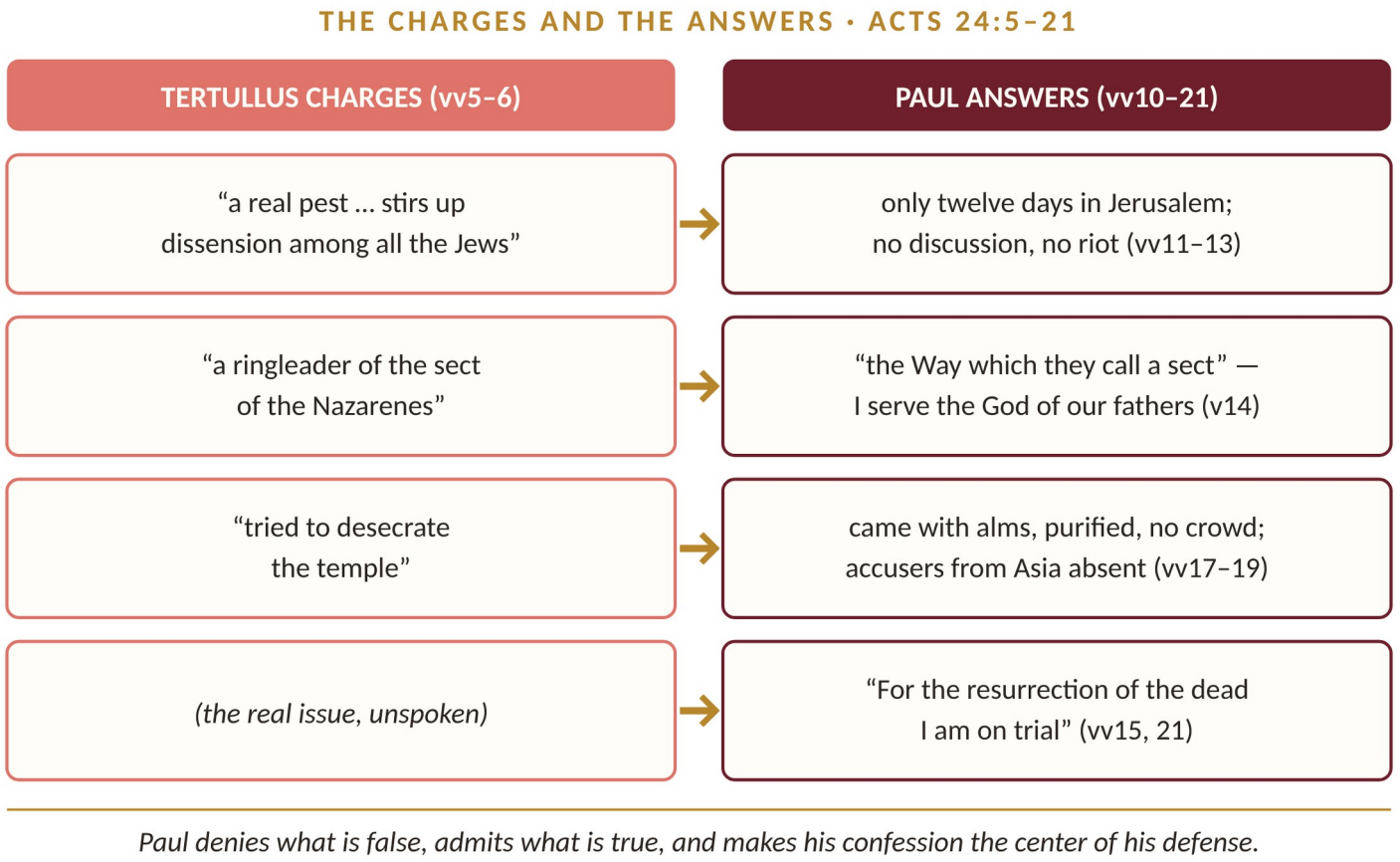
Worship in the way called heresy; a conscience void of offence.

αἵρεσις · ὁδός

HAIRESIS · "SECT"

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).

The charges and the answers



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

When I Find Time

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

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."

DAVID GUZIK

A middle ground, a bribe, and a convenient time that is foolish to trust.

C.H. SPURGEON

The appropriate sermon, the affected audience, the lamentable disappointment.

