

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

LVII. Overcoming Powerful Slander By Godly Living

(Acts 24:1-23)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 24:1-23 records how Paul faced powerful slander by his Hebrew enemies that was designed to incite the Roman procurator Felix against Paul due to their claim of Paul's alleged trouble for the Romans themselves.
- C. Paul overcame this strong slander by godly living, so we view the passage for our insight and application:

II. Overcoming Powerful Slander By Godly Living, Acts 24:1-23.

- A. Up to this point in his ministry, Paul had faced opposition over the different way that he viewed the teachings of the Old Testament than did many in Judaism, but he had not faced the serious charge of insurrection against the Roman government itself. However, that all changed in his case before Felix, Acts 24:1-9:
 - 1. After Paul had been transferred from Jerusalem to Caesarea to be tried before Judaea's procurator Felix, Israel's high priest Ananias with the elders and a man named Tertullus came down from Jerusalem to level charges against Paul, Acts 24:1. "Tertullus (Roman name) was probably a lawyer hired by the Jews in Caesarea to present their case," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Acts 24:1.
 - 2. When Paul was summoned, Tertullus extensively flattered Felix to try to sway his judgment, Acts 24:2-4.
 - 3. Most manuscripts "do not contain a concluding sentence of verse 6, verse 7, or an opening phrase of verse 8" (Ibid., ftn. to Acts 24:6-8), so we refer only to verses 5, 6a and 8b, noting Tertullus charged Paul with being (a) "one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world," the word "world" being rendered from the Greek term *oikoumene*, a technical term for the Roman Empire (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 563-564), (b) and a "ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (c) who "tried to profane the temple," Acts 24:5-6a ESV.
 - 4. Tertullus stated that by Felix's own examination of Paul, he would find these charges to be true, and the Hebrews with Tertullus gave verbal testimony that the charges made by Tertullus were true, Acts 24:8b-9.
- B. When Felix motioned for Paul to speak, Paul said that he cheerfully made his defense since he knew Felix had been a judge in Israel for many years and could thus discern the truth on the matters in this case, Acts 24:10.
- C. Paul's defense was to present the simple truth about his godly actions, showing that he could not be convicted of insurrection against Rome nor with the Hebrews' charge of trying to profane the temple, Acts 24:11-21:
 - 1. Paul stated that Felix himself could verify that it had not been more than 12 days since he had first gone up to worship at Jerusalem temple, Acts 24:11 ESV. That claim along with Felix's knowledge that five days had elapsed since Paul had arrived in Caesarea (Acts 24:1) meant that a mere week had elapsed since Paul had arrived in Jerusalem, hardly enough time to stir up a riotous insurrection against the Roman Empire!
 - 2. Paul added that no one had found him in the temple disputing with anyone nor stirring up the people in the synagogues or the city, nor that any charge of insurrection against him could be proved, Acts 24:12-13.
 - 3. However, Paul did confess that he upheld "the Way" that his accusers called a sect, but that it involved worshiping the God of the Hebrew nation's fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and the prophets, having a hope in which his Hebrew accusers themselves accepted, a hope in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, what Paul had always conscientiously upheld before God and man, Acts 24:14-16.
 - 4. Paul then told how the riot in the temple had occurred when he had brought alms and presented an offering and some Hebrews from Asia had raised objections about him, and Paul declared that they were the ones who really should have been present before Felix to bring their charges against him, Acts 24:17-19.
 - 5. Paul added that the Hebrews present with Tertullus should bring charges if they had any for what Paul did in the Sanhedrin, and all he had done there was to cry out in favor of the resurrection of the dead, v. 20-21.
- D. When Felix had heard Paul's argument, knowing rather accurately about Christianity, he postponed making a ruling that would be unfavorable to the religious leaders, for he recognized that Paul was innocent, Acts 24:22. Felix thus gave Paul a lot of liberty following the hearing, Acts 24:23; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 422.

Lesson: *When strongly slandered by his foes, Paul merely reported on the verifiable facts about his godly actions.*

Application: *To counter strong slander in ministry, may we always function in godliness and tell the simple truth.*