

# A Practical Study of ACTS:

## Take It To Them!

### “Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

#### Study Number Twenty – Acts 24:1-27

We left Paul in the city of Caesarea when we finished our last study.

A little over a week ago he came into the city of Jerusalem. It was against the counsel and advice of some folks in Caesarea and also some people up in Tyre who said don't go to Jerusalem.

Paul did go and he stirred up a riot. He nearly got himself killed. And from the stairs of the barracks with the permission of the commander, he gave a tremendous message. We studied that message as he stood there bloody and battered. And everything was fine because he was speaking in fluent Hebrew and they really listened to him speak.

Then came that one word that caused everything to fall apart. He used the word “Gentiles.” And the Jews started throwing dirt in the air and became very, very angry toward him. And C.L., the commander, took him to the barracks. Not knowing who Paul was, he ordered him to be scourged.

Paul claimed his Romans citizenship, which would have been

a violation of that if he had been scourged, and therefore he was freed from that.

And the commander said, “Well I want you to stand before the Sanhedrin.” The Sanhedrin is the ruling body of the Jews—Paul’s greatest opportunity to witness. We looked together as he came before the Sanhedrin to speak and he lost it.

He started by saying simply, “I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.” And the high priest ordered him to be hit in the mouth with the iron-heeled shoe.

Paul evidently had a hair-trigger temper. He called the high priest a “white-washed wall.” And from then on in, he lost his opportunity to be a witness.

Back in the cell, in the barracks, the next night while he was still feeling terribly sad over his failure before the Sanhedrin, the Lord appeared to him and said, “It’s going to be alright Paul. You’ve witnessed for Me in Jerusalem and you’re going to witness for Me in Rome also.”

That had to bring a lot of comfort to him, at least knowing that he was going to have the privilege of going to Rome before he was going home. And so the next thing we find, the next morning, is 40 men plotting against Paul that they would not eat or drink until they had taken Paul’s life.

A little nephew came into the picture and spilled the beans on the whole thing. And Paul, as a result of that, was taken to

Caesarea by an armed force of some 470 men. Then at Caesarea we left him.

Felix said to him as he stayed in Herod's Praetorium, which is really a fancy place to stay, "As soon as your accusers come, I will judge your case."

Now Felix is going to be in the study and he is the governor of the land of Judea. He is the Roman representative. The Roman seat of government is in Caesarea. The Jewish seat of government, of course, is in Jerusalem. And we're now some 50 or 60 miles north and west of Jerusalem in the city of Caesarea as the scene of the study opens.

How do we think Paul is feeling? He's probably feeling pretty good. He's encouraged. He's feeling excited. He probably feels deep inside that he's right in the center of God's will and he realizes God is at work in all these things. After all, how many people get an opportunity to be a witness to a Roman governor?

And he's thinking, "This is great. I'm going to have an audience with the governor and I'm going to have a chance to tell all these people in Caesarea about Jesus Christ."

Many times in our lives we can get off to a bad start. We can have a tough time. But with real courage and determination, we can overcome those obstacles that block our way and become successful.

Paul is overcoming them. He's hanging in there and he's faithful. And he knows God is going to work and so he's waiting expectantly for God to begin to do his good work in his life.

Paul probably feels a little bit like Joseph. Remember when Joseph was 17 he had these dreams of great grandeur. But during those dreams it also spoke of the fact that his brothers would be bowing before him and he was going to be a big leader. And yet a lot of traumatic things happened between them and the actual fulfillment of those dreams.

Paul is excited knowing that this is going to be good and God is going to work. Now the last verses we read and the last statements that were made were made by Felix as the curtain dropped on our last episode. We read this:

### Acts 23:35

He was saying, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," having given orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

So he has been living it up during the time that we've been apart. Let's pick up with verse 1 of Acts 24.

**v. 1 Now after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a certain prosecuting attorney, Tertullus; who brought charges to the governor against Paul.**

“Now after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a certain prosecuting attorney, Tertullus; who brought charges to the governor against Paul.”

Now Felix felt that he needed to wait until the accusers came. So it's been five days now since the end of our last study and they have finally assembled for the court. But Ananias is no dummy. And as the high priest he's gone around in the legal profession and he's hired his own Racehorse Haynes. And he evidently is part of the Jerusalem legal profession.

Money can buy us out of situations and also get a good judgment. And so Tertullus comes on the stage. Now Tertullus means “third.”

And we can just see it, his name is probably third on the door of the law practice: “Goldberg, Epstein & Tertullus.” And he's the one who brings the charges against Paul and files the formal complaint.

Now there's one other character we don't know yet and we don't know much about it, but he's going to be sitting here listening to the case and he's the judge. And his name is Felix. Now not Felix the cat—his name is Felix.

Felix the PHLEGMATIC.

