

Acts 24:1–27

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[0 : 0 0] well good morning trust you're staying cool amen all right let's pray Lord you have been our dwelling place even before the mountains were formed you have been God and I pray this day we could get to know this God who from everlasting to everlasting reigns and rules and holds the iron rod which represents the authority that he has in heaven and earth and hell below I pray that the truth and the reality of who you are will be represented in our daily witness in Christ's name amen well we have been making our way through the book of acts if you're joining us for the first time or or if you haven't been paying attention these last few chapters pastor Dave helm has called it a few times the trilogy of the tribune the trilogy of the tribune where Paul is having to make a case for himself after being arrested and being put in front of individuals who would accuse him of certain things and this tribune would come and save his life and over the next three weeks after having seen what Paul has said and done amongst this tribune we'll we'll also see what Paul does in making a defense for himself in front of one Felix and then next a man named Festus and then lastly in chapter 26

Agrippa and Festus at the same time it's three times tribune three times a defense that you are coming to this morning in chapter 24 so we pick up even in verse 1 and if you see it down there after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman with Tertullus Tertullus they lay before the governor their case against Paul Paul is in Caesarea standing before this governor this financial Roman officer Felix as he's awaiting for five days his accusers to make their way down from the Sanhedrin and if you see it in there this dude I'll just say Tertullus they hire a lawyer an orator someone to speak on their behalf to speak for them against Paul or as Witherington would say what we have here today recorded in Luke's presentation is a oratorical duel between two accomplished rhetoricians Tertullus and Paul so you'll see them go head to head in chapter 24 but I might also add it's not really Paul verse them it's them verse God you'll even notice that the high priest they bring down the elders and Ananias you know kind of like the pep rally or the tailgate and they come down and hey we just want to make sure everything goes right I can imagine the meeting in the law firm as alright this is what we want to do oh I can I can handle that what did he say oh yeah we can we can we can make a case who are we going against Felix oh this will be this will be great this is going to be great underneath this whole exchange that you'll notice in chapter 24 is the question of whose argument will persuade whose argument will persuade those that are listening whose words will stick whose witness will last and what we find in this text is not only the words in the oration it's the character of the witness that you'll see peeking up as we make our way through what is the character that is being put before us today not only in the person giving their witness but what's the character of the words that are being utilized both these men Paul and Tertullus will present their strongest case before Felix after all the life of Paul is on the line our text is broken up and I would say in three instances first of all you got this accusation of the people verse 1 through 9 the accusation of the people and then verse 10 through 21 you have this apologetic given by Paul this apology given by Paul this defense made by Paul and then from 22 on to 27 you have this aftermath of politics and preachers this aftermath so you get the accusation you get the apologetic and you get the aftermath first of all verse 1 through 9 check it out verse 1 through 9 you'll notice that the way Tertullus makes his exordium right out of the gate his argument is built on some sort of fawning flattery check it out look at verse 2 and when he had some in Tertullus began to accuse him saying since through you we enjoy much peace Felix and since by your oversight most excellent Felix reforms are being made for this nation in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude he starts with this flattery toward the governor it's an argument built on establishing rapport with those he will have to make his defense in front of aimed at securing the vote aimed at making sure the judge votes their way in fact in verse

2 through 4 this man Tertullus spends almost the same amount of time appealing to the pride of Felix as he does accusing Paul it's a classic appeal to emotion fallacy it's an appeal to flattery apple polishing brown nosing greasing the wheel whatever you call it toting it's an appeal to the pride an argumentum ad superbium an appeal to this man's pride in order to actually oh yeah okay so what you got for me okay

[7 : 38] I can go with that and at the end of the day in this attempt to win the argument on something but the basis of facts on anything else but the basis of truth it's an attempt to sway you by emotion and not necessarily by it's because you have a weak argument that you have to go here how is it this flattery is laid out check it out verse 2b through 3 he says through you Felix we have enjoyed much peace now nothing can be further from the truth when you actually do the history of this man Felix when in fact it was under his leadership they actually experienced the worst turmoil that any governor ever brought to the land of Judea his administration was filled with insurrection after insurrection people stepping up trying to create turmoil he's procurator he couldn't deal well with the turmoil that was happening but

