

Paul's Trial Before Felix, Part 1: The Case Against Paul

Scripture: Acts 24:1–9

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INTRODUCTION

Some passages in Scripture are theological, while others are historical narrative. Acts follows the pattern of the latter. The gospels are both doctrinal and historical, but the book of Acts is a running historical narrative. Doctrine appears rather sporadically--it is more often implied than stated. Acts 24 is the story of one man. Yet it is as much the story of a bad man (Felix) as it is the story of a good man (Paul).

A. Felix: The Tragedy of Lost Opportunity

Felix was bad in every sense of the word. He was a corrupt official. His wife Drusilla married a king when she was fifteen, but Felix lusted for her, seduced her, and stole her from her husband. First century Roman historian Tacitus said that Felix "exercised the powers of a king in the spirit of a slave" (*Histories* 5:9).

1. His opportunity

Felix is one of the great illustrations of lost opportunity. Nineteenth century Kansas senator J. J. Ingalls wrote these words describing opportunity:

Master of human destinies am I!

Fame, love and fortune on my footsteps wait.

Cities and fields I walk; I penetrate

Deserts and seas remote, and passing by

Hovel and mart and palace, soon or late

I knock unbidden once at every gate!

If sleeping, wake; if feasting, rise before

I turn away. It is the hour of fate,

And they who follow me reach every state

Mortals desire, and conquer every foe

Save death; but those who doubt or hesitate,

Condemned to failure, penury and woe,

Seek me in vain and uselessly implore.

I answer not, and I return no more!

The greatest story of lost opportunity in the history of man is Judas. He was condemned to hell for his unbelief. What might Judas have been? He could have been one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, reigning in the Kingdom. He might have been one of the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem or one of the twelve stones on the breastplate of the eternal High Priest. He might have been one of the glorified saints of all eternity. But what was he? He was a traitor, thief, and hypocrite. Jesus Christ said of him, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark 14:21). Judas lived with the Son of God, but forfeited his opportunity.

There is another like Judas, and his name is Felix. The apostle Paul actually lived in his house for two years. Now that's opportunity! There wasn't another man like Paul, yet Felix rejected all that Paul stood for and proclaimed.

2. His rule

Antonius Felix was his full name. He was the governor of Judea, following in the infamous line of

Pilate. He ruled Judea from A.D. 52 to 60. He acquired his position because his brother Pallus was friends with emperor Claudius, not because he had any leadership qualities. His reign as procurator was marked by trouble. The Sicarii, who were professional Jewish agitators and assassins, were a problem during his rule. Felix did manage to quell some riots. But when he stopped one particular riot, he killed many people and alienated the Jews he was trying to protect. In Acts 24, Felix appears not only as indecisive and procrastinating, but also as a coward.

B. Paul: The Triumph of Providential Intervention

1. The setting

The book of Acts records the history of the church from the day of Pentecost until it brought its message to the great capital of the world, Rome. During those early years, many exciting things happened. Two people dominated: Peter during the first few years, and Paul during the last years. Acts 24 takes place in the midst of the story of Paul--the man who took the gospel to the Gentiles. He took three tours to Gentile countries, and as we come to Acts 24, he has finished his third tour. He is no longer a free man; he is now a prisoner.

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem at the conclusion of his third tour, he tried to pacify the Jewish Christians by going to the Temple. Although he was a Christian, he wanted to show them that he wasn't anti-Jewish because he still believed in some of the customs of Israel. While he was in the Temple, some Jews from Asia Minor saw him and tried to kill him (Acts 21:27-30). Paul had won so many Jews to Christ in Asia Minor that he upset those who had not come to Christ. So when they saw him in the Temple, they attacked him.

As we come to Acts 24, Paul has arrived in Caesarea. His ministry as a prisoner took place in three cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome. He spent only a few days in Jerusalem, but he spent a few years in Caesarea before he was sent to Rome.

