SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 24

Go Away for the Present — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Before a corrupt governor Paul answers lies with facts and confesses the Way, the resurrection and a clear conscience. Felix hears the gospel aimed straight at his own sins, trembles — and chooses delay, the most comfortable way of saying no.

00 The Text

ACTS 24 (NASB95), MARKED

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

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.

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.’”

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.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “Since we have through you attained much peace” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “a real pest” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” — Sin / warning
- **v6** “he even tried to desecrate the temple” — Sin / warning
- **v10** “I cheerfully make my defense” — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** “no more than twelve days ago” — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** “Nor can they prove to you the charges” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “I do serve the God of our fathers” — God — His character & actions
- **v14** “believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets” — Command / instruction
- **v15** “having a hope in God” — Promise / blessing
- **v15** “a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men” — Command / instruction
- **v17** “I came to bring alms to my nation” — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** “put them off” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “faith in Christ Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “Felix became frightened” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “Go away for the present” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “when I find time I will summon you” — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** “he was hoping that money would be given him” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “after two years had passed” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “after two years” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “Felix left Paul imprisoned” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “the Way” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v15** “resurrection” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v16** “conscience” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

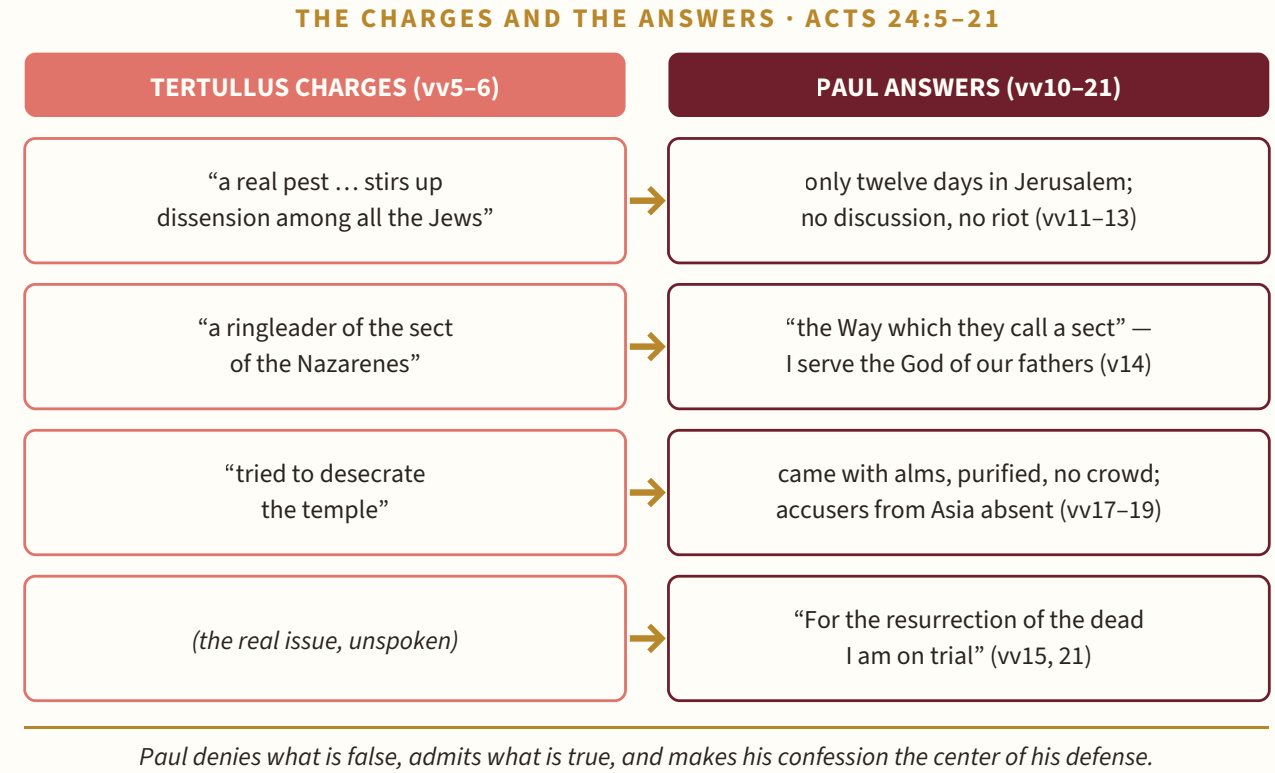
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · 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;"

FIGURE · 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.

