



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### "RIDING THROUGH"

#### THE BOOK OF ACTS-LESSON 24

We ended chapter 23 with Paul being held in Herod's Praetorium, awaiting an audience with the governor. Paul waited for five days to be heard by Felix. They were waiting for his accusers to arrive before his case would be heard. This actually marks the beginning of a two-year imprisonment for Paul in Caesarea.

Waiting for Felix gave Paul a long opportunity to reflect, plan, pray, and perhaps write. I imagine that Paul was praying, and not only asking God to prepare his heart for what was to come, but also to give him the strength and the boldness he would need to meet this challenge. Paul's goal, even in prison, was to preach the Gospel and to see God work in the lives of men. What would you be doing in prison if you were being held? Worry? Panic? Freak out? Not Paul. He prayed to his God whom he knew so well. He knew that God was with Him.

Just as a side note, remember the Jews in Acts 23:12 who made a vow not to eat until Paul was killed? Do you think they have eaten yet? Wow, they must be hungry!

#### First Day

1. Read Acts 24:1-27. List and describe the main characters.
2. What would you say is the key verse or main thought in this chapter?
3. Before you study any further, what application can you already see for your own life?

4. Read Acts 24:1-4 again. What kind of attitude toward Paul do you think Ananias already had? (Remember what happened last chapter?)

Remember, usually when the text says people are going "to" Jerusalem, they go "up," and when they are coming "from" Jerusalem, they go "down."

5. What is an "orator"? Why do you think they chose this man to present their case before Felix?

Tertullus was thought to be a Jew with a Roman name, or a Hellenistic Jew. Vines tells us that an orator ... "was hired as a professional speaker to make a skillful presentation of a case in court. His training was not legal, but rhetorical."

6. How did Tertullus begin his case? How does he appeal to Felix?

7. Define the word "flattery." What do the following Scriptures say about flattery?

- a. Proverbs 20:19
- b. Proverbs 26:28
- c. Proverbs 29:5
- d. Jude 16

8. What does Paul say about flattering words? Read 1 Thessalonians 2:4-5 and Romans 16:18.

9. What can be some of the dangers in using flattery? How is it dangerous for you? How is it dangerous to the other person?

10. According to the definition of flattery, can it ever be right to use?

11. Do you ever use flattery when dealing with people to gain an advantage?  
Ask God to search your heart. Why is honesty a better approach?

Tertullus attributes Felix with bringing much peace to their nation. Felix was responsible for a few "reforms" and put down a number of insurrections. He even captured a guerrilla leader by the name of Eleazar. But alas, Felix did not fit the picture that Tertullus was trying to paint. He ruled with much corruption and violence. It was written about him..."he thought he could do any evil act with impunity, and that he indulged in every kind of barbarity and lust". (Homer Kent)

12. Does it make it okay if the flattery is true?

I wonder why flattery is such a good "wile" of the enemy? Maybe because he knows how much our pride wants to be lifted up. Flattering someone is different than encouraging them. **What's the difference?** Think about that this week.

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." Acts 24:16

### Second Day

**Review your memory verse. Can you make that statement?**

Tertullus butters Felix up like a piece of bread! He's ready now to present his accusations. And Paul silently waits before his accusers. Sound familiar?

1. Read Acts 23:1-9.
2. Tertullus presents three basic charges. Let's see if you can find them:
  - a. **What was the personal charge?**

b. What was the political charge?

c. What was the doctrinal charge?

Tertullus presented his case in such a way as to suggest to Felix that this was much more than a simple religious dispute. He claimed that it was an actual threat to the Roman government itself.

3. Why do you think they considered Paul a "pest"? Was he?
4. Oftentimes we are labeled a "pest" or a trouble-maker when we share our faith. Discuss the difference between witnessing to people and harassing people. Which one did Paul do?
5. Could you ever be considered a pest by the way you witness? Give an example of a time where that may have been the case. What can be done about it now?
6. What group did they accuse Paul of being the ringleader of?

The term Nazarenes may have been referring to the various Messianic movements that were arising, and the Romans knew of the havoc and chaos a false Messiah could raise. It is more likely that the Nazarenes referred to in verse 5 speak about the Christians that were following Jesus, who were from the town of Nazareth (Matthew 2:23).

