

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

Week 9 | Unleashed through Unexpected Opportunities | Acts 24:1-26:32

Paul was able to proclaim the gospel in Jerusalem for a short time, but the furious reaction of the Jews led to his arrest by the Romans. Paul's subsequent appearance before the Sanhedrin also resulted in angry dispute, and Paul was taken into custody again. When the Roman commander discovered a plot to kill Paul, he sent Paul with a large military escort to Caesarea, so that Paul could make his defense before Felix, the governor appointed by Claudius Caesar to rule over Judea and Samaria.

Read Acts 23:11 What encouragement had God given to Paul?

1. FELIX: Read Acts 24

The Jewish high priest Ananias brought the lawyer Tertullus to submit charges against Paul before the Roman governor Felix. Paul's life was at risk in these legal proceedings.

- a. What specific charges did they make against Paul? 24:5-9
- b. What were the elements of Paul's defense? 24:10-13
- c. How does Paul defend his innocence regarding his conduct at the temple and his conduct before God? 24:14-21

Felix had governed Judea and Samaria for six years; he was well aware of the excellent reputation of the Christians in the region. His judicial decision was to appease the Jews by keeping Paul in custody, but to refrain from condemning Paul.

- d. Personal reflection; Felix is known to have been a violent and cruel man, but in his dealings with Paul, he was uncharacteristically merciful. How does this demonstrate the invisible, yet effective, sovereignty of God over the forces of evil? Read Proverbs 21:1 and John 19:11-12. How does this understanding give you comfort as you contemplate the various dangers we observe in our world today?
- e. Although Paul was under arrest, he was free to meet with his friends and followers and also to teach and write from his place of confinement. How is God using Paul to spread the gospel in Judea?

SEMESTER 03: _____

Unleashed

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

- f. During Paul's two years of confinement in Caesarea, the Roman governor Felix sent for Paul many times and repeatedly heard from Paul the truth about man's need for righteousness before God and about the coming judgment. From what you know about Paul, what do you think was Paul's goal in each of these meetings? What was Paul's desire for Felix? What is God's offer to Felix?
 - g. What was the response of this powerful ruler to the revelation of God's judgment and God's provision of salvation? 24:25
 - h. Personal reflection: Many of us have antagonistic people in our lives, or adversaries. We may find that we harbor an inner ill will toward such people. Consider Paul's example before Felix. Rather than harboring resentment, he desired Felix' eternal good. How was this possible? Will you ask God to give you his compassion for the "antagonists" in your life?
2. FESTUS & AGRIPPA Read Acts 25
- After two years, Felix was recalled to Rome, and Festus was appointed as his successor. Festus was a man of more noble character than Felix, but unlike his predecessor, Festus was a Gentile who was *not* familiar with Jewish teaching. When the Jewish leaders came before him and accused Paul of many offenses, Festus was unable to make a judgment on the matter.
- The Jews pleaded with Festus to send Paul to Jerusalem to be tried before the Jewish ruling council. That would have been a death sentence for Paul, because the Jews planned to murder Paul on the journey. Paul was able to escape that fate by making an appeal as a Roman citizen for his case to be tried before Caesar.
- A few days later, the king of Judea, King Agrippa II, arrived in Caesarea to pay a courtesy call to the new governor. Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. As a man who was uninformed about Judaism, Festus was totally confused about the dispute between Paul and the Jews.
- a. How did Festus describe this perplexing case to King Agrippa? 25:18

SEMESTER 03: _____

Unleashed

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

King Agrippa was, for all practical purposes, a Jew. He was very aware of the disputes between Pharisees and Sadducees; he understood the Jewish prophecies about the Messiah, and he was familiar with the differences between Jews and Christians. King Agrippa asked to hear Paul's defense.

- b. The Jews demanded that Paul be put to death. What was Festus' evaluation of the charges against Paul based on Roman law? 25:24-25
 - c. Personal Reflection: Paul's fate seems to be in the hands of people who make decisions based on a desire for position and power rather than justice. How does Paul's response serve as an example when those in authority seem unconcerned for your welfare?
3. PAUL'S ADDRESS: Read Acts 26
- a. Paul's defense before King Herod Agrippa II was a powerful, persuasive gospel presentation rather than a personal defense against criminal charges. What was Paul's overarching goal in this formal audience before King Agrippa? 26:28-29
 - b. How is this goal consistent with God's purpose for Paul's life revealed in Acts 9:15-16?
 - c. Personal reflection: Paul was alert to take advantage of any opportunity to proclaim his story of Jesus' work in His life. All of us may have unexpected opportunities to share with friends our hope in Christ and our confidence in the faith of the gospel. Have you thought through how you might do that?
 - d. From what you've learned in Acts so far, what was the most offensive aspect of Paul's teaching in the eyes of the Jews? 26:15-18

What had the Jews refused to understand? See Isaiah 49:6

SEMESTER 03: _____

Unleashed

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS

Women's Bible Study

A TWO-YEAR JOURNEY THROUGH
THE STORY OF GOD

- e. As Paul stood before King Agrippa, Festus, and high-ranking officers of the city, how did Paul express his respect for King Agrippa II? 26:1-3

- f. How did Paul justify his claim to have lived in obedience to the Jewish law? 26:4-5.

- g. How did Paul argue that the coming of Jesus does not contradict Old Testament Scriptures? 26:6-8

- h. What is Paul's grace story?
 - i. How does he describe his wicked behavior before his conversion? 26:9-11

 - ii. How did Jesus dramatically intervene in Paul's life? 26:12-18

 - iii. What mission has Jesus given to Paul? 26:16-18

 - iv. How has Paul's life demonstrated obedience to the vision from heaven? 26:19-20

 - v. How Jesus' mission for Paul correspond to Acts 1:8?

King Agrippa and Governor Festus agree that according to Roman law, Paul has done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment. Nevertheless, Paul has appealed to Caesar, and he will go to Rome. It is from Rome that a different sort of enduring work will be accomplished. God's purposes prevail; the growth of God's multiethnic Kingdom cannot be thwarted.

SEMESTER 03: _____

Unleashed

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS

