
Paul Appears Before Felix and Festus
Acts 24:1 - 25:12

Introduction

The prophet Agabus had warned Paul that he would be arrested by the Jews and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles (Acts 21:11). That warning was fulfilled when Roman soldiers rescued Paul from being killed by the Jews. After a second threat on Paul's life, Roman soldiers had secretly taken him to Caesarea. There, he waited for his case to be heard before Felix, the governor.

Felix was born a slave but Emperor Claudius gave him his freedom. In 53 AD, Claudius appointed him governor of Judea. Felix was a cruel ruler. He freely ignored the law and did whatever he wanted because he had special influence with the Royal Court in Rome. The Jews did not have much respect for him because of his actions.

The Lord had promised Paul that he would testify for Him in Rome (Acts 23:11). Paul trusted in the Lord and His perfect timing. He is a great example for Christians today and a reminder to be patient and cheerfully endure.

Outline of Acts 24:1 - 25:12

- I. Paul's Accusers Appear Before Felix-24:1-9
- II. Paul Delivers His Defense-24:10-21
- III. Paul Is Kept in Custody-24:22-27
- IV. Paul Appeals to Caesar-25:1-12

I. Paul's Accusers Appear Before Felix-24:1-9

Paul waited in prison for five days before his accusers arrived. Ananias and the elders had hired a professional speaker, Tertullus, to present their case. He knew the Roman law and court procedures. When Tertullus began speaking with Felix, he used words of **flattery** because he hoped to make a good impression on the governor. Tertullus praised Felix for the peace and **prosperity** he had brought to the Jewish people. He also thanked him. These

words were false. Felix's rule had been one of struggles and the relationship the Jews had with Rome was falling apart.

Tertullus portrayed Paul as a constant troublemaker, saying that Paul stirred up disagreements *among all the Jews throughout the world*. It is true that almost everywhere Paul preached the gospel there were Jews who hated him and wanted to get rid of him (Acts 13:45,50; 14:2-5; 17:5-9; 18:6; 19:9). However, the disagreements were about the Jewish religion and that was of no concern to the courts of Rome.

Second, Tertullus stated that Paul was a ringleader of the *sect of the Nazarenes*. Tertullus probably used these words to try and separate Christianity from Judaism. The Roman Empire recognized Judaism as a legal religion. Any religion that branched out from Judaism would also be protected as legal. But, a completely new religion would be illegal.

Lastly, Tertullus said that Paul tried to *profane the temple*. He was referring to the false claim by the Jews from Asia that Paul had taken Gentiles into the temple (Acts 21:27-36). This was a very serious charge because the Romans had given the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who went inside of their temple. If Paul was convicted, then there would be a legal reason to execute him. However, this was a religious concern and more likely a case for the Jewish Sanhedrin instead of the Roman court.

Tertullus twisted the facts. He said the Jews had wanted to judge Paul according to their law, when they had actually only wanted to kill him. Tertullus claimed Lysias had used violence when in fact it was the Jews who had used violence. He also conveniently left

out the fact that Lysias decided to take Paul to Felix because the Jews had threatened Paul's life a second time (Acts 21:21-24). The high priest and the elders agreed with all the charges made by Tertullus.

II. Paul Delivers His Defense-Acts 24:10-21

Paul was given permission to speak for himself. Like Tertullus, he also offered flattery to Felix. However, Paul's words were not false. Instead, he said he was confident that he could get a fair trial because Felix had experience as a ruler of the Jews.

Paul pointed out that it had been less than twelve days since he had arrived in Jerusalem. This was hardly enough time to start a riot. Because it had been such a small amount of time, his accusers should have had no problem providing evidence, but they had none.

Paul explained his purpose in going to Jerusalem was not to stir up trouble, but to worship in the temple. (During the days of the early church, Jewish Christians continued to go to the temple to pray and worship God.) His accusers could not give any example of him causing a riot in the temple, the synagogues, or the city.

Paul further said that he was not a member of a strange sect. He worshiped God according to *the Way*, meaning Christianity. Paul showed that followers of *the Way* came from Judaism by proclaiming his faith in the *Law* and in the *Prophets*. He claimed the same *hope..... in the resurrection of the dead*. This proved that Christianity was founded on the Old Testament and Judaism. Paul assured Felix that his belief in the resurrection of both the just and the unjust (meaning someday there will be a judgment of all men) made him work at keeping his conscience clear towards, both, God and men.

