

# Paul before Felix

Acts 24:1-27

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## Introduction

If you are living for Jesus Christ in this world,

- you have no doubt encountered some unusual responses to your faith.
- It is really quite remarkable to hear some of the things that unbelievers will come up with about you.
  - In our society, you can be accused of everything from child abuse to escapism, from hating people who don't agree with you to oppressing women.
  - Now of course things like this can and do sometimes go on among those who name the name of Christ,
    - but I have known faithful brothers and sisters who are consistently following the Lord who have been accused of these things.
- One is reminded of our Lord Jesus who was accused of being a drunkard and a glutton at the very same time that His faithful prophet John the Baptist was accused of having a demon because he came neither feasting or drinking...
  - We know that in the early church there were those who were accused of being atheists (of all things) and cannibals because they ate the Lord's Supper.
  - There is no end to the unreasonable attacks that are brought against the faithful.
    - Jesus said it would be that way, and it is!

As believers we need to learn how to respond to some of the attacks that come against us.

- Of course there are times when it is best not to answer at all...
  - As Proverbs 26:4 says:
    - **Prov 26:4: Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.**
  - But at other times, you need to answer a fool—
    - As Proverbs 26:5 (the very next verse) says:
      - **Pr 26:5: Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.**
- And that is what we find Paul doing in Acts 24 as he is brought before Felix, the Roman Governor, to be tried before his Jewish accusers...
  - Just 12 days prior, he had gone to Jerusalem.
    - He had met with the elders of the church at Jerusalem and told them of the amazing progress of the gospel among the Gentiles (the non-Jews),
      - And the elders told him of the wonderful progress of the gospel among the Jews at Jerusalem...
    - And while doing so, they had also told him of a harmful rumor that was being spread about him and his ministry...
      - namely, that he was commanding the Jews not to be circumcised or to keep the law of Moses.
    - The elders did not believe the rumor, but because many people did,
      - they encouraged Paul to dispel it by joining in a week-long purification rite at the temple with some disciples to prove that he did not forbid Jews to worship in the ancestral way.
  - Paul agreed to do this, but as he was completing his purification,

- some of the Jews who had tried to kill him in Asia spotted him at the temple and rushed upon him to lynch him, accusing him of profaning the temple by taking a Greek into the area that only Jews could go.
- Paul had done no such thing, but they incited a mob against him and would have killed him if the Roman authorities had not rushed in to quell the disturbance.
- But as soon as they had brought Paul to safety, he respectfully requested of the Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, permission to address the angry mob!
  - Permission was granted and a number of things followed including an inquiry before the Sanhedrin the next day...
    - but each time Paul stood before the Jews, they lost control because of things he said.
  - Last week, we saw that a plot was made against him to take his life, but was discovered by his nephew (in God's providence),
    - with the result that the Claudius Lysias sent him to Caesarea to be tried before the Governor—Governor Felix.
    - It is at this point that we pick up our reading in Acts 24.
      - And as I say, in this chapter, we will see the unreasonable accusations and responses of unbelievers toward Paul...
      - But we also see how he responds to these—just the way a servant of Lord ought to respond. There is much to learn here...
- So please listen now as I read to you from Acts 24.
  - This is the very word of God.

Acts 24:1-27: Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator *named* Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. 2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, 3 we accept *it* always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. 5 For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. 7 But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took *him* out of our hands, 8 commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him." 9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have

been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, 11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust. 16 This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. 17 Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, 18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. 19 They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. 20 Or else let those who are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, 21 unless *it is* for this one statement which I

cried out, standing among them, ‘Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.’”

22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of *the* Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case.” 23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let *him* have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him. 24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla,

who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.” 26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy word.

In this account, you can see the unreasonable responses that were made to Paul, the faithful servant of the Lord...

- There was unreasonable opposition and unreasonable indifference...
- You will also face these if you follow Christ.
- Let’s look at each of them in order and see what we can learn...

**I. First, know that if you faithfully follow Christ, you will face unreasonable opposition at times.**

- Some of this opposition will come from unbelievers who are outside the church, but much of it will come from unbelievers who profess to know God.
  - Of course I do not mean to say that you will be targeted the way Paul was—he was a mighty leader among the Christians...
    - but it is inevitable that if you are living for Christ, you will be zealously opposed and falsely accused with many things that you never did!

