




1. Describe a situation (real or imagined) where a follower of Jesus might be tempted to become distracted from sharing and living out the gospel, and instead get involved in discussions about “secondary matters.” Consider those secondary matters that you just listed – what good reasons might a follower of Jesus have to be passionate about them? What negative impacts might result from making these the primary focus of one’s life?
2. Study the statement by Tertulus, the prosecuting attorney, before Felix (2-8). What do you see as his main charges against Paul? Can you think of anything about Paul’s history in Acts that might make someone believe these charges?
3. Study Paul’s defense before Felix (10-21). How does he answer each charge against him? How does his defense keep the gospel itself as the focus of the situation, rather than the charges against him?
4. Consider for a moment what Paul’s defense would have sounded like if he had focused on defending his actions rather than on the gospel. For example, what if he had tried to explain the dissension among the Jews around the world? In what way would this defense not have served the cause of the Lord Jesus as well as what he did say?
5. Explain Paul’s reasoning in verses 15 and 16. In what way does his belief in the resurrection affect his own life? Why does it affect it in this way?
6. What do you think of Felix’s decision in verses 22-23? What does it demonstrate about his thinking and his priorities? How “just” would you say this decision was? Why did the Lord allow it to happen, do you think?
7. How did the Lord prepare the people of Caesarea a short while before this (21:8-16) for their ministry role with Paul while Felix kept him in prison? (24:23,27)
8. What things did Paul discuss with Felix in verses 24-25? If Paul had been concerned about his own freedom, what topics do you think he would have discussed instead? In what ways might a Christ-like love for other people and a forgetfulness of ourselves affect our ordinary conversations today?
9. What spiritual value was achieved during Paul’s conversations with Felix, even though Felix ended one abruptly and had mixed motives for later ones (25-26)? What value is achieved today in witnessing that seems “unsuccessful” from our point of view? What do we learn about how Christians should respond when someone asks for or hints at a bribe?
10. Apply it: In what ways could your belief in a coming resurrection impact your life this week? In what other ways might it affect your interactions with those who do not yet know the Lord Jesus?



The Main Thing

Leader Notes for Acts 24



Having been delivered from the plot against his life, Paul had arrived safely at Caesarea Maritima, the seat of Roman government for the province of Judea. There Paul stood trial before the Roman procurator, Antonius Felix. His accusers, the Jewish chief priests, traveled down for the trial and brought with them an orator named Tertulus, while Paul spoke in his own defense.

Tertulus' address was relatively traditional for the time, and it served both to butter up Felix and to level serious (but unsubstantiated) charges against Paul. When Paul spoke, on the other hand, he did not follow the traditional script for a defendant. While he did respond clearly and concisely to the charges against him, this was in some ways only a sidelight to his intention of keeping the gospel at the forefront of the discussion. He made it clear that the issue was not one of his own wrongdoing, but rather of the truth of the resurrection which he proclaimed and of all that entailed.

Ultimately, though, it didn't matter what the Jews accused Paul of or what Paul said in his own defense. Felix already had a good understanding of this apparently new Jewish sect called "The Way." Knowing that Paul had not committed any wrongdoing, but wanting to pacify his notoriously rebellious Jewish populace, Felix punted. He was not going to condemn Paul, who was clearly innocent, but he was not going to release him either – that would only have aggravated the chief priests. Therefore, he simply kept Paul under arrest, but a very loose arrest (possibly in order to pacify his own conscience). The friends he had made during his recent visit to Caesarea in 21:8-16 and those who had been traveling with him were allowed to minister to his needs there.

During the time that Paul was under arrest, Felix and his wife visited privately, and Paul used this opportunity not to speak on his own behalf, but rather to explain the gospel to Felix in a way that he would understand, in a way that would resonate to a Roman governor. Paul's message hit home, and when Felix found himself actually coming under conviction of sin, he sent Paul away, and so escaped the situation. Although future conversations occurred between Paul and Felix, this gleam of hope for the Roman governor appeared to be short-lived. He appeared much more concerned about receiving a bribe from Paul than he did about obeying and believing the gospel himself. It is clear that Paul never tried to win his own freedom by giving Felix a bribe, but remained true to his Lord.

Suddenly we see the story jump forward two years. A new procurator – Festus – had taken over, and in order not to burn any bridges as he departed, Felix left Paul in prison as a goodwill gesture to his old Jewish subjects. But the Lord was still in control of Paul's situation, still working out His promise that Paul would witness for Christ in Rome.