



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 81 “Being Faithful when It’s Stressful”
By Pastor Jody May 06/02/2024

Acts 24:1-27 ESV

Paul Before Felix at Caesarea

24 And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul. **2** And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: “Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, **3** in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. **4** But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. **5** For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. **6** He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. **8** By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.”**9** The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

10 And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. **11** You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, **12** and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. **13** Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. **14** But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, **15** having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. **16** So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. **18** While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— **19** they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. **20** Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, **21** other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: ‘It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.’”

[READ THE TEXT]

Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”
People – “Thanks be to God.”

[PRAY]

[INTRO. & BACKGROUND]



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Illustration – Have you ever tried to help someone only to have them get mad at you? Christ knows that pain oh so well. Even from His hometown on earth he was despised and rejected, because He always tried to be helpful by giving and living out the Truth, developing the Way. By Him showing the only way, it reflects on people they know not the way, they are on the wrong path, and now that revelation condemns them in what they are doing. **Not everyone wants to solve their problems**, most people would rather live by the standards they understand life, for in those standards they have identified a way in which to like themselves. They have discovered a way in which to save themselves.

Paul, all he has done in Jerusalem, has tried to observe the law to soften the Christian Jews perception of the Gentile churches, and all that got him was death threats. He tried to share his conversion story with his Jewish brothers and sisters, and they tried to kill him. He tried to discuss the benefits of the Gospel with the Sanhedrin like resurrection of the dead, and they tried to kill him. Everything that Paul did he tried to do out of love to save some out of a clear conscience, and yet the more he tried to help those around him the more they closed their ears and hardened their hearts against his words.

But even when encountered with fierce oppression and slander, we want to notice how Paul doesn't back down from still proclaiming the good news. We are going to look at three different sections from this trial with Felix today, to look at the truth behind each encounter so that by the end we learn how it is to stand even when people don't want our help, which btw that is a part of your sanctification.

Today we will have to come to realize that **1st there will always be people who oppose Christians with slander and lies**. It doesn't matter how much you say "in love" or how many of their sins you try to rectify with scripture because we want to believe they have a good heart, or no matter how much you try to look like them and you give every cultural sign available to let them know you will accept them, please know if you are truly a Christian you will not always be liked by the world. By having the identity of a Christian that automatically puts you at odds with this world. **Secondly**, we will see that if



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we stand our ground **God will provide and bless our opportunities to speak for Him. When we remain calm and courageous** God will use our plain speech to justify your actions and point out why the world is angry. **Lastly**, we will see that then leads to opportunities to testify **honestly** with why we think **we are being oppressed**. To sum it up those points here is your main point for the day.

MP

The opposition of the Gospel comes with opportunities for joyful defense and faithful proclamation.

1. Enemies of the Gospel WILL oppose Christians with slander and lies. (1-9)

²And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: “Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, ³in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. ⁴But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. ⁵For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.

Tertullus is a common Greek name, which means this is a professional Greek lawyer hired by the Sanhedrin, for now Paul’s opponents have seen that they are going to have to up their game. Tertullus starts his beginning arguments with flattery, “*since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, we accept this with all gratitude (2-3).*” Now while that seems unnecessary that was the custom back then you butter up your judge, especially the governor, who you should know has connections in Rome by his brother Pallas, who was the head of the treasury or what we know as the IRS, good friend to Emperor Nero, and is now an independent power broker in Rome. It would be a great error in judgment **not** to say these things. Here’s the thing about this that is ironic, they have peace because Felix loves to use the philosophy of *Pax Romana*¹ which is peace by force. In effect the lawyer is trying to assuage

¹https://www.worldhistory.org/Pax_Romana/



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Felix that we get it, the Jews know they deserve their beating, but this case requires your attention. The **Sanhedrin is selling out its’ people** they were to protect, instead they were trying to win the favor of the governor the people held disdain for.

The claim of this Tertullus is simple and is something that may sound familiar to your ears as we see how Christians are viewed in our world today.

Paul is a plague (5) – Quite literally in the Greek it means **pest**² and not just any pest but one like a rat that actually carries the plague. So, Paul in essence is a dirty, sneaky, low down, four legged, hiding in the dark, living off the good people of our land **rat** that carries with him a disease that kills and destroys cities.