Tertullus says it nonetheless under you we have found much peace I mean stroke your ego right there but then he goes on he says but by your foresight most excellent Felix reforms are being made in this nation he says foresight meaning by your great hand of your providence you have in every way caused healing to come to our land and that's not true either that just didn't happen Felix was not gracious amongst the Jews in fact the Jews hated Felix they did not like this man per se or not per se but specifically they didn't like this man this medical term reform being used as a term to try to help Felix see that look man we know you're doing a lot for us Churchill was new and understood that

Romans loved to be called the benefactors of what was happening in the land they wanted to be seen as bringing peace to the people this this Pax Romana this this idea that through their hand the Jews can actually live in peace and anything that will go against that would mean that we'd have to get rid of that so through your hand we have found much peace and then even in verse three we accept what you've done with all gratitude I mean what would make these men stoop so low to hire someone to say what actually is not true what would make them actually come from the Sanhedrin and say the things that at the end of the day we'll take an L here because we do not want this man Paul to live Tertullus remarks towards

Felix would then be heightened by the sharp contrast he makes with Paul in verses five through nine so not only does he stroke the ego of Felix but he uses these words to actually make his case against Paul because the words he uses for Paul are exactly opposite of what he used for Felix first of all he calls Paul a plague pestilence look at verse five for we have found this man a plague one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes of the Nazarites Paul indeed is infectious in what he has to say he he has gained followers but what Tertullus is trying to do is tell the Roman society that this man is causing a ruckus this man is causing an insurrection he he's actually creating what you are saying on your coins and through your edicts that you don't want he also says

Paul is a troublemaker amongst the Jews and not only a troublemaker but he's the ringleader of these troublemakers you know this man is he's he's rallying people against the status quo and he's the leader of them all while Paul was a Christian leader the words here are meant to tell Rome that the whole Christian community is a threat to Roman society you see you couldn't just take out Paul without taking out who he represents and what he represents so yeah we'll take another L there an L means a loss just in case I keep saying that right Paul is named as the main culprit for the disturbance and he's also named as the leader of a heretical faction that is not only and they mind you

[13 : 12] Roman leaders allowed the Jews to do what they wanted to do as far as religious practices but what Tertullus is saying is that Paul is leading a sect heretical different radical group that will actually come against what you've allowed us to do and that's nothing further from the truth and he's saying Paul is going against this Roman Pax Romana and he's against this peace but third the charge against Paul and leave it to Tertullus to leave the weakest argument last because that's what you should do you know he uses this unsubstantiated argument in verse six he says he profanes the temple now he has no witnesses there the folks in Asia that came down that were actually contributing to the riot they aren't there to actually speak that he did anything wrong but this charge is made towards Paul as to say that the reason that they even arrested him in the first place

is because he was coming in the temple causing a distraction when actually what happened if you read the previous chapters the tribune came and saved

Paul from the people that were coming to kill him in fact if you depending on which scripture you have which version of the Bible you have there is an extended verse seven that says from Tertullus words as they talk about Paul in verse seven of whom we took and we yeah look Felix we would have judged him according to our law but the chief captain Lysias of the tribune came upon us with great violence and took him away out of our hands see we would have handled this but but your people came and took him away so we have no choice but to come to you right away one can clearly see the heart of the witness of the people from the Sanhedrin you can also see the heart of the witness of of Paul's accusers and Paul himself especially as verse nine tells us these Jews these Jews joined in affirming these things were so I can imagine Paul when pinning his letter to the Romans and when he says and those who do evil there are others who affirm their evil and give hearty approval to this evil I can imagine Paul when writing to Rome thinking of this instance of and then y'all come and y'all applaud this foolishness this unsubstantiated blarney in fact I think Luke is purposefully bringing up this issue that Paul had to deal with in society as a representative of Jesus Christ who himself had to deal with being called hey man you're a pest and mind you if you see that word there it literally means a disease someone who's bringing a virus to our culture and our society someone who we need to eradicate because he is he is killing what we have tried to create

Jesus himself fits these terms here Jesus was called a pest Jesus was called a troublemaker Jesus was the one that actually said destroy this temple in three days I raised it up hey he's going to destroy the temple look he said he's going to destroy the temple let's arrest him just on that fact Luke isn't wasting words here he's actually doing a lot to show who he's writing to almost excellent Theophilus that hey bruh never forget never forget that as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4 that we shall always carry about in our body the death of Christ so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies never forget that if you are to walk with Christ your witness will be accompanied by lies and by accusers by persecution it's not going to be an easy sale but never forget who you're sailing with oh yeah so you get this accusation by the people but verse 10 through 21 we move into this apologetic made by