2. The specifics

A riot started when Paul entered the Temple in Jerusalem. A tribune named Claudius Lysias was the captain at Fort Antonia. He was responsible for keeping the peace in Jerusalem as the representative for Felix, who was the procurator of the territory of Judea. Claudius Lysias rescued Paul. He assumed that Paul must have done something terrible for the people to be so adamant in their effort to kill him. Claudius tried to get an accusation against Paul, but he couldn't (Acts 21:33-34). So he decided to torture Paul. As he was stretched out to be scourged, Paul informed a soldier standing nearby that he was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:24-25). In a panic they cut him loose because to scourge a Roman was a crime according to Roman law. Since Claudius still did not have an accusation, he decided to take Paul before the Sanhedrin. But when Paul appeared before the Jewish council, the leaders began to fight about him. And still Claudius didn't have an accusation.

3. The solution

Claudius was in a difficult situation. As a Roman, he had a sense of justice. Also, he wanted to keep his job, so he couldn't execute a Roman citizen who wasn't guilty of anything. But in an area like Jerusalem, which was a hotbed of Judaism, he had to be sure that he pacified the Jewish people. If he didn't, he might have a riot on his hands. Worse, he might lose his job, and possibly his life because he wasn't able to keep the political situation from turning into revolutionary proportions. Claudius was caught between a rock and a hard place. He didn't want to violate Roman justice, and he didn't want to cause problems with the Jewish people.

When Claudius realized that he would be unable to accuse Paul, he had Paul removed out of Jerusalem in the middle of the night to avoid the burden of a decision. Four hundred and seventy Roman soldiers escorted Paul to Caesarea (Acts 23:23). You can imagine that Claudius was glad he had turned his problem over to Felix. But now Felix had the same problem Claudius had had. He also had a sense of justice and obligation to Rome. He couldn't kill a Roman citizen without an accusation, and he also had to pacify the Jews. That kind of dilemma ultimately destroyed Pilate. He repeatedly said he found no fault in Jesus, but he let the Jewish leaders crucify Him because they

had pressured him. They implied that they would report Pilate to Caesar for allowing a seditious to live (John 19:12). Felix responded in much the same way Pilate did.

LESSON

There are three ways to look at Paul's trial before Felix in Acts 24. You can look at what Paul is doing, what God is doing, and what Felix is doing. Like so many passages in Scripture, this one is like a diamond-- it has many facets. You could use this passage to teach about Paul's attitude in the midst of a trial. You could use it to teach about the tragedy of procrastination, as I intend to do. You could use it to teach about the providence of God. And you could use it to teach about the hatred of unbelief and the hardness of men's hearts when they turn against Christ. I trust the Holy Spirit may impress those things on your mind as we look at just one perspective.

The passage divides itself into three simple parts: the prosecution, the defense, and the verdict.

I. THE PROSECUTION (vv. 1-9)

Claudius Lysias sent a letter to Felix explaining the situation concerning Paul. In effect Claudius said, "As far as I can see, this situation is a matter of Jewish theology. Paul hasn't done anything for which he should be put in jail or killed" (Acts 23:26-30). Claudius stamped Paul as innocent. Then he told Paul's accusers that if they wanted to pursue their case, they would have to go to Caesarea, which they did. You would think that the Jewish leaders would be content in having Paul out of Jerusalem, but they wanted him dead. He was a threat to them because he undermined their security. They loved their spiritual prestige and prominence. But Paul called them hypocrites. The very One they had deemed a blasphemer and executed, Paul preached as Jesus the Christ, the Son of God--the Messiah. Paul was doing the same thing Jesus had done--he was destroying their theology, and they couldn't tolerate that. Paul also was winning many Jews to Christ, and that was creating problems for the other Jews. So they took the sixty mile trip down to Caesarea to accuse him.

A. The Accusers (vv. 1-4)

1. Their identification (v. 1)

"And after five days Ananias, the high priest, descended with the elders, and with a certain orator, named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul."

a) Ananias--Ananias was a corrupt high priest. He saw Paul as a threat, so he wanted to get rid of him. That's why he was part of the entourage that went to accuse Paul. b) The elders--They were key leaders out of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of Israel. c) Tertullus--Ananias and the elders didn't want to accuse Paul themselves, so they hired a professional case reader by the name of Tertullus. He was probably well versed in the legal procedure of Rome and spoke eloquent Latin. Verse 1 says that he "informed the governor." The high priest and the elders stood silently while Tertullus did the talking.

