

**Lesson 22**  
**Acts 24**  
**PAUL THE WITNESS**

**Memory Verse:** “So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.” (Acts 24:16 NIV).

In the trial before Felix, the Jews use a professional lawyer to present their case (24:1-4). They make three accusations against Paul. First, he creates uprisings among the Jews, the suggestion being that he is stirring up rebellion against Rome. Secondly, he is a leader of the Nazarenes, a religious group that operates without government permission and therefore is probably rebellious against Rome. Thirdly, he has defiled the temple in Jerusalem (24:5-9).

Paul begins his defence by denying that he has stirred up the people in Jerusalem. No one can prove such a claim (24:10-13). Secondly, he admits that he is a follower of ‘the Way,’ but this is the true continuation and completion of the ancient Israelite religion. It is not a new sect, neither is it false. Paul believes in the resurrection of the dead, as did most Jews, and he worships the same God as they do (24:14-16). Finally, he has not defiled the temple; in fact, he has carried out a ceremony of purification. In addition he has brought gifts to help his fellow Jews in their need. The Sanhedrin’s only accusation against him concerns his belief in the resurrection, and even that is supported by only one section of it (24:17-21).

Felix knows the Jews well and plainly sees that Paul is not guilty, but out of fear of the Jews he will not release him. So Paul spends the next two years in prison, though he is allowed to receive visits from friends (24:22-23; see 24:27). Felix wants to find out more about Paul’s Christian beliefs, but he becomes uncomfortable when Paul speaks of the need for right behaviour and the certainty of coming judgment. Paul could have been released had he been willing to pay the bribe Felix is seeking, but he refuses. Felix therefore leaves him in prison till the arrival of the next governor, who could handle the case as he wishes (24:24-27).

Law was the most characteristic and lasting expression of the Roman spirit,” wrote historian Will Durant in *Caesar and Christ*. “The first person in Roman law was the citizen.” In other words, it was the responsibility of the court to protect the citizen from the State, but too often various kinds of corruption infected the system and made justice difficult for the common man. Paul would soon discover how corrupt a Roman governor could be.

“The secret of Roman government was the principle of indirect rule,” wrote Arnold Toynbee. This meant that the real burden of administration was left pretty much on the shoulders of the local authorities. Imperial Rome got involved only if there was danger from without or if the local governing units were at odds with one another.

In this chapter we see the Roman legal system at work and specifically three men made their contribution to the system - the prosecuting lawyer, the defendant and the judge who was also the governor of the region.

**Scriptural Reading:** Acts 24

**Things to learn:** 1) False Accusations 2) Faithful Answers 3) Foolish Attitudes

Read the introduction to this study and Acts 24

**Questions:**

1) What do you think about the eloquent presentation by the prosecuting lawyer, Tertullus in the case against Paul (Acts 24:1-9)?

2) How did Paul defend the charges from the prosecutor before the governor (Acts 24:10-21)?

3) Felix the governor was “well acquainted with the Way” (Acts 24:22) and because of his wife’s curiosity, he had another hearing in which Paul actually gave a “three point” sermon instead. Why did Felix procrastinate with the message from Paul (Acts 24:22-27)?