Paul 10 through 21 Paul is signaled by the governor Felix that he may go ahead and make his rebuttal look at verse 10 you can go ahead and make your rebuttal and then knowing that for many years Paul begins that many years you have been judged over this nation I cheerfully make my defense Paul opens up he does the opposite of what to a Churchill does he doesn't open up with flattery he opens up with truth hey bro I know you've been here for a few years so you kind of know that everything he just said is wrong because you got issues yourself it was subtle it was a subtle jab but it was truthful nonetheless he didn't appeal to flattery he appealed to Jesus his first statement short clear truthful but indicting as well Paul is pointing to the fact that Felix knows that if what

[18:55] Churchill has said about his excellencies is true then they would need proof if any of this is substantiated then where is the proof Paul is pointing out that Felix has been around a long time to know that Churchill cannot corroborate his story at all Paul maintains that he is he is not a pest verse 11 through 12 he is not a pest he is not a disease in fact he has no history of inciting the Jews he even says bro I've been there 12 days and I only came there to worship because I've been under this vow 12 days is not nearly enough time to get everybody rally together especially with no ballpoint pen or about something and then maybe over the next two three months but 12 days come on come on

Felix I came there to worship Paul says like like others we came there to just worship the very God that these accusers are saying they came to worship and if he were to stir up a rebellion he would need more traction than 12 days verse 13 lets us know that Felix he lets Felix know that there is no proof to these claims whatsoever but secondly you gotta understand Paul's accusation of insurrection or leading a sect Paul uses that and says no that's only that's not true at all but what I am doing is I'm following the way verse 14 through 16 I'm a follower of the way Paul uses this opportunity to reason with all who are listening on the basis on the basis of the one who he represents in the first place first

Paul does not agree with the accusers that he is part of some heretical sect but he is a follower of the one true God and the son who he sent and what some might call heresy Paul calls the way what

does that do for us today what some would call ridiculous Paul calls it's the only way it's the only way to life it's the only way to hope as you'll see here it's the only way to God it's the only way to heaven it's the only way to answer the question of our day for Paul he had to work in this resurrection because Paul understood that the issue that these Jews had had nothing to do with if Paul gained some followers or not they had an issue with God Almighty and the idea of the resurrection see

Paul knew well very well that the idea of the resurrection was an indicting idea and he knew this because Jesus himself comes to Paul on the road to Damascus and says why are you persecuting me and then later he shows up and says nah bruh you're going to represent me and you're going to be taken captive and and this is going to be your life because my son lives and as we sang earlier he reigns and I'm calling you to be a mouthpiece to that truth Paul uses the opportunity of this resurrection to actually put himself on the line and say I know full well that this resurrection idea is a personal thing to me because the living Lord came to me and actually told me who he is and what I must do in this life including being persecuted by you but Paul's primary defense is on the basis of everything he's done is found centered in the hope that all the fathers of the faith that these men say they follow that everyone that has come before him that that all the scriptures all testify to the fact that there is hope in the fruition of the fact that Jesus is out of the grave all the fathers are looking to that instance that Jesus didn't stay dead but as the old church would say early one Sunday morning he got up and if Christ has resurrected then all who are in Christ will also resurrect with him Paul is making the case that if your issue is with the resurrection then your issue is with the fact that we have hope in this life and if you don't know that the hope lies in the fact that the confirmation of what

[24 : 36] Jesus came to do lies in the resurrection itself then all is lost and all I've been doing is in vain but I am sure that this is not in vain you gotta understand as Christ is resurrected we will resurrect with him also for Paul working the resurrection into the conversation was a matter of personal importance a matter of personal experience but also Paul believed in the resurrection as a matter of public righteousness it was a resurrection as a matter of public righteousness but but after all this is to the point that the Jews had beef with Paul because if they choose to not believe in the coming resurrection then there isn't a reason to preach there isn't a reason to change what they are doing if there's no Christ then I can continue to swindle the congregation if there's no resurrection I can continue to have everyone pay me to actually forgive their sins to look at me as the leader right look at verse 15 and 16 letting us know that just how