Felix never makes a decision. The hardest thing in the world for a phlegmatic to do is to make a decision. When a

phlegmatic was dating a girl for 7 years and she was just wishing so much that he would ask her to marry him. And finally one day she just got up enough courage to say, “Would you like to be married?” And he said, “Yes, when?” It’s just one of those things. Phlegmatics just have a hard time making decisions.

Felix never makes a decision on anything during these years that he’s ruling. Now, let’s just introduce him to everyone. Felix was born a slave and he lived as a slave.

Felix is kind of like Jimmy Carter—all the way from peanut farmer to president. This is the first time in Roman history that someone has come from the reigns of being a slave to becoming governor of a territory.

Now there’s a reason for that. The Roman emperor was a very close friend with Paulus, Felix’s brother. Paulus had a high position in the Roman Empire. And he asked Claudius, the Roman emperor, if his brother could be freed from slavery. And he liked Paulus so much he said yes.

And in fact, we have an opening in Judea for a governorship. How would he like to be a governor? And so we have a slave with a slave’s mentality ruling as a governor.

Now what happens when we have somebody’s who’s been downtrodden all their lives and they get a little bit of power? Well they get power hungry. And he has formed his own private mafia.

And when someone is a slave and they all of a sudden get power, they are suspicious of everybody around them. So a lot of people have had to suffer from this.

Now isn't this a true adventure story? Will Paul survive and make it to Rome? Or will he win in the face-off with Felix? We'll see.

Felix has been married three times. He married a little princess young in his career. We don't even know her name. And then he married again and his second wife was a little more famous. She was the granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra, made famous by Shakespeare. And then his third wife is Drusilla. Drusilla is the daughter of Herod who had James beheaded in Acts 12. So she comes out of the Herodian line and she is the woman who's getting ready to step on the stage in the study.

It's this unscrupulous man who has his own hit squad and who rules with a slave's mentality who is now the governor that's going to rule on Paul's case. Does Paul have a chance? They have Racehorse Haynes being the prosecuting attorney and Felix sitting on the throne up there. What chance does a Christian have being put in this kind of a situation? Watch and see how God works all this out. This is an exciting study.

**v. 2 And after he was called, Tertullus began to be accusing him saying: "Since we are obtaining through you much peace and since by your**

**forethought reforms are being carried out for this nation,**

“And after he was called, Tertullus began to be accusing him saying: ‘Since we are obtaining through you much peace and since by your forethought reforms are being carried out for this nation,’”

Isn't that just like a lawyer? They have to blow a lot of smoke to butter up the judge. That's just the way it's done.

Somebody said: “Old lawyers never die, they just lose their appeal.”

This guy hasn't lost his. We can just see it! And he wants to get Felix over on his side before anything is really said.

Is there music to a politician's ears in those opening statements? Look at that:

“Since we are obtaining through you”—Felix, WHAT?—“much peace”

Does every ruler want peace in his domain? Oh! It's a great mark for him to have everybody peaceful and satisfied. But look at the next one. Oh that is music to every politician's ears.

Carefully planned “reforms are being carried out” for the benefit of the “nation.”

The guy's just saying, "Speak on Tertullus! Speak on! I love it! I'm listening!"

And then notice when we go for an overkill, we even say more—verse 3.

**v. 3 we are recognizing this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.**

"we are recognizing this in every way and everywhere,"

"Over the whole totality of your domain sir. Everybody recognizes it and everything you do, every way is perfect."

And then what's the title he uses?

"most excellent Felix,"

A slave loves that doesn't he? So there are three phrases that just really turn him on:

1. "every way,"
2. "everywhere,"
3. "most excellent Felix."

And then finally with humility he says:

“with all thankfulness.”

“We are so grateful for your administration because of the peace and the reforms that you’ve brought and instituted in your leadership. And all of us everywhere and in every way are so thankful for you, ‘most excellent Felix.’”

Now having made this great commendation in blowing all this smoke, he turns to his concerns. We can see he has it well planned. And from this statement of RESPECT he turns to his REQUEST when we get to verse 4.

**v. 4 But in order that I may not further cut in on your time, I am begging of you to grant to us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.**

“But [sir] in order that I may not further cut in on your time, I am begging of you to grant to us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.”

What’s he saying?

“I realize you’re really a busy man Felix and I’ll get on with why I came. I want to say thank you for your kindness and we want you to know this is going to be ‘a brief hearing.’”

What does that do? When we immediately say that, it puts who on the spot? PAUL.

Ever been the second speaker on some kind of an occasion and they say that you're going to sandwich you in?

"I'll make this whole thing as brief as possible sir because you're not even going to want to listen to this other guy that's going to talk. You know, just listen to me. Everything's going to be great."

Now look at how he characterizes Paul. He wants to cast him in the worst light possible. So when we get to verse 5 he's trying to paint a picture of Paul that makes him look like a kook and a cult leader. That's basically what we have here in his descriptions.