Setting. Caesarea, the governor's court, five days after Paul's arrival (v1). The high priest Ananias comes with elders and a hired orator, Tertullus (vv1–9). Paul answers (vv10–21). Felix adjourns the case (vv22–23), later hears Paul privately with his wife Drusilla (vv24–25), sends for him often hoping for a bribe (v26), and after two years leaves him in prison for his successor, Porcius Festus (v27).

Structure:

- vv1–9 — **the accusation:** Ananias, elders and Tertullus (v1); flattery of Felix (vv2–4); "a real pest," "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes," "tried to desecrate the temple" (vv5–6); [bracketed words about Lysias, vv6b–8a]; "examining him yourself" (v8); the Jews join in (v9).

- vv10–21 — **the defense:** "I cheerfully make my defense" (v10); twelve days, no riot, no proof (vv11–13); "the Way which they call a sect" — the God of our fathers, the Law and the Prophets (v14); hope of a resurrection of righteous and wicked (v15); a blameless conscience (v16); alms and offerings, purified, no crowd (vv17–18); the absent Jews from Asia (v19); "For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial" (vv20–21).
- vv22–27 — **the delay:** Felix, knowing about the Way, puts them off until Lysias comes (v22); custody with some freedom (v23); Felix and Drusilla hear about faith in Christ Jesus (v24); righteousness, self-control, judgment to come; "Go away for the present" (v25); hoping for money (v26); two years; Festus; "Felix left Paul imprisoned" (v27).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "accuse / charges" ×7 — vv1, 2, 8 (×2), 13 (×2), 19 (one of the v8 uses is inside the brackets).
- "Paul" ×6 — vv1, 2, 10, 24, 26, 27; "Felix" ×6 — vv3, 22, 24, 25, 27 (×2).
- "before" ×6 — vv8, 16 (×2), 19, 20, 21.
- "judge / judgment / decide / trial" ×5 — vv6, 10, 21, 22, 25.
- "found / find" ×5 — vv5, 12, 18, 20, 25.
- "Jews" ×4 — vv5, 9, 18, 27; "sect / the Way" ×4 — vv5, 14 (×2), 22.
- "crowd / riot / uproar / dissension" ×4 — vv5, 12, 18 (×2).
- "God" ×3 — vv14, 15, 16; "temple" ×3 — vv6, 12, 18; "nation" ×3 — vv2, 10, 17; "years" ×3 — vv10, 17, 27.
- "summon(ed)" ×2 — vv2, 25; with "sent for" (v24) ×3.
- "money / alms / offerings" ×3 — vv17 (×2), 26.
- "resurrection" ×2 — vv15, 21; "hope / hoping" ×2 — vv15, 26; "Lysias" ×2 — vv7 (bracketed), 22.

Contrasts: Tertullus' flattery (vv2–4) ⟷ Paul's plain words (v10). "A sect" (v5) ⟷ "the Way" (v14). Charges ⟷ proof (v13). Riot and crowd (v12) ⟷ purified, "without any crowd or uproar" (v18). Paul's hope in God (v15) ⟷ Felix's hope for money (v26). A blameless conscience (v16) ⟷ a frightened one (v25). Paul ready to speak "today" (v21) ⟷ Felix's "for the present … when I find time" (v25). Two years of custody (v27) ⟷ the freedom of a clear conscience.

