



ACTS 24:1-27 ESV

1 And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul. 2 And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 5 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. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. 7 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him." 9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so. 10 And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. 11 You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 12 and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. 17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. 18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— 19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 21 other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'" 22 But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." 23 Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs. 24 After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you." 26 At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. 27 When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

STRUCTURE

- I. **Tertullus, the slick-tongued prosecutor:** the Jewish prosecutor lies by flattering the godless governor and falsely accusing Paul, revealing the politics of religious elites (24:1-9).
 - a. Flattery disguises injustice (24:1-4)
 - b. False charges distort truth (24:5-9)
- II. **Paul, the cheerful prisoner:** the apostle defends himself and the gospel by proclaiming the truth about both—with courage, joy, and a clean conscience (24:10-21).
 - a. Respect without flattery (24:10)
 - b. Defense without deception:
 - i. *Not an agitator:* he never stirred up a crowd (24:11-13)
 - ii. *Not a heretic:* he proclaims the ancestral faith (24:14-16)
 - iii. *Not a profaner:* he comes with purification and offerings (24:17-18)
 - c. Exposure without fear (24:19-21)
- III. **Felix, the cowardly politician:** the adulterous and self-serving ruler detains the faithful apostle for two years seeking glory from the Jews and money from Paul (24:22-27)
 - a. Cowardly Felix delays justice under the guise of investigation (24:22-23)
 - b. Cowardly Felix delays repentance under the weight of conviction (24:24-25)
 - c. Cowardly Felix delays a verdict for the sake of greed and applause (24:26-27)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

As Paul's legal saga continues in Caesarea, Acts 24 portrays more than a courtroom drama—it dramatizes the clash between political power and prophetic truth, between flattery and integrity, between cowardice and courage. Paul stands trial before Governor Felix, not merely to defend himself, but to proclaim the gospel in a hall of earthly justice. Luke skillfully contrasts the slick, self-serving prosecution with Paul's joy-filled, truth-centered defense. Meanwhile, Felix's vacillating judgment exposes the rot of political expedience. This chapter invites readers to examine not just how Paul defends the faith, but how the gospel exposes every heart it encounters.

The prosecution begins not with evidence but with empty praise. Tertullus, the professional orator, puffs up Felix with fawning flattery—words as hollow as the charges he soon unleashes. His oration drips with political grease, praising a man widely known for cruelty and corruption, which already signals that truth is not the goal. What follows is a series of distortions: Paul is called a plague, a sectarian ringleader, and a temple-desecrator. The irony is sharp—accusers who once tore into each other in the Sanhedrin now unite under falsehood, driven by a political spirit. Luke presents Tertullus as the embodiment of religious power gone rotten: more concerned with winning favor than finding truth. In the kingdom of God, truth does not flow from gilded tongues but from “a clear conscience” (24:16).

Paul's response is as remarkable for what it lacks as for what it includes. There is no groveling, no bartering, no manipulation—just cheerful clarity. He respects the court without catering to it and walks through the charges with calm precision, flipping the script from defendant to witness. He denies stirring crowds or desecrating the temple and instead confesses his allegiance to the Way as the fulfillment of Jewish hope. Paul is not an agitator but a worshiper; not a heretic but a faithful son of Israel; not a profaner but a purified giver. In every word, Paul upholds both the integrity of the gospel and his own conscience. The world may slander the truth, but Paul stands as living proof that the truth stands up under fire—and makes men glad to do it.

Felix, “well-acquainted with the Way,” should have thrown the case out. Instead, he delays, dissembles, and detains. Luke doesn't paint him as ignorant but as willfully spineless—a man with access to truth but no courage to act on it. His delay is not judicial patience but political cowardice. Then, when Paul preaches not only faith in Christ but righteousness, self-control, and judgment, Felix trembles—but still won't repent. The gospel reaches his ears and rattles his soul, but greed and people-pleasing drown out conviction. For two years he converses with Paul, hoping for a bribe and angling for Jewish favor. He leaves office with nothing to show but a righteous man still imprisoned. Felix heard the truth, felt its weight, but lacked the spine to bow to it.

