

*All passages from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.*

Acts 24 notes – page 1 of 3

- Samaritans
- Essenes
- “I do serve the God of our fathers”
  - Paul said he was “believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.”
- If Paul wrote later that the Law was “nailed to His cross” (Col. 2:\_\_\_) or was “obsolete, fading away” (Heb. \_\_:\_\_\_) as some claim, was he speaking by the Spirit at this point or in those letters?

**Acts 24:22 — “Felix, having a more exact knowledge of the Way, put them [Paul’s accusers] off”**

- This “more accurate knowledge” could have come from his experience in dealing with insurrections and Jewish politics in Judea as well as insights into the teachings themselves.
  - The freedom given to Paul during his imprisonment suggests that God was speaking to Felix.
    - This “Way” wasn’t seeking earthly power, so it wasn’t a threat to Rome.
    - Felix was known for violently putting down insurrections, such as that of “the Egyptian” mentioned in a previous chapter of *Acts*.
- Flavius Josephus recorded that Antonius Felix succeeded Cumanus as procurator of Judea at the behest of a high priest named Yohonatan.<sup>2</sup>
  - This could be why Felix was so conciliatory to the Sanhedrin.
  - However, Roman officials often gave deference to the Sanhedrin to keep peace. Felix’s successor, Porcius Festus, also gave deference to the Sanhedrin by offering to send Paul back to them to decide a religious matter (Acts 25–26).
  - The Roman historian Tacitus recorded that Felix served as co-procurator of Judea with Cumanus and fell into disgrace with Rome in A.D. 55.<sup>3</sup>
    - Josephus refers to Felix as a cruel leader, sometimes hiring assassins to deal with robbers and murderers and, perhaps, “the Egyptian” Lysias asked Paul about.
    - His rule brought on a number of rebellions that culminated in the destruction of Yerushalayim in A.D. 70 and the Jewish Wars that followed.
    - That unrest could have prompted the replacement by Festus.
    - Felix’s time in office is described as starting in A.D. 51, with Paul’s two-year imprisonment starting in A.D. 53 or 54.
- In Acts 24:24 we read that Felix’s wife, Drusilla, was a Jew.
  - According to Josephus, she was the youngest of the three daughters of Agrippa I.
    - Born in A.D. 36, she was married the first time at age 14, but Felix persuaded her to desert her husband and marry him in A.D. 54.<sup>4</sup>
  - Her son, Agrippa, died when the eruption of Vesuvius buried Pompeii in A.D. 79,<sup>5</sup> but it’s debated whether “the woman” Josephus described as being with him was his mother or his wife.<sup>6</sup>

**Acts 24:24–25 — Paul spoke to Felix and Drusilla about faith in Yeshua, righteousness, self-control and judgment to come.**

- These are key aspects of the “good news,” a “complete salvation message” Stern suggests cover past, present and future:<sup>7</sup>
  - Past: Faith in the death and resurrection of Yeshua as the Lamb of God cancels God’s charges against us and mends the relationship between God and mankind. God declares us righteous before Him for the sake of Yeshua.
    - “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Iesous Christos for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christos Iesous; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the

<sup>2</sup> Orr, James, ed. “Felix, Antonius.” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1915.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* “Drusilla.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, citing Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.7.2, and “Acts 24:24” in David H. Stern’s *Jewish New Testament Commentary: a Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament*. Clarksville, Md: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Stern. “Acts 24:25.”

- justifier of the one who has faith in Iesous.” (Rom. 3:21–26)
- “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8)
- Present: God continues to make us righteous by His Spirit, teaching us self-control by “writing” His instructions on our hearts (motivation and emotion) and minds (reason).
  - “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Gal. 5:22–23)
- Future: God’s promised judgment leaves everyone responsible for making a decision for or against Him.
  - “According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Iesous Christos. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:10–15)

**Acts 24:25–26 — “Felix became frightened ... he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul”**

- ἔμφοβος *emphobos* (ἐν, φόβος). Adjective masculine singular nominative: “afraid,” “put into fear”
- Felix seemed to have been hearing the Spirit and experiencing “holy fear,” the realization that God is real, has a code of conduct and one hasn’t remotely been following it or even actively fighting against it.
  - “Better is a fearful person inferior in intelligence than one superior in prudence and transgressing the law.” (Sirac/Ecclesiasticus 19:24 *New English Translation of the Septuagint*)
  - He seemed to be looking to see if The Way truly was different from the other “ways” by watching Paul’s conduct to see if he would offer a bribe to get out of jail. Yet Paul was a trustworthy prisoner for two years, even through the handoff to the next procurator.
    - How are we showing the excellence of The Way of God by the excellence of our behavior and reaction to hardship and persecution?
    - Such excellence of behavior is a fruit of God’s Spirit working in us.
  - Yet Felix seemed to have “blinked,” or pulled back from his fear of God. His recorded behavior up to the time of his removal from office wasn’t excellent. We can hope that the jarring of his removal brought him back to the fear of the LORD he once felt.
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