

Acts 24

Read Acts 24:1-21: The High Priest, Anaias and the lead prosecuting attorney made the trip to Caesarea, to the Governor's quarters. They came to frame Paul. They failed to bring any witnesses. Paul's Roman citizenship kept him from falling prey to anything less than a full trial. Undoubtedly, any of their false and inconsistent testimony would have only been a liability and caused his release.

This inquiry is a typical mischaracterization from a religious *hanging posse*. The Jews tried to paint a picture that favored them.

The Romans did not actually execute great violence to take Paul from the Jews, as they claimed. Claudius Lysias (the Commander) is also not there to represent the facts to Felix as the arresting officer. The Jews are presenting themselves as appreciative and cooperative to the Governor. They were experts at framing Roman leadership with false claims of insurrections upon their enemies. This put maximum pressure from Rome on local Roman leadership; and it provided for capital punishment opportunities.

The Jews had lost their ability to execute capital punishment. Rome had also been moving away from client-controlled territories (Herod was not a Roman). Herod was like an independent contractor, who could manipulate a court judgement to reflect more favorably on him as a friend to the Jews, at the cost of the accused. Client-controlled territories like Herods had reputations for corruption, and excessive taxation. The client kings kept the taxes collected beyond Rome's share. Paul's testimony included dates, counts and details.

Read Acts 24:22-27: Paul was being detained for trial *with liberty* as they waited for Claudius Lysias, the arresting Roman Commander to arrive. That meant that Paul could rent a place, and let friends visit, etc... This was the kind of treatment that a prominent prisoner might receive.

Governor Antonius Felix returned with his Jewish wife, Drusilla. Drusilla was not really of Jewish ancestry. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Her dad was an Edomite and Nabatean, but he was raised like a Jew, to be custom fit to rule the Jews (like a dynasty) as a client ruler over Judea. Saying that Drusilla was a Jew was to say that he dad and her household lived in Jewish customs to gain favor over their subjects.

Undoubtedly Herod and Drusilla would have considered this to be a rare treat. Paul would testify on some technical and legal information that required knowledge of the Hebrew culture and scripture. Herod did a lot of things to gain favor with the Jews. He was a student of their culture and scriptures.

Herod the Great tried to gain favor with the Jews mainly by undertaking major building projects and by adopting some Jewish-friendly policies despite his Idumaeen origins and Roman ties.

- He rebuilt and greatly expanded the Second Temple in Jerusalem (the Temple Mount complex), transforming it into a magnificent structure that became a central focus for Jewish worship.
- He renovated and expanded the fortress of Antonia and rebuilt the city of Caesarea Maritima (with a large harbor) to honor Rome while providing economic benefit to the region.
- He rebuilt and refortified the cities of Samaria (Sebaste) and Jerusalem, and constructed lavish palace and fortresses such as Herodium and Masada.
- He also built theaters, amphitheaters, and hippodromes (e.g., in Caesarea), and improved roads and aqueducts to boost infrastructure.

Primary aim: use monumental religious and civic construction to legitimize his rule, placate Jewish religious sensibilities (especially via the Temple expansion), and demonstrate beneficence to both Jewish and Roman constituencies.

Felix wanted to sharpen his skills to rule the Jews and do them a favor in his proceedings with Paul. Perhaps he wanted to do them a favor and rule against him if possible. After hearing Paul talk about faith in Christ, righteousness, self-control and the coming judgement he began to feel afraid. Felix was feeling convicted of his sins. He did not quite know what to do with him. He secretly would have let him go with a bribe.

Paul was stuck under house arrest for two more years as Felix procrastinated on what to do about Paul. Eventually, Porcius Festus replaced Felix as Governor.

During this detainment, Paul wrote the two prison epistles; Phillippians and Ephesians. What seemed unfair to the faithful messenger was actually a specific time to draft scripture.

Here are New Testament verses that explicitly state Paul was writing from prison in Ephesians and Philippians.

Ephesians

- Ephesians 3:1 – "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles,"
- Ephesians 4:1 – "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."
- Ephesians 6:20 – "for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Philippians

- Philippians 1:7 – "It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."
- Philippians 1:12 – "I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel," (context: v.13-14 explains his imprisonment has become known and emboldened others)
- Philippians 1:13 – "so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ."
- Philippians 1:17 – "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice."
- Philippians 4:22 – "All the saints send you greetings, especially those of Caesar's household." (implies imperial/court connection consistent with a Roman imprisonment)