Paul felt about this resurrection that it is a resurrection of us that might sound new to these guys here no no no no you gotta understand it's not just a resurrection of those who are in Christ but you gotta understand Felix this is a resurrection based off Daniel chapter 12 2 where he says and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt what Paul is telling the leaders of the Sanhedrin and the governor who is the judge that amen whether you are righteous or unrighteous we're all gonna be judged by the one who matters the most do you believe that so when it says the rain falls on the just and the unjust do we see that eschatologically as amen there's going to be some words whether you believe or not it's about who you believe and who's representing you on that day

Daniel 12 is the baseline for the argument Paul makes here that I might be wrapped in chains but I'm free in Christ I might be accused and lied on but I'm free in Jesus and when that day comes that I have to stand before the righteous judge Felix the righteous judge that I'm going to stand before Paul says in the end my conscience is clear before God and man I have not done a thing wrong I'm not saying and Paul's not even saying he's never done anything wrong we know Paul's story but can you say today that your conscience is clear as we take the elements later can we actually take it with a clear conscience as we sit in this hot Sunday service are we at the end of the day at peace with our maker that might sound you know elementary but it's a reality that

I think Luke is trying to get Theophilus to even see Paul's not trying to spare his own life Jesus said if anyone saves his life he'll lose it but if anyone loses his life for my sake you'll find it while others are worried about their reputation and worried about their fame in the land worried about whether they will continue in authority Bible says in Proverbs 29 when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice but when the wicked bear rule the people mourn I think Paul is representing that right now nah you are representing an authority that we should mourn over both the Jews and Felix Paul ends this with this third defense in 18 through 21 as to what he is doing in the temple he says I just

came to worship and there's no evidence of wrongdoing that as influencing as and well stated as Turchillus's claims were they were nothing more than a ruse they were just a lie as Paul says in the end of verse 21 other than this one thing I cried out in chapter 23 while standing amongst them it is it is respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day it would seem that Paul had a peculiar hope to which he does claim to be guilty of guilty of what they failed to believe in and is that enough for you today hope based on a resurrection that many would say is not true hoping on the promise of a future resurrection and hoping on the premise of a resurrection already in progress you see Paul says that there is going to be a resurrection of the dead and the emphasis there is that not only has there been a resurrection in Christ not only will there be a resurrection if you're in Christ or you're outside of Christ but if you are in

[30 : 05] Christ you get the opportunity to enjoy a resurrected life today the character of Paul is seen here the character of the Sanhedrin is seen the character of Felix is somewhat seen but we end with this aftermath that's where I make my landing we end off with Felix having heard both arguments Luke Luke lets us know that he was a man well acquainted with the way verse 22 through 27 he was a man well acquainted with the way Felix does choose not to cast a judgment in fact the word says he put it off he says you know what I don't want to judge on this I'm going to let the tribune come and let them handle that we just did all this and you just going to put it off and we see a few things concerning this man Felix here

Felix gives Paul some liberties but keeps him in custody so he makes no judgment he does nothing it's almost as if Felix has this I like to call this Grover mentality I like to watch this show in the morning called Sesame Street you know it's just me and Cece and my segment on Sesame Street about Super Grover 2.0 Grover the blue guy the monster and he always shows up and the tagline is Super Grover 2.0 he showed up and the idea is that every time he shows up he doesn't help in fact he hurts in fact he's offering all the wrong advice and it will probably just be better that you didn't show up at all and they end up finding the issue solving the issue themselves and it was like Super Grover 2.0 you showed up it would seem that there is a tendency for just showing up and okay I heard it I can kind of you know see where you're coming from there but you did nothing about the issue at hand I think we live in a society where it's it's easy to make conversation it's easy to put up a blog it's easy to repost but it's harder to actually show up and do something worthwhile we see a few things more here about this man Felix we see a glimpse into the procurator's personal life verse 24 as Luke's brief mention of this young lady Drusilla she would have been the youngest daughter of Agrippa the first back in Acts 12 we talked about him but the way in which Felix gets her as a wife was shady she was married to another man she was underage he saw her he said I wanted her in fact Felix name means happy he comes up to her story goes he says I want to make you Felix happy she like the man who not only is you know lax in actually making the right decision but he's he's an adulteress

