The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N44 November 8, 2026

UNHINDERED

"No Wasted Waiting"

Acts 23:23-24:27

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

SELF-CONTROL

I have the power through Christ to control myself.

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

Titus 2:11-13

Q?

How did Paul's trial before Felix end?

Self-control is a virtue normally discussed in connection with sanctification. It's one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, *self-control*; against such things there is no law." It's a trait required of an elder. "Therefore an overseer[a] must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, *self-controlled*, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money" (1Ti 3:2-3; cf. Tit 1:7-8). In other passages, it is used to describe the kind of life that Christians ought to live. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live *self-controlled*, upright, and godly lives in the present age" (Tit 2:11-12; cf. 2Pe 1:5-7).

In the context of sanctification, self-control is the spiritual and practical capacity—empowered by the Holy Spirit—to govern one's thoughts, emotions, speech, and physical desires in alignment with God's will. It is simultaneously a supernatural work produced by the Holy Spirit and a personal responsibility that believers are called to actively exercise, as seen in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. There Paul writes: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises *self-control* in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

However, Paul incorporates the idea of self-control in his presentation of the gospel to Felix and Drusilla, his young wife. His message about "faith in Christ Jesus" included reasoning about "righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment." Paul's message is reminiscent of Jesus' message, who in John 16:8 declared when the Spirit comes, "He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

Fundamental to Paul's gospel message was his belief in the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. Jesus taught that "an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:28-29; cf. Rev 20:4-6), which is in line with what the prophet Daniel taught (Da 12:2).

The resurrection of the righteous and wicked implies judgment. Righteousness and self-control are both germane to that judgment, hence Paul mentions both. One commentator explains: "Whatever the driving force behind the desire of the [Felix and Drusilla] to visit Paul, the apostle used the opportunity to share the gospel with them and 'spoke about faith in Christ' (v. 24). For this particular couple, he focused on the prospect of the coming judgment (v. 25) . . . The relevance of 'self-control' (*enkrateia*) to this subject and to their own particular situation must have been self-evident for Felix and Drusilla. It surely explains Felix's alarm and abrupt curtailment of the conversation with Paul" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 486).

Paul warned the royal couple that judgment was coming, and that people would be judged on the basis of their righteousness, warning that a lack of self-control would inevitably lead to sin and condemnation. According to one writer: "Paul's courageous example in speaking the Christian message to them can easily serve as encouragement to other witnesses to present their message even to high officials" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 302).

1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Acts 23:23-24:27
Acts 24:1-21

1 And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul. 2 And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying:

"Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 5 For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him."

9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

10 And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied:

"Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. 11 You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 12 and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. 17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. 18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— 19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 21 other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'"

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "After five days" in v. 1.
- Circle "Tertullus" in v. 1.
- Circle "Felix" in v. 2.
- Circle "plague," "ringleader," and "profane" in vv. 4, 5.
- Circle "twelve days" in v. 11.
- Circle "confess" in v. 14.
- Bracket "resurrection of both the just and the unjust" in v. 15.
- Circle "alms" in v. 17.
- Highlight v. 19.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."

2 DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Ananias, the high priest, was a Sadducee, as most likely were the elders who accompanied him. Explain why that mattered.

2. Tertullus begins by heaping praise on Felix. *How* so, *why* so, and was it *sincere*?

3. Identify the charges Tertullus brought against Paul (vv. 5-6).

4. Who joined in affirming the charges brought by him?

5. Paul begins his defense by alluding to the "many years" Felix had been "judge over this nation" (v. 10). What's Paul's point.

6. How did Paul defend himself against the first charge (vv. 11-13)?

7. How did he respond to the second charge (vv. 14-16)?

8. What about the third charge (vv. 17-21)?

9. During the two years Paul is kept in custody, he speaks to Felix and Drusilla about "faith in Christ Jesus" (v.24). Describe how the governor responded.

10. **Discussion:** Paul is not guilty of the charges brought against him, but he remains in custody for two years. Talk about what that tells you about divine providence.

3 EXPLORE RESOURCES
Commentary On The Text

Acts 23:23-24:27 is divided into three sections in the ESV—23:23-35; 24:1-23; and 24:24-27. The first records Paul's transfer to Caesarea for security purposes and for him to appear before Felix, the governor. The second records his defense against charges brought against him by Ananias, some elders, and Tertullus, their legal representative. The third contains the record of Paul's off-and-on discussions with Felix and his wife, Drusilla, over a period of two years. Part two can be divided into three parts as well. The first records the charges brought against Paul (vv. 1-9). The second records Paul's defense against those charges (vv. 10-21). The third records, the response of Felix to all that he heard (vv. 22-23).

Once he heard about the plot to kill Paul, Lysias sprang into action with a view to sparing the life of a Roman citizen. He assembled a military guard made up of two hundred foot soldiers, seventy cavalry, and two hundred spearmen to accompany Paul to Caesarea, the seat of the provincial government and residence of the procurator, Felix. This was nearly half of the one thousand troops stationed in Jerusalem. Lysias provided horses for Paul to ride and wrote a letter to Felix to summarize what had happened and to explain why he was sending his detainee to him. The foot-soldiers accompanied Paul to Antipatris, about thirty-five miles from Jerusalem or a little more than halfway to Caesarea, but they apparently returned to Jerusalem at some point along the way after reaching a safe distance from Jerusalem.

After some time, Paul's accusers arrived—Ananias having secured eloquent legal counsel to make the case against Paul. After heaping disingenuous praise on Felix, Tertullus presented the charges against Paul. Three are specified by Luke, which according to one commentator, have four elements: "Paul is (1) a pest, (2) a political agitator [two sides of the same coin], (3) the leader of a sectarian movement, and (4) one who tried to be disruptive at the temple. This can be reduced to the statement that Paul disturbs the peace as a seditious member of a dangerous sect" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 691).

Luke records Paul's defense against these charges one by one. "First, it was 'no more than twelve days ago' that he came to Jerusalem, not for political agitation but for worship. In such a short time, he implies, there would hardly have been sufficient opportunity to foment a revolt. Second, his accusers could hardly charge him with being a ringleader of any sedition, for he was alone when they arrested him in the temple; and they could not cite any time when he was stirring up a crowd anywhere in the city (v. 12). Third, their claim that he desecrated the temple was unproved because it was entirely without foundation (v. 13)" (Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 540). What's more, his temple accusers were not present to testify against him. About them the apostle said, "they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me" (v. 19).These charges were not the real problem. The real problem was the resurrection, not just that the righteous and the unrighteous would be raised to stand before God, but that Jesus Christ had been raised already, proving that he was the Messiah. The evidence vindicated Paul, but Felix chose to delay his verdict until Lysias arrived in Caesarea.

The wait for the tribune extended for two years during which time Paul met Felix and his young wife, Drusilla, more than once. Each time Paul spoke to them about "faith in Jesus Christ" (v. 24). Felix showed himself to be as indecisive regarding the gospel and he was regarding Paul. According to Luke, "So he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison" (vv. 26b-27).

The "upper story" of this narrative is about God who faithfully works behind the scenes through circumstances and characters to keep his word to Paul. In 23:11, he told the apostle: "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome." Now in Caesarea, Paul finds himself one step closer to Rome. Later, before Festus, he will appeal his case to Caesar and off to Rome he will go (25:11-12). The "lower story" is about Paul's faithfulness to his calling to testify about "faith in Jesus Christ" (24:24). During his two-year detention in Caesarea he faithfully testified to Felix and Drusilla (vv. 24-28).

Commenting on Paul's example, one commentator writes: "In today's world, where the moral compass has lost its magnetism, such a life stands in contrast to that of many. This contrast, if lived out in an effective, engaging manner, can be attractive when people sense the chaos of the alternative lifestyle that a lack of morals produces" (Bock, 697).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 ***after five days*** The chronological reference is ambiguous. Perhaps Luke meant five days after the departure from Jerusalem (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ac 24:1), or perhaps five days after Paul's arrest in the temple (Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 539), or simply five days after Paul arrived in Caesarea (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 478).

v. 1 ***Tertullus*** "Paul's accusers had hired a special prosecuting 'attorney' to present their case. 'Tertullus' (a diminutive form of 'Tertius'; Rom. 16:22) was probably a Hellenistic Jew, in view of his Roman name, though he could have been a Roman Gentile and hence a Latin speaker. 'Attorney' is the translation of a Greek word that appears only here in the New Testament (*rhetoros*), which means a lawyer who was especially skillful in oratory" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Acts," 2026 ed., soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf)—a legal advocate. One commentator calls him "a hired pleader, a legal gun" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 689).

v. 2 ***Felix*** He didn't deserve the praise given him by Tertullus (vv. 2-3). "The governor was Felix. Unusually, he had been a slave who had been freed by Emperor Claudius; but he seems to have been a favorite of the Emperor, and Claudius was known for giving too much power to freedmen. He was procurator of Palestine from 52 to 59/60, a period of growing unrest (the Jewish revolt broke out in 66), for which his maladministration was blamed. His servile origins will not have helped when opinion turned against him at court; Tacitus the Roman historian summed him up in one of the better one-liners of the period—'he exercised he power of a king with the spirit of a slave' (*Histories* 5.9)" (James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 3011-12). "Many Jews would have been shocked to hear the high priest's mouthpiece attributing 'a long period of peace' and 'reforms' to Felix's administration; and few would have joined in any expression 'profound gratitude' for the governor's frequent displays of ferocity, cruelty, and greed" (Longenecker, 539).

vv. 4, 5 ***plague, ringleader . . .*** The charges against Paul: "The first was that Paul was a 'troublemaker' (literally, a 'pest' or 'plague') . . . [the second] Paul was 'a ringleader of the Nazarene sect'. . . By linking the comment with the charge of provoking insurrection, Tertullus implied that the Christians as a whole were a dangerous and seditious sect and that Paul was one of their main collaborators . . . Tertullus's third charge was another matter—that Paul had violated the temple. Evidently the Romans did grant the Jews the right to enforce their ban on Gentile access to their sacred precincts. Paul had been charged by the Asian Jews with violating the ban (21:28)" (Polhill, 480).

v. 11 ***twelve days*** "He had been in Jerusalem only '12 days,' implying that he had not had time to be much of 'a public menace' (v. 5). He had gone to Jerusalem 'to worship,' not to stir up dissention. He had gone to bring money to the Jews there and to present offerings to Yahweh (v. 17; cf. Gal. 2:7-9)" (Constable, 432).

v. 14 ***confess*** "Paul does admit to certain things, none of them crimes. He makes a confession of faith, not of guilt . . . In sum, Paul believes the God of 'our' fathers and is 'guilty' only of being religiously faithful, a good Jew. This has been Paul's consistent defense in Acts" (Bock, 693).

v. 15 ***resurrection*** "This verse contains the only New Testament reference to the fact that Paul believed in 'a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.' Nevertheless the Scriptures speak elsewhere of God raising all people to face judgment (e.g., Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:31-33, 46; John 5:28-29; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rev. 20:12-15)" (Constable, 433-34).

v. 17 ***alms*** "The reference to alms is the one clear remark in Acts confirming the fact that Paul had brought a collection for the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:10; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8-9) . . . It also was for 'my nation'; here Paul is supportive of Judaism and the nation of Israel and identifies with it . . . In Paul's view to contribute to Jews who believe in the hope of resurrection and the Messiah is to support Israel. That is the irony of the charge—Paul is on trail for supporting Israel and its faith" (Bock,693).

4 APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Although not guilty of the charges brought against him by Tertullus, Paul remained in custody for two years, during which time he testified repeatedly about faith in Christ Jesus to the governor and his wife.

3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?

PARENT CONNECTION

Do you ever feel like your words are on repeat – a constant loop of "Wash your hands after you use the bathroom," "Clean your room," "Empty the dishwasher," Finish your homework," or some variation. In fact, you've probably already said several of these today. You think to yourself, "at some point I won't have to ask, but when, Lord?" Parenting can feel like an endless cycle on repeat and we wonder if our kids are listening or if our words are making any difference at all. There can be frustration in the waiting. In Acts 24, Paul is experiencing the frustration of waiting and being on repeat. Again, he sits accused. Again, he listens to the ridiculous false accusations. Again, he's put in a position where he must defend himself. But the beauty in the repeat comes next. Again, he shares the gospel. Without being put on trial, would Paul have had a captive audience? Without being put on trial, would Paul have the same opportunity to share of Jesus' sacrifice? Parents, you have the most captive audience there is. Your kids actually can't get out of the car until you arrive at your destination. Here's a thought – change the loop. Rather than being stuck on the mindless loop of things your kids need to do, get stuck on the loop of discipleship. Rather than telling your kids to wash their hands, post a memory verse and help them to practice scripture memory while they're washing. Instead of telling your kids to do chores or homework, tell them what you see God doing in their life. We're Praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?	What Do You Think?	What Do You Do?
Read Acts 23:23-24:27 1. What 3 things was Paul accused of (24:5-6)? 2. Who did Paul say he worshiped? 3. What did Paul speak to Felix and Drusilla about?	How did God protect Paul while he was being questioned?	How can you keep cool in tense situations? Talk with your parents about different ways you can stay close to God and reflect His character when things don't do your way.

CORE COMPETENCY: Self-Control

I take charge myself with Jesus' help.

MEMORY VERSE: Colossians 3:17

"*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*"

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.
Questions: **kids@wearecentral.org**

_____ I completed my Bible Study
_____ I memorized this week's verse
_____ I brought my Bible to church
_____ I brought a friend

CHILD'S NAME _____ GRADE _____ PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.
Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.
Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.
The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.
Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.
Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.
Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.
Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.
Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.
Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.
Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.
Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.
Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.
Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others
Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.
Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.
Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.
Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.
Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.
Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.

CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.
Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.
Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.
Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.
Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.
Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.
Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.
Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.
Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.
Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.