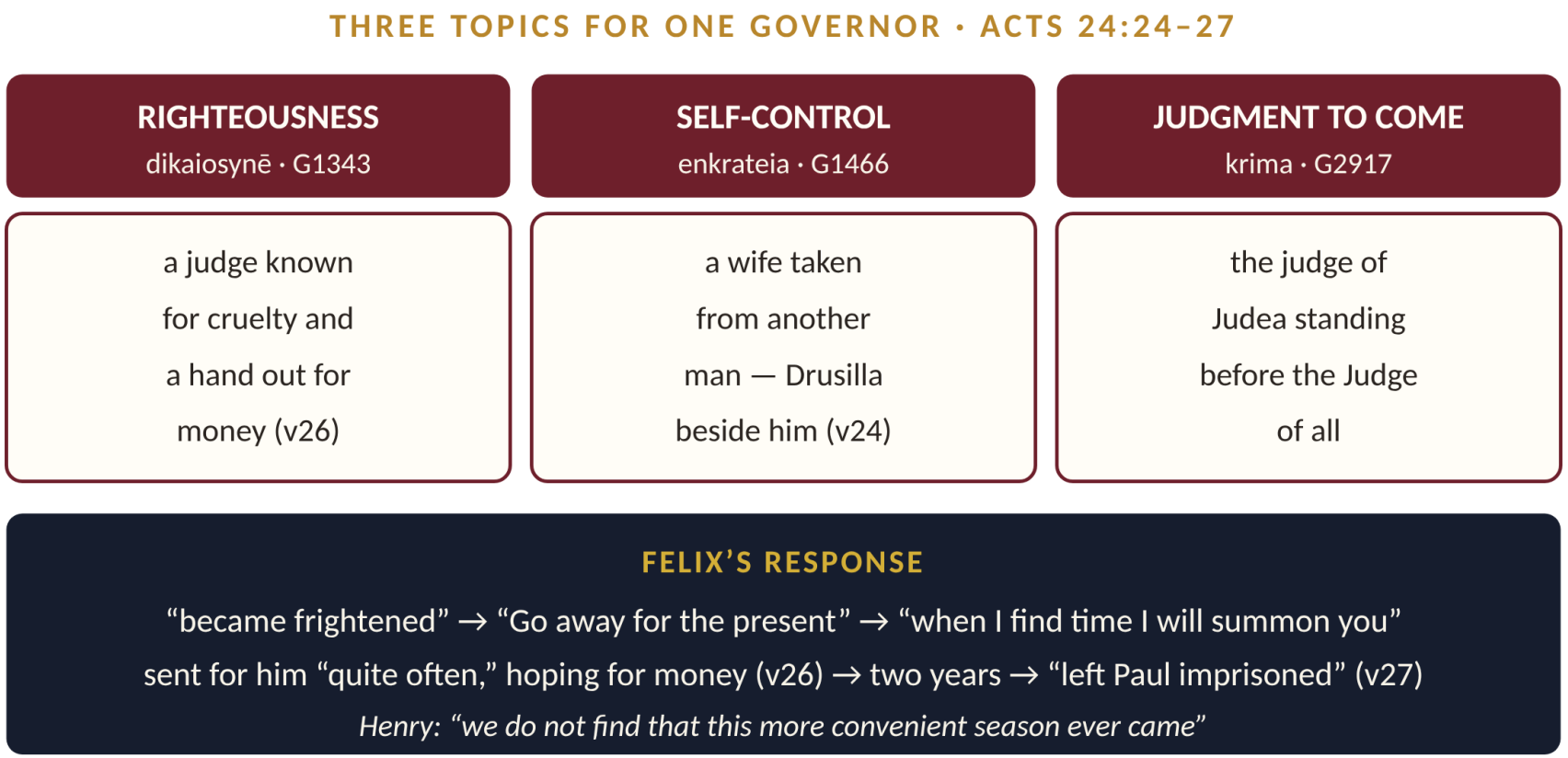
MATTHEW HENRY

Delaying justice is a wrong; the convenient season never came.

ἐγκράτεια
ENKRATEIA · "SELF-CONTROL"

Literally "holding power within" — mastery of one's own desires; the KJV's "temperance."

Three topics for one governor



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.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Flattery is not loyalty.

Henry: “flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another.”

2

Accusation is not evidence.

Guzik: “Tertullus did not even pretend to offer outside evidence of the charges.”

3

An honest bracket.

The NASB prints vv6b–8a in brackets as probably not in the original writings; the KJV prints them as text.

4

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.

More to carry

5

Two resurrections, one hope.

“A resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” (v15; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28–29).

6

A conscience is trained.

Askō — “I exercise myself” — is athlete’s language.

7

The sermon fit the sinner.

Spurgeon: “the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse.”

8

Fear is not faith.

Felix “became frightened” (v25) — the KJV says he trembled — and still sent the preacher away.

Talk it through

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?

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?

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?

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?

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”?

CLOSING

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

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Acts study page.