**A. Just look at the unreasonable measures that were taken by the Jews to oppose Paul:**

**A.1. First, we find his opponents being very litigious.**

**A.1.a. It is rather ironic that they should be because just before this, they themselves showed no concern for law and order!**

- They who had sought to murder him unlawfully—
  - first by a violent lynching at the temple,
  - and then by a plot in which more than forty men had taken a vow that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him—
    - and this had been supported by some of the Jewish leaders...
  - These same ones are now wanting to bring Paul to justice in a court of law...
- But this is common, isn’t it?
  - Those who have no regard for the law are happy to use the law to get at their enemies—
    - not because of any love for justice, but because it is way to get at those they hate.
- It smacks of such hypocrisy for those who are ready to use lawless means to run off to the courts as if they are lovers of justice!
  - But that is what people do all the time...
    - Like Daniel’s enemies, they look for something against you according to the law so that they can accuse you in court.

**A.1.b.** And let me say that this same spirit can occur at every level of society...

- A little girl who is exposed by her brother for getting into her mother's jewelry can spend the rest of the day looking for some wrong in her brother that she can report to mom and dad...
- And if nothing clear can be discovered, she will add a little imagination and come up with something!

**A.1.c.** At another level, if your godly life is bothering the conscience of one of your co-workers,

- that co-worker will oftentimes search to find something to accuse you to the boss about—it can be anything—
- I know some of you have had a co-worker press you about your faith and contend with you about it and then go and report that you were harassing them with your religious views.
  - Go figure!

**A.2.** And look at how zealous unbelievers can be about this!

- The Jews who oppose Paul go to great lengths to accuse him!

**A.2.a.** They make no delay—within five days they are in Caesarea to bring charges against Paul before Felix.

- They must have gone to work as soon as they learned that Paul had been taken to Caesarea...
- They are like hound dogs that are onto Paul's scent—tracking him wherever he goes...

TRANS> And look—they are so keen on getting Paul that...

**A.2.b.** They send their VIPs—their very important persons—to do the job...

A.2.b.1) Ananias, the high priest, goes with some of the elders...

- This shows how important this is to them!
- They send the high priest himself!

A.2.b.2) They also hire a talented lawyer to present their case—Tertullus—a man with a Roman name.

- They spare no expense...much like the men who tried to sue the ARP Synod for our work to reform Erskine College.
- They hired hot shot lawyers and raised tens of thousands of dollars because they were so zealous against the gospel—all in the name of Christ of course!

TRANS> And there is little they will not stoop to in order to gain their point.

**A.2.c.** They resort to disgusting flattery of Felix the governor...

- By and large, the Jews hated Felix—
- he had recently killed Jonathan, one of the high priests...
- And with poor judgement, he had used excessive violence against the Jews that stirred up even more violence from them—
- In fact, he was soon to be deposed from office because of this.
- But these weasels from Jerusalem are not above flattering him if it will help them to succeed in the lawsuit against Paul...
- Look at what they say in verse 2 & 3...
  - **Acts 24:2-3: And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness."**

- I grant that it was standard procedure to address the judge with respect,
  - but this is dripping with such hypocrisy!
  - The intent is to tell Felix what a great job he is doing to maintain peace so that they can then point out that Paul is a disruptor of this hard-won peace.

**A.3.** And then they bring against Paul three unreasonable accusations!

**A.3.a.** First, a general one—in verse 5—

- They say that he is a plague who creates dissension among the Jews throughout the world.
  - He is like a disease that needs to be quarantined or eliminated lest he infect the whole world with disorder!
    - This is a political charge—a charge of sedition—of disrupting the Roman peace that Felix has done so much to establish!
- The interesting thing is that there is *some* truth to this charge—
  - Jesus said that He did not come to bring peace, but a sword...
    - But He did not mean that He would incite violence among His disciples—
      - It was rather that He knew that their message would arouse violence from those who heard them.
  - In that sense, Paul had stirred up dissension at Jerusalem...
    - His mere presence had caused this high priest and these elders to riot because they so opposed to what Paul stood for.
- The gospel is a savour of life unto life to those that believe and of death unto death to those who do not believe...
  - And the ones who refuse to believe are condemned by it and they absolutely hate to hear about it...
    - So they rise up with guilty antagonism against those who preach the gospel.
    - It bothers them because it rings true with their conscience and they don't want it to.
      - No one ever gets so angry about lies as they do about the truth because lies don't bother your conscience.
  - But still, this charge is unreasonable—
    - Paul and Jesus never got a group together to protest or to riot.
    - He simply pled with men to be reconciled to God through Jesus and people wanted to kill him for that...