Paul is a political protagonist (5-6) – Paul uses his sneakiness to bring in radical reform. He not only does this in Jerusalem but all over the world, by trying to erect a new religion “*The Nazarenes*” (another name for Christianity) but probably used here to show more of its’ cultish and secretive behavior, and he tried to profane the temple which you know Felix, by Roman edict ([see Gallio Acts 18:12-17](#)), we believe in the freedom of religion.

The truth in contrast to this is that wherever Paul has gone he has always lived out a certain political philosophy, which means he taught it as well to other Christians, and that is we are to **respect our governing authorities**.

Romans 13:2-3 ESV

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

BTW that is our belief, for it has always been the belief of the church. That doctrine is what has gotten the church in trouble in the past, for godless

² **3369** λοιμός (*loimos*), οἷ (ou), ὁ (ho): n.masc. [BAGD Ac 24:5 adj.]; ≡ Str 3061—**1**. LN 23.158 **plague**, pestilence (Lk 21:11+; Mt 24:7 v.r.; Mk 13:8 v.r.); **2**. LN 22.6 **troublemaker**, public menace (Ac 24:5+). James Swanson, [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)](#) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).



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political leaders know this about us and they use it to get the church to do the dirty work for the government. The church was one of the biggest players in bringing both the Nazi Regime and the Communist Party to power in the last century for they were trying to honor their leaders by influencing their congregations. They had forgotten the principle of Peter, that it **is better to obey God than man** when the requests compete with Christian doctrine ([Acts 5:29](#)).

The truth of our present reality is this, an ever-increasing number of people don't like Christians because of how they live and what they preach threatens their way of life. It threatens leaders with the ability to remove their power of followers by the declaration of the Gospel which offers a new and better King in Jesus. It threatens leaders because it displays the slander and foolishness of what they teach and reveals all their hypocrisy. Family, I'm sorry, but please know as long as you live on this earth and call yourself a Christian there will never be a time where you will not have an enemy that will oppose you.

LP:

It is expected those that OPPOSE the Gospel will not like our beliefs.

2 Timothy 3:12 ESV

Indeed, all who desire **to live a godly life** in Christ Jesus will be **persecuted**,

John 15:18-21

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, **but I chose you out of the world**, therefore the world hates you.²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours (that means us the church).²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me (depravity).

Christ's declaration of His people being loyal to Him, of having to endure hatred as He endured hatred, is because He sovereignly elected us to do so, it is our privilege, it conforms us into His image, it propels us into holiness ([Rom](#)



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[8:29](#)). How do you know if you have been chosen for a privileged life of being targeted for your love for Christ?

[GOSPEL]

Psalm 110:3 (Messianic Psalm that speaks of Jesus as Lord [Mark 12:35-37](#))

Your people will **offer** themselves **freely**

on the day of your power,

in holy garments;

from the womb of the morning,

the dew of your youth will be yours.

People of King Jesus **freely offer themselves for the service** of their king, no matter how much you may be harassed by this world. Jesus has come and is revealed to us through scripture and by the power of HS revelation that He is indeed KING, and kings are to be revered (because of who they are), feared (because of what they can do), and obeyed! King Jesus’ people want show their loyalty to their King for what He has done for them – **it’s not Salvation by works it is Salvation expressed through works**. Jesus’ establishment of the Kingly office, bequeathed to Him by the Davidic covenant, the right preaching of that, gets our eyes off our daily needs, off our daily wants, and puts them on who we are to worship, that is to offer to Him freely our lives!

This is why we have a problem with liberal theology today, it is because in our churches we are offering a soft watered-down Jesus that offers no compulsion to accept the Gospel to be *SAVED* from sins! Without King Jesus why would you fear judgment? It is the King that carries out justice, without rightly preaching that He is our King, there is no real justice, and that leads to this new form of universalism running amok in our land, God accepts all with no repentance, don’t worry about it, but that contradicts and nullifies scripture ([1 Cor 6:9-10](#); [Rev 21:8](#)).

[CHALLENGE]

You see what needs to be preached is the glory of this King that can either impute righteousness or exercise wrath and that needs to be taken seriously! That should happen now for our time is short friends, we have a King, and we obey Him first, and we should know though that all won’t like His reign. Soften



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your hearts to your neighbor tell them the dire straits they are in, plead for them to listen to reason, for there will come a day, the day of the Lord, when grace has run out. Remember the Gospel will always come with opportunities for declaration and if you accept that position that will nicely set you up for this next part of which you can offer some help.