2. Their flattery (vv. 2-4)

It was very common for orators in those days to do what Tertullus did. In verses 2-4 he laid the flattery on thick. The Latin description of what he did is Captatio Benevolentiae. That could freely be translated as a "soft-soap job." Tertullus buttered up Felix with flattery. There wasn't much good that could be said about Felix, so Tertullus spoke in generalities. But that was a common approach to obtain a favorable hearing. Felix knew what Tertullus said wasn't true, but he liked to hear it anyway. That was true of Herod in Acts 12:21-22. As he sat on his throne and gave a speech, the people said that he wasn't a man, but a god. Herod loved receiving such praise even though he had to know it wasn't true. So Tertullus flattered Felix, even though the governor was intelligent enough to know that the Jewish people hated him.

a) The hearing begins (v. 2a) "And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him [Paul]" "We can't be sure if the hearing was formal or informal, but there is a clue it was informal because Felix decided to defer the case to a later date according to verse 22. So Felix calls

Tertullus, who begins his accusation.b) The flattery begins (vv. 2b-4)(1) Great peace (v. 2b)"Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness" Tertullus begins by telling Felix that he had brought peace. Yet Felix had made no contribution to Roman peace at all. The only occasion when Felix brought any peace was when he stopped a riot that shouldn't have started in the first place. He did such a bad job of it that he alienated everyone. He hadn't done anything that contributed to peace; Tertullus was just flattering him. Many of the Jewish people didn't see the Pax Romanus as peace at all. Calgacus, a chieftain who fought the Romans, said that where the Romans "make a desolation, they call it 'peace'" (Tacitus, Life of Agricola, 29-30). It may have been peace for Rome, but it was oppression for everyone else.(2) Great deeds (v. 2c)"And that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy provision." I got out twelve different books to try to find one good thing Felix did, and I couldn't find one. Whatever good Tertullus said he did history didn't record. Notice that Tertullus offered no specifics, only generalities. Felix had driven off an Egyptian impostor, which ignited a revolution. He did quell a few riots. But he certainly passed no reforms of any consequence. He did many bad things. He assassinated Jonathan, the high priest, because he didn't like him (Josephus, Antiquities, 20.8.5). That is not the way to become popular with the Jews. The historian Tacitus says that he "believed himself free to commit any crime" (Annals 12:53). In other words, he thought he could do any evil and get away with it. Tacitus also said that he indulged in every kind of barbarity and lust (Histories 5:9). I don't believe Felix had done very worthy deeds.(3) Great thankfulness (v. 3)"We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness." Tertullus emphasized his statement with "always" and "all." I can imagine the Jewish leaders staring in disbelief. I know why they hired a lawyer; they could never have said what Tertullus did with a straight face. I know Felix didn't believe it. I think he enjoyed listening to the flattery because he knew the Jewish leaders had to stand there and endure what Tertullus said about him. There was certainly nothing noble about Felix at all.(4) Great brevity (v. 4)"Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I beseech thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency [yieldedness--a willingness to give place to another] a few words." Tertullus claimed that he didn't want to continue to recite all the things he had been saying so as not to be tedious to Felix. The real truth was he didn't have anything more to say. The idea of not being tedious was very common. There is historical evidence that orators often began their speech by saying that it would be brief. They said that so they could elicit the concentration of the hearer at the beginning. Their speeches didn't always turn out to be brief, but it was a good way to win immediate attention. Felix enjoyed the flattery of Tertullus because the Jewish leaders had to listen to all his flattery. But that was Tertullus's job, and he did it well.

B. The Accusation (vv. 5-9)

The accusation falls into three categories: sedition, a violation of Roman law; sectarianism, a violation of Jewish law; and sacrilege, a violation of God Himself.