Shape of the chapter: a formal trial (1–21) that ends in no verdict, then a private hearing (24–25) where the judge becomes the one on trial. The case against Paul fades; the case against Felix grows.

Chapter theme (my words): The man in chains is free and the man on the bench is bound. Paul tells the truth, confesses Christ and keeps his conscience clean; Felix hears the truth, feels it, and puts it off — and the convenient time never comes.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 24:15

"☆having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be ☆a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."

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.

What about the bracketed words in verses 6–8? The NASB 1995 prints "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" in brackets, which in the NASB marks words probably not in the original writings. They are absent from the oldest Greek manuscripts and present in many later ones; the KJV includes them, and Henry and Guzik both comment on verse 7 as part of the speech. The practical difference is in verse 8: in the shorter text "examining him" means examining Paul; in the longer, probably Lysias. I keep the NASB as printed, read the brackets honestly, and notice that no doctrine depends on it. If the longer words are original, the accusers even blamed the Roman who had saved them from committing murder (Henry).

Why did Tertullus flatter Felix? It was standard courtroom rhetoric, and it was false. Guzik: "These were lies presented as flattery," for "Felix did not bring peace or prosperity to those he governed." Henry: "One of the worst of men is here applauded as one of the best of benefactors, only because he was the judge."

What were the charges, and how did Paul answer? Troublemaker, sect leader, temple defiler (vv5–6). Paul answered with checkable facts — twelve days, no riot, no proof (vv11–13), no witnesses from Asia present (v19) — and with a confession (vv14–16). Guzik: the temple charge was "a fabricated charge based on rumor only."

Is Christianity a "sect"? Tertullus said so; Paul said "the Way" — the faith of "the God of our fathers," believing everything in the Law and the Prophets (v14). Guzik: "Paul called it the Way." Henry: "in the way which they call heresy—or a sect, so worship I the God of my fathers." The gospel is the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures and Israel's hope, not a break from them — and God is not finished with Israel (Romans 11:1–2, 26).

What resurrection did Paul hope for? "A resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (v15) — the hope of Daniel 12:2 and of Jesus in John 5:28–29. Guzik: "Paul clearly believed in a resurrection for both the righteous and the unrighteous," and soul-sleep or annihilation is "not accurate according to New Testament teaching." Henry: "both of the just and of the unjust, the sanctified and the unsanctified."

What does a "blameless conscience" take (v16)? Work. *Askō* means to exercise or train. Paul says the same as he said before the Council (23:1). A conscience is kept clean by daily confession and by making things right with God and with people.

Why did Felix become frightened (v25)? Because Paul's topics were aimed at his life. Spurgeon: "Felix had been an unjust extortioner, and the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse." Henry: "Felix for the present could fasten upon nothing to pacify his conscience, and therefore trembled." But fear is not repentance. Guzik: "Felix was unwilling to declare his decision against Jesus," so he delayed — and "It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe."

Why did Felix keep Paul two years (vv26–27)? Money and politics. He hoped for a bribe (v26) and wanted "to do the Jews a favor" (v27). Henry: "It is a wrong not only to deny justice, but to delay it," and "he would continue him a prisoner rather than offend them." Guzik notes that under Roman law this kind of custody could only last two years.

Word study (Greek):

- **attorney — *rhētōr* (G4489):** a trained orator; only here in the New Testament.
- **pest — *loimos* (G3061):** plague, pestilence (Luke 21:11).
- **sect — *hairesis* (G139):** a chosen party; source of "heresy" (5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14).
- **Way — *hodos* (G3598):** Luke's name for the faith (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).
- **hope — *elpis* (G1680)** and **resurrection — *anastasis* (G386):** vv15, 21.
- **righteous — *dikaios* (G1342); wicked — *adikos* (G94):** v15.
- **do my best — *askeō* (G778):** to exercise, train; only here.
- **blameless — *aproskopos* (G677):** without offense (1 Cor 10:32; Phil 1:10).
- **conscience — *syneidēsis* (G4893):** 23:1; 24:16.
- **righteousness — *dikaiosynē* (G1343); self-control — *enkrateia* (G1466); judgment — *krima* (G2917):** v25.
- **frightened — *emphobos* (G1719):** in fear; KJV "trembled."
- **time — *kairos* (G2540):** the opportune moment; "convenient season."

