Study of Acts – Discussion Notes Chapter 24

Introduction

It seems likely that chapter 24 as written by Luke is a condensed version of what was said at Paul’s trial before Felix. Surely more was said than just what Luke records. One cannot imagine an angry group of Jews settling for just a few words of charges against Paul. And I certainly cannot imagine a high priced lawyer not having a rebuttal to Paul’s defense.

Though this chapter seems rather informational, there are some important things to be learned from our text. Take the time to observe the difference in testimonies of this trial and you will see the power of truth and the emptiness of lies.

Content

1. Liars are easily recognized (vs. 1-9).

The term “Be there or be square” comes to mind at the beginning of chapter 24. One would think just having Paul out of Jerusalem would be good enough for Ananias and the other Jews. However, they gather everyone and travel to Caesarea to make sure Paul goes on trial.

What would you say is the motivation behind the Jewish leadership to see Paul punished?

Certainly their real reasons are not disclosed in their presentation before Felix. Their real motives are much deeper and too devious to openly disclose. Their motives include:

a. Their resentment of the gospel being presented to the Gentiles.

b. Their resentment of common people hearing and believing in the Good News.

c. Their fear of losing power and influence through their religious practices.

According to Luke’s account in Acts, how would you describe the case presented by Tertullus?

Tertullus first goes to great lengths to butter up to Felix. He showers the Governor with all manner of compliments; all of which are lies. Felix was known for his greed and cruel way of ruling. Felix had risen from a slave to a Governor by making well planned marriages. He was not a friend of the Jews. The Jewish people despised the heavy hand of Felix.

But Tertullus takes the time to shower Felix with an assortment of phony compliments intended to win his favoritism. This in itself is a sure sign of the bogus nature of the charges about to be brought.

What charges does Tertullus mount against Paul?

Tertullus accuses Paul of the following:

a. He is an agitator among the Jews.

b. He is a ringleader of the Nazarenes (interesting choice of words, nothing good can come out of Nazareth).

c. He tried to desecrate the temple (by bringing a Greek to the gate).

The words of Tertullus are filled with lies. Paul is a leader of the Way but he is not an agitator. He did not desecrate the Jewish temple. The really big lies are:

a. These are not their real motives for charging Paul.

b. They did not intend to put Paul on trial according to the law but rather murder him.

Liars rarely fool anyone other than themselves.
2. The truth is always the easy way (vs. 10-23).

Notice Paul gave a simple salutation and then went right into his defense. It was not necessary for Paul to provide all manner of complements upon Felix in order to win his favor. Paul was trusting in the will of God to play out and he was prepared for whatever that might be.

Paul tells the simple truth about what transpired during his short time in Jerusalem. Paul challenges their ability to provide any evidence of the charges they brought against him.

What does Paul confess to and what does this mean?

Paul confesses to worshipping the God of his father according to the way. Paul worshiped the one and only God Jehovah; the same God of the Jews. What a sad testimony that the fellow Jews and worshipers of the same God would so severely hate someone of like faith. Hatred and resentment can be stirred by little differences if not kept in check.

As believers, we must be careful to not allow differences to cause us to go against our brothers and sisters in Christ; least we become like the Jews against Paul.

Paul believed the same prophesy as the Jews but had the spiritual sight to recognize that Jesus was the Messiah of such prophesies. Paul believed in the resurrection just as the Pharisees but recognized that Jesus was the resurrection over death. The Jews on the other hand could not take their eyes off worldly power long enough to see “God with us.”

Why do you think Paul repeats basically the same phrase that got him smacked across the face before (clear conscience toward God and men)?

Paul was firm in his defense and this was part of his defense. He was simply telling the truth. He has lived the truth of what God has disclosed to him and that all he could say. Paul does not feel compelled to do anything but tell the truth of his position.

Paul shifted the entire trial from being about civil insurrection to the real issue which was about religious theology and beliefs. Paul knew Jesus was the fulfillment of prophesy and the Jews did not. Paul saw salvation was for all who would receive and the Jews saw salvation for them and theirs only.

Who do you think persuaded Felix the most favorably?

Clearly, Felix saw right through the nonsense of the Jewish leaders and their high power attorney. He basically buys time by telling them he will decide the case later. This was a brush off much like the one we have used with salesmen for years; “I’ll get back with you.”

Paul on the other hand was given protection and the freedom to move about and have visitors. Had Felix sided with the Jews, he would have pronounced severe punishment on Paul. Instead, Felix and his wife were intrigued by the teachings of Paul.

Illus: My job as a teenager where to my surprise, the boss knew who was working and who was not.

3. There is a difference between hearing, believing and receiving (vs. 24-27).

Why do you think Felix and his wife sat and listened to Paul?

Luke tells us that Felix was hoping for a bribe from Paul. Money and power was clearly at the top of Felix’s priorities. Some commentators believe Felix kept Paul around for the amusement or for the entertainment of hearing him speak. Luke mentions the fact that Felix was “accurately informed of the way.” This would indicate that Felix was intrigued by teachings about Jesus and had heard about them from others and thus curious to hear what more Paul would have to say on the subject.
However, Luke also tells us that Felix listened to what Paul had to say and became afraid.

*From the text or otherwise, what do you think Paul said that frightened Felix?*

Again, we are sure Luke is scratching the surface of the conversation. Paul surely spoke of the crucifixion and the resurrection and all he had learned of Jesus. No doubt Felix heard the full testimony of Paul and his experience on the road to Damascus. Paul surely told of those he had seen saved and baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Knowing Paul an invitation was given every time he spoke with Felix; an invitation to believe and be baptized.

But Luke specifically tells us in verse 25 that after Paul spoke of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became afraid and dismissed Paul. Righteous, self-control and judgment, these are the teaching of the person one becomes when they are saved.

17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.* 2Corinthians 5:17 HCSB

We often correctly preach and teach that you do not have to become a good person to be saved. This is good biblical teaching. None among us received salvation by our works. However, anyone who sincerely considers and understands salvation understands that receiving Christ means making Him Lord of their life. Making Christ Lord of your life means the Holy Spirit of God is going to expect and inspire changes in one’s life. Felix understood this. He knew that receiving Christ would challenge his corrupt and crafty way of living. This was a sacrifice he was unwilling to make.

When Felix heard the good news, it was not good news to him because he saw the personal cost.

*Rather than reject, what does Felix do?*

Rather than outright reject, Felix procrastinates. Felix and his wife missed the opportunity of their life because they could not turn loose of the desires of the world. Felix did not want God or anyone else meddling with his morals. This imposes the question that stirs in each of our hearts. Would we choose to serve God if it meant turning loose of our worldly possessions? If we were posed with the option of being poor in order to be a Christian, would we choose Christ?

Someone once said, “We make our decisions, and then our decisions turn around and make us.” This is a profoundly true statement. However, our indecisions make us as well.

Joel described life as a valley of decisions. There are times in our life when the Lord presses us to make a decision about Him and serving Him. May we have the ear to hear and the eyes to see and not find ourselves indirectly rejecting through procrastination.

**Conclusion**

May we never be like the Jews and allow our hatred to consume us and turn us into liars for our petty causes.

May we never be like Felix and miss the opportunities to walk with our Loving Father because our heart is too focused on the world.

Instead, may we be like Paul and be able to say we have a clear conscience as it relates to our fellow man and God.