

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for May 5, 2019

The Accusation Against Paul
Acts 24:1-9

Acts 24 begins a series of defenses by Paul before three different government leaders while in prison in Caesarea.

1. Those charging Paul (24:1)

“After five days” is a time marker that will become significant in Paul’s defense in 24:11. Ananias presided over the trial of Paul before the Jewish council a week earlier, which ended in a dispute between the Pharisees and Sadducees over the resurrection.

2. The charge against Paul (24:2-8)

a. Flattering words (24:2-4)

The peace that existed under Felix came about by his ruthless reign of terror, and his reforms were more like purges. This was insincere ingratiation in contrast to Paul’s remarks in 24:10.

While flattery is a common worldly practice to further one’s own ends, it is considered to be sinful in the Scripture (Job 32:21-22; Psalm 5:9; 12:2-3; Romans 16:18). Paul noted in 1 Thessalonians 2:5 that flattery ought not to be associated with Christian ministry.

b. False words (24:5-6)

The first charge was personal, that Paul was a troublemaker.

The second charge was of a social nature. Riots were disruptive to the social order and required the Romans to take action. But it was the Jews who stirred up the riot that resulted in Paul’s arrest (Acts 21:27). Often those making false accusations are guilty of the very charges they themselves make (cf. Matthew 7:3-5).

The third charge involved a legal matter, that Paul was the leader of an unauthorized religious sect that was not Judaism. The disparaging term “sect of the Nazarenes” was used for the first time in recorded history by Tertullus to bolster his argument.

The fourth false charge was a religious charge of profaning the temple, which was first brought in Acts 21:28.

c. Fake words (24:7)

Modern English translations place Acts 24:7 in a footnote or at least in brackets to indicate that it is unlikely part of the original text. The earliest copies of the book of Acts (325-350 AD) do not include it. It appears in some texts from the western region of the Church and was passed along to the Greek texts used for the translation of the King James Version in 1611. It was added to explain the Jews' arrest of Paul when he was in Roman custody.

d. Final words (24:8)

The arrogant lawyer actually believed that his case was so sure that Paul would verify it himself.

3. The collusion against Paul (24:9)

The Jews expected Felix to quickly send Paul to be executed since this was his practice against those who disturbed the peace of Rome.

The testimony of multiple witnesses was required for an accusation under the Law (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15, cf. Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1) but more than one witness does not prove the charge as witnesses were to be investigated (Deuteronomy 19:18). In this case, there was a conspiracy against Paul.

When false accusations come our way on account of Christ we are blessed (Matthew 5:11-12). This truth allows us to rejoice in the midst of such insults by sharing in His sufferings (1 Peter 4:13-14).