1. False charges (vv. 5-6a)

a) Sedition (v. 5a)"For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world" Sedition could be translated "treason." If they could make that charge stick they would get him in deep trouble with the Romans. The phrase "pestilent fellow" in verse 5 translates as "a nuisance." In modern day vernacular, they considered Paul to be a pain in the neck. Now that wasn't an accusation; that was just a general statement reflecting their attitude toward Paul. Then they define the three areas in which they thought he was such a problem.(1) The evidence First, they accused Paul of sedition against the government. Verse 5 says, "We have found this man a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world." They were accusing Paul of causing Jews to revolt against Rome. Treason, insurrection, and riots were happening all over the world. Actually, that accusation had some basis in fact. Paul didn't stir up riots, but he sure was around when many of them occurred. He would preach a sermon and then someone would get excited and stir up a riot. If the Jewish leaders had any evidence that Tertullus could have used to support their accusation, it was this one fact. But Paul could never have been justifiably accused, although they

had the potential to make the accusation stick if they could twist the truth. The Romans were paranoid about revolutions, insurrections, and riots because they had placed rulers and soldiers in the foreign lands to keep the peace.(2) The exaggerationVerse 5 says that he is "a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world." Tertullus doesn't name any specific riot. Why? If he had referred to a riot in any specific area, the responsibility for the case would have been removed from Felix's jurisdiction. They would have had to transfer Paul to the ruler of that area. In Acts 23:34 Paul was asked what province he was from, and he told them Cilicia. When he said that, Felix recognized that as his jurisdiction. Tertullus was purposely vague so Paul wouldn't be transferred. The Jewish leaders wanted an immediate decision against Paul. So they accused him of leading sedition among all the Jews throughout the world. That was a false accusation of treason. It was the people who created dissension in response to what Paul was preaching that were responsible. This particular accusation was very common in ancient times. Petty tyrants and tyrannical emperors used the concept of sedition or treason at will to execute anyone that disagreed with them.

The Acquittal of Christianity

Throughout the book of Acts, Christians were put on trial for preaching Christ. The Holy Spirit recorded the features of those trials in great detail. Why did the Holy Spirit tell us every detail? Why didn't he give a general description and follow it with some doctrine? There are many trials described in the book of Acts, such as Paul before Gallio, Sergius Paulus, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, and Peter and John before the Sanhedrin. Why did the Lord include the details of those trials?

Throughout history, the church in the early years of Christianity was often condemned on the basis that it was a treasonous, revolutionary movement. The Holy Spirit was careful to record the details of each trial of Christians in the book of Acts because in every single case, it is abundantly clear that they were innocent of any violation of civil law.

Christianity is not political treason. The Bible is explicit about that. Jesus said, "Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21). In Romans 13:1 the apostle Paul said, "The powers that be are ordained of God." Peter said to submit to kings, governors, and the police (1 Pet. 2:13-14). Christians are not political insurrectionists; they should be law abiding citizens. Only when you live in a society that makes laws that violate the laws of God do you have the right to choose whether to obey God or men, and you should choose to obey God. But that's the exception. Judges like Gallio, Sergius Paulus, and Felix exonerated Christians. Luke made that clear in the book of Acts for all who would read it, particularly in those early centuries, so Christianity would not be branded as political insurrection.

(3) The evaluationI don't think Felix believed the Jewish leaders' accusation of insurrection. Claudius Lysias had already written a letter to Felix about it (Acts 23:25-30). In his letter he said, "I perceived [Paul] to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or bonds" (v. 29). In other words, "It isn't a legal matter for us to consider; it's strictly a theological issue between them." I think Felix believed his own tribune, or he wouldn't have had Claudius in that position if he didn't think the man was capable. Felix accepted the Jewish leaders' accusation even though he knew it was a lie. The accusation began with a vague charge, which was inadmissible as any kind of evidence.b) Sectarianism (v. 5b)"A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."The Jewish leaders now accuse Paul of heresy--of belonging to the sect of the Nazarenes.(1) The contemptuous titleThe name "Nazarene" was originally a term of derision, as was the term "Christian." The term "Nazarene" started because Jesus of Nazareth was called the Nazarene. So people who identified with Jesus came to be known as Nazarenes. During the time of Jesus, this popular saying was reiterated by Nathanael, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). In our vernacular, it was considered to be an uneducated hick town. When the people who followed Jesus were called Nazarenes, that was a slur. Jesus was called "Jesus of Nazareth" six times in Acts, but this is the