Felix if Felix were to hear about the Christ he must he must probably heard it from Jerusalem who was mentioned as a Jew and and he hears about the Christ from Paul in verse 25 and and and Luke mentions here Paul found the opportunity to talk to Felix about morals about what is right and wrong and he talks to him so much about the righteousness of Jesus Christ that the text shows here that he that Felix was troubled and he you know he was like I don't want to hear anymore that's cool that's cool for you that's good I appreciate your words I respect you I think we learned something there that there might even be some of us here today that are okay with the sermons with the music with just showing up but are our lives actually turned in a way that shows that we actually believe what is said do our lives show that a witness actually has come to fruition in our heart so much so that we will not go to the right or to the left but we will hold the line of scripture or as one of my friends will say we will pray and grind or are we okay with just hearing the info instead of flattery

Paul speaks directly to Felix concerning his sin of adultery of pride of lack of justice lack of peace even in the land even looking at verse 26 according to many Felix was the type to take bribes I mean I was hoping you was going to give me some money I could have kind of moved your case a little long but you know I'll keep you there yet!

[35 : 43] said only said said you said so are you the king of the Jews and Paul counts it happy to actually be to suffer something of that well I remember I remember a few years back I was rapping in D.C.

and my dad stays in Alexandria my mom stays in Maryland so I flew in did the show Friday night it was crazy good awesome all that and I was like all right my cousin said I want to spend some time with you and then I'll drop you off at your dad's house at a flight that next day driving from southeast D.C.

get on the turnpike about to head to Alexandria and we get pulled over and it's Friday night it's hot and I'm like well this happens whatever but they come to the car they pull us out throw us on the ground strap us up throw us in the back of the car and we still don't know what we did in fact my cousin was like man he's used to that and I'm like I'm just trying to get to my dad's house and I'm a Christian rapper drag us in to the local jail and we're sitting there it's just us in the to say anything like what are we talking about I'm just saying if they ask you something then they bring us in one by one first him then me and they come in and we're like well we found a gun in the car this gun had been shot a few times I'm like I don't know anything about a gun and he says yeah well this gun could mean automatic three years for the both of you because it's an unlicensed gun in DC and I'm like I don't know anything about that I was just trying to get to my dad's house my cousin I hear him in the other room nah man he a good dude he's talking about me by the way and mind you I'm not like the most pious person in the world but I'm like come on now let me go let me just call my dad he works at the pentagon and they they bring him in and they go all right come here for a second your cousin keeps yelling about you're a rapper rap in front of us right now and I remember being so angry because I was like what and it was an anger that for me translates to humor so it might seem like I'm just joking around but I'm not so when they took my mug but you ever don't search it because you won't be able to find it because they spelled my name wrong too so you still won't be able to find it but I decided to smile because I didn't want any time if just in case happened you know everybody gots the worst mug shots

I hot I didn't Ž Ž Ž Ž Ž Ž Ž Ž Ž Ž and they bring us in and they go rap and i'm like you know what and again i'm not saying that i was like super on 10 for jesus at this moment because i definitely wasn't but i remember thinking i don't know what you're gonna do god but i'm just gonna try to do something so i do something and they go okay all right back to the deal and i'm like man i thought that was gonna get us off long story short we got out tuesday morning my dad's standing there with the u.s marshals he's like what happened i'm like come on really and we get out and uh i never heard from him again they gave me a little certificate that said hey not certificate it was just a little letter that said hey if you ever get jammed up on a job just show them this and you'll be fine and and i think i i remember my heart in the process thinking i'm not thinking of jesus right now i'm thinking of all the little nuances that got me to this point i remember feeling as if i wish i did do something because the way they're treating us over these last two and a half days is is as if we murdered the president and all i would tell you is that in christ paul experienced more than that but you can imagine having to deal with liars and having to deal with the people that are supposed to have your back as they actually you're saying we don't have your back we're gonna leave you to suffer and in spite of paul's imprisonment he he decides to be a witness god had used me as a witness i'm not sure if anybody came to faith i'm not sure of the what what happened if they went back in question no one asked me anything after that i ended up getting back to chicago but are you ready to expound truth when called upon in sticky situations in the in the face of liars and haters and those who would do away with scripture in order to make their point it's hot so i'm gonna i'm gonna be quiet last thing i'll say is do non-believers know who you represent is your witness as one lady saying at aretha franklin's funeral is your witness in vain let's pray lord we pray that you will be the point of our witness that your character will be revealed that as next week we see paul standing even before more judges that we can actually find our life within this text and you will give us the grace and the humility to live it out in jesus name we pray amen