

How Should We Respond to False Accusations?
Acts 24:1-21
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The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

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. You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. . .” - Acts 24:9-11, ESV

Have you ever been falsely accused? Have you ever had someone slander your reputation, either directly charging or else insinuating that you have done some great evil? Because I have spent several years in leadership positions, I have had the pleasure of that experience on a number of different occasions. If you've ever had it happen to you, you know how gut-wrenching an experience it can be. The Apostle Paul certainly knew this experience well, and the way he handled the false accusations in today's passage is very helpful for us.

Sometimes you aren't given an opportunity to defend yourself. Paul didn't always have the opportunity either. At those times, we must pray and trust God and wait for Him to provide the right opportunity, if one ever comes. If we are given the opportunity, as Paul is given in today's passage, we need to make sure we respond well:

1. First, we need to make sure that we maintain a positive attitude, thankful to God and respectful to others. Notice that Paul did not complain to Felix or grumble about the way he had been treated. He simply, respectfully and cheerfully made his defense.
2. Secondly, we need to make sure we have not done anything to cause offense or bring accusations on ourselves. Paul could address Felix honestly and respond to these charges openly because he had nothing to hide. He invited Felix to verify his story for himself.
3. Third, if we have done anything wrong, we need to make sure we confess it and apologize for it. In verse 21, Paul does admit that he caused a commotion in his trial before the Sanhedrin by what he cried out before the council.
4. Finally, we need to be focused on the Lord, on His honor. His worship, His word, His Gospel and His church. Paul is clearly concerned to honor the Lord and faithfully adhere to His word as he defends his behavior and seeks to protect the church from any further harm.

Of course, we need God's grace to equip and empower us for this kind of defense. We need Him to lead us as we speak. We can imagine that Paul spent much time in prayer while he was being held prisoner. God answered those prayers by giving him the right words to say and the right attitude in which to say them.

Heavenly Father, living in a fallen world is full of dangers. At times, we will be slandered or falsely accused of wrongdoing. At those times, we need Your Holy Spirit to calm our spirits, strengthen our faith, give us wisdom to speak well and help us to glorify You at all times. In Jesus' name, Amen.