only time the people who followed him were called Nazarenes. Apparently it was a very popular term because Tertullus did not bother to explain it to Felix--he assumed Felix understood its meaning.(2) The troublesome factionDuring this time, there were various Messianic factions, most of which didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah. Those factions were very troublesome to Rome. The faction of the Nazarenes would have been classified with the other Messianic factions by Rome, so they could have been perceived as a threat. When Tertullus called Paul a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, he was identifying Paul with the troublesome Messianic offshoots of Judaism. The Jewish leaders were accusing him of heresy--of being anti-Jewish.c) Sacrilege (v. 6a)"Who also hath gone about to profane the temple"To the Jews, the Temple was sacred. The laws of the Temple were binding. There was an outer court, and the Gentiles could enter it. But they could not go past the barricade into the inner part of the Temple. Signs were posted to that effect. Archaeologists have found remnants of those signs so that we know what they said. If a Gentile went into the inner part of the Temple, he would pay with his life. It was such a serious violation of Jewish law that the Romans allowed the Jewish people to have the right of capital punishment for that offense--and for that offense only. Remember that the Jewish leaders had to get the Romans to crucify Christ. They had no right to take a life except when the sacredness of the Temple was violated.When Paul was in the Temple, the Jews from Asia Minor who saw him there accused him of bringing a Gentile into the inner court (Acts 21:28). He hadn't done that, but they accused him of it. They even tried to kill Paul. But that was a ridiculous attempt because the law said that the Gentile who entered was to be killed, not the one who brought him in. So the facts were twisted. But in Acts 24:6 they backed off that accusation. Instead of accusing Paul of bringing a Gentile into the inner court, they accused him of attempting to profane the Temple. And they didn't say he did it, just that he tried to do it. Why would they back off their original charge? Because they couldn't prove it. And it couldn't be proven because Paul didn't do it. They couldn't find any witnesses. So by saying he tried to do it, there was no way to prove that he didn't try to do it. That was a safe accusation. The Jewish leaders thought if the accusation was vague enough, Felix might have Paul executed.

Defending a Square Inch of Religion

Religious people can often be the most immoral and unethical of people. Many evil things have been perpetrated in the name of Christianity throughout history. For example, during the Crusades "Christians" marched across Europe to take the holy places from the Turks. As they went, they slaughtered Jews along the way so the Jews wouldn't contest possession of those holy places. It was all done supposedly in the name of Christ. You can understand why Jewish people have a hard time with Christianity--they know their own history. They know that Germany was the birthplace of the Reformation and the home of Martin Luther. They don't see that Christianity had much of an effect on the Germans, at least not during the Holocaust.

It isn't true Christians, but religious people who are sometimes the most immoral and unethical of all. Religious wars are still going on. Catholics and Protestants are still killing each other in the name of Christianity. You and I understand that that's not true Christianity, but does the world? It's very difficult to connect honest morality with religion. True ethics and morality come from a true relationship with God. Apart from that, religious people can be as criminal as anyone, and maybe more so when they set out to defend their square inch of religion. So we shouldn't be surprised to find the religious people in Acts 24 wanting to kill an innocent man in the name of God. They so desperately wanted Paul dead that they would bring false accusations against him.

2. False testimony (vv. 6b-9)

a) The scriptural problemActs 24:6 poses an interesting problem. Some of the ancient manuscripts do not include the end of verse 6, all of verse 7, and the first part of verse 8. This is known as a problem of lower criticism--trying to determine which text is right. Certain principles are used to