2. Friends of the Gospel WILL answer accusations calmly and courageously (vs. 10-21)

¹⁰ And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I **cheerfully make my defense**. ¹¹ You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, ¹² and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. ¹³ Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. ¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,

Paul cheerfully responds to the accusations, why, because he has a good conscience, let’s see what gives him such confidence. First, he states that he knows what Felix has been going through with these Jews (*for many years*), so Paul’s answer is in light of what Felix has encountered. He explains to Felix I did everything by temple law, and now we know there were witnesses to these facts for it happened only 12 days ago, and they (Sanhedrin) have no proof otherwise. Then Paul says I will make one confession, everything I did, **abiding by the law**, was not because I was terrified of you or was it because of being such a good Jew, it was because I am a part of **the way**, a Christian, and the scripture commands me to be obedient to the law of God. Paul’s no dummy folks, for by that very declaration he’s saying the people you have problems with, the Sanhedrin, leaders of the Jews, are the ones that cause you pain for their dead religion promotes rebellion by building unjustified pride in their race not God and is only an excuse to disobey the government.

LP

Christians WILL answer about their place in society for we know we exemplify how to follow law and promote peace.



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Paul also goes on and states the **why**.

¹⁵having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that **there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust**. ¹⁶So I always take pains to have a **clear conscience** toward both God and man.

Paul is explaining to Felix it's not because I fear you or these guys that I obey the law, it's because I fear **for you**. There is coming a day in our faith that we believe God is going to resurrect the dead but not just those who had died as faithful servants for a reward but the dead who were not found faithful, they will be resurrected as well for judgement. Paul is like, listen I need to tell you this truth to have a **clear conscience** and you should know I believe it's the truth, for I will be held accountable to the truth and so will you, because I believe in a future judgment. I am working for a clear conscience in this Felix, that is my reward. No rebellion, I am not trying to be a political protagonist, no plague here, the only plague here is sin of treason towards God, of which I am trying to point it out to everyone. By very nature what makes me a good citizen and a good Jew is that I practice what I believe, and that is I need to inform others of the coming day of judgment.

LP

Christians WILL answer about why they care because they don't want to see others face judgment when Jesus still wants to save.

[CHALLENGE]

Listen I know we talked about it a couple of weeks ago and I also know that you forget 80% of what I say by nightfall, that's ok I want to keep my clear conscience too. But maybe perhaps, if you are having a hard time with this, instead of worrying about will people like you if you share with them the Gospel perhaps worry **for them** because you are living out your faith that you believe in a day of judgment. Many times, that will get you over that hump you may have about being worried how you are perceived when you talk to others. I am not saying just blurt out, "You're going to Hell, you sinner!" that may be true I get it, but you don't know that person's final destination yet. But



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instead, you may want to tell someone that you care about them and that you believe all the Bible and that it all points to a day of judgement, and the only way any of us can stand on that day is if we **stand in Christ the mediator**.

2 Peter 3:8-10 ESV

But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the **day of the Lord will come like a thief**, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

God is always working to save those He is calling, so let us speak calmly and courageously about why we live the way we do, and say the things we do, for we believe in a God that desires to save for there is an end coming where the offer of the Gospel will desist.

3. Friends of the Gospel WILL testify to the truth for why they are oppressed. (vs. 22-27)

¹⁷Now after several years **I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.** ¹⁸While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— ¹⁹they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. ²⁰Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: ‘It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.’”

Paul is like not only do I follow the laws and promote peace, but I have in my heart, as all Christians do, the desire to do good for my neighbor. Paul had been spending years collecting an offering for the church in Jerusalem. This is the only place in his Jerusalem visit where it is mentioned, perhaps because it wasn’t received well. He was tireless in writing to all the churches in the Gentile world to give an offering to the mother church in Jerusalem to



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bless them and to build a bridge of camaraderie for the sake of the Gospel. Not only was Paul not breaking the law, but he was active in doing good.

LP

Friends of the Gospel WILL testify to the truth that they are for the less fortunate.

