

DAILY STUDY

Lesson 23: The Plot Against Paul Fails

Passage: Read Acts 23-24

Verse: Acts 24:16

DAY 1 LET'S BEGIN:

1. Who was listening to Paul's case, and what happened? (Acts 23:1-5)
2. What did Paul observe, and what did he say? (Acts 23:6)
3. What was the response to Paul's words, and why? (Acts 23:7-9)
4. What did the commander do? (Acts 23:10)
5. What happened that night? (Acts 23:11)
6. What did the Jews plot to do? (Acts 23:12-15)
7. Who heard the plot, and what did he do? (Acts 23:16)
8. What did Paul do? (Acts 23:17)

DAY 2 FIND the FACTS:

1. What did the commander do? (Acts 23:18-24)
2. What was in the letter the commander wrote to Felix? (Acts 23:25-30)
3. What was the response of Felix to Paul's arrival? (Acts 23:31-35)
4. Who arrived as Paul's accusers? (Acts 24:1)
5. How did Tertullus approach Felix? (Acts 24:2-4)
6. How did Tertullus describe Paul? (Acts 24:5-6)
7. Describe the accusations against Paul. (Acts 24:6-9)
8. What was Paul's response to the accusations? (Acts 24:10-13)
9. What did Paul say his position was? (Acts 24:14-15)

PASSAGE THOUGHTS

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As Paul looked at the Council, he could say that he had a good conscience before God. He had done what God had called him to do. Paul called these men brethren, remembering and reminding them that he had once been one of them (Acts. 26:10). His claim to a good conscience would mean that they were on opposite sides of true service to God. One of them had to be wrong.

The conscience must be correctly informed by biblical truth to respond correctly. Paul had persecuted Christians previously thinking that he was serving God. When he was informed correctly, he changed his actions immediately. There can be a weak (1 Cor. 8:7, 10), defiled (Titus 1:15), wounded (1 Cor. 8:12) or seared (1 Tim. 4:2) conscience.

For whatever reason Paul did not recognize Ananias as the high priest. Some have explained that this was not a formal assembly and therefore the high priest was not wearing his priestly clothing. Paul, not being from Jerusalem, said he did not know that Ananias was the high priest. He immediately admitted his error when informed.

Paul had quickly recognized that he would not receive a fair hearing, so he appealed to the Pharisees, recognizing the division of the Sadducee and Pharisee factions. The discord was so fierce that Lysias had to rescue Paul again. That night God comforted Paul Himself. He assured Paul that he would witness at Rome also. That truth sustained and guided Paul's actions on numerous occasions in the following weeks and months.

The plot against Paul further indicates that the Jews knew they had nothing against Paul that was worthy of death. The Romans could not be counted on to condemn Paul. Paul was in protective custody so the commander was looking for any information that would tell him what to do with Paul.

Lysias immediately gave orders to escort Paul to safety at Caesarea with a letter of explanation. In the letter he acknowledged the lack of reason to condemn Paul. Paul would have been comforted by the immediate rescue following God's promise.

Five days after Paul reached Caesarea, his accusers appeared from Jerusalem some sixty-five miles away. They acted quickly perhaps intending to prevent Paul's release.

Ananias, one of the most corrupt high priests, was present, but he had a lawyer speak for him. Paul would have been a threat to Ananias' position. Having other elders present also is an indication of the seriousness of Paul's threat to them.

Tertullus' flattery address was just that. History indicates that Felix was rather inept. Two years after this occasion, Nero replaced him. Felix, a former slave, was the brother of Pallas who was favored by the Emperor Claudius. Felix did suppress some anti-Roman

terrorists and the Egyptian false messiah. However, he used such brutality that the Jews were outraged and alienated. There are no recorded reforms by Felix.

The Bible is replete with illustrations of missed opportunities concerning salvation. There was a generation of Israelites in the wilderness, the foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1-12), would be disciples (Lk. 9:57-62), and Judas (Mt. 19:28, 26:24). Felix appears to be one of them. There is no indication that he turned to God for salvation. It appears that Felix later listened to Paul merely with the hope of financial gain (Acts 24:26).

Tertullus made three charges against Paul after describing him as a pest. The first charge was that of generally stirring up public dissension. To have named a specific situation would have gotten Paul transferred to the appropriate authority of that area which they would have avoided in order to not lose control over the officials. The vague charges were considered inadmissible. The second charge was that of a troublesome sectarian. The third was that of trying to desecrate the temple.

Finally, they brought up an issue about who it was that should try Paul. Tertullus blamed Lysias the commander for wrongful conduct.

Then Felix allowed Paul to speak. Paul explained that he had gone to Jerusalem only a short time ago and had not debated with anyone. He had not caused a riot. This is when the case should have been dismissed for lack of evidence. The other two charges were religious in nature. Paul admitted that he was a Christian but that Christianity was not heretical. As to the third charge Paul said he came to Jerusalem to present offerings. Then Paul told what really happened. Paul said the Jews from Asia should have been there to present the case for why Paul was detained. For them to be absent undermined the Sanhedrin's case.

Felix was left in a predicament. This Roman citizen had no eye witness accusers and no specific crime to be held for. So Felix did the most prudent thing, he delayed his response saying he would wait for Lysias to arrive.

