

PAUL AND FELIX, THE ROMAN GOVERNOR; TRIAL TWO: WHAT REAL WORSHIP IS ACTS 24:14–21

Introduction

This is a picture of Paul's defence before the Roman governor. It is a defence declaring what real worship is.

- I. Paul could confess only one thing: a genuine worship of God (vv. 14-16).
- II. Paul had come for only one purpose: to bring gifts (vv. 17-20).
- III. Paul was guilty of only one thing: proclaiming the resurrection (v. 21).

ACTS 24:1–27 FELIX

Felix was originally a slave who along with his brother was freed by the mother of the emperor Claudius. His brother Pollus was highly favoured by Claudius, and as a result, Felix was able to secure his position as governor of Judea. Felix was a monstrous ruler, cruel and despotic, lustful and full of greed and corruption. He was known for taking and manoeuvring for bribes. He was removed from office because of racial riots between Jews and Syrians. □

I. Acts 24:14–16 *Genuine Worship of God*

Paul could confess only one thing, a genuine worship of God. Paul admitted that the second charge against him was true. He was a follower of the Nazarene, Jesus. Note: Paul said that “the way” of the Nazarene was heresy to the Jews, but...

1. He worshipped the same God, the God of the fathers of Israel, not a new god (see notes, Acts 17:24-25; 17:26).
2. He believed all things written in the Scriptures, denying nothing (see notes, *Scripture*, Rom 1:1-7; 2 Tim 3:16. See also 2 Pet 1:19-21.)

Mat 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

1 Pet 1:25 “But the word of the Lord stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.

3. He hoped for the resurrection the same as Israel did (see notes, 1 Cor 15:1-58; *Judgement Seat of Christ*, 2 Cor 5:10; note, 1 Th 4:13-5:3 for details of Paul's belief. See also Rev 20:4-6; 20:11-15; 21:1-22:5.)

2 Cor 4:14 Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

1 Th 4:16-18 *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

4. He always sought to have a clear conscience before God and man. Paul said three things.
 - a. He *strived* — *strove* (en toutoi) — actively trained, disciplined, practiced, laboured, struggled, even to the point of pain — to keep a pure conscience.
 - b. He struggled to *keep his conscience clear* (aproskupon), to keep from stumbling, to keep from causing others to stumble, to keep from hurting himself and from hurting others.

1 Cor 10:31-33 *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God. Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

Phil 1:10 *So that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.*

- c. He struggled to have a clear conscience before both God and men.

2 Cor 1:12 *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.*

1 Tim 1:5 *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

1 Tim 1:19 *Holding on to faith, and a good conscience. Some have rejected these so have shipwrecked their faith.*

1 Pet 3:16 *Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

II. **Acts 24:17–20 Paul in Jerusalem**

Paul had come to Jerusalem for only one purpose — to bring gifts for the poor of Jerusalem. Far from being an insurrectionist, Paul had returned to the city to bring financial help to the poor. His return was not to incite the people against their government, but to minister and show mercy by helping all he could. Note: Paul related exactly what had happened.

1. He was unjustly attacked by Asian Jews. The attack was not even by those Jews who lived there, but by foreign Jews. In addition...
 - they attacked him while he was worshipping
 - they were not present in the court to accuse him of the charges
2. He was unjustly tried by the great Jewish court, the Sanhedrin (see Acts 22:30-23:11).

Thought 1. Note a crucial point. Paul was in the midst of a terrible trial, but he was there because of a righteous deed. Therefore, he could expect to be delivered by God exactly as God willed. So it is with every believer.

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

1 Pet 2:20 *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

III. Acts 24:24:21 God's Guidance during Paul's Trial

Paul was guilty of one thing — that of proclaiming the resurrection. Paul's daring strategy launched by the Spirit of God. Paul was being led step by step by the Lord to bear testimony for Him (Acts 23:11 see Mat 10:18-19; Luke 12:11-12). What happened in this scene is the height of drama. Paul knew that he had lost all hope of a fair hearing since he had rebuked the high priest. However, he perceived something. Representatives from the two major parties of Jewish belief were present, and he knew they were bitterly opposed to each other. He conceived a plan whereby he might be able to pit them against each other. He cried out that he was a member of the Pharisee party and had been dragged before the court because he held the belief of the Pharisees.

=> The Pharisees believed in the spiritual world and the resurrection.

=> The Sadducees did not believe in the spiritual world nor in the resurrection.

His strategy worked all too well. The two parties became so engaged in debate and arguing against each other that they were about to tear Paul apart. He had to be rescued by the soldiers again.

Thought 1. The leadership of God in this manoeuvre by Paul is phenomenal. On a human level, it is not likely the two parties would become so divisive that they would forget all about Paul. What happened is just what Christ had promised: Christ said he would provide the answer when believers are called upon by the world to give an answer for their faith. Apparently, on a spiritual level, the Lord was guiding and manoeuvring the situation, working it out for good by keeping Paul from being tried by the Jewish court. The point is that God leads the believer through pressure and strain, no matter how severe it may be.

Mat 10:19 *“But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say.”*

Luke 21:15 *“For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.”*

Thought 2. Note two things.

- (1) Religious men of politics (Sadducees) can be tragically deceived about the truth of God and the spiritual world. Men seek power at the expense of their soul's salvation.
- (2) Religionists, even strict religionists who hold to Scripture, can be deceived and distort the truth for the sake of their own customs and traditions, position and livelihood. (See note, Acts 12:1–4.) ■