In Acts 24, Luke pulls back the curtain to show the courtroom as a throne room for Jesus Christ, the returning judge of “both the just and the unjust” (24:15). The prosecutor flatters, the governor trembles, but the prisoner speaks with freedom and joy. Paul's bold confession reveals a deeper trial beneath the legal wrangling—a trial not of Paul, but of truth itself. The gospel proves stronger than politics, clearer than flattery, and more frightening than chains. But to the one who embraces it, even in chains, it gives courage, joy, and a clean conscience. When our integrity is tested and our comfort is threatened, this chapter reminds us: it's not where you stand in the courtroom of men that matters, but how you stand before the Judge of all the earth.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

1 And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul.

—“And after five days”: In the prior context, we observe how a group of over forty Jews forms a conspiracy to kill Paul, vowing not to eat or drink until he is dead. Paul's nephew overhears the plot and warns him. Paul then informs the Roman commander, who swiftly arranges for a military escort to transfer Paul safely to Governor Felix in Caesarea. Paul is delivered with a letter explaining the situation, and he is kept under guard at Herod's headquarters. “After five days”, the high priest Ananias and others arrive in Caesarea to formally present their case against Paul.

—“high priest Ananias”: the corrupt official who commanded Paul be struck in ch. 23.

—“spokesman, Tertullus”: Tertullus was the prosecutor, known more for oratory than legal expertise. He was present to persuade, not to present truth.

—“before the governor”: This is Felix. He served as the Roman governor (procurator) of Judea from about A.D. 52 to 59. A former slave, Felix rose to power through the influence of his brother Pallas, a favored servant of Emperor Claudius. He is remembered for his corruption, cruelty, and political incompetence. Roman historian Tacitus described him as a man who “exercised royal power with the instincts of a slave.” Felix ruled with brutality, suppressing uprisings harshly and exploiting his office for personal gain. In Acts 24, he listens to

Paul's defense but delays judgment, hoping for a bribe, and leaves Paul imprisoned for two years to please the Jews.

2 And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 5 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. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. 7 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him." 9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

—"we enjoy much peace... by your foresight, most excellent Felix... every way and everywhere we accept this with gratitude":

- Given Felix's reputation, Tertullus' flowery oration reeks of flattery. The Scripture often condemns such speech as dishonest, which sets the tone for what follows.
- Verses about flattery:
 - "Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts" (Ps. 12:2-3).
 - "Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue." (Pr. 28:23).
 - "A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet." (Pr. 29:5).
 - "For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive" (Rom. 16:18).
 - "For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness" (1 Thess. 2:5).
- Imagine appearing before Adolf Hitler and telling him how grateful the Jews are for him. While Tertullus' speech doesn't rise to that level, it nevertheless aligns. Felix had violently suppressed Jewish dissent throughout his reign, which contributed—not to "gratitude" (Acts 24:3)—but to the Jewish-Roman War that brought down the temple and resulted in a holocaust of 1.1 million Jews.

—"I beg you in your kindness to hear us": Considering his flattery, the request for "kindness" hits different. Does he ask merely for a hearing—or for a political favor?

—"found this man a plague... stirs up riots": Roman politicians cared greatly about insurrection. Tertullus' accusation strikes at the heart of Roman concern—not about Jewish law but about Jewish revolt. Rome demanded subservience and called it "peace." Makes me think of a bully who demands your lunch money and calls "not beating you up"—kind.

—"ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes":

- As the "ringleader," Tertullus laid the blame for these riots at Paul's feet.
- "sect": the Pharisees and Sadducees were considered sects of Judaism (Acts 5:17; 15:5). Here, the word applies to Christians.
- "Nazarenes": followers of "Jesus of Nazareth."
- Stott: The Greek word for sect "had not yet come to mean 'heresy', although its uses in this chapter and its recurrence in 28:22 'inclines towards' the rendering 'heretical sect'" (BAGD).
- This verse constitutes a second charge against Paul. Not only is a rabble-rouser; he also leads a divergent sect from historic Judaism—modeling his doctrine after the same villain that Rome had already crucified for sedition. Paul is thus painted as a problem for both Jews and Romans. He's a doctrinal heretic and treasonous villain.

—"he even tried to profane our temple":

- Here is the third charge. Paul is not just a doctrinal heretic and treasonous villain but also a condemned blasphemer.
- The Greek verb βεβηλόω (bebeiloō) means to profane, desecrate, or treat as common what is sacred. The idea of temple defilement echoes Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig and setting up a pagan altar (see Daniel 11:31). In the eyes of these Jews, Paul is an antichrist figure—an "abomination that causes desolation."

- The charge of profaning the temple refers to Paul allegedly bringing “Trophimus the Ephesian” (Acts 21:29) into the restricted Jewish parts of the temple (beyond the court of Gentiles). Luke narrates that they “supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple” (21:29), implying he had not (which Paul seems to confirm later).
- The Jewish accusers care not about facts or truth, but power and suppression. They assumed Paul had transgressed based on uninvestigated hearsay.
- People influenced by a political spirit seize on any piece of evidence that supports their agenda—often without investigating whether it’s actually true. As discerning believers, we must resist the urge to jump to conclusions. Wisdom calls us to draw conclusions slowly, carefully, and truthfully.

—“we seized him”:

- More like, they beat him unlawfully.
- The political spirit inflames charges against others but sanitizes its own actions.

—“by examining him yourself”: The Romans formerly intended to “examine” Paul via torturous means until discovering he was a Roman citizen and it was illegal (22:24-29). Tertullus is essentially asking them to waterboard Paul into “testifying.”

—“The Jews also joined in the charge”: Tertullus enjoys the support of the Jewish Supreme Court—the Sanhedrin—and probably many others. Paul stands alone.

10 And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. 11 You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 12 and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me."

—“Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation...”:

- Paul honors the governor but without flattering him. The contrast between his introduction and that of Tertullus already foreshadows the truth of Paul’s claims.
- If someone is dishonest about lower-case-t “truth,” we should not trust them to instruct us in capital-T “Truth”—religious truth; absolute truth.
- As believers, we help or hinder our testimony to capital-T Truth by being truthful people—in the way we speak and interact.

—“I cheerfully make my defense”: Most people would not be cheerful after getting beat up, arrested unjustly, and being forced to stand before a mob of false accusers. The gospel makes us glad.

—“not more than twelve days”: In other words, “I had no time to organize a political revolution, even if that had been my intention—and it wasn’t.”

—“I went to worship in Jerusalem”:

- Paul has been accused of heresy as a follower of Jesus the Nazarene, but he claims to have entered Jerusalem as a faithful Jewish pilgrim. Paul does not deny his worship of Jesus, but this launches his defense of the Nazarene sect, not as an aberration, but as a fulfillment of Jewish hope.
- Paul does not say, “I went to start a riot,” but I “went to worship.”
- Therefore, with just a few words, he has already responded to the charges of heresy and insurrection. He will have more to say too.

—“they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd”:

- Paul defends his claim that he entered Jerusalem not to riot but to worship by pointing out the evidence of how they found him—doing none of those things. Not only does the evidence support Paul; he adds that they have no evidence to “prove to you what they now bring against me.”
- Some Christians believe it is wrong to defend yourself based on the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek. However, Paul provides his defense, and Luke presents it as a model of righteousness. “turn the other cheek” does not mean that you can’t respond to critics. Rather, it means you don’t retaliate in kind or seek personal revenge. Paul’s defense is not vindictive or self-exalting—it is a truthful, restrained, and reasoned appeal to justice. In doing so, he honors both the Lord and the truth, showing that defending oneself can be a righteous act when done with humility and integrity.