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Flattery is not loyalty** (Henry).

2. **Accusation is not evidence** (Guzik).
3. **An honest bracket** — vv6b–8a.
4. **Not a sect but the Way** — *hodos*.
5. **Two resurrections, one hope** — Dan 12:2; John 5:28–29.
6. **A conscience is trained** — *askō*.
7. **The sermon fit the sinner** (Spurgeon).
8. **Fear is not faith** — Felix trembled and delayed.
9. **The convenient season never came** (Henry).
10. **Right now counts forever** (Sproul, via Tabletalk).

Cross-references: Prov 29:5; Isa 55:6; Dan 12:2; Luke 21:11; John 5:28–29; Acts 5:17; 9:2; 17:30–31; 19:9, 23; 21:26–29; 22:4; 23:1, 29, 35; 25:13; Rom 11:1–2, 26; 1 Cor 10:32; 2 Cor 5:10; 6:2; Gal 5:23; Phil 1:10; 1 Tim 1:19; Heb 4:7; 13:18; 2 Pet 1:6.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 24:16

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

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.

Example to follow — Paul under accusation. Paul didn't flatter, didn't panic and didn't lie. He denied what was false, admitted what was true ("this I admit to you," v14), and turned his defense into a confession of Christ. Many of the men I serve have stood before judges. Some charges were true and some weren't. The way of Christ is the same in both cases: tell the truth, all of it, and let your hope in God be the center of what you say.

Command to obey — exercise your conscience. Paul said, "I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men" (v16). That is daily work. This week I will end each day by asking two questions: Is anything between me and God? Is anything between me and another man? And I will deal with it before I sleep.

Sin to confess — "when I find time." I have said Felix's words to God more than once. I felt the weight of His Word, I knew what He was asking, and I said, "Not now." Fear without repentance is just a feeling. I confess the specific thing I have been putting off, and I do it today, because the convenient season never comes.

Promise to trust — the resurrection. Paul could wait two years in custody because he had "a hope in God" that the dead will rise (v15). My release date, my court date, my family's choices — none of them is my final hope. The resurrection is. Christ is risen, and I will stand before Him.

Warning to heed — the judgment to come. Felix was a judge who forgot he would be judged. Every man will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10). That is not a threat to the man in Christ; it is a reason to live clean and to tell others while there is time.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

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? (24:2–4; Prov 29:5) *Flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another (Henry).*
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? (24:10–16) *Paul answered with facts and with a confession.*
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? (24:16; 23:1; 1 Tim 1:19) *Askō — I exercise myself (v16).*
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? (24:24–25) *The sermon fit the sinner (Spurgeon).*
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"? (24:25; 2 Cor 6:2; Heb 4:7) *It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe (Guzik).*
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? (24:23, 26–27; Phil 4:11–13) *Paul kept preaching to the man who kept him there.*

Worship. God of our fathers, You are righteous, and You have fixed a day when You will judge the world in righteousness through the Man You raised from the dead. You are the God of the Way, the hope of Israel, and the One who raises both the righteous and the wicked. You kept Your servant faithful through two years of waiting, and You still speak to governors and prisoners alike.

Prayer. Father, I don't want to be Felix. When Your Word presses on my life, give me the grace to say "yes" today, not "when I find time." Train my conscience to stay clean before You and before men. Teach me to answer accusation with truth and with Christ. Keep my hope fixed on the resurrection, not on my circumstances. And give me the courage to speak of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come to men who need to hear it — with love, and while there is still time. Amen.

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