



## Acts Chapter 24

### **Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church**

#### Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

#### Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

**Read Acts 24** Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.

Song for the week: Not in a hurry

<https://youtu.be/VeWuavHf4oY?si=cO6bpTPJLn-wXEkk>

#### Personal Reflection

Paul was both a Jew and a Roman. Jews accused him of teaching against the law; they tried to kill him. The Romans saved him only to order him flogged until they learned he was a Roman and flogging him would violate Roman law. Back with the Sandhedrin, the Jewish High Priest ordered Paul be struck, violating Jewish law. Paul is accused of breaking laws but the accusers and those in charge are the actually the ones breaking the laws.

Finally in *Acts 24*, it seemed like the law would be kept.

Without knowing the outcome, what might you think is going to happen next based on the past few days that Paul has endured?

Are you tempted to predict your future based on your past and what has been done to you? If so, how does that affect your thinking and feeling?

How might that hamper what God may be wanting to do in your life?

The Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, had written to Governor Felix in Caesarea informing him of the charges against Paul. He was sending Paul to him and ordering the accusers to bring the case to Felix. Paul arrived safely in Caesarea by Roman transport. Ananias, the same High Priest who had ordered Paul to be struck, arrived after them. He brought with him Jewish elders and a lawyer hired by the Sandhedrin who was named Tertullus.

Tertullus began with flattering Felix, though much of the flattery was lies. Felix was born a slave and became the first former slave to become a governor of a Roman province. Publius Cornelius Tacitus, born in 56 AD, is still considered one of the best Roman historians. He said Felix was "a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave."

Yet Tertullus said that Felix brought peace and reform. In reality, he “had put down several insurrections with such barbarous brutality that he earned for himself the horror, not the thanks, of the Jewish population. In particular, he ordered a massacre of thousands of Jews in Caesarea, with many more Jewish homes looted by the Roman soldiers (*Enduring Word*).”

Read *Psalms 78:36* and *Romans 16:18*. What do they say about flattery?

What are some reasons people flatter others? We have been learning about encouragement. How is flattery different from encouragement?

Tertullus then named the charges against Paul.

1. He is a troublemaker. He stirred up riots among Jews all over the world.
2. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.
3. He tried to desecrate the temple.

Read *Acts 19:23-29*. Who stirred up the riot in Ephesus? What was being protected (or threatened)?

Read *Acts 21:27-32*. Who stirred up the riot in Jerusalem? What was being protected (or threatened)?

Consider a time you felt something you needed or believed in was threatened. How did you behave? How does remembering this help you identify with those who stirred up the riots?

Paul then had his opportunity to defend himself. He said it had been only 12 days since the accusations began in Jerusalem and there was no proof. However, he acknowledged he followed the Jewish God and the Way both. He sighted his beliefs aligned with the law (first five books of the Old Testament) and the prophets (of the Old Testament).

The Nazarene sect were the Jews who believed Jesus was both God and man; their Savior. They also observed the Jewish laws and customs. Paul was confessing to being part of the sect and he used his opportunity to defend himself to share the gospel.

Compare Paul’s speech in front of the Sanhedrin in *Acts 23:1-8* and in *Acts 24:13-16*. What two claims were the same? What new things did he say?

Read *Matthew 5:17-18*. What did Jesus say about the law and the prophets?

How was Paul’s tying the Way to the law and the prophets a testimony of Jesus?

Paul then recaps his time in Jerusalem, beginning with bringing gifts, being ceremonial clean and standing in front of the Sanhedrin.

Considering what he says, what people may be present who could be a witness for Paul?

Though you were not there, using Gospel Contemplation, imagine you had been. What things could you say in defense of Paul?

Luke wrote that Felix was already familiar with the Way. Felix wanted to wait for Lysias, the Roman Commander who had written to him, to be present before deciding Paul's case. While waiting for Lysias, Paul was given some freedom and his friends were allowed to take care of his needs. Felix returned with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. They listened as Paul spoke of his faith in Jesus.

Felix did not release Paul when Lysias returned. But Paul was kept safe and Felix continued to talk with Paul for two years. At the end of his term, to appease the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

What connections did Felix have that would have him wanting to appease the Jews? And what connections did he have that would have him wanting to appease the Romans?

What connections do you have that tempt you to appease others?

As followers of Jesus, we should want to appease God. It sounds simple, but we know it is not always. What stands in your way of appeasing God? What encourages you to appease Him?

It had been two years since Jesus told Paul he was going to go to Rome. Paul was in a season of staying put - but he continued to talk with those around him.

What do you do with your waiting? What is hardest about waiting?

If you are in a season of waiting, what can you notice God doing for you or in you or with you in your waiting?

### Putting it into practice:

Consider what your prison is. Is it being unworthy, ashamed, fearful, anxiety...?

Read *Galatians 5:1*. The key to getting out of the prison is Jesus - inviting Him into these places, allowing God's love to penetrate you; allowing the Holy Spirit to transform you and remind you of who you are in Christ.

Who do you know you are in Christ?

Sin is also a prison. What sin do you want to confess? What sin do you want to ask the Holy Spirit to help you turn from? Where do you need to ask for forgiveness and receive Jesus's love?

Spend time this week waiting with Jesus. Pay attention to the Holy Spirit's work inside of you. In solitude, cast off concerns about being productive and efficient. Hear the ambient sounds of quiet around you. In the white noise and bustle of urbanity, slow down. As you turn your palms up in prayer, be mindful that His will be turned down to fill yours. Let Jesus' love fill you as you wait upon Him.

Consider memorizing *Psalm 130:5-6*

"I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,  
and in his word I put my hope.  
I wait for the Lord  
more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning."

### **Further Study**

As you are comfortable, share with each other what you are waiting for.

Our country is also waiting. Waiting for the storms to end. Waiting to find people who are missing. Waiting to rebuild what the storms have wrecked.

Our country is also waiting for elections to happen. Waiting for leaders to step up or step down. Waiting for laws to be passed. Waiting to see if we can all get along when we disagree on so much.

How have you encouraged someone who is waiting for something or someone?

Without suggesting to each other fixes or answers, how can you encourage each other in the waiting? How would you like to be encouraged?

How has God shown you answers to your waiting? When the answer was not what you wanted or expected, how did you receive it? Based on this experience, how can you encourage others?

How are you cultivating your relationship with Jesus? How are you making the relationship personal? How do you like to study God's Word?

### **Pray**

Pray for each other and what you are each waiting for.

Pray for those affected by the storms, for those waiting to be found, for those who are responding to help.

Pray for our country as we prepare to vote in a new president - as always, do not take a side, simply pray for our country and for our leaders.