Paul explained the disturbance at the temple and the Jews from Asia that had caused trouble (Acts 21:27). The high priest and elders had not

witnessed what had happened in the temple. The Jews from Asia should have been present to accuse Paul for themselves.

Lastly, Paul declared the only true charge which might have been brought against him was that he believed in the resurrection of the dead. This was the doctrinal dispute between the Sadducees and Pharisees (Acts 23:6-9). It was clearly a religious matter. The Roman courts did not have jurisdiction or interest in such matters. Paul made it clear that there was no reason for him to be on trial in a Roman court. He was innocent and should be released.

III. Paul Is Kept in Custody-Acts 24:22-27

Felix chose to keep Paul a prisoner even though it seemed that Paul was innocent. He decided to delay his judgement until Lysias came to Caesarea. Luke does not record whether Lysias ever arrived to tell his side of the story. Paul went back to the custody of the centurion, but, because he was a Roman citizen, he was given freedom to see his friends and receive food and other necessities from them.

Several days later Felix and his wife, Drusilla,¹ sent for Paul. He spoke to Felix and Drusilla about *faith in Christ*. He gave a sermon to the **adulterous** couple, speaking of *righteousness, self control, and the judgment to come*. He probably called them to repentance. (Repentance was Paul's constant subject. See Acts 26:18 and 20). It is not surprising that Felix's responded with fear. It is likely that he recognized Paul's sermon applied to himself. Both his marriage and his governorship were **immoral** and unjust. Felix sent Paul away, promising to call for him at a more *convenient time*. Felix found many "convenient times" to call for Paul because he hoped that Paul would

¹ Drusilla was Jewish, the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1) and the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice. She had been married to the king of a small state in Syria, but when Felix met her, he was overcome by her beauty and persuaded her to leave her husband and become his third wife.

offer him a bribe to be released. However, Paul remained in custody for two years. Felix surely knew that Paul was not guilty, but he kept him in order to gain the favor of the Jews. However, after two years, Felix lost his governorship and was replaced.

IV. Paul Appeals to Caesar - Acts 25:1-12

Porcius Festus was the Roman governor of Judea during 58-62 AD. He was from a noble family in Rome, and, although his term was cut short by his death, his rule was far more fair than that of Felix.

One of the first things Festus did as governor was visit Jerusalem. Caesarea was the capital of the province of Judea, but Jerusalem was the religious center. Festus knew it was important to visit the chief priests and leaders of the Sanhedrin so that he could have good relations with the Jews.

Even though two years had passed, the Jewish leaders had not forgotten Paul. They told Festus about their case against Paul and requested that Paul be summoned to Jerusalem. However, they knew they had no legal case and the only way to get rid of Paul was to **ambush** and kill him. Festus' answer was that he was not staying long in Jerusalem. He invited the Jewish leaders to accompany him back to Caesarea and present their accusations against Paul there.

Once they arrived, Festus formally took his seat as judge and called for Paul to be brought before him. The Jews made many serious complaints but had no proof for any of them. Paul defended himself by denying the charges against him. He had not acted against the Jewish law, the Jewish temple, or the Roman Caesar. Festus asked Paul if he would be willing to stand trial in Jerusalem with himself as judge to make sure it was a fair trial. He knew this was what the Jews wanted, and he figured it was an easy way to gain their favor.

However, Paul knew that the Jews would never allow him to make it to Jerusalem alive. To

avoid the danger of returning to Jerusalem, he used his Roman citizenship and appealed to Caesar². In Rome, he would receive a fair trial. The Jews would have no influence there. Nero was the Roman emperor at the time, and he had not yet shown **hostility** to Christianity. Festus could not deny Paul's appeal to Caesar. Festus told Paul, *You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!* God's promise that Paul would go to Rome was confirmed. †

2 The right of appeal by a Roman citizen dated back to 509 B.C. and the foundation of the Roman republic.

Prayer

Patience is precious. Pray that God will teach you and remind you to act with patience when you are frustrated with other people and/or yourself.

Memory Verse

Acts 24:16 *This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*

Vocabulary

flattery - the act of praising or complimenting, sincere or insincerely

prosperity - a successful condition; good fortune

adulterous - involved in a romantic relationship with someone other than the individual's spouse

immoral - not concerned with the rules of right conduct or the difference between right and wrong

ambush - remain hidden to attack by surprise

hostility - opposed state; unfriendliness

Questions for Acts Lesson 20

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Review last weeks lesson and notes.

1. Give words or phrases to describe the following people.

a. Turtullus

b. Paul

c. Felix

d. Festus

2. ♥(Heart Question) What did you learn from any of these men that you can apply to your life?

DAY TWO: Read Acts 25:13-27.

3. a. Who arrived in Cesarea while Paul was in custody there?

- b. What did Festus tell the king about Paul? Circle the correct statements.

Paul was a prisoner left by Felix. Paul had tried to bribe him.

The Jews had asked for a judgment against Paul.

Paul deserved an opportunity to defend himself.

The accusations against Paul were not what he had expected.

4. What were the two points of disagreement between Paul and his accusers?

1. _____

2. _____

5. a. After listening to Festus, what did King Agrippa request? Was his request granted?

- b. What reasons did Festus give King Agrippa for bringing Paul before him?

DAY THREE: Read Acts 26:1-11.

6. In this passage, what part of God's plan for Paul (from Acts 9:15) is being fulfilled?

7. According to Paul:

what did all Jews know about him?

why was he being accused by the Jews?

8. a. What is the *hope* Paul spoke about? (See Acts 26:8; 23:6; 24:15 and Romans 1:1-5 for help.)

b. ★(Memory Question) What group of people thought it was *incredible* that God raises dead?

9. From verses 9-11, list some things Paul did before he met Jesus?

DAY FOUR: Acts 26:12-23.

10. a. What miraculous experience did Paul describe to King Agrippa in verses 12-18?

b. Give four promises Jesus had made to Paul during this experience.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

11. Use verse 18 to answer the following questions.

a. What must happen in order for a person to turn from darkness to light?

b. How does the power source of a person's life change when these things happen?

c. What two things does a person receive when the power source changes?

d. ♥Heart Question) Have these things taken place in your life?

12. a. What three things had Paul been preaching about which caused the Jews to want to kill him? Give verse.

vs. _____ 1. _____

vs. _____ 2. _____

vs. _____ 3. _____

b. According to verse 22, what doctrine of his own did Paul add to what Moses and the prophets taught?

13. What had Moses and the prophets taught? (Underline the correct answers.)

Christ would overthrow the Roman government.

Christ would be the first to rise from the dead.

Christ would suffer.

Christ would proclaim light to both Jews and Gentiles.

DAY FIVE: Read Acts 26:24-32.

14. These verses deal with what took place after Paul made his defense. Beside each statement below, indicate whether the statement refers to Agrippa (write an A), Festus (write an F) or Paul (write a P).

A F P a. He said that much learning was driving Paul mad.

A F P b. He claimed to speak words of truth and reason.

A F P c. He surely knew the truth of which Paul spoke.

A F P d. He said that Paul almost convinced him to become a Christian.

A F P e. He wished that all who heard him would be like him except for his chains.

A F P f. He believed Paul had done nothing worthy of death.

A F P g. He said Paul had would have been set free if he had not appealed to Ceasar.

16. ? (Thought Question) Do you think the statement in verse 32 is correct or incorrect? Give reasons to support your answer.

VOCABULARY FOR ACTS LESSON 20

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition of the vocabulary word.

Sanhedrin - _____

rebuked - _____

fanatical - _____

ordains - _____

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

rebuke - criticize praise scold

fanatical -not interested frenziedzealous

ordain..... decree establish predestine

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**rebuked**

the supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Christ and earlier

Sanhedrin

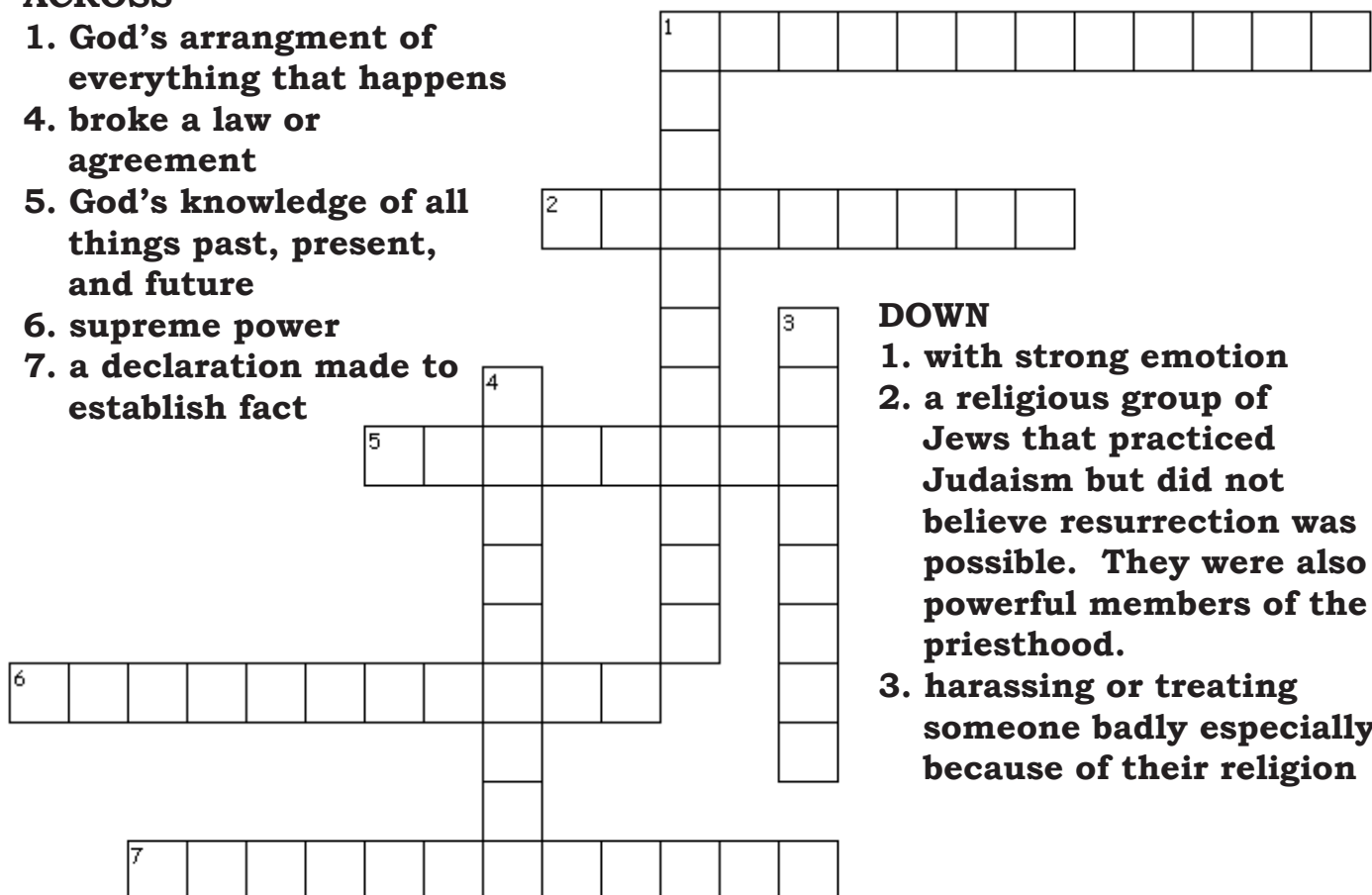
criticized or corrected sharply, reprimanded

fanatical

with extreme, unreasonable enthusiasm

ordains

prearranges unalterably

DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary word(s).**ACROSS****1. God's arrangement of everything that happens****4. broke a law or agreement****5. God's knowledge of all things past, present, and future****6. supreme power****7. a declaration made to establish fact****DOWN****1. with strong emotion****2. a religious group of Jews that practiced Judaism but did not believe resurrection was possible. They were also powerful members of the priesthood.****3. harassing or treating someone badly especially because of their religion**

WORD-BANK
 persecution
 testimony

sovereignty
foreknown
providential

Saducees
violated
passionately

ANSWER KEY

ACROSS

1. God's arrangement of everything that happens
PROVIDENTIAL
4. broke a law or agreement **VIOLATED**
5. God's knowledge of all things past, present, and future
FOREKNOWN
6. supreme power **SOVEREIGNTY**
7. a declaration made to establish fact **TESTIMONY**

DOWN

1. with strong emotion **PASSIONATELY**
2. a religious group of Jews that practiced Judaism but did not believe resurrection was possible. They were also powerful members of the priesthood. **SADDUCEES**
3. harassing or treating someone badly especially because of their religion **PERSECUTION**