**v. 5 For we found this man a real pest and a fellow who is stirring up strife among all the Jews throughout the inhabited earth, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.**

"We found this man a real pest and a fellow who is stirring up strife among all the Jews throughout the inhabited earth,"—at least he's got an international influence—"and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."

Now if we take that statement it is loaded for bear. It's loaded with prejudice. It's loaded with hatred. It's loaded with resentment. And it just drips with venom.

The word:

“pest,”

the word trouble-maker—“stirring up strife,”

“ringleader,”

“sect” and

“Nazarenes.”

He is part of that “sect of the Nazarenes.” In other words, he’s a cult leader.

How does the apostle Paul refer to the Christians? He calls it “the Way.” And Tertullus calls it a “sect.”

Now that term “Nazarenes,” this is the first time that’s used by the way—and it is derogatory. Now realize we have a denomination called the Nazarenes. Wonderful, loving Christian people—but that does not nullify the fact that that term is used in a derogatory fashion in the Bible. And the reason it is, we find it in John 1 where we read:

John 1:46

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

Nazareth was considered on the wrong side of the tracks. And when Philip comes to Nathanael, running up and says, “We

have found the Messiah!” Then Nathanael, the astute student of the Scriptures says, “Can anything come from that side of the tracks? Can anything come that’s good out of Nazareth?”

And so Tertullus picks up on that and he knows there are feelings about people who live in that dusty, dirty city of Nazareth and so he uses that term to even set this thing in a worse light before Felix.

Verse 6—now we’re getting down to some of the specifics. He’s building a tremendous case against Paul in every statement that he makes.

**v. 6 Who even attempted to profane the temple; whom also we arrested [and we wanted to judge him according to our own Law.**

“Who even attempted to profane the temple; whom also we arrested [and we wanted to judge him according to our own Law.”

There are a lot of things wrong with that. We know it because we’ve studied that. Want to watch a fella twist the truth in order to get his own personal advantage? Look at that.

“[He] attempted to profane the temple”—we know he didn’t. That is circumstantial evidence that Trophimus, the Ephesian, was with him in town and they assumed that because he was there and wanted to see the town, he took a Greek into the temple. And so they’ve assumed that.

Now notice another phrase that's a lie: "whom also we arrested."

What happened? Those Asian Jews grabbed him in the temple, pulled him outside and were pulling him into pieces when the commander got there along with several of his soldiers to save his life. They were trying to kill him. They were not arresting him.

And they also—that last statement is sure a pretty way of saying we wanted to kill him isn't it?

"[and we wanted to judge him according to our own Law.]"

They were pulling him toward the rock pile. They were going to make an end of him as quickly as they possibly could.

Now Tertullus seals his own doom.

Know how sometimes a guy will just overstate it because he really doesn't know how the wind is blowing and where the chips are falling? Once in a while when we sit down in real wisdom and we listen, we'll hear some things that'll help us understand where a guy's coming from. And this happens to Tertullus. He's had a great case, he's got everybody on his side, but he just lost it with Felix in this next statement.

**v. 7 But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,**

“But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence he took him out of our hands,”

But who’s violence? It was their violence.

C.L. just came down with his forces and took Paul away from them and took him to the barracks.

He is twisting the facts for personal advantage! Evidently Tertullus has signed a tremendous contract for a large chunk of money if he gets a favorable disposition. And probably double if he wins the thing.

That’s just like a current courtroom scene here in the way the game is played. Now he is talking about C.L. and C.L. happens to be the commander of the Felix force in Jerusalem. And C.L. wrote a letter, remember? And the neat thing is, Tertullus doesn’t know what’s in that letter but Felix has read that letter before the hearing so everything that’s said now is condemning Tertullus.

And this is the reason when we get to the end of it that Felix says, “I don’t want to have anything to do with it until C.L. gets here!”

**v. 8 ordering his accusers to come before you.] Whom you will be able, having yourself conducted an investigation concerning all these things, to come**

**to know fully the things of which we are accusing him.”**

“ordering his accusers to come before you.] Whom you will be able, having yourself conducted an investigation concerning all these things, to come to know fully the things of which we are accusing him.”

This is his summary statement. This is the end of his part of the trial. He’s made his statement and he makes it with a bold crass announcement. “We know that now when you get all the facts, you will certainly give us a favorable disposition and we’ll take care of him. And that’ll be the way that it’s going to be.”

What has been left out of all of this? A lot of critical things.

Number one, not one word was said of the plot of 40 men to kill Paul. And that’s why C.L. sent him to Caesarea.

The letter mentioned that. And when the letter mentioned it, Felix knows about it. But he knows Tertullus is going to leave out anything that’s going to be negative or that’s going to be hurtful to his case. So he axes all of that and simply says, “You know we’re looking forward to a favorable disposition on our behalf.”

Now isn’t it interesting that Tertullus and Ananias brought their own cheering section? As soon as Tertullus finishes his speech—look at verse 9.

