

PAUL'S TRIAL BEFORE FELIX

Acts 24:1-27

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Paul, Governor Felix, and Jewish leaders from Jerusalem

Key-location: Caesarea

Key-repetitions:

- Accusations against Paul: was a troublemaker (Ac 24:5); stirred up riots among the Jews everywhere (Ac 24:5); was a ringleader of the Nazarene sect (Ac 24:5); tried to desecrate the temple (Ac 24:6).
- Paul confessed: went to Jerusalem to worship (Ac 24:11); worshiped God as a follower of the Way (Ac 24:14); believed the Mosaic Law and the prophets (Ac 24:14); believed there would be a resurrection (Ac 24:15); strived to do right (Ac 24:16).
- Paul denied: arguing at the temple Ac 24:12); stirring up conflict in the synagogues or the city Ac 24:12); being involved in any disturbance (Ac 24:18).
- Injustice against Paul: falsely accused by the Jewish leaders (Ac 24:4-9); Governor Felix left Paul in prison to please the Jews (Ac 24:27).

Key-attitudes:

- Jewish leaders' hatred for Paul.
- Paul's confidence in God.
- Governor Felix's inconsistency.

Initial-situation:

Paul finished his third missionary journey by traveling to Jerusalem. Jews from Asia falsely accused Paul of bringing non-Jews into the temple courtyard. A mob seized Paul and beat him. The Roman commander arrested Paul while the crowd kept shouting, "Kill him!"

The day after Paul was arrested, the Roman commander ordered the Sanhedrin Jewish Council to assemble and explain why Paul was being accused. The Sanhedrin Council meeting became violent. The commander ordered his soldiers to take Paul away by force and bring him into the barracks. When the commander discovered some Jews had conspired to kill Paul, he sent Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea.

Initial-problem:

The high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the Jewish religious leaders and a lawyer named Tertullus.

Final-situation:

Because Governor Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, he left Paul in prison for two years.

BIBLE STORY

Five days after Paul was taken to Caesarea, the high priest Ananias, some Jewish leaders, and a lawyer named Tertullus went down to the city of Caesarea. The lawyer Tertullus began to speak, "Your Excellency, your wise leadership has brought peace and reforms that benefit the people. We thank you and we appreciate what you've done in every way and in every place. We'll be brief.

"This man Paul is a troublemaker. He stirs up riots among the Jews all over the world. He's a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. Paul even tried to desecrate the temple, so we seized him. Cross-examine Paul and you'll find out that our accusations are true."

The governor permitted Paul to speak. Paul replied, "You can verify that twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. My accusers didn't find me arguing at the temple, nor stirring up a crowd in the synagogues, nor anywhere else in the city. They can't prove the accusations they're making against me. However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way of Christ, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is written in the Law of Moses and in the writings of the Prophets. I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. I strive to do what is right before God and man.

"I was absent from Jerusalem for several years when I returned to Jerusalem to bring gifts for the poor and offerings for God. I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. No crowd or mob was with me. I wasn't involved in any disturbance. These men here should state what crime they found me guilty of when I stood before the Sanhedrin Council. They could only accuse me of one thing. When I stood before the Sanhedrin Council, I shouted, 'I'm on trial because I believe that the dead will come back to life.'"

Felix was well acquainted with the Way of Christ. Felix adjourned the proceedings. He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and to permit his friends to take care of his needs (Ac 24:1-23).

Later, Governor Felix sent for Paul and listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus. When Paul discussed the subjects of righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became afraid. Felix said, "That's enough for now. I'll send for you again when I have time." Felix hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe. So he sent for him frequently and talked with him. Because Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, he left Paul in prison for two years (Ac 24:24-27).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Governor Felix had a reputation of violently suppressing rebellions against Rome. What did the lawyer Tertullus say about Governor Felix's reign?
2. What does the lawyer Tertullus' reference to Christianity as being a sect show about his view of Christians?
3. How do people today misunderstand Christians who desire to serve Christ?
4. How did Paul defend himself?
5. What is the difference between being acquainted with the Way of Christ and being a believer?
6. After Felix knew that Paul was innocent of the accusations against him, why did he leave him in prison for two more years?
7. How have you experienced a "dead time" in your life when it appeared that nothing was happening and God was on vacation.

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Those who serve God are subject to injustices.** In Caesarea, Paul suffered two injustices:
 - False accusations from his accusers. The lawyer Tertullus falsely accused Paul (Ac 24:5-9).
 - Deliberate delaying of justice by manipulative selfish politicians. Because Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, he left Paul in prison for two years (Ac 24:24-27).
2. **The Christian faith is not a sect that is a spin-off from Judaism; it is the fulfillment of Jewish Scripture.** Jews who reject Jesus Christ are rejecting the hope of their own religious tradition. Paul told Felix that the Way of Jesus, which the Jews called a sect, actually in everything agrees with the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets (Ac 24:10-21). In his speech before King Agrippa, Paul proclaimed that the Jews were accusing him because of his hope in the promise made to their ancestors that God raises the dead (Ac 26:4-8). Paul claimed that he was not saying anything beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen, that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles (Ac 26:19-23).
3. **The gospel must go beyond presenting the story of Jesus' life to also emphasize its dynamic change in believers' lives.** Governor Felix sent for Paul and listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus. But, when Paul discussed the subjects of righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became afraid and sent Paul away (Ac 24:24-27).
4. **Often God appears to be in no hurry, and his servants must wait patiently for God to fulfill his promises.** Shortly after being arrested in Jerusalem, the Lord told Paul, "Take courage! You spoke about me in Jerusalem. You must speak about me

in Rome" (Ac 23:11). Paul was then sent from Jerusalem to Caesarea to be judged by Governor Felix. Felix knew that Paul didn't deserve to be arrested, but he left him in prison for two years (Ac 24:24-27).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Pantomime Retelling of the Story:

The storyteller tells the story one time. Then the storyteller:

- Asks for a volunteer to pantomime the story as the storyteller repeats the story. The storyteller retells the story while the volunteer pantomimes it.
- Invites a listener to retell the story.
- Asks listeners if the one who retold the story left out or added to the story.