**A.3.b.** The second charge is that Paul is a ringleader among the sect of the Nazarenes.

- The word *sect* here is the same that is used to refer to the *sect* of the Pharisees or the *sect* of the Sadducees...
  - It is not necessarily negative, but the negative part is that they are following a man from lowly Nazareth who was condemned.
  - And in this case it is negative because it is seen to be a deviation from the true religion of the fathers—a sect in the sense of a heresy.
- So again, in one way, this charge is true—Paul does follow Jesus of Nazareth who was condemned and crucified...
  - the same who also rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit at God's right hand.
- But in another way it is not true at all...

- As Paul has already testified, this doctrine is no deviation from the religion of his fathers...
  - Paul is not like Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism or Mohammed, the founder of Islam... who rejected the religion of the fathers and started a new one...
    - He teaches how Christ is the fulfillment of all that was hoped for by the fathers and proclaimed in scripture.
- When you preach or follow the truth, you too will be accused of being a schismatic...
  - Even if you are following the scriptures and the confessions and creeds of the fathers of our faith.
    - When Elijah preached the truth, he was called the troubler of Israel.
    - When Luther preached the truth, he was accused of departing from the true religion.
  - Many of you have experienced this in your own homes.
    - You are in good company with the rejected man from Nazareth and His true apostles.
      - Consider yourself a part of the sect of the Nazarenes!

**A.3.c.** The third charge is that Paul was trying to profane the temple and that the Jews arrested him to stop him!

- This is just a completely made up charge...completely bogus...
  - It was started by a rumor that spread like wildfire because Paul's enemies were eager to find an occasion against him...
  - Paul never even thought of bringing a Greek into the temple!
  - He was rather worshipping at the temple in accordance with the law—very much so—engaged in purification rites as prescribed by Moses.
- When people are feeling guilty, they will look high and low to find things to condemn you about...
  - And if a rumor gets started, such as the rumor that Paul brought a Greek into the temple,
    - your guilty enemies will embrace it with great enthusiasm.
    - And they won't let it go no matter what.
- I have known instances where a minister was misquoted—his detractors actually took the word “no” out of a statement he had made...
  - And when he pointed it out to them, they said that it didn't matter because that was what he *really* believed anyway!
    - They were so eager to find fault that they just could not let go of the *evidence* even when it was found to be bogus.
  - Before, the Jews had said that Paul had brought a Greek into the temple, but since he was not with Paul when they came after him,
    - they changed the story to say that he had tried to bring someone in—and presumably they had stopped him?
    - You see, the truth does not matter—
      - They are convinced that he is evil and they just have to have some charges against him—even if they are bogus.
      - Somebody must have seen him do this because everybody knew that he had done it!
        - Such is the logic of men looking for an accusation.
  - Do not be surprised if you are accused of all sorts of crazy things.

- If you are making people feel guilty by walking in the truth, they will be very inventive about finding fault with you.
- I was once accused of being gay at a wedding by a chap who didn't like what I had preached.

B. But why were the Jews so upset with Paul that they went to such lengths to oppose him?

**B.1.** I have already pointed out one of the main reasons...

- It is because the truth stings their conscience.
- People oppose Christianity with great zeal because the truth rings true and they just don't want anybody around reminding them of it...
  - I mentioned this last week—if you are trying to suppress the truth, you don't want people who represent the truth around!

**B.2.** But the Jews also had another reason—a reason that the Romans did not yet have—

- I say *yet* because the Romans would have this problem in the near future...
  - I'll say more about that later...
- But the Jews had this problem—this fear—that Jesus' kingdom was encroaching on their territory...and in a way it was...
  - As they said,
    - **Joh 11:48: "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."**
  - They saw many Jews turning to Christ and it was a threat to them.
    - They would lose their positions at the temple and all, and they would have to repent of their corruption and live a godly life.
  - They did not want Jesus to rule because if He rules it would mean that they would have to change the way they did things...
    - And they didn't want to change.

**B.3.** And you see, this is why in the early years of the church it was the unbelieving Jews that were on the attack instead of the Romans.

- The Romans did not feel threatened by Christianity until it advanced further into their dominion...
  - Then they started attacking it for the same reason the Jews had attacked it in the first century.
- They realized that if Jesus keeps gaining more followers, our whole way of life will be changed!
  - We can't have that!
    - Our kingdom is under assault...
      - That is how they felt, even though the attack was not with swords but with the power of the gospel!
      - It was taking men's hearts and it was going to take over and it must be stopped!
    - That's what a lot of people are worried about!
      - If Jesus' kingdom takes over our nation, we can't have our abortions and we can't sleep around and we can't curse and get drunk and the corporate dude can't embezzle, and lie and bribe his way out of it in the courts.
    - That is also what makes the church oppose reformation...
      - They don't want church discipline and to have to follow what the Bible says about husbands and wives and such things...

- And that is what makes them oppose you if you represent Christ.

C. You will do well to give them a simple answer the way Paul does when they accuse you...

**C.1.** The first thing to do is appeal to their reason and sense of justice...

- They have launched this *unreasonable* attack and you just need to calmly and sanely show them how unreasonable it is...
  - In verse 10, Paul makes the customary appeal to Felix, but without flattery...
    - He simply states that he is very glad that Felix has been governing the Jews for some years because as a result, he understands how the nation operates.
    - This knowledge will be to his advantage in the face of the crazy charges that have been brought up by the Jews.
  - Felix, even though he is not a man of integrity—is at least in a position from which he should be able to see what is going on here.
- You can appeal to those who evaluate you in the same way...
  - “You have known me for a long time—
  - “You know my manner of life...”
  - “You are in a good position to see the truth of the matter.”

**C.2.** And then just point out to your accusers that you simply have not done the things they are accusing you of doing...

- Yes, people have reacted against you, but you have not tried to force anyone to believe—you have not attacked anyone, but they have attacked you.
  - Paul points out in verse 12 that during the time he was in Jerusalem, he had not even entered into disputation with anyone...
    - and they were accusing him of stirring up riots!
    - He says:
      - **Acts 24:12: And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.**
    - It would not have been unlawful for him to dispute—but he had not even done that...
  - Show them that they have not evidence for the things they are charging you with.
    - **Acts 24:13: Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.**
    - In verses 17-21 Paul recounts what he had actually done...
      - Simply gone to Jerusalem with alms for the poor and to worship.
      - Where are his accusers—those who saw him profaning or trying to profane the temple?
        - It is only a rumour—no one is there who saw it.
        - Just show your enemies how groundless the accusations are.

**C.3.** But then go ahead and freely confess what you *have* done!

**C.3.a.** Confess that you have indeed followed Christ according to the one true ancestral way that is revealed in the scripture and in the creeds and confessions of the church that are based on scripture...

- In verse 14, Paul says:



- **Acts 24:14: But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.**
- You are not following some clever new religion, but the true way of the fathers revealed in scripture.
  - Gladly admit to doing that!
- C.3.b.** Confess further that you have hope in eternal life...
  - You believe that there is life after death—
    - That there is more than just this world.
    - That every soul will be raised up to give an account to God.
      - As Paul says in verse 15:
        - **Acts 24:15: I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.**
- C.3.c.** And confess that because you believe this—because you really believe this—you live in light of it.
  - **Acts 24:16: This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.**
  - The word *strive* is a word used of athletes who strain and exert themselves to attain the prize...
    - What a beautiful thing to exert yourself to keep your conscience devoid of offense before God and man!
      - To live according to what you believe to be right before God and man!
  - Of course the Jews knew very well that the only way to have a conscience without offense was to have a purified conscience...
    - A conscience purified by the Lord who pardons and forgives sin according to His covenant promise.
    - Paul's hope is not just that he will live forever, but that he will live forever in God's favour.
      - He can fear God because there is forgiveness with Him through the blood of the covenant, which is the blood of Jesus.
  - Yes, you live entirely differently when you believe this...
    - You live to please God—to continue in His grace, to continue in life, to continue in Jesus Christ.
    - And yes, you freely admit that you live very differently because of this.
      - That is all that a person can do who believes.
        - But there is no wrong in living this way—
        - Who can accuse you of wrongdoing for this?

TRANS> That is what you must do with the unreasonable accusations of those who oppose you and who even make up things about you.

- Don't get all upset about it—just answer them in a straightforward manner...
  - The truth is obvious and it will stand
  - It is those who are trying to oppose it that are unreasonable.
- But we have here in this account of Paul before Felix another unreasonable response...
  - That of Felix himself—

**II. If you follow Christ, you will not only run into people who are unreasonably offended with you, you will also run into people who are unreasonably indifferent—**

- People like Felix!

**A. Such persons are numb to the gospel...unreasonably so!**

**A.1.** They are numb because they do not feel the threat of Christ's kingdom upon their situation in this world.

- That is how many people in our society are.
- They do not care (the way the Jews did) because it is irrelevant to them.
  - You just have all these different religions—and they fight among themselves—but how does it affect them?
- These are the ones that Psalm 14 speaks of as fools—
  - **Ps 14:1: The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."**
  - For them, God Himself is irrelevant.
    - They have learned to live their life with very little thought of Him.
    - Such was the way of Felix.

