



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 18 – STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 24:1 - 25:27

DAY ONE

1. Thinking back on the Spiritual Reflection from last week's lesson (Lesson 17, Chapters 22 and 23), was there something which challenged you or made you think? Briefly explain.

Read Acts 24:1-16

2a. As last week's lesson ended, Paul had been sent under guard from Jerusalem to the Roman headquarters in Caesarea. After 5 days, his accusers arrived with their attorney, Tertullus, to report their case against Paul to Felix, the Roman governor. Who were the accusers according to verse 1?

b. Tertullus began his argument against Paul by flattering Felix. Summarize what he said according to verses 2 to 4.

3a. In verses 5-6 (note that the NRSV omits a verse 7), Tertullus deftly summed up his case against Paul, justifying his clients' seizure of Paul. List the four accusations Tertullus made against Paul.

NOTE: The "Nazarenes" is a title that some applied to early Christians who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and described Christians as followers of "Jesus of Nazareth."

b. In verse 8, Felix was assured by Tertullus that he would find these statements to be true when he examined Paul. According to verse 9, who does the "we" represent that affirmed the charges against Paul?

4a. Rather than questioning Paul, Felix allowed Paul to give a direct rebuttal. Paul started by acknowledging Felix's experience as a judge over Israel, stating that he cheerfully made his defense to him. In verse 11, what did Paul say was the reason he went to the temple?

b. In verses 12 and 13, Paul denied several actions of which he had been accused. What were they?

5a. In verse 14, Paul admitted that he followed "the Way", which the Jews were referring to as a sect. How did Paul describe his beliefs that were continuous with Judaism?

b. In verse 15, Paul affirmed that he shared with the Jews (Pharisees) his hope for the resurrection of the dead for both the righteous and unrighteous. Read and record verse 16 in which Paul stated what he did to prepare himself for this day (Good memory verse).

6. CONNECTION: Paul, a devout Jew, had accepted Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah, putting him in conflict with the Jewish high priest and other Jewish leaders. Even faced with arrest, imprisonment and trial, Paul acted with dignity and grace, proclaiming to all that he spoke and acted with a clear conscience. Have you ever faced a situation when, like Paul, you chose to speak out according to your conscience even though you knew your beliefs were in conflict with others? What sustained and supported you, and how did you handle the situation? Share some thoughts with your small group.

Read 1 Timothy 1:18-19. Aware that through your conscience the Holy Spirit leads you to do what is right and good, write a prayer today incorporating ideas from these verses in 1 Timothy.

DAY TWO

Read Acts 24:17-23

7a. As today's lesson begins, Paul continued his discourse before the governor and Tertullus. According to verse 17, for what two holy reasons had he come to Jerusalem?

b. This mention of Paul collecting money to assist the poor of Jerusalem is described more fully elsewhere in the New Testament, and was part of the mission he had accepted years earlier at the Jerusalem Council. Read and record Galatians 2:10, which referenced this mission.

8a. Briefly compare Paul's account of the situation from verse 18 with the accusations of Tertullus in 24:5-6.

b. In verse 19, Paul stated that the Jews who had come down from Asia to oppose him weren't even there to accuse him. What did he then ask of those accusers who were there (verse 20)?

9a. In verse 21, Paul stated what he believed was the real reason these charges had been made against him. Record his words.

b. Paul appeared to be referring to Acts 23:6 in which he proclaimed to the Sanhedrin that he was a Pharisee that believed in the resurrection. Read and record the passage in Acts 23:6 to which he referred.

10a. Upon hearing Paul's controversial statement, Felix abruptly concluded the hearing. What interesting fact do we learn about Felix in this verse (beginning of verse 22)?

b. Felix was "passing the buck." What promise did Felix make as he adjourned the hearing that shows this is true? Read and record the end of verse 22.

11. According to verse 23, describe how Paul was to be treated after the group adjourned.

12. CONNECTION: In today's lesson, Paul confirmed that important Christian beliefs were shared with the Jewish faith (particularly the traditions of the Pharisees). Both the Pharisees and early Christians believed in the one, true God, who formed His Chosen People, through whom He would send a Messiah, in the testimony of the prophets of the Old Testament, and in the resurrection of the dead; however, the Jews who opposed Paul did not believe that Jesus Christ was their prophesied Messiah. Do you see the beautiful continuity between Judaism and Christianity? Comment on why you think it is important to "link" the truths of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Testament) with the truths of the New Testament.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to those who denied him that he was prophesied in the scripture. Read and record Matthew 5:17 and let thoughts of our shared Jewish and Christian relationship with God lead you into prayer.

DAY THREE
Read Acts 24:24-27

13a. As today's lesson begins, a few days have passed since the trial. Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul. What did they hear from Paul (verse 24 and the first part of verse 25)?

b. At Paul's words, Felix became frightened. What did he say (end of verse 25)?

NOTE: One reason Felix would have been uncomfortable was that he was in an adulterous marriage (USCCB).

14a. We learn from verse 26 and the beginning of verse 27 that Felix kept Paul in prison for over two years. For what was Felix waiting (verse 26)?

b. To give Paul ample opportunity to bribe him, what did Felix do "very often" (verse 26)?

15. After two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Why did Felix leave Paul in prison when he left the governor's office (verse 27)?

16. This short passage gives us a vivid portrait of the type of person Felix was. How would you describe him to others?

17. CONNECTION: In today's reading, we see Felix, the governor, walking a political line between two powerful and disparate groups ... the leadership of the Jews and his masters, the Romans. To antagonize the Jewish leadership would create more unrest in a zone which even in Paul's day had experienced violence and civil disruption. Felix's Roman superiors saw political danger in religious unrest, so Felix's imprisonment of Paul was meant to maintain an uneasy order. Our Lord told us that it is impossible to serve two masters. Are there two "masters" in your life? Can work take precedent over family life, or are Sundays too busy for worship? Share with your small group some ways in which you can "set your priorities" right with God.