**v. 9 And the Jews also joined in the attack, affirming that these things were so.**

“And the Jews also joined in the attack, affirming that these things were so.”

In his harem: “Amen! Right on brother! Put it to him! Let’s feed him to the lions! Let’s throw him in the rock pile!”

They’re all involved immediately, just knowing that as they show their favoritism and they’re united together in thinking “let’s get this guy off the face of the earth!”

How would we feel if we were standing there now and we had to be Paul and open our mouth and say something? Tell us this guy’s not a man of horrendous courage and tremendous ability to stand in the strength of the Lord and give a witness. We’re going to love Paul in this.

We really gain a tremendous respect for the man, just in this passage alone, by the way he handles himself. Not intimidated one bit, he comes right back and he has a real answer for it.

**v. 10 And when the governor nodded to him to be speaking, Paul responded: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I am cheerfully making my defense,**

“And when the governor nodded to him”—that is to Paul—“to

be speaking, Paul responded:”

Now here comes the man. Notice Paul has not hired his own attorney. In fact, he’s probably turned down a court-appointed attorney. He wants to handle his own case because he doesn’t have a thing to hide. He’s learned to live by the truth and he will die by the truth. And so he is willing to speak on his own behalf.

Now notice:

“Paul responded:”—he turns to Felix and he says—“Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I am cheerfully making my defense,”

What’s great about that? There’s no pretty platitudes. There’s no smoke screen. There’s none of this sloppy soft mushy stuff, saying things that aren’t true. This is so great!

All he says to him is, “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge in this nation,”—what does that say?

“You’ve been in office a long time.” He says absolutely nothing about how he feels about his administration. He’s wise as a serpent and he’s harmless as a dove. He can form his own conclusions and his own opinions on the basis of how he knows his heart and how he’s ruled and reigned as a governor. And so he doesn’t say anything that’s not true.

Sometimes as Christians we think we have to exude with all

kinds of agreement. Or words that we really don't feel and we're so phony and so hypocritical.

Why can't we be nice and just say what needs to be said and then keep our mouths shut? And let silence speak in situations where we don't know what to say?

The neat thing about this is, this is the same guy who was singing with his buddy in a Macedonian prison in Philippi at midnight after he had been publicly beaten. And he knows all about Felix. And he says, "I am cheerfully making my defense."

"I'm excited about it! I'm looking forward to this!"

Oh he's up! Even in jail he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always! And again I say rejoice!" They just can't cut the man and make him really bleed with depression and defeat.

"I'm just glad to be here and have this opportunity to speak."

### Ephesians 6:10, 11

Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Here he is, just standing ready to speak.

Now watch him unfold his own statement here—verse 11.

**v. 11 since you are being able to understand that there are not more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.**

“since you are being able to understand that there are not more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.”

“Felix, I want to just tell you that this whole thing has come about in less than two weeks. Actually sir, it’s been twelve days.”

”We’ve had him arrested speaking on the stairs, speaking in the Sanhedrin, had a plot against him and he’s been brought up here and he’s been up here for five days. And you know what I did? I went back and counted them and this is the twelfth day since that happened. Just listen to this. I just want to check it, you know, to see if Paul’s story was really true.”

On Day 1 the riot started in the temple. Right? And on day 1 he stood on the steps of the barracks and gave his message, all beaten and bloody.

On Day 2 he gave his speech before the Sanhedrin. It was on day 1 too when he just missed getting scourged. On day 2 he came before the Sanhedrin. At the end of day 2 he was sitting in his cell weeping because he had failed miserably.

And on Day 3, in the evening, the Lord came to him and said, “You know, everything’s going to be alright. We are going to go to Rome.”

On the morning of Day 4, forty fellas committed themselves to killing this guy. And at 9 p.m. that night on day 4, Claudius Lysias commanded 470 military men to depart Jerusalem to take him to Caesarea.

On Day 5 he was in Antipatris. That’s half-way there.

On Day 6 they arrived in Caesarea.

And how long has he been in Caesarea?

Day 7-11—five days.

And this is Day 12—the day for the court. The trial is scheduled.

He probably keeps a diary. And it’s an awful good thing to do when somebody gets ready to write someone’s biography. It’ll sure be a lot easier for them if there’s a diary for them to write from. And it’s exactly 12 days.

**v. 12 And neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city did they find me disputing with any certain individual nor stirring up a crowd.**

“And neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the

city did they find me disputing with any certain individual nor stirring up a crowd.”

Now what’s he doing? He immediately enters into a rebuttal. And his rebuttal has to do with those words:

1. “pest” and
2. “trouble maker.”

And he says this:

“I didn’t do it in the temple and I didn’t do it in the synagogue and I didn’t do it in the city! So where do you think I did it? None of those places was a pest or a trouble-maker, or stirring up strife.”

Those are the three areas where it could happen:

1. “the temple” and
2. “the synagogues” and
3. “in the city.”

And he’s bold in verse 13.