We administer to the sick, the needy, and the oppressed. Christians have always been on the front lines of helping people throughout history. As a matter of fact, if the government would stop trying to **grow** a welfare state and force it down our throats, I believe the church could unite around the needs of the truly oppressed and be able to answer many of the needs in our society thus quieting the demands of the social justice movement in the church.

“Practicing Christians are 40% more likely to donate to charity than non-Christians, and churchgoers are 75% more likely to donate than non-attendees, according to recent research.”³ Research shows that true Christians almost do half the giving to charities in the country. This is not about toot your horn about how generous you are but when God gives you a chance to talk about the good the church does don’t neglect to do that. One of the things that I am so proud of is seeing **Christ in you** for you have always done well collecting for those in need. Whether it has been offering free space and promoting a Christian Home school library for years, or providing provisions and labor for CAYA, or raising for a missions budget outside our regular giving all by donations, and on top of that I know many of you are compelled to give more even outside this church. Great job family, and those of you not doing that I invite you in on the fun and the ability to share with others that you and your family DO care about others, it is our joy, and it is a sign of our love for Christ.

LP:

It is expected when given the opportunity we will ‘cheerfully’ give our defense.

³ <https://www.ecfa.org/Content/Practicing-Christians-Are-More-Generous-Givers-Research-Shows>



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Let us all remember Paul is **not the exception** in Christian living **he’s the example** for all Christian living. When we are given the chance God will promote our message if we just remember to remain calm and collective, and perhaps like Paul do it cheerfully, with joy in your heart. Now just a quick word on how to cultivate that heart of joyful service.

2 Peter 1:5-8 ESV

For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith** with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[CHALLENGE]

You can spend a lot of time practicing apologetics, debate, and arguing all to win a point which will do good to build your arrogance and narcissism, **but scripture tells us pursue/make every effort to build our faith again by bending a knee to Christ and pursuing a godly life out of love for Him - virtue**, and in doing so these qualities of faith will **help us in our deliberations by giving us a Biblical knowledge of God, they will keep you from being ineffective for Christ**. Let me encourage you today my people, one of the things that makes us panic when we must give a Word for God is one of two things: people will not change, and/or you will look like a fool.

But the Gospel frees us from that worry, for our job is not to convince the lost of the love of God through Christ, but to convince them of the love of God in Christ for His people, and that you believe He wants to extend that to others. In doing so you will know how to relate that to culture and other people. The Gospel comes with opportunities for cheerful defense, and **you will do well by focusing on growing your faith first before you get overly concerned about how to share it**. The ability to share your faith comes from the amount of time you spend on developing your love for Christ predominantly with a church. Pursue that with all your heart and if you do it will prepare you for this big point.



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MP

The opposition of the Gospel comes with opportunities for joyful defense and faithful proclamation.

May God so bless us with these opportunities in the days to come, may we all speak well for our King.

[PRAYER]

[CALL TO OBEY]

Elder – Read

Church, remember the instruction and promise that God has given to His people in **Deuteronomy chapter 31**, as they prepared to enter the promised land - "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." Let us be like the people of Israel, knowing that 'It is the Lord who goes before us. He will be with us; he will not leave us nor forsake us. So, we need not fear or be dismayed.'

[COMMUNION]

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – “Christians, what do you believe?”

Congregation -

Congregation - the LBCF 1689 Chapter 16 Section 2
The Results of Good Works, Which Are the Fruit of Faith



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These good works, which are done in obedience to God's commandments, are fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith.

By them:

- believers express their thankfulness
- strengthen their assurance
- edify fellow believers
- profess the gospel
- answer people who are against the faith
- and glorify God

Believers are God's workmanship and created in Christ Jesus for good works. These good works bear fruit that lead to holiness, and the result of this is eternal life.

3. James 2:18, 22

4. Psalms 116:12-13

5. 1 John 2:3, 5; 2 Peter 1:5-11

6. Matthew 5:16

7. 1 Timothy 6:1; 1 Peter 2:15; Philemon 1:11

8. Ephesians 2:10

9. Romans 6:22

[OFFERING+LAST SONG] –

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has provided for us the opportunities to declare the Gospel, calling all people to repentance.

Go in the name of the Son, that spoke faithfully even unto death, of the Kingdom of God, so that we may speak cheerfully of the work He has done.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that sanctifies us in the Truth, so that we may stand with a clear conscience when it is time for us to give the Gospel of Christ. Now go and share that good Word with others.