Politically, Paul was being accused of instigating riots among the Jews, within the Roman Empire. We have learned that the Jews were allowed to practice their religion, unless any illegal activities came up that could weaken the Roman Empire. These Romans did not want their peace disturbed.

Doctrinally, they accused Paul of defiling the temple by bringing a Gentile into the temple. We know that this was a false accusation. This was a capital offense.

7. In verse 6, it says "we seized him." This suggests an orderly arrest. What REALLY happened? Read Acts 21:30-32.

8. Who stopped the beating of Paul in Acts 21:32? Why do you think Tertullus "forgets" to mention this?

The Jews backed Tertullus' story 100% (vs 9). Their judgment was clouded by the hardness of their hearts. We too can use poor judgment and make rash and foolish decisions because of the condition of our heart.

9. Is there any bitterness in your heart for someone? Has this made you jump to any conclusions or make any decisions that may not have been fair? Have you been "supposing" again?

10. How did Paul practice the fruit of self-control at this point?

I can't imagine how Paul must have felt, listening to all these false accusations. I don't think I could have remained quiet. Knowing me, I would have been butting in at every point -- "Not true!" I **Rejoice** that God wants to plant self-control in our lives, and it can grow as we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. We can choose to bite our tongue, or lash out. Let's rejoice together that our God will fill us and equip us with what we need, when we need it!

### Third Day

#### What's your memory verse?

Now it's Paul's turn to talk. Let's see what nuggets the Holy Spirit has for us today ...

1. Read Acts 24:10-21.
2. When did Paul begin to speak? (vs 10) Why was this wisdom?
3. Do you detect any flattery in Paul's words, or open honesty?
4. In your own words, explain Paul's defense to each charge.
  - a. How does he answer the personal charge?
  - b. How does he answer the political charge?
  - c. How does he answer the doctrinal charge?

Paul reminds Felix that he had not been in Jerusalem long enough to even stir up all the insurrections that he was being accused of. Only twelve days ago he had arrived in the city of Jerusalem, and he had been in custody for five of those days! He didn't even have any crowds around him. This is a possible explanation for his twelve days in Jerusalem:

<b>Day 1</b>	Arrival in Jerusalem
<b>Day 2</b>	Meeting with James
<b>Day 3-7</b>	Days of purification
<b>Day 8</b>	Before the Sanhedrin
<b>Day 9</b>	Conspiracy reported to Lysias
<b>Day 10</b>	Arrival in Caesarea
<b>Day 11</b>	In Caesarea
<b>Day 12</b>	Before Felix

5. Does Paul ever deny Christ to save his own life?

6. How is Paul honest with Felix? What does he admit to him?
7. Read Acts 24:16. When he made this statement to Ananias in 23:1, what happened? Why do you think these two men reacted so differently?
8. What does Paul say about his accusers in verses 19-20?

So often, the accusations against us come to us through a "second party." Many of these Jews could not face Paul themselves. (I wonder if this was Paul's way of calling them "chicken"!)

9. Have you ever been accused of things "second party"? (Someone said that you ...) What did you do? What is the right way to respond? Should you listen? What is the right way to bring accusations against someone? Discuss these questions in your group.
10. Read Galatians 5:22-26. Which "**fruits**" were evident in Paul's life? How can we experience this "fruit" in our life? What's the key word in Galatians 5:22 and 25 that answers this question?
11. Meditate on Galatians 5:22-23. Which "fruit of the Spirit" is lacking in your life? What's hindering the growth of fruit in your garden?

Paul ends his defense with the issue of the resurrection of the dead. He clearly implies that it is a religious issue, not a civil one.

We'll end here for today. My "**Reason to Rejoice**" is that even in terrible situations and circumstances, we can rely on God's Spirit to control our behavior. We

don't have to "**flesh out**"! It's our choice to walk in the Spirit, or the flesh. What will you choose today?

### Fourth Day

**Repeat your memory verse to someone. Can you explain it?**

Paul gives a good, clear defense. Now the ball is in Felix's court. (Tennis anyone?)

1. Read Acts 24:22-27.
2. What was Felix's first response? (vs 22)
3. Why do you think he wants to wait for Lysias?
4. Why do you think Felix may have been more knowledgeable about this new sect within Judaism than Lysias? (Verse 24 gives us a clue)

I believe that Felix knew that Paul was innocent. He held him for a while to ease his conscience regarding the Jews, and to look good to them.

