

Acts Lesson #26

BSF Scripture Reading:

FIRST DAY:

1. Read the lesson notes and References

SECOND DAY:

Read Acts 24

The Trial Before Felix

[24:1] Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. [2] When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: “We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. [3] Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. [4] But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

[5] “We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect [6] and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. [8] By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.”

[9] The Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

[10] When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. [11] You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. [12] My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. [13] And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. [14] However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, [15] and I have the same hope in God as

these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. [16] So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

[17] “After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. [18] I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. [19] But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. [20] Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— [21] unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’”

[22] Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” [23] He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

[24] Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. [25] As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” [26] At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

[27] When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

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THIRD DAY

Read Acts 25

The Trial Before Festus

[25:1] Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, [2] where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. [3] They urgently requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. [4] Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. [5] Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there, if he has done anything wrong.”

[6] After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. [7] When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove.

[8] Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”

[9] Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?”

[10] Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. [11] If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”

[12] After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

Festus Consults King Agrippa

[13] A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus.

[14] Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. He said: “There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. [15] When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

[16] “I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges. [17] When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. [18] When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. [19] Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. [20] I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. [21] When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar.”

[22] Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.”

He replied, “Tomorrow you will hear him.”

Paul Before Agrippa

[23] The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. [24] Festus said: “King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. [25] I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. [26] But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. [27] For I think it is unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him.”

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FOURTH DAY

Read Acts 26:1-23

[26:1] Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: [2] “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, [3] and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

[4] “The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. [5] They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. [6] And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. [7] This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. [8] Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

[9] “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. [10] And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. [11] Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

[12] “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. [13] About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. [14] We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

[15] “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. [16] ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. [17] I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them [18] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

[19] “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. [20] First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. [21] That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. [22] But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen — [23] 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.”

FIFTH DAY:

Read Acts 26:24-32

[24] At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

[25] “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. [26] The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. [27] King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

[28] Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

[29] Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me

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today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

[30] The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. [31] They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”

[32] Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

SIXTH DAY:

Review Acts 24-26

See above verses: