

Fact Sheet for “Of Politics and Religion” Acts 23:25 – 24:27

Pastor Bob Singer 06/22/2014

Several Jews had taken an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. The tribune, on hearing of this plot transferred Paul to Caesarea by night.

^{ESV 25} And he wrote a letter to this effect: ²⁶ ¶ "Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings.

Antonius *Felix*, a freedman prominent in the reign of the Emperor Claudius; he was the husband of Drusilla and procurator (governor) of Palestine about 52–60 A.D. “When a prisoner was forwarded to a superior, the subordinate officer was required to accompany the subject with a written statement of the case.”¹

²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen.

Notice that Lysias discreetly omitted any reference to his preparing to have Paul flogged.

²⁸ And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹ I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment.

Similar comments were made in 18:14-15; 19:40; 23:9; 25:25, 26:31-32.

³⁰ And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him."

³¹ ¶ So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³² And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him. ³³ When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him.

Antipatris, a city in Judaea more than 35 miles from Jerusalem

³⁴ On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium.

At this time Cilicia was not a full province but was under the legate of Syria, for whom Felix was a deputy.

24:1 ¶ 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.

Spokesman, (ὀπίτωρ) orator, advocate, attorney

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.

"...Felix was known for his violent use of repressive force and corrupt self-aggrandizement. Felix had been a slave, won his freedom, and curried favor with the imperial court. Tacitus, a Roman historian, bitingly summed up Felix's character with the terse comment, 'He exercised royal power with the mind of a slave.'"²

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, (1) one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and (2) is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶ (3) 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."

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 420.

² The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 421.

- (1) This had clear political overtones because Rome desired to maintain order throughout its empire.
- (2) Rome permitted Judaism, but would not tolerate new religions, *sect* (αἵρεσις)
- (3) The Romans had given the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who went inside the barrier of the temple (21:28)

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 (a) You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem,

Paul now answered the charges brought against him one by one.

¹² and (b) 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 (c) 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.

"the Way" is not a new religion!

¹⁶ So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

Regarding "the just and the unjust"

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.'

Paul was saying that his accusers were actually the ones stirring-up the trouble.

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.

Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, 3rd wife of Felix the procurator. In Acts 25 Paul would stand before Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I and brother to Drusilla.

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.

Felix was later accused of using a dispute between the Jews and Syrians of Caesarea as a pretext to slay and plunder the inhabitants. As a result he lost his position. Drusilla would die in Pompeii during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79A.D.

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.

**God is in always control.
Have faith (as Paul did). Don't be despondent about life.
God's timing is not our own.
Never stopped sharing the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20).**