5. What did he do to ease his conscience about holding Paul? (vs 23)

In verse 24, we meet Drusilla, the wife of Felix. It is thought that this was her second marriage, having been seduced away from her first husband by the more experienced Felix. She had been raised in an extremely wicked family. Her father was Herod Agrippa I, who had executed James and was later eaten by worms when he accepted the worship of the people (Acts 12:1-2; 20-23). Her aunt and great uncle, Herodias and Herod Antipas, had John the Baptist beheaded (Mark 6:16-29). Her grandfather, Herod Aristobulus, was strangled by order of his own father, Herod the Great, who was the king at the time of Jesus' birth, who ordered the killing of all the Bethlehem baby boys (Matthew 2:1-18). (And you thought your family was bad!)

6. Often Felix and Drusilla summoned Paul to talk to them. What things would Paul share with them? (vs 25) (Did he continue to plead his case? Did he offer marriage counseling?)



7. How did Felix respond? Why?
8. What was Felix hoping Paul would give him?

Accepting bribes was a common practice among the Roman government. Paul did not believe that the ends justified the means. In other words, because he was innocent, he did not believe that he had the right to do whatever was needed to free him. He had a higher calling from God. It was one of honesty, integrity, and accountability.

9. According to our text, does Lysias ever come?
10. How do you think Paul's statement in verse 16 affected Felix? I wonder if it convicted him, knowing how corrupt and evil he was.
11. What happened to Felix after two years? Why was Paul still in prison?

Josephus tells us that after two years, there was a riot between the pagans and the Jews in Caesarea. The soldiers of Felix put it down with such violence that the outraged Jews were able to force his recall in A.D. 58. According to Josephus, he was a marked improvement over Felix, but he died after two years in office. We will learn more about this man Festus in tomorrow's lesson.

Paul has now been in prison for two years. He is learning more and more about what it means to trust God. This go-getter, fast-paced Paul had to sit ... and wait. He had to accept God's perfect timing. I rejoice that God's timing is perfect, and that His plan for us is perfect, even when we don't understand!

### Fifth Day

**Write your verse by memory.**

Today we will review chapter 24, spending a little more time on a few of the main points of application in this chapter.

1. What can we learn from Paul's reaction to this big trial? Reflect on a trial that you are in or have recently been going through. How are you responding? Does your behavior reflect a trust in God? Where are your eyes focused? What changes do you need to make in your life in this area?
  
2. What can we learn from Tertullus? Would you be considered a "flatterer"? We know that besides lying, Tertullus twisted the truth. What does God say about that? Remember when the serpent in the garden twisted God's truth? What was the result of Eve not obeying the whole truth? What should Eve have done? What should you do when the enemy twists the truth in your mind? If you're not reading your Bible, how will you even know what the truth is?
  
3. What can we learn from Felix? Do you tend to do things to please people, rather than do the right thing? Felix knew better, but he was seeking popularity. Have you made any bad decisions lately because you were seeking popularity instead of God's will? What can you do about it now?

4. What can we learn about God's timing through this chapter?

Read Acts 24:25. Note Felix's response: "Go away for now, when I have a convenient time I will call for you." (ouch!)

5. Meditate on this thought for a few moments, and answer the question honestly. How often do you turn to God when it's convenient?

6. Has the Holy Spirit been speaking to your heart lately, trying to get your attention in some area that He wants you to deal with? Has your response to Him been, "**Go away**"?

7. Fear caused Felix to respond in a certain way. Fear causes us to respond in ungodly manners. Fears cause us to worry, to procrastinate, to do things in our own strength, and ultimately to disobey. Fear always hinders us in some way if we don't cast those fears on Him. Are you dealing with any fear today? How is it hindering you? How is your relationship with Christ affected?

8. Greed also motivated Felix. Is there any hint of greed in your heart? Confess it today. Don't let your desire for "whatever" come between you and your desire for the Lord. And it will, I guarantee it.
  
9. What was your "**Reason to Rejoice**" this week? Maybe the Lord showed you an area that He wanted to deal with in your heart. That is reason to rejoice! Maybe this chapter reminded you to trust the Lord and His timing. Maybe it simply encouraged you to see Paul's steadfastness and his ability to press on, taking everything in his life as from God. Will you share your "**Reason to Rejoice**" with your group? How about with your family?

**May the Lord bless you and keep you as you walk with Him!  
"Rejoice!"**