

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for November 10, 2019

The Anxiety of Felix
Acts 24:22-27

Acts 24 concludes with an interlude after Paul's defense in front of Felix (Acts 24:1-21) and before his defense in front of Festus (Acts 25:1-12). These verses span two years, between the summer of 57 and the summer of 59 A.D.

1. The delay by Felix regarding Paul (24:22-23)

This long delay in the trial of Paul was based upon Felix's inside knowledge of the opposition to Christianity ("the Way") by the Jews. One source of this knowledge was likely his Jewish wife, Drucilla. Felix recognized his dilemma in the trial of an innocent man who was hated by the religious leaders.

Lysias was the Roman commander who delivered Paul to Felix from Jerusalem (Acts 23:26-35). Lysias had already provided his perspective (Acts 23:29) and Felix had all the information necessary to throw out the case in the same way that Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, did in Acts 18:12-16. This dispute was of religious matters beyond the interest of the Roman government.

Felix sought to favor the Jews by continuing to detain Paul and to favor the Christians by granting Paul some freedom. Leadership by appeasement is a well worn worldly practice.

2. The discussion of Felix with Paul (24:24-25)

Felix's wife Drucilla was not only Jewish, she was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I who killed James the apostle (Acts 12), the sister of Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25), the great-niece of Herod Antipas who killed John the Baptist (Matthew 14) and the great-granddaughter of Herod the Great, who killed the babies of Bethlehem (Matthew 2). She was a teenager who was persuaded by Felix to leave her first marriage.

Felix sought to speak with Paul. The content included the topics of righteousness, self-control and judgment (cf. John 16:8). Like Paul, we will have opportunities to speak with people about faith in Christ and these topics are universally relevant to everyone.

Felix became intensely frightened after listening to Paul speak about sin and the coming judgment. Fear is the opposite of faith (cf. 1 John 4:16-18).

3. The desire of Felix regarding Paul (24:26-27)

Felix's first desire was for his own financial benefit. Paul had access to a significant sum of money (cf. Acts 24:17) that could pay for his freedom. Paul's desire to speak with the governor was beyond his willingness to pay for his release.

Felix's second desire was for his own political benefit. His various atrocities toward the Jews led to his removal by Emperor Nero. It was in his interest to pacify the Jews in order to lessen their complaints against him. The favor granted to the Jews was from Felix's perspective since the desire of the Jews was to kill Paul (Acts 25:3). Ultimately, Felix escaped punishment because his brother, Pallas, was very influential.

It is not uncommon for unsaved people to have wrong motives when they engage Christians about faith. Salvation comes through many circumstances and we ought not to expect those we speak with to be pure in heart.

The two year detention of Paul in Caesarea allowed his friends to minister to him (24:23), which included Luke who later departed with Paul to Italy in Acts 27:1. Some of the details of the Book of Acts was undoubtedly recorded at this time (cf. Luke 1:1-4).

May we always be ready to discuss spiritual truth with those whom we relate to regardless of the difficult circumstances that we may face (1 Peter 3:13-16).