14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

—“But this I confess to you”:

- Paul refuses to admit to false charges, but he also refuses to backdown from their sole true charge—that he belongs to the “sect” of the Nazarenes.
- I am reminded of Paul’s words to Timothy about “the good confession”:
 - “Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God... and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession...” (1 Tim. 6:12-13).
 - Timothy “made the good confession” by publicly proclaiming the truth.
 - Jesus “made the good confession” by testifying before Pilate.
 - What is “the good confession”?
 - It is the bold, unwavering acknowledgment of the truth about Jesus Christ, made publicly and often under pressure.
 - For Timothy, it was his open declaration of faith in Christ before many witnesses.
 - For Jesus, it was His affirmation before Pilate that He is indeed a king—but not of this world (John 18:36–37).
 - For Paul, here in Acts 24:14, it is his courageous confession that the Way—though called a “sect”—is the true fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He does not retreat from this identity; he embraces it.
 - Paul models for us that “the good confession” means refusing to deny the gospel, even when it is misunderstood, mocked, or criminalized.

—“according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers... the Law and the Prophets... hope in God, which these men themselves accept... resurrection”:

- Paul disputes that Christianity is merely a “sect,” claiming instead that it is the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures.
- Rather than opposing Judaism, Paul aligns himself with the God of the Jews, the Scripture of the Jews, and the hope of the Jews—namely, resurrection.
- Rhetorically, Paul has responded to the false claims of not only insurrection (earlier) but also heresy (here).

—“resurrection of both the just and the unjust”:

- Our destiny is not disembodiment but rather eternal embodiment.
- When we die, our spirit soars to heaven (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23); at the end of the age, God grants an eternal physical, and glorified body to all who believe (1 Cor. 15:42–44; Phil. 3:21).
- But resurrection is not only for the righteous—even unbelievers will be raised, though not for reward, but for judgment (John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15; Dan. 12:2).
- Their bodies will *not* be “like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21) because they rejected the glory of Christ in life. While Scripture does not give a detailed description of their resurrected form, it is clear that resurrection for unbelievers is unto shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2), not glory.
- Thus, all will be raised, but the just to eternal life and the unjust to eternal judgment—embodied, conscious, and eternal destinies.
- The resurrection of the damned shows that God deals with humans as whole persons, body and soul. It manifests His perfect justice in public, embodied form. It fulfills Scripture’s consistent teaching that eternal destinies are bodily, not just spiritual. And it reveals the eternal weight of rejecting God’s mercy. The resurrected bodies of the damned, though not glorified, may in some way reflect the shame and corruption of sin—just as the glorified bodies of the saints reflect Christ’s beauty.
- Rowe (qtd. by Schreiner): “From first to last, the Way is about resurrection.”

—“always take pains to have a clear conscience before God and man”:

- “take pains”: maintaining a clear conscience is no light matter. At times, our conscience will convict us. This experience is painful, necessary, and good.
- “clear conscience”: Paul emphasized conscience in his prior defense as well (23:1). Why does he so emphasize it? Paul’s emphasis on a clear conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16) shows that he is not merely defending himself legally, but morally and spiritually. He knows that human courts can misjudge, but God weighs the heart (Prov. 21:2). A clear conscience means Paul has lived sincerely before God—without hidden agendas, hypocrisy, or manipulation. In a world full of slander and political spin, a clear conscience is his anchor of integrity. It enables him to suffer unjustly without guilt and to speak boldly without shame.
- “before God and man”: Paul is saying, in effect, “I have nothing to hide from either heaven or earth.” His statement acknowledges that God, not the court, determines his true standing; at the same time, he has nothing to hide from human courts.