TRANS> Of course, these persons do not make decisions in light of the resurrection and the judgement to come!

- They do not care about pleasing God or doing His will...

**A.2.** They make decisions based on whatever seems best to them...

**A.2.a.** They often are in great perplexity about what to do.

- You see, it is much easier when your goal is simply to do the will of God.
- Then you don't have to decide (as Felix was doing),
  - whether it would be more to your advantage to pardon Paul because he is a Roman citizen and you have a written report that says that Claudius Lysias who took him into custody found no fault in him...
  - or would it be more to your advantage to turn him back over to the Jews and let them dispose of him so as to keep them happy—because nobody wants to rule a kingdom of Jews that are unhappy with you...
    - And they were already so because of previous ways that Felix had offended them.
- You see, he had quite the dilemma!
  - But how easy it would be for him if he simply judged according to what was right and left the rest with the Lord!
    - And of course, really, serving justice in the fear of God would be by far the best for Felix anyway—but, being estranged from God, he doesn't recognize that—sin has blinded him.

**A.2.b.** This is what Paul was talking about with the conscience without offense.

- When you live that way, then the only choice is to do the right thing—the obedient thing.
  - You don't have to decide whether to get an abortion...
  - You don't have to decide whether to submit to your husband...
  - Granted, there are times when it is difficult to know for sure what God's word says about a matter...

- But many times the difficulty has more to do with whether or not we really want to do His will.
- You don't have to try to figure out whether to cheat on your taxes or get into an illicit affair or lie to your boss or lie for him or whether to keep the Sabbath or play in that tournament...
  - Life is much simpler and much sweeter—if you know God and are living in communion with Him.
  - Of course you don't want to break communion for something stupid and sinful!
    - You want to maintain a conscience without offense...that is the way you purpose to live your life.

**A.2.c.** As for Felix, he ended up acting with injustice...all for his own sake...

A.2.c.1) First, he decided that he would **not** make a judgement about Paul—even though he knew him to be innocent.

- He says that he will wait until Claudius Lysias comes,
  - but this was just a delay tactic—the truth is he does not want to make a decision about Paul...

A.2.c.2) We are told the two things that motivated his decision—and neither of them had anything to do with justice...

- In verse 26,
  - we are told that he held Paul in hopes of obtaining a bribe from him...he held him for two years!
- And in verse 27,
  - we are told that he also held him (or did not release him) in order to do the Jews a favour.

TRANS> As you can see, the fear of God was far from Felix—

- He was indifferent about doing the will of God.
- What can you do with such a person?
  - It's almost better when they react against the truth the way the Jews did...
  - But what can you do with those who are just indifferent about God?
    - Who say in their heart, "there is no God..." What can you do with them?

**B.** You will do well to give those who are indifferent a good poke.

- You know, the way a wife does with her husband when he falls asleep in church...
- Just give them a good sharp poke with the gospel to wake them up whenever you have an opportunity to do so!

**B.1.** Paul makes good use of such an opportunity with Felix and his wife Drusilla.

**B.1.a.** They were quite the couple!

- Drusilla was Herod Agrippa's (the Herod who was eaten by worms) youngest daughter—she was a Jewess and among the most beautiful among women.
  - He had given her in marriage to the king of Emesa, a petty state in Syria, but when she was only 16,
    - she attracted the attention of Felix (who was already married) and he got a magician friend named Atomos to persuade her to become his wife.
- She agreed, and at the time of Paul's imprisonment was not yet 20 years old.

TRANS> You see how insanely indifferent this pair is toward God.

**B.1.b.** The opportunity for Paul to poke them came when they decided that they would like to hear Paul on faith in Christ...

- Verse 24 explains: **And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.**
  - The western text adds that it was particularly Drusilla who wanted to hear Paul...

B.1.b.1) Now you can imagine that this couple thought that it would be an interesting and curious diversion to see what this prisoner that the Jews were so upset about had to say about Jesus...

- They were expecting a nice abstract discussion about theology and religious principles...
  - It should make for an interesting time...

B.1.b.2) But instead they got preached at by Paul!

