

Acts 24:1-27

Paul's trial before Governor Felix followed typical court procedures, with the filing of charges, the prosecution by the plaintiffs' spokesman, and an answer from the defendant. After hearing both sides of the case, the judge normally rendered a verdict.

In Paul's case, however, Governor Felix found himself in a difficult position, and sought to evade making a decision.

Paul took the opportunity, however, to tell others about Jesus.

Summary

In Acts 24:1-27, Governor Felix though persuaded of Paul's innocence, did not wish to offend the Jewish leadership and risk another outbreak of resistance to his rule and made an excuse to postpone his decision and then prolonged this strategy for two years, until removed from office.

1. Eloquent Prosecutor vv. 1-9

The Roman tribune, Claudius Lysias, notified Paul's accusers that his case had been remanded to the governor, and Paul himself moved to Caesarea. Five days later a delegation of the Sanhedrin appeared before Felix to present their charges.

Their seriousness in prosecuting Paul was shown not only by Ananias' presence but also by the fact that they had hired a professional spokesman to prosecute their case. His speech shows his shrewd use of flattery, subtle threat, and evasion to win a verdict condemning the defendant.

Tertullus presented his clients' two charges against Paul.

First, the defendant spreads riots like the plague everywhere he goes.

Secondly, Paul had tried to desecrate the temple.

Tertullus closed his argument by inviting the governor to interrogate the prisoner to verify his crimes. As the prosecutor rested his case, his Jewish clients concurred with the charges to apply their political pressure to the governor.

2. Confident Defense vv. 10-21

Felix then gave Paul the nod to present his defense. He too began with a compliment to win the judge's favor. Paul knew that the Sanhedrin's accusations rested on second-hand 'testimony' from Asian Jews who were absent from the court.

In response to the first charge, therefore, Paul argued that his peaceful conduct in Jerusalem during his recent visit refuted the charge that he was an itinerant troublemaker

He then turned the discussion to the real issue between Paul and his accusers. He worshiped the God of their fathers, having a hope in God that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

Regarding the second charge of defiling the temple, Paul showed its absurdity by pointing out the purpose of his visit to Jerusalem. He had come to bring contributions for the relief of the poor among his people and to present offerings at the temple. How could a ritually-purified Jew, peacefully presenting his offerings in God's house, be accused of compromising the temple's sanctity?

Again Paul brought his defense back to the resurrection (**Acts 24:21**).

“In synagogue or marketplace in private conversation or public courtroom, whatever the occasion and wherever his starting point, Paul found a way to bring the subject around to the resurrection, the central reality that showed Christ’s cross to be vicarious, his present lordship to be supreme, and his future return as judge to be inevitable.”

3. Delayed Justice vv. 22-27

Instead of vindicating Paul and offending Jewish dignitaries, the governor postponed his decision that he needed to consult the tribune Claudius Lysias before announcing a verdict.

His sympathy for Paul's cause and respect for Paul's Roman citizenship found expression in his orders that Paul be granted a measure of freedom while imprisoned and that none of his friends be prevented from caring for him.

Something in Paul's defense aroused the governor's curiosity about the hope that gave the apostle such calm confidence (**Acts 24:24**).

With his wife Drusilla, he summoned Paul to a private audience, at which the apostle presented his message about faith in the Messiah, Jesus. Paul's discussion of self control and the coming judgment, terrified the governor. He brought the interview to a sudden close, promising to recall Paul when convenient.

Felix sent for Paul repeatedly over the next two years, but not to hear more about the Messiah and the justice, self-control, and hope that his Spirit imparts.

Felix hoped that Paul would offer a bribe to buy his release.

Keeping Paul in custody ingratiated him with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem.

When recalled to Rome to be reprimanded and narrowly escape punishment, Felix left Paul in custody, his legal case undecided.

Felix's preferred response to life-challenging truth and costly decisions was procrastination. What about you?