17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. 18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— 19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 21 other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'"

—“I came to bring alms to my nation and present offerings”:

- The “alms” refer to charitable gifts for the poor, likely the collection Paul gathered from Gentile churches for the suffering believers in Judea (cf. Rom. 15:25–27; 1 Cor. 16:1–3; 2 Cor. 8–9). This was both a practical act of mercy and a symbolic gesture of unity between Gentile and Jewish believers.
- The “offerings” refer to ceremonial acts of devotion in the temple. These were not animal sacrifices for atonement, since Paul knew Christ had fulfilled the sacrificial system (Heb. 10:1–14). More likely, these were ritual purification offerings or thank offerings associated with the Nazarite vow Paul helped sponsor (Acts 21:23–26).
- Far from desecrating the temple, Paul was honoring its role in Jewish life—even as he preached that Jesus was its fulfillment. His actions were an effort to build bridges, not burn them. He came in humility, not hostility.
- Far from opposing the Jewish nation, Paul brought offerings to support it, and he calls it, “my nation”.

—“they found me purified in the temple”: Far from opposing Moses, Paul submitted to the Law, participating in a Nazirite vow—not because he had to, but for unity (21:23–26).

—“without any crowd or tumult”: Far from stirring insurrection, Paul entered the temple quietly. Whatever tumult arose came by “Jews from Asia” (v. 18).

—“they ought to be here... to make an accusation”: Paul points out a glaring hole in the prosecution’s case—the very men who allegedly saw him commit the offense are not present. Their absence undermines the credibility of the charges. According to both Jewish and Roman legal standards, accusations were to be confirmed by actual witnesses (cf. Deut. 19:15; Acts 25:16). The fact that these supposed eyewitnesses stayed behind while others pressed the charges suggests the presence of bias and hearsay. Paul’s accusers are relying on secondhand testimony and emotional hostility, not verifiable facts. By exposing this, Paul shows he is being prosecuted not for a crime, but for his faith and convictions.

—“Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council”: In Acts 23, the Pharisees—after Paul claimed himself to be a Pharisee—had declared, “We find nothing wrong with this man” (v. 9). Now they want to press charges? What changed? Nothing—that’s the point. These men want blood, not justice.

—“other than this one thing”: Just like Paul did when standing before the Sanhedrin, he repeats here standing before Felix—he reframes the trial. It is not Paul, but the truth of the gospel, that stands trial. Paul is the faithful witness. And God, not Felix, is the Judge.

22 But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." 23 Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

—“Felix... accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off”: As the governor of Judea where Christ was crucified and Christianity flourished, and as the spouse of a Jew, it makes sense that Felix knew about the Way. Felix’s knowledge of the Way should have led to justice—he knew they had no case against Paul. Instead, he makes a calculated political move.

—“When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case”: Felix is buying time. He already received a letter from Lysias declaring Paul’s innocence (23:29). Felix is a liar.

—“kept in custody but have some liberty”: Felix doesn’t side with the Jews because they have no case; but he doesn’t side with Paul because he wants receive a “bribe” from Paul (24:26) and “to do the Jews a favor” (24:27)—leaving Paul in prison.

—Pinter (qtd. by Schreiner): “Instead of a bribe, [Felix] receives a sermon.”

—Rather than deciding his case, Felix looks like Pontius Pilate 2.0. He finds no guilt in the accused but lacks the courage to set him free (cf. Luke 23:4, 14, 22). Like Pilate, Felix chooses political expedience over righteousness, trying to appease the crowd while ignoring the truth. His decision isn’t truly neutral; it’s a failure of leadership wrapped in passivity. Justice delayed becomes justice denied.

24 After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you." 26 At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. 27 When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

—“his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish”:

- Drusilla was a beautiful, young Jewish princess from the Herodian dynasty, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12—the one God struck dead) and sister to Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (Acts 25-26). Originally married to a Syrian king named Azizus, Drusilla left him to marry the Roman governor Felix. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Felix was captivated by Drusilla’s beauty and used a magician (possibly a sorcerer named Atomos) to persuade her to leave her husband and marry him. This marriage was both politically scandalous and religiously unlawful by Jewish standards, since it involved adultery and remarriage to a Gentile.
- Her presence in Acts 24 is significant: as a Jew, she would have understood the moral weight of Paul’s message about righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment. Yet, despite her heritage and access to the truth, she and Felix responded not with repentance but with delay and self-interest, highlighting the tragic irony of those who hear the gospel yet harden their hearts.