- The faithful apostle made his message plain and pointed and personal and he poked them with it...
  - He taught not as the scribes, but as God's ambassador, proclaiming His message with authority and calling them to repent in the name of the Lord!
  - Paul was laying obligations from God upon them and poking them with warnings that were directly applied to them...
- Verse 25 explains this...that...
  - **Act 24:25: he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come...**

B.1.b.2.a) Surely we can suppose that the faithful apostle spoke of righteousness just as he did in the epistle he had recently written to the Romans.

- It is something that no one has—not one Jew and not one Gentile—for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
  - It's true—not one of you has it in yourself!
  - You are all guilty of breaking God's law...
- But there is a righteousness apart from the law that is witnessed by the law and the prophets...
  - A righteousness that is by faith in Jesus Christ who died in the place of guilty of sinners and rose again for their justification.
  - The whole purpose of the law was to testify to this righteousness that God has now provided in Jesus Christ, His only Son...
    - And now, whoever believes in Him is fully justified from all things that you could not be justified from under the law.
    - Jesus is the true offering for sin, and all those and only those who believe in Him will be saved.
- Paul preached about this and he told Felix and Drusilla that unless they believe, the wrath of God remains upon them...
  - And in faithfulness to my task as a preacher I must tell each one of you that too...
    - Unless you believe, you too will perish!

B.1.b.2.b) And Paul also spoke to them about self-control...

- About how all who come to Jesus for salvation are given the Holy Spirit who transforms them and makes them holy...

- How He grants to us faith and repentance so that we can believe and obey Jesus.
- Those who believe no longer live in the flesh to fulfill the lusts of it, but now they live according to the spirit, bringing forth fruit that pleases God...
- In short, they make it their aim to do the will of God and to maintain a conscience without offense before God and man.
- The Spirit writes the law on their hearts...
- Paul told them that if they had not repented, they would perish—that they must each be born again of God’s Spirit...
- And again, I say that to all of you...
  - Have you a new heart? Are you controlled by the Holy Spirit?
  - Do you live according to the will of God or do you go your own way and do your own thing?

B.1.b.2.c) And Luke says that Paul also spoke to them about the judgement to come...

- I have already mentioned that—
- He told them that God would raise everyone from the dead and that everyone would stand before His judgement!
- He warned them—just as I would warn each of you—that unless you repent and believe, you will be irreversibly and forever condemned in that day.

**B.1.c.** This was more than Felix had bargained for!

- He was expecting to be entertained—not preached at—not poked with the gospel!
- Look at his response...verse 25:
  - **Acts 24:25: Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid, and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”**

B.1.c.1) The word *afraid* is a strengthened form—meaning that he was very afraid!

- Here you see the wonderful power of the Holy Spirit and of the gospel of Jesus Christ—
  - that a prisoner puts terror into the heart of his governor...
- It is very possible that Felix had never heard real preaching like that...
  - preaching that was directed at him rather than just some nice musings about God!
  - It called for a response and Felix’s response was to send Paul away.

B.1.c.2) It is very sad because Felix dealt with his fear...

- He dealt with it in the worst way he could.
  - Instead of responding to the message that had pricked him and seeking the remedy of salvation in Jesus,
    - He allowed the burning in his heart to cool.
- Thomas Walker, a missionary to India, explains this destructive process like this:
  - **Like iron that becomes harder when cooled after heating, man’s heart becomes more obdurate after it has been stirred to no purpose. There are many in India today who were once deeply conscious of sin and of their need of Christ, but who are now hard and opposed because of their resistance to God’s Holy Spirit.**

B.1.c.3) It is very sad to me to know that there are those that I have preached to who have become hardened by my preaching...

- That the metal was heated and ignored and grew colder again and again and now there is a hardness that is almost impossible to penetrate.
- Perhaps that is the case with one of you—maybe two of you...
  - God has been gracious enough to you that you have heard and the message has stung you—there has been fear of God there...
    - but you have pushed it away again and again!
  - Let me plead with you—do not keep doing that!
    - Maybe, just maybe, there is yet a pang of fear in that heart!
    - Don't ignore it—don't let it cool before you fall on your knees before God and plead for His mercy in Jesus Christ!
- Yes, the message is directed at YOU!
  - Do not run from God—do not hide from Him...
  - The day will come when He will snatch you out of your hiding place and you will stand before Him face to face...
    - And then how you will lament that hardness!
    - How you will wish that you had responded!
- Yes, I reason with you about righteousness, self-control, and the judgement to come.
  - What I am saying is reasonable...
  - To go away from this message without Christ—still without Him—is totally unreasonable!
    - See that you do not do it!
    - I plead with you—be reasonable!