Read and record Matthew 6:24 and begin your prayer asking God for the wisdom to serve him first.

DAY FOUR
Read Acts 25:1-12

18. In yesterday's lesson, we learned that Porcius Festus was the new governor of Judea. Where did Festus go soon after he arrived in the province?

19. Even after two years, there is still antagonism against Paul. In Jerusalem, the chief priests and leaders of the Jews gave Festus a report against Paul (verse 2) and appealed to him that Paul be transferred back to Jerusalem. What did they plan to do (end of verse 3)?

20a. Festus told them Paul was staying at Caesarea, and that he himself intended to go back to Caesarea shortly. In your own words, what did he tell them according to verse 5?

b. Festus stayed in Jerusalem 8 or 10 days, and then went down to Caesarea. What happened after he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought in front of them (verse 7)?

NOTE: The Roman tribunal was a raised platform on which a magistrate or judge(s) would sit to hear and adjudicate a complaint or case.

21. Apparently the Jews brought three particular accusations against Paul because he denied three things. What are they (verse 8)?

22a. What threatening question does Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, ask Paul (verse 9)?

b. For what reason(s) would Paul not want to be tried in Jerusalem?

23a. Paul defiantly stated that he was appealing to the emperor's tribunal, which is where he, as a Roman citizen, was entitled to be tried (verse 10). Summarize the rest of Paul's response to Festus's proposal from verses 10 and 11.

b. Record Festus's response to Paul's request according to verse 12.

24. CONNECTION: Paul has done a lot of waiting ... imprisoned and waiting for two years, then waiting on the new governor, then waiting on Festus to get to Jerusalem, then another eight to ten days to Caesarea. How frustrating this waiting would have been for any of us, but things happen in the Lord's time. Recall a time when you had to wait "days" for something. Maybe it was waiting for the results of an examination or a medical test, or for someone to return, or for something to arrive, or even for something to heal. Briefly describe what the waiting taught you.

Read and record Psalm 27:14. Let thoughts of waiting patiently for the Lord's perfect timing in all situations lead you into prayer.

DAY FIVE

Read Acts 25:13-22

25a. As today's lesson begins, several more days have passed. Who arrived in Caesarea and for what reason (verse 13)?

NOTE: King Agrippa was Herod Agrippa II, the great-grandson of Herod the Great. His consort, Bernice, was actually his sister, with whom he had a scandalous affair for many years (Ignatius Catholic Study Bible). Though a Jewish king, he was raised in the court of the Roman Emperor Claudius.

b. Since Agrippa and Bernice were staying there several days, what did Festus then do and say (verse 14)?

26a. Festus began to recount to his royal guests what had happened from the time that he assumed the governorship in Jerusalem and had learned of the charges brought against Paul by the chief priests and elders of the Jews. He also told them of his refusal to hand Paul over, as a Roman citizen, without facing his accusers (verses 15-16). Briefly summarize what he then told King Agrippa and Bernice (verses 17-18).

b. What two points of disagreement did the Jews have with Paul that they brought to Festus' attention (verse 19)?

27. In verses 20-21, Festus continued with the summary of the actions he took after hearing the accusations made against Paul. What was the reason that he asked Paul if he wished to go to Jerusalem to be tried?

28. King Agrippa's interest was aroused and he said that he would like to hear the man himself. How did Festus respond?

29. CONNECTION: Paul's case is more of a political one than a legal one. He is a hot potato for the Roman governors. They know he is innocent of any crime against the emperor but they do not want to release him and allow him to be the source of unrest. So, once again, the "case" against the Roman citizen, Paul, has been transferred to another decision-maker. Once again, a Roman authority is at a loss as to how to answer charges from the Jewish leaders against a Christian. At least the Roman governors have refused to hand him over to the Jews based on his legal right of Roman citizenship. As Christians, we believe that all human law is based on natural law ... the law God has written on the hearts of man. In the US we say that our government is a government of laws and not men. What does this mean to you?

Read and record Jeremiah 31:33, and let this thought lead you into prayer.

DAY SIX
Read Acts 25:23-27

30. As today's lesson begins, it was the next day, and in great pomp King Agrippa and Bernice entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. According to the end of verse 23, what happened?

31. Festus addressed King Agrippa and all who were gathered in the hall. With what words did he begin to describe Paul's situation (verse 24)?

32. According to verse 25, Festus stated that he did not find that Paul deserved death, and thus when Paul appealed to his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor Nero, Festus decided to send him. According to verse 26, what was Festus missing and what was to be done to resolve it?

33a. There is a word in verse 27 that described how Festus felt about sending a prisoner to the emperor without written charges. What is it?

b. What might this tell us about Festus?

34. While we do not hear Paul speak in today's lesson, when we read this chapter we noted that a prophecy for persecution has come true. Read and record Matthew 10:18.

35. CONNECTION: Although Festus was a pagan, a man without the benefit of God's law in his life, he strove to follow the man-made laws that helped ensure that the accused received fair and just treatment. Yet how often we, as Christians, overlook God's laws of love, forgiveness, truth and justice. Sometimes our behavior is no different from the behavior of people with no religious influence in their lives. What are some examples of "unchristian behavior" that are evident in today's society? Is there anything that we can each do as Christians to make things better?

Read and record John 1:5 (Good memory verse) and let this thought lead you into prayer.

After completing this lesson, read Chapters 24 and 25 (refer to pages 134-138 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 171-179 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.