—“faith in Christ Jesus... righteousness and self-control and coming judgment”:

- Paul’s first concern is with “faith in Christ Jesus”—that people be saved by trusting in Christ’s finished work on the cross.
- But this does not mean that Paul—or we—should be unconcerned with good works.
- I have heard people say in evangelistic contexts, “You catch the fish before you clean it.” The saying intends to communicate that we should not concern ourselves with the sinful lifestyle of godless people but rather with bringing them to Christ, who will “clean” the fish after it is caught, which is to say, after they are saved.
- The saying has some merit, but it is too simplistic. It’s true that our chief concern should be with saving the lost, not with reforming them. However, we can’t push this too far. Paul’s teaching about righteousness and self-control should be viewed as part of his saving message: he routinely used the law to convict of sin (Rom. 3:20), pointing to the need for a Savior.
- It’s hard to convince someone they need a life preserver if they don’t realize they are drowning. Paul shows this wicked royal couple that they are drowning in sin, and that judgment looms, warning them to put their “faith in Christ Jesus.”
- In light of Paul’s example—which aligns with the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostle John in Revelation—I get queasy when I see big-name Christians cozying up to politicians. If God grants Christians favor in the political realm, they must be faithful to warn them about the sins that drown them—rather than drowning them with flattery like Tertullus in this passage.

—“Felix was alarmed”:

- This fascinates me. The lowly prisoner so effectively prophesied doom over the powerful politician that he shook in his boots.
 - This is a striking reversal of expectations. The man in chains—the supposed criminal—becomes the voice of fearless authority, while the powerful governor trembles under the weight of truth. Paul, the prisoner, is calm, composed, and clear-eyed, proclaiming the gospel with conviction. Felix, draped in Roman authority and seated in judgment, is the one who panics. It's a vivid picture of how God's truth disorients the world's power structures.
 - The same pattern is seen throughout Scripture. Time and again, the prophets and apostles—though outwardly weak—speak with such moral clarity and divine authority that kings are undone by the weight of truth. Felix wanted control, but Paul had courage. Felix had status, but Paul had a clean conscience. When truth entered the room, it wasn't the chains that made Paul a prisoner—it was Felix, bound by fear, who was truly captive.
- “hoped that money would be given him by Paul... desiring to do the Jews a favor”:
- Felix desires wealth and popularity—not Christ and the gospel.
 - Schreiner: “He invites Paul into the dance of the Roman Empire, where money and power corrupt.”
- “When two years had elapsed... Felix left Paul in prison”:
- Two years! Not because Paul was guilty but because Felix was spineless. His political compromise yields no bribe from Paul and no love from the Jews. This is the cost of moral cowardice. Felix had multiple opportunities to act justly, but he postponed, evaded, and eventually walked away—leaving a righteous man in chains to preserve his own career. In the end, it gained him nothing. His name fades into history as just another petty ruler who feared men more than God. Meanwhile, Paul—though unjustly confined—continued his ministry, preserved by God, his conscience clear, and his mission intact.
 - I'm reminded of a quote by CS Lewis about courage in *The Screwtape Letters*: “Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point. Which means at the point of highest reality. A chastity or honesty, or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful—till it became risky.”
 - Felix lacked the courage to act justly, and he vanished from history. Paul languished in prison, but with his conscience intact and a legacy that continues.
 - All of us will face tests like Paul, and like Felix. Passing the test requires not just great love, or great mercy, or great discernment—but great courage. Without courage, all virtues collapse, and we fail the test. The gospel stands on its own, but Christians need a spine to stand with it.