

# Lesson 30 – Acts 24:1-27

## A Cheerful Defense

When things go wrong, accusations can quickly fly: “You caused the problem!” or “It is your fault this happened!” It can be very hurtful to be accused of something that you haven’t done. Accusations can lead to anger, fights, and all sorts of trouble.

When someone is accused of a crime, he may be arrested and even brought before a judge or government official. The Apostle Paul had many false accusations leveled against him during his ministry, including those made in front of a powerful governor, Felix. By the grace of God, Paul was able to answer the accusations against him, not only truthfully, but cheerfully and with a clear conscience.

### Felix – Governor of Judea

Felix was appointed governor by Emperor Claudius and served from 52 to 60 A.D. He was a cruel and corrupt leader. His rule was marked by injustice and his life by lack of self-control. Felix . . .

- used assassins to accomplish his own agenda.
- willingly accepted bribes.
- was personally immoral—married Drusilla while she was still married (Drusilla was the granddaughter of King Herod the Great, sister of King Agrippa II).
- promoted distrust within the Jewish community. During his rule, revolts were continuous.
- was called back to Rome for charges of abusing authority and for the ongoing unrest that resulted.
- escaped punishment after his brother appealed to Emperor Nero.

### Into the Word: Acts 24:1-27

1. Arrested in Jerusalem and brought to Caesarea by the Romans, Paul now awaits the coming of his accusers. Five days pass before a group arrives in the governor’s court. Who are they? v.1
  - *The high priest Ananias*
  - *Some Jewish elders*
  - *A smooth-talking lawyer with the Roman name Tertullus.*

[TM Roman law required the original accusers be present to make their case. These people were not the original accusers. See Acts 21:27 and Acts 24:18-19.]

Read Acts 24:2-4. History tells us that Felix was a cruel and corrupt governor. Tertullus addressed Felix with flattery. Tertullus may have hoped by his flattery that he would be granted a favorable decision.

2. Tertullus makes some serious accusations against Paul. Read the following verses to see what Paul is accused of and how his answers show how false the accusations were.
  - Tertullus’ claim (v.5a): Paul was a trouble-making pest
  - Paul’s answer (v.12): *At no time during his time in Jerusalem did they find Paul causing a riot or even so much as carrying on a discussion: not in the temple, the synagogues, or anywhere in town. They called him a pest, but he was taking part in the purification ceremony in an attempt to eliminate dissension among believers.*
  - Tertullus’ claim (v.5b): Paul was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Tertullus recognized that the followers of Jesus of Nazareth were teaching something significantly different than the Pharisees or Sadducees. They were a sect, separate from the rest of the Jews. According to Tertullus, Paul was a leader in spreading “false teachings.”

- Paul's answer (vv.14-16): *The Jewish accusers call Christianity a sect, but Paul says he believes in and serves the same God and Law as their fathers. Verse 15 says, "having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves." Paul also believes in the resurrection and strives to maintain a blameless conscience by behaving in an upright manner.*
- Tertullus' claim (v.6): Paul tried to desecrate the temple.
- Paul's answer (vv.17-18): *Paul was actually bringing money to Jerusalem from the Gentile churches and was in the temple to bring an offering and take part in the Old Testament ritual for keeping a vow. There was no trouble till the Jews from Asia came against him.*

In verse 13 Paul states that the accusations can't be proven, and none of these accusers from Asia were there to present their charges (vv.18b-21). The only possible trouble they had seen Paul cause was when he spoke up in favor of the resurrection before the Council.

3. After hearing Tertullus' accusations and Paul's cheerful defense, what judgment did Felix hand down? v.22 *He decided not to decide.*

Felix had knowledge of "The Way"—the followers of Jesus. Felix claimed that he was waiting for Lysias, the commander who had been involved in the whole messy situation in Jerusalem (vv.22-24). Perhaps Felix never actually sent for Lysias. His arrival was never reported, and Paul remained in custody.