Later Felix listened to Paul; however, when he heard about righteousness and self-control he knew that he was not ready for the accompanying judgment. Felix dismissed Paul rather than yield to God. For two years Felix hoped Paul would bribe his way out of custody. Felix knew Paul was innocent, but he refused to release him to the end.

How is God protecting you in the midst of various circumstances? How are you a testimony to Him? Who is ruling your life? What improper aspirations do you have? What do you need to change?

PRAYER: *Father, thank you for protecting Paul. Thank you for allowing him to teach others about You.*



PREPARE to SHARE: Review the passage, and use the questions to help draw the passage together in order to strengthen your relationship with God, your family and others.



FOCUS: Paul testified of Jesus; the Council wanted death; God spared Paul through the Romans.

A. OBSERVE  :

1. Who are the main and other characters?
2. Where is the action taking place, and what are the characters doing?
3. What words or phrases: a. occur frequently; b. should be defined for the students (include a definition)?
 - a.
 - b.
4. What qualities, promises and/or commands of God do you see in this passage?

B. SUMMARIZE  :

1. Into what 2-4 sections would you divide this passage? Label the sections.
2. What information can be added by cross references?
3. Make a summary statement of ten words or less uniquely identifying the passage.

C. APPLY  :

1. From this passage what can you:
 - a. praise God for?
 - b. thank God for?
 - c. pray for yourself, your family and your class?
2. To apply this passage you would:
3. To apply this passage a student would:
4. What applications can be made as questions?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

D. SHARE  :

1. What important points do you want to communicate to your class, and how?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

PASSAGE SUMMARY

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Paul looked at the Council. He said his conscience was clear before God. The high priest told those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. Paul said God would strike him. Paul called the man a whitewashed wall. The man had violated the law by striking him. Then Paul learned that this man was the high priest. Paul knew he should not speak evil of the high priest.

Paul knew the Council had both Sadducees and Pharisees. Paul pointed out that he was a Pharisee, and his father was a Pharisee. He said he was on trial because of the hope and resurrection of the dead.

The Pharisees and Sadducees began arguing with each other. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, angels or spirits. The Pharisees believed in all of these. There was such an uproar that the commander removed Paul to the barracks.

That night the Lord told Paul to be encouraged. Paul would witness in Rome, also. Meanwhile, more than forty Jews plotted to kill Paul before they ate again. Paul's nephew heard about the plot and informed Paul. Paul sent the young man to report the plot to the commander.

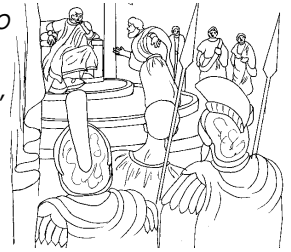
The commander gathered his men to send Paul to Caesarea at night. They would take Paul safely to Felix, the governor, with a letter. The letter said that Paul had been accused over questions about Jewish law. He had done nothing to deserve death. They would send Paul's accusers to **Felix**, also.

Felix read the letter when Paul arrived. He said he would listen to Paul after the accusers arrived. He ordered Paul to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

Five days later Ananias arrived with some of the elders. Tertullus, their attorney, made the charges. First Tertullus thanked Felix for all the reforms he was making in the province. Then he hastened to tell why they were there.

Tertullus said Paul was a pest who stirred up the people. He was a ringleader of a group of Nazarenes. He said Paul had tried to desecrate

the temple. They wanted to try Paul by their own Law. But the commander, Lysias, had taken Paul away from them. He said the commander was bothering the governor with Paul.



Then the governor let Paul speak. Paul was glad to speak. He said he had arrived in Jerusalem to worship twelve days earlier. He had not had a discussion with anyone so he could not have created a riot. His accusers could not prove their charges.

Paul said he served the God of their fathers. He believed what was written in the Law and Prophets. His **hope** was in God. Then Paul said there would be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Because of this Paul endeavored to have a **good** conscience before God and men.

Paul said he had come to Jerusalem to offer alms and offerings. That is why he was in the temple. He was making offerings when some **Jews** from **Asia** arrived. They should be telling what had happened. Or the ones who were there should explain why his saying there would be a resurrection of the dead should bring charges against him.

Felix said he would wait for the commander, Lysias, to arrive before he decided what to do. Paul would be kept in custody, but he would have some freedom. His friends could come to him.

Later Felix's wife Drusilla arrived. She was a Jewess. They sent for Paul to tell them about **faith** in Jesus Christ. Felix sent Paul away when he began speaking about righteousness, self-control and the coming judgment. Felix sent for Paul often. He was hoping Paul would offer him money to let him go. Two years later Festus replaced him as the next governor. Felix left Paul in prison as a favor to the Jews.

QUESTIONS: Who was Paul speaking to at the beginning of this passage?
Who else did Paul speak to, and what did he say?
Who wanted to hear Paul some more, and why?

BIBLE VERSE: Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.

SUMMARY WORKSHEET: *Write answers and prepare well.*

1. What passage focus could you share with a friend? (Consider truths about God and current applications.)

2. How could you present the passage? (Read the passage summary for ideas.)
Beginning statement:

Outline, dialogue, action, sounds, illustrations, etc.:

Ending statement:

3. What questions could you ask? (Use: who, what, when, where; and how and write answers.)

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.