

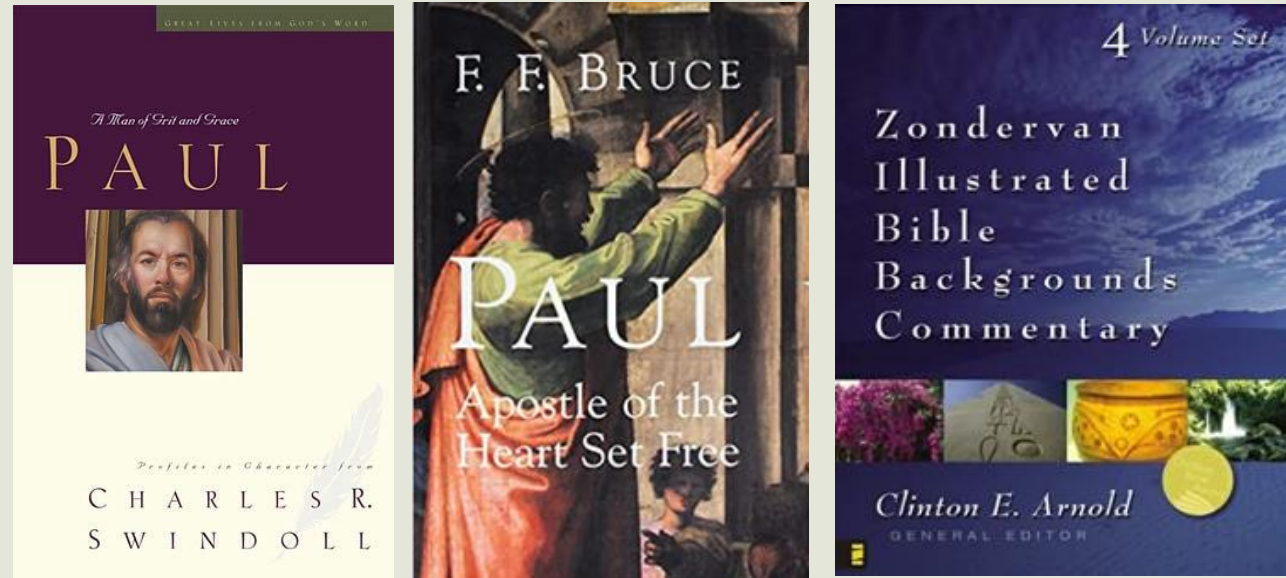


# Paul – Lesson 17

## New Testament Studies

CBC B&B Sunday School  
August 13, 2023

# Source Material



Companion Sources



# Lesson 17 Intro...

- Acts 24-26 (~ AD 58):
  - Where we last saw Paul, he was in the temple presiding over the purification rituals of the Nazarite vows for four Jewish men. Then troublemaking Jews who recognized him from Ephesus stirred the crowd into a riot. Paul was subsequently pulled out of the temple and was beaten
  - The Roman commander responsible for peace in the city then arrested Paul and, in his quest to seek the truth through Paul, ordered punishment upon Paul until he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen (Paul's punishment falls under Roman Law).
  - After some mocked trials for crimes that Paul never committed, the Roman commander learned of a plot to assassinate Paul. He then decided to send Paul to Caesarea to be tried by Felix, the Roman governor over the Judean region

# Acts 24-26 [NASB]

The Trials of Apostle Paul – Part II:  
Making Tough Decisions in (Ministry) Leadership

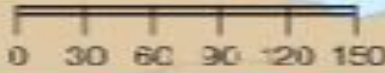
\*Map used by Permission – Standard Bible Atlas



Acts 24-26

Acts 21-23

*Paul's Third Missionary Journey*





# Apostle Paul on Trial

## **Charges Punishable by Death**

- Roman Law – treason, murder, others deemed “most heinous”
- Jewish Law – desecrating the temple

## **Additional Variable:**

- Paul is a Roman Citizen (cf Acts 16:35-38)

# Acts 24:1-27 [NASB]

## The Trial before Felix

# Acts 24:1-27 [NASB]

**Antonius Felix** was the Roman procurator for the Judea region for roughly eight years (AD52-59). He was appointed procurator at the request of Jonathan, the interim high priest at the time, only to later arrange to have Jonathan assassinated by the Sicarii. **He was an opportunist** who uses people and circumstances to gain greater power and accumulate more wealth. **He was also corrupt**, taking bribes and decided disputes based on political expediency instead of justice. Many of his actions stimulated unrest among the Jews – which would later contribute to the Jewish war (AD66-73). He was ultimately removed by Nero after his inept handling of a riot in Caesarea between the Jews and the Syrian inhabitants that took place in AD59.



# Acts 24:1-27 [NASB]

After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney *named* Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul. <sup>2</sup> After *Paul* had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying *to the governor*,

“Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, <sup>3</sup> we acknowledge *this* in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. <sup>4</sup> But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.

# Acts 24:1-27 [NASB]

<sup>5</sup> For we have found this man **a real pest** and a fellow **who stirs up dissension among all the Jews** throughout the world, and **a ringleader of the sect** of the Nazarenes. <sup>6</sup> And he even **tried to desecrate the temple**; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. <sup>7</sup> But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, <sup>8</sup> ordering his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him.” <sup>9</sup> The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.

# Jewish Leaders' Charges

## **Charges Against Paul:**

- Pest (troublemaker) who stirs up dissension among the Jews throughout - 24:5
- Ringleader of a cult (that could pose a danger to Rome) – 24:5
- Tried to desecrate the temple – 24:6

## **Deception Introduced:**

- Tried to arrest Paul (before the riot broke out) – 24:6
- Prevented from arresting Paul by Lysias – 24:6-7
- Riot and violence initiated by Lysias and the Roman guards – 24:7



# Paul's Defense

## Charges Against Paul:

- Pest (troublemaker) who stirs up dissension among the Jews throughout - 24:5
  - Acts 24:11-13 – He only arrived in Jerusalem twelve days ago and was busy with temple rituals; had not spoken to anyone to have caused the riots.
- Ringleader of a cult (that could pose a danger to Rome) – 24:5
- Tried to desecrate the temple – 24:6

# Paul's Defense

## Charges Against Paul:

- Pest (troublemaker) who stirs up dissension among the Jews throughout - 24:5
  - Acts 24:11-13
- Ringleader of a cult (that could pose a danger to Rome) – 24:5
  - Acts 24:14-16 – If Christianity is a cult that is a danger to Rome, then so is what the Jews believe
- Tried to desecrate the temple – 24:6

# Paul's Defense

## Charges Against Paul:

- Pest (troublemaker) who stirs up dissension among the Jews throughout - 24:5
  - Acts 24:11-13
- Ringleader of a cult (that could pose a danger to Rome) – 24:5
  - Acts 24:14-16
- Tried to desecrate the temple – 24:6
  - Acts 24:17-21 – He just gave a large offering to the temple, and was in the midst of presiding over a purification ritual in the temple. These are not actions of someone who tries to desecrate the temple



# Acts 24:1-27 [NASB]

But *there were some Jews from Asia*—<sup>19</sup> who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. <sup>20</sup> Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, <sup>21</sup> other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘*For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.*’”

Deuteronomy 19 –

Punishment for Bearing False Witness = same punishment demanded by false witness

# Felix's Response

- Has more knowledge about the Christian movement than the Jewish leaders – 24:22
- Opted to delay decision on the case
  - for bribery purposes (24:26)
  - concerned for appearance / Jewish reaction / relationship (24:27)
- Kept Paul in custody for 2 years (24:27)

# Acts 25:1-12 [NASB]

## The Trial before Festus



# Acts 25:1-12 [NASB]

**Porcius Festus** (24:27) was described by Josephus as an **honorable and capable leader**. Emperor Nero installed him as procurator over the region in AD59, replacing Felix after yet another mishandling of a conflict involving the Jews. His rule would be short-lived, however, as he died prematurely in AD62. Festus inherited a mess left behind by Felix, to include the ongoing strife between the Jews and the Gentiles, the terrified villagers who were terrorized by the Sicarii (setting villages on fire), the continued fallout with the handling of the Egyptian false prophet, and other matters that would all contribute later towards the Jewish War.

# Acts 25:1-12 [NASB]

Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. <sup>2</sup> And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him, <sup>3</sup> requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (*at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way*). <sup>4</sup> Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly. <sup>5</sup> “Therefore,” he \*said, “let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him.”

# Acts 25:1-12 [NASB]

<sup>6</sup> After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. <sup>7</sup> After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove, <sup>8</sup> while Paul said in his own defense, “I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.” <sup>9</sup> But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?”

# Festus' Response

- Tried to be more knowledgeable of the people he is dealing with (25:6)
- Sought after facts to prove the charge, and finding none (25:7, 18)
- Respected Paul's right as a Roman citizen being charged by the Jews (25:9, 16)
- Respected Paul's request to appeal to Rome (25:12, 20-21)
- Actually listened to the facts –
  - 25:19 / 24:21



# Festus' Response

<sup>20</sup> Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, <sup>21</sup> other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘**For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.**’”

Acts 24:20-21

<sup>19</sup> but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.

Acts 25:19

# Festus' Response

- Tried to be more knowledgeable of the people he is dealing with (25:6)
- Sought after facts to prove the charge, and finding none (25:7, 18)
- Respected Paul's right as a Roman citizen being charged by the Jews (25:9, 16)
- Respected Paul's request to appeal to Rome (25:12, 20-21)
- Actually listened to the facts –
  - 25:19 / 24:21
  - **\*\* THIS IS NONE OF ROME'S BUSINESS \*\*** - except that Paul had appeal to Rome.

# Acts 25:23-26:32 [NASB]

## The Witnessing before Agrippa

# Acts 25:23-26:32 [NASB]

**Marcus Julius Agrippa** (Herod Agrippa II) was the eldest son born to Herod Agrippa I, who was struck by an angel of the Lord in Caesarea in AD44 (Acts 12:23). Though a Jew, his loyalties were more aligned with Rome than with the Jewish cause. However, he has established goodwill within the Jewish community. He was an instrumental figure to dissuade Jewish aggression during the Jewish War (AD 66-73) and was one of the key sources for Josephus' historical account about the Jewish War.



# Festus' Appeal

<sup>23</sup> So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup> Festus \*said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, **loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.** <sup>25</sup> **But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death;** and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. <sup>26</sup> Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you *all* and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write. <sup>27</sup> **For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."**

# Acts 26:1-32 [NASB]

- Luke's third recording of Paul's salvation testimony in the book of Acts:
  - Acts 9:1-30: Original Salvation Experience and calling
  - Acts 22:3-21: Under accusation / under persecution
  - Acts 26:2-29: Under trial before Agrippa
- Third act was delivered with an evangelical bent

# Acts 26:1-32 [NASB]

<sup>24</sup> While *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus \*said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad.” <sup>25</sup> But Paul \*said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. <sup>26</sup> For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” <sup>28</sup> *Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”* <sup>29</sup> *And Paul said, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”*

# Acts 26:1-32 [NASB]

<sup>30</sup> The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, <sup>31</sup> and when they had gone aside, they *began* talking to one another, saying, “This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment.” <sup>32</sup> And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”



# Trial of Apostle Paul Summary

- Accused of crime punishable by death by Jewish leadership (cf Acts 21:10-11)
- Found to have committed no crime that meets the criteria for death by:
  - Lysias the Roman commander in Jerusalem (23:29)
  - Felix the Roman procurator in Caesarea until AD 59 (24:27)
  - Festus the Roman procurator who succeeded Felix in Caesarea (25:25)
  - Herod Agrippa II the “Jewish” king (26:31-32)

# Making Tough Decisions in Leadership

## Class Discussion –

Why is it so hard to simply release Paul?

# Principles I

**When Confronted with a tough decision in ministry leadership...**

**Be respectful and understanding to those in authority or with authority.**

**This first principle models after Paul's reaction to this situation.** He could have made things more difficult for leadership by demanding his innocence be acknowledged. He could have demanded for the authorities to do something about the real troublemakers. But these were not the paths he took. He was respectful to the Roman commander who didn't know he was a Roman citizen, he was respectful to Felix, Festus, and Agrippa – allowing them to have their space to make decisions they deemed appropriate, even if he may not agree with them. When we encounter situations in ministry where we recognized that leadership is caught between a rock and a very hard place, model after Paul by sticking to the facts and give leadership space to deliberate on the best possible outcome.

# Principles II

**When Confronted with a tough decision in ministry leadership...**

**Be courageous and have integrity as those in authority or with authority.**

**The second principle models against the actions of Felix.** Putting aside Felix's character issues as a corrupt leader, on the matter of making tough decisions, Felix was overly concerned about the reactions of the people in his decision making calculation. Moreover, unlike some of his other decisions, there was no clear win as it relates to how to handle Paul's situation with the Jews. As a result, he lacked the needed courage to make any decision on the matter, prolonging the drama of indecision for over two years. Leadership involves making difficult decisions. It does not take a leader to make easy decisions; it takes a leader to make hard and difficult decisions. The direr the consequences, the more difficult the decision-making process becomes. In difficult decision scenarios, leaders must acknowledge that there will always be people who will not agree with the decision, whatever that may be. But the burden of making such decisions correctly is on the leader with the given authority to make them. Leaders who lack the courage to make difficult decisions correctly are not "leaders" by definition.



# Principles III

**When Confronted with a tough decision in ministry leadership...**

**Be humble and wise among those in authority or with authority.**

**This final principle models after Festus and Agrippa.** Festus, as an upright leader, was humble enough to recognize that he is at a loss for what to do, and wise enough to consult others for advice. Festus could have taken the easy route by elevating his position of authority, forge a good relationship with the Jewish leaders and make Paul a casualty of a process that can lead to a win-win. However, he was wise enough to know that the issue is beyond his depth and could have greater implications. His focus is to pursue what is true, what is factual, and what to report to his higher authority (Rome). If this leads him to lower any pride he may have, recognize that he does not have all the answers and needs help to make a wise decision, so be it. When we are put in positions of authority to make difficult decisions, we should likewise lower our pride, pursue truth, seek any needed wisdom, and be more concerned about our report to our higher authority – which is God.

# Questions