**v. 13 Neither are they able to prove to you the charges concerning which they now are accusing me.**

“Neither are they able to prove to you the charges concerning which they now are accusing me.”

“They can’t prove that I took someone into the temple and profaned the temple! And the charges they have against me, they cannot prove.”

**v. 14 But this I am admitting to you, that according to the Way which they are calling a sect, thus am I serving the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that has been written in the Prophets;**

“But this I am admitting to you, that according to the Way”

He sticks to the right terminology, not the “sect of the Nazarenes.” And he stops there.

“But...according to the Way which they are calling a sect, thus am I serving the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that has been written in the Prophets;”

How come they called it “the Way”?

They called it “the Way” because of the way they live. Because of the way they love each other. Because of the way they look. They have a radiant face that reflects the Person of the Lord Jesus. And by the way, they long for Him to come back again.

These are the things that made people say, “This is the way they LIVE! This is the way they LOVE! This is the way they LOOK! And this is the way they LONG for Him!”

And so, let's stick to the right terminology.

Notice Paul makes the strongest statement. This is strong stuff.

“I am serving the God of our fathers,”

“I am...believing everything”—**UNDERLINED**, and

“in accordance,” and

“with the Law,” and

“the Prophets.”

Those are the strong statements here.

**v. 15 having a hope in God, which also these men themselves are sharing, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.**

“having a hope in God, which also these men themselves are sharing, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

He uses **THREE KEY VERBS** there:

- 1. “serving,”
- 2. “believing,” and
- 3. “having.”

“I am serving the God of our fathers,”

“I am...believing everything that is in accordance with the law that has been written in the Prophets;” and

“I am...having a hope in God.”

And it is this “hope...which these men...are sharing.” And it was that hope that divided them in the Sanhedrin, remember, between the Sadducees and the Pharisees when he stood there in our last study.

Now look at verse 16. This is the neatest verse!

**v. 16 In view of this, I also am doing my best to be having a conscience which does not cause offense to God and to men at all times.**

“In view of this, I also am doing my best to be having a conscience which does not cause offense to God and to men at all times.”

“In view of” WHAT?

“In view of the fact that I am serving God.”

“In view of the fact that I believe everything.”

“In view of the fact that I have a hope.”

“I also am doing my best to be having a conscience void of offense to God and to men.”

Robert Foster says it so well in his letter to businessmen called “The Challenge:”

Beware that we continue for a single hour in contact with what soils our hands and wounds our conscience, grieves the Holy Spirit and mars our communion with God. Be decisive; be whole-hearted. Give up at once the unclean thing—whatever it be: habit, associations or dirt in the thought life.

Cost what it may—give it up. No earthly gain, no earthly advantage can compensate for the loss of a pure conscience, an uncondemning heart, and the light of our heavenly Father’s blessing.

(source unknown)

How did he open his remarks to the Sanhedrin in Acts 23? Remember?

Acts 23:1, 2

And Paul, having looked intently at the Sanhedrin, said, “Men, brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day,” and the high priest Ananias ordered those standing beside him to be striking him on the mouth.

Isn't that great! Ananias is sitting in the audience and Paul says the very same thing he said! And it's almost like it is unsaid, “Alright Ananias, tell them to hit me in the mouth now and you'll sure ruin your case! I'll tell you Ananias, you can hit me in the mouth for something I said that was the truth and I'll stand by it now in court! And you can sit there and seethe and smirk all you want, and squirm like crazy, but it's the truth!”

“[I have] a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.”

What a powerful, powerful argument. The rest of these men who've come from the Sanhedrin who heard that statement before, now hear it again. And we can just see them. Oh, they just seethe inside! And Ananias bites his tongue because he sure would like to have a shoe, and he would love to really put it to Paul.

And what's Paul doing? Smiling and cheerful!

Do we have “a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men”? Did we sense the heavenly Father's smile when we got up this morning?

If we missed that, we missed half the reason for living. What a neat feeling when we just wake up first thing in the morning, we sense it's all right with the Father. And He's been watching over us while we slept, and He's right there waiting for our first thought and our first word.

## 2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Cut it out of our life. Make it right. It isn't worth it. And allow God to really, really work in our life.

Paul says, "I got that." And no wonder he's so courageous.

Now look at verse 17 because here he unfolds the rest of his statement.

**v. 17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;**

"Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;"

He's been on three missionary journeys. And during those three missionary journeys it consumed over 20 years of his life. And he's been off in Asia Minor on all these journeys that

are recorded in the earlier chapters of the book of Acts.

And so he says, “Now after several years I came back with alms for my nation, to bring offerings.” He felt like a Brinks armored car because all of these people up in Corinth and all of these cities in Macedonia had given offerings for the poor saints in Jerusalem. So he brought all this money down to these people.

And of course old Felix is listening, “Aww, he’s got alms. He’s got offerings.” We’re going to see that in just a minute.