determine which one is right, but this is a difficult case. The New American Standard marks verses 6b-8a in brackets.b) The contextual resolutionI'm not an expert in this area, but in looking at it from a textual standpoint, I lean towards leaving those verses in the text. Let's assume first that those verses aren't in the text. Verses 6 and 8 would read this way: "Who also hath gone about to profane the Temple; by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, of which we accuse him." With the middle section left out, whom does the "examining of whom" in verse 8 refer to? It would have to refer to Paul. So Tertullus would be saying, "Paul has profaned the Temple. If you'll examine him, you'll find that this is true." I have a problem with that reasoning. If Felix examined Paul, he wouldn't find that it was true because Paul didn't profane the Temple. Why would the lawyer tell Felix that all he had to do to get the truth was ask Paul? It wouldn't make any sense because Paul would not have agreed with Tertullus. Let's see how the text reads with verses 6b-8a intact.(1) The request (vv. 6b-8)"Whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain, Lysias, came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee; by examining of whom [Lysias] thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, of which we accuse him."Whom does the "whom" refer to? Lysias. That makes sense. Acts 24:22 says, "When Felix heard these things ... he deferred them, and said, When Lysias, the chief captain, shall come down, I will determine your case." Felix wanted to hear testimony from Claudius Lysias. So Tertullus says, "I've given you the accusations. If you want corroboration, get it from your chief captain. We were trying to carry out justice when Lysias took Paul away and commanded us to come down to you. Why don't you check with him and see if that isn't so." In verse 22 Felix said he would. But he never did.(2) The assent (v. 9)"And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so."One elder after another perjured themselves. They called themselves lovers of God and lovers of the law, yet they blatantly lied to preserve their religion and to execute a man they didn't want around.

Only the Holy Make Waves

The accusations brought against Paul are a clear illustration of what a Christian should expect. If a Christian lives a godly life in the face of an ungodly world, he is going to make waves.

1. 2 Timothy 3:12--Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If you're going to live a godly life in the midst of an ungodly society, you will receive some flak. That's to be expected. If you're not receiving any flak, maybe you're not living a godly life.
2. 1 Peter 3:14-16--Peter said, "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good manner of life in Christ." Peter is saying two things: one, have a blameless life; and two, have a clear testimony.
3. Matthew 5:11--Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely."

Focusing on the Facts

1. Explain why Judas's life can be considered one of the greatest stories of lost opportunity.
2. Describe the rule of Felix.
3. Why did Paul go to the Temple after he arrived in Jerusalem following his third tour? What happened while he was there (Acts 21:27-30)?
4. Describe what Claudius Lysias did with Paul after he had rescued him (Acts 21:33-34; 22:24-25).
5. What was the problem that faced Claudius? How did he finally resolve it?
6. Who were Paul's accusers?
7. What kind of approach did Tertullus use with Felix in presenting the accusations? Describe it.

8. What were the three accusations brought against Paul?
9. When Tertullus brought the first accusation, why couldn't he name any specific riot that had been started by Paul?
10. Why did the Holy Spirit record the trials of Christians in the book of Acts with such detail?
11. What kind of citizens are Christians to be?
12. How was the term "Nazarene" used during the first century?
13. Explain how the group of believers called "Nazarenes" could be conceived as a threat to Rome.
14. Describe the seriousness of a Gentile entering the inner court of the Temple.
15. How did the Jewish leaders change their original accusation from Acts 21:28? Why did they do that?
16. Explain why Acts 24:6b-8a should be left in the text rather than being taken out.
17. What will happen to the Christian who lives a godly life in the face of an ungodly world?

Pondering the Principles

1. Both Judas and Felix serve as examples of men who lost their opportunity to embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Perhaps you know people who have been exposed to the gospel but balk at it. Take this time to pray that they might not lose their opportunity to receive Christ. Ask God to soften their hearts and convict them of their sin.
2. There are many trials of believers in the book of Acts that acquit believers of wrongdoing. Read through Acts and make a list of each of those trials. Record the details that prove the innocence of the believers who are on trial. Thank God for His providence in taking care of each of His children.
3. When a Christian lives a godly life in this world, he will face some kind of opposition. Yet that is all part of God's plan. Read 1 Peter 3:14-16. According to verse 14, what happens when you are persecuted for the sake of righteousness? What kind of human response should be avoided? According to verse 15, what must believers do before they can respond in the appropriate manner to persecution? How should believers respond when they are confronted about their beliefs? Are you responding in the right way? If not, examine the hope that is in you. Make sure you know the facts of the gospel message so you can communicate them to those who ask you.

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