4. Felix was curious and sent for Paul to talk with him about faith in Christ Jesus. How did Felix react to Paul's discussion of righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment? v.25 *He was frightened by Paul's message and sent him away.*

Paul remained imprisoned in Caesarea for two years at the discretion of Governor Felix, who was succeeded by Festus. During this time, Felix would often call Paul in to talk with him, hoping to get a bribe from Paul. The last time Paul had been in Caesarea, he had departed from friends who wept to see him leave (Acts 21:13-14). Now he couldn't leave, but was able to write letters and have visitors.

### New Ideas: Blameless Conscience

Paul spoke confidently before Felix, "I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men" (Acts 24:16). What did Paul mean by "a blameless conscience"?

The conscience is a reflection of one's value system. A weak value system produces a weak conscience. This will happen to anyone whose values and behavior are not in line with the truth of God's Word. In Acts 24:25, Felix responded fearfully when Paul spoke of "righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come." Paul's words of truth may have brought feelings of guilt and shame upon Felix, even though his conscience was weakened.

In Paul's life, his conscience operated by an adequate understanding of biblical truth and produced a confidence that his actions were acceptable to God and fair to men. Maturing in our faith and knowledge of truth as contained in the Bible will strengthen the conscience.

### Memory Verse

"In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men."  
Acts 24:16

### Extra Memory Challenge Colossians 4:6

*Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*

## Discussion Questions

*Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.*

1. In Acts 24:2–9, the lawyer Tertullus had quite a story to tell about Paul, but Paul was easily able to answer his accusations because he knew the truth. How can a Christian today have the same confidence Paul did? When we face people who don't understand the truth about God, on what can we depend? See Hebrews 13:5b-6 and Matthew 28:20.

*Paul was not afraid to face his accusers because of two facts:*

*a. He knew the truth.*

*b. He trusted in the promises of God and knew that God was with him in every situation.*

*In our lives it is critical for us to know and hold on to the truth about God from the Bible. This is our guide for living as well as the message of hope that the world needs. We may never go to Rome, but we can also hold onto God's promises. God has promised to be with us and help us have the words to say in times of trial. God has promised his strength to us in whatever situation we face. God is faithful to us, just as he was to Paul.*

2. Is it possible for us to have “a blameless conscience both before God and before men” as Paul claims to do? Why or why not? See Hebrews 9:14, 10:22.

*In Hebrews, the author speaks about the conscience in relation to our standing before God (Hebrews 9:14, 10:22). The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences and through faith our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. In speaking about the blameless conscience before men, Paul emphasizes that the believer who acts in faith before men has a clear conscience not because he is perfect, but because he stands forgiven and operates in love strengthened by the Holy Spirit.*

*“The conscience cannot come to rest and peace through works, but only through faith, that is, when it is assured and knows that for Christ's sake it has a gracious God, as Paul says in Romans 5:1, “Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God.” (BOC, AC, Article XX: Good Works)*

*To have a blameless conscience before men, we seek to fulfill our God-given vocations to help and encourage our neighbors, recognizing that as we will sometimes fail we can confess our sins and be forgiven. Note Zechariah 3:1-5 how Joshua was filthy and was made clean. Also Titus 1:15-16 says: “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.”*

## Daily Devotions

Sunday:	Genesis 40:1-8
Monday:	Genesis 40:9-15
Tuesday:	Genesis 40:16-23
Wednesday:	Genesis 41:1-13
Thursday:	Genesis 41:25-37
Friday:	Genesis 41:38-49
Saturday:	Genesis 41:50-57

## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

\* What is the Epiphany message?

Epiphany, meaning “revelation,” is celebrated on January 6. It has been termed “Gentile Christmas” because it marks the appearing of the Savior to all the nations, not just to the Jews. Therefore, the visit of the magi (wise men from eastern countries) to worship the Christ Child in Bethlehem is the standard Gospel lesson for the day.

1. How did Isaiah prophesy the epiphany of the Lord? Isaiah 60:1-6

*Isaiah prophesied that a light would shine in the darkness as the Lord came to the world to be praised by people from many nations who would bring gifts of thanks.*

2. Why is the Epiphany season a good time to emphasize world missions? Matthew 28:18-20

*Epiphany reminds us that Jesus was born not only as the Messiah for the Jews, but as the Savior of all people. So we should let His light shine in the whole world.*