**v. 18 in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, not with a crowd nor with an uproar. But there were certain Jews from Asia—**

“in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified,”

“I was clean. I was ready for this. I was there under the Law.”

“not with a crowd nor with an uproar.”

“I wasn’t there as a trouble maker.”

“But there were certain Jews from Asia—”

Ah-huh—that’s exactly right. Those Jews were there to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost and Paul was there too. And they recognized him from his ministry up in Asia.

And it was those, according to Acts 21 that were:

Acts 21:28

crying out, “Men of Israel, be coming to our aid! This is the man who is teaching to all men everywhere against our people and the law and this place; and besides he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”

And now in verse 19 he says:

**v. 19 who ought to have been present before you, and to be bringing accusation, if they were having anything against me.**

“who ought to have been present before you, and to be bringing accusation, if they were having anything against me.”

They're the ones that ought to be here bringing any changes if they had anything.

Now he turns to the audience, Ananias and Tertullus and the rest of the crew and he says, Felix:

**v. 20 Or let these men themselves tell what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the Sanhedrin,**

“Or let these men themselves tell what wrongdoing they found

when I stood before the Sanhedrin,”

Paul wants to be right, too, and so he admits his failure in verse 21. He doesn't leave it out like Tertullus did, other than knowing that he has a loophole in his argument because he did fail before the Sanhedrin.

**v. 21 other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead, I am being judged before you today.’”**

“other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, “For the resurrection of the dead, I am being judged before you today.””

What's he doing there? He knew that he lost his testimony when he started that fight with the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

After he got hit in the mouth, remember, he decided he would plead the Resurrection. The Pharisees believed in it and the Sadducees didn't and it created that great havoc that finally got him out of there barely with his life. Well now he realizes he really failed in that.

And because he failed in that, he wants to be honest. And he says, “The only thing they can accuse me of is that I spoke of the resurrection of the dead.” And that agonizing defeat is the only statement. He switched to the controversial from

proclaiming Christ on that occasion.

Now look at verse 22—that’s the end of Paul’s address.

**v. 22 But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, having said, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.”**

“But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, having said, ‘When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.’”

Now let’s review the letter that came to Felix so we can understand why he made that statement. Here’s the letter from Acts 23 as it is recorded in that chapter:

### Acts 23:25-30

And he wrote a letter having this form: Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent Governor Felix, greetings. When this man had been arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, having come upon them with the troops I rescued, having learned that he was a Roman. And desiring to know fully the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Sanhedrin; whom I found to be accused concerning questions of their law, but having no accusation worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was pointed out to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you immediately, having given orders also to his accusers to

be telling before you what they have against him.

Sincerely,  
C.L., Commander of the Felix Force in Jerusalem

So Felix has it all. He understands what's going on. And so he just puts them off at this point.

Now look at verse 23.

**v. 23 And he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet to be having some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.**

“And he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet to be having some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.”

Don't we wish that the centurion were Cornelius? Cornelius is the first Gentile centurion in the city of Caesarea who had Peter come to his house and the gospel was preached back in Acts 10 and 11.

Wouldn't that be neat if that was the centurion? Caesarea is the citadel of Gentile salvation. Because who else lives here? Philip and his prophetess daughters live here, and all those believers live here who told him not to go down to Jerusalem.

This is the citadel for the beginnings of a Gentile ministry. It

was also in Caesarea that Philip continued to live with his daughters.

Are these Christians in Caesarea mature enough in their faith that they can come and minister to Paul now that he's incarcerated by the Roman officials after they told him not to go to Jerusalem?

If he were living in current times there wouldn't be any Christians in Caesarea that would come knocking on his door! They'd say, "Man, we told you and you went ahead and did it! Hang it up! Man, you made your bed now fry in it!"

It's incredible how Christians, under the guise of love, treat people that have a problem! Or people that have not followed their counsel and advice! It is absolutely incredible!

And at a time of great need, are we still there? And do we care? And will we meet needs?

Our hope is that these Christians in Caesarea are mature enough that while Paul's in prison and he has visiting privileges that his friends will come and minister to him.

It's almost like we have to get our pound of flesh. And we just leave people so lonely and so out in the cold when things really get tough.

Someone has said the Christian army is the only army that attacks its own wounded. Flips on them, beats them, when

they really, really need the help.

**v. 24 Now after certain days, Felix, having arrived with Drusilla, his own wife who was a Jewess, sent for Paul, and heard him concerning his faith in Christ Jesus.**

“Now after certain days, Felix, having arrived with Drusilla, his own wife who was a Jewess, sent for Paul, and heard him concerning his faith in Christ Jesus.”

Now enter Drusilla. We can picture in our mind that Drusilla lives by the fault philosophy that a woman’s place is in the mall. And when the going gets tough, the tough go shopping. “Shop till you drop!”

Well Drusilla’s been on a shopping trip down at Jerusalem while all of this has been going on. She comes trucking in some days later, it says here, and Felix says over dinner that night: “You know honey, boy I heard this guy Paul and he’s really something!” And Drusilla says, “Well I’d like to hear him too. Let’s have him over for dinner.” And Felix says, “Hey that’d be great!”

And so Paul has one agenda for his meeting with Felix and Drusilla. And what is that agenda?

“concerning his faith in Christ Jesus.”

He gets to give his testimony to these, looking forward to it

now that he's heard his defense.

Now Drusilla is the daughter of Herod Agrippa. She's only about 20 years old now. At 16 she was given to a Syrian ruler and Felix seduced her away from her husband and is now married to her.

**v. 25 And as he was discussing righteousness and self-control and the judgment which is about to be coming, Felix having become frightened, answered, "Be going on your way for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."**

"And as he was discussing righteousness and self-control and the judgment which is about to be coming, Felix having become frightened, answered, 'Be going on your way for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you.'"

He'd never talked about righteousness. He'd never talked about self-control. And he didn't know much about judgment either. And he didn't want to hear much about judgment because he knew what would happen to him. He knew where he was coming from and it scared him. Those were all three foreign subjects to Felix's lifestyle and his slave mentality.

### John 16:8

And when He comes, [that is the Spirit] He will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment.

And Felix immediately, the Spirit of God over dinner just eats the guy's lunch! He knows he's not righteous! He knows he's eating, drinking and being merry and for tomorrow he dies. Forget the self-control and restraint stuff.

As far as the judgment's coming, God's dead and there isn't going to be any accountability after death—that's the way all of those kinds of people live.

Now what's the Bible say?

## 1. RIGHTEOUSNESS

In Romans 1 it says:

Romans 1:16, 17

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it's the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The righteous man shall live by faith."

## 2. What about SELF-CONTROL?

Galatians 5:22, 23

The fruit of the Spirit [the last manifestation] is self-control...

1 Corinthians 9:27

I treat my body roughly, and I make it serve me...

3. And JUDGMENT is the third one.

2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9

Dealing out retribution to those who do not know God...

Hebrews 2:3

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?...

Hebrews 10:31

It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The guy starts shaking like crazy. And notice again, he doesn't make a decision. He just simply says:

“Be going on your way for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you.”

How do we know we have time?

2 Corinthians 6:2

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

We don't have any record that this man ever made a decision. He is Felix the Phlegmatic! And because he is, he refuses to make decisions that are critical.

It's just like Satan had his little imps get together and he wanted a plan to deceive man.

The first little imp says, "I'll tell them there's no heaven." And Satan said, "No, they know there is."

"Well I'll tell them there's no hell."

"No, they know that. Some of them are living in it."

"No," the third little imp said, "I'll tell them there's no hurry." And Satan says, "That's my plan! I'll tell them they've got all the time in the world! And when it runs out, we'll catch them because they've never had any hurry!"

"Be going on your way for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."

**v. 26 At the same time, too, hoping that money would be given to him by Paul; therefore he also was sending for him quite often conversing with him.**

"At the same time, too, hoping that money would be given to him by Paul; therefore he also was sending for him quite often conversing with him."

He picked up on the words “alms” and “offerings” and he thinks Paul is a rich man. And he just thinks that Paul might pay him a bribe to get a favorable disposition for his case and be released!

That’s the mafia in him! He wants the money he can get under the table in order to make a political decision to let him off the hook! And so he comes to Paul often, hoping he’s going to get money. And Paul won’t have anything to do with it.

**v. 27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.**

“But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.”

How does he feel? Exactly the way Joseph felt.

Joseph said to the cupbearer: “Remember me.” And the cupbearer forgot him. (see Genesis 40:23)

And for two more years, Paul resided behind that closed door of the prison.

Can he reside right where he is for two more years when he has a promise that he’s going to Rome? Paul has an incredible ability to recognize that God’s delays are not his denials. That God is going to work. And there’s some purpose for him to stay

there.

And like Pilate, Felix did not make a decision about Jesus Christ.

Now there are a lot of lessons that come out of this. Let's go over them and we'll wrap it up.

Lesson #1: The Lord will never take you anywhere that His grace cannot sustain you.

He's there to meet you.

Lesson #2: Matthew 5:11, 12

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Lesson #3: Serving God, believing His Word and having a hope is the content of the abundant life.

Lesson #4: Keeping a clean, clear conscience before God is critical.

Lesson #5: Your testimony should have a past, present, and future tense:

In the PAST TENSE—we were made righteous by the blood of

Christ.

In the PRESENT—we are exercising self-control.

In the FUTURE—we are facing the Judgment Seat of Christ with confidence because we know our heart and we're right.

We have to have past tense in that we were made righteous by the blood of Christ.

It ought to have a present tense in that we're exercising self-control.

And it ought to have a future tense in that we're facing the Judgment Seat of Christ with real confidence.

Lesson #6: Don't make the tragic mistake of Felix in never being able to make a decision.

What a tragic, tragic, tragic thing.

Let's conclude with a poem called "This Moment" by Annie Johnson Flint. Think now about the decisions we need to make. Maybe it's to receive Christ!

THIS MOMENT

by Annie Johnson Flint

He's helping me now—this moment,  
Though I may not see it or hear,

Perhaps by a friend far distant  
    Perhaps by a stranger near,  
Perhaps by a spoken message,  
    Perhaps by the printed word;  
In ways that I know and know not  
    I have the help of the Lord.

He's keeping me now—this moment,  
    However I need it most,  
Perhaps by a single angel,  
    Perhaps by a mighty host,  
Perhaps by the chain that frets me,  
    Or the walls that shut me in;  
In ways that I know and know not,  
    He keeps me from harm and sin.

He's guiding me now—this moment,  
    In pathways easy or hard,  
Perhaps by a door wide open,  
    Perhaps by a door fast barred,  
Perhaps by a joy withholden,  
    Perhaps by a gladness given;  
In ways that I know and know not,  
    He's leading me up to heaven.

He's using me now—this moment,  
    And whether I go or stand,  
Perhaps by a plan accomplished,  
    Perhaps when He stays my hand,  
Perhaps by a word in season,

Perhaps by a silent prayer;  
In ways that I know and know not,  
His labor of love I share.  
(source unknown)

Father, You know our hearts. Perhaps they're those who find themselves with everything on hold in their lives. And like Paul, it's two more arduous years in this prison cell. And we see a man like Felix who didn't make a decision about Paul, he didn't make a decision about Jesus Christ. And as he left his administration, he refused to deal justly with the things that were demanded of his leadership. Teach us our Father how critical it is for us to know what is right and to act upon it. If there are those who know not the Christ, please bring spiritual conviction at this very hour that they might respond to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# A Practical Study of ACTS:

## Take It To Them!

### “Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

#### STUDY NUMBER TWENTY – ACTS 24:1-27

#### NOTES

v. 1 Now after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a certain prosecuting attorney, Tertullus; who brought charges to the governor against Paul.

v. 2 And after he was called, Tertullus began to be accusing him saying: “Since we are obtaining through you much peace and since by your forethought reforms are being carried out for this nation,

v. 3 we are recognizing this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.

v. 4 But in order that I may not further cut in on your time, I am begging of you to grant to us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.

v. 5 For we found this man a real pest and a fellow who is stirring up strife among all the Jews throughout the inhabited earth, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

v. 6 Who even attempted to profane the temple; whom also we arrested [and we wanted to judge him according to our own Law.

v. 7 But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,

v. 8 ordering his accusers to come before you.] Whom you will be able, having yourself conducted an investigation concerning all these things, to come to know fully the things of which we are accusing him.”

v. 9 And the Jews also joined in the attack, affirming that these things were so.

v. 10 And when the governor nodded to him to be speaking, Paul responded: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I am cheerfully making my defense,

v. 11 since you are being able to understand that there are not more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

## NOTES

v. 12 And neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city did they find me disputing with any certain individual nor stirring up a crowd.

v. 13 Neither are they able to prove to you the charges concerning which they now are accusing me.

v. 14 But this I am admitting to you, that according to the Way which they are calling a sect, thus am I serving the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that has been written in the Prophets;

v. 15 having a hope in God, which also these men themselves are sharing, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

v. 16 In view of this, I also am doing my best to be having a conscience which does not cause offense to God and to men at all times.

v. 17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;

v. 18 in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, not with a crowd nor with an uproar. But there were certain Jews from Asia—

v. 19 who ought to have been present before you, and to be bringing accusation, if they were having anything against me.

v. 20 Or let these men themselves tell what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the Sanhedrin,

v. 21 other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead, I am being judged before you today.’”

v. 22 But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, having said, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.”

v. 23 And he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet to be having some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.

v. 24 Now after certain days, Felix, having arrived with Drusilla, his own wife who was a Jewess, sent for Paul, and heard him concerning his faith in Christ Jesus.

v. 25 And as he was discussing righteousness and self-control and the judgment which is about to be coming, Felix having become frightened, answered, “Be going on your way for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you.”

## NOTES

v. 26 At the same time, too, hoping that money would be given to him by Paul; therefore he also was sending for him quite often conversing with him.

v. 27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 24:1-27 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. How does Tertullus the lawyer describe Paul, according to verses 5 & 6?

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3. What is Paul's attitude as he stands before Felix, according to verse 10?

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4. What does Paul say about the charges against him in verses 12 & 13?

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5. What common hope does Paul make reference to in verse 15?

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6. What does Paul say about his conscience, according to verse 16?

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7. How does Felix respond to these accusations in verses 22 & 23?

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8. How did Felix respond to the judgment which is coming, according to verse 25?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Lord will never take you anywhere that His grace cannot sustain you.

LESSON #2: “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11, 12).

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