

# Bible Stories for Adults

## Paul Imprisoned and Appeal to Rome

### Acts 21-26

## Opening

Gathering: What percent of Christians today would stand up for their faith in a radically Muslim country?

Today's Focus: Paul continued to witness of the gospel even as he stood trial for his faith in Jesus.

Key Verses: *You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.* Acts 22:15

*Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" Paul replied, "Short time or long – I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."* Acts 26:28-29

Opening Prayer

## Lesson

Travel Plans (Acts 19:21-22)

What plans did Paul make after spending a couple of years in Ephesus during his third journey?

Acts 19:21-22 = Time to move on, sights on Jerusalem and Rome, but visit Greece first

Besides checking up on things, what did Paul intend to do by passing through Greece?

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 = Take a collection for the poor in Jerusalem (written in Ephesus)

What were Paul's plans after taking the offerings to Jerusalem church? = His work in area was done

Romans 15:23-28 = Visit Rome and Spain - (Wrote book of Romans in Corinth)

Did Paul sense any danger in his plans to go to Jerusalem?

Romans 15:31-32 = He knew he needed protection from non-Christians in Jerusalem

How were Paul's plans to go to Jerusalem in time for the Passover changed?

Acts 20:3b = Jews planned to throw him overboard or the like, walked back through Macedonia

What target date did Paul set for arriving in Jerusalem after he missed Passover?

Acts 20:16 = Pentecost, 50 days later - even sailed past Ephesus to avoid delay

Did Paul believe the dangers in Jerusalem were gone since he missed Passover?

Acts 20:22-23 = No, he knew dangers were waiting whenever he showed up

Why would Paul go to Jerusalem if prison and hardship was facing him?

Acts 20:24 = He must *finish the race and complete the task* given to him

Sad Farewells (Acts 20:36-21:16)

How did the Ephesians respond to Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem despite the danger?

Acts 20:36-38 = They prayed and were very sad that they wouldn't see him again

Was the concern for Paul's safety because of their friendship?

Acts 21:3b-4 = No, even Christians at Tyre he knew only a week begged him not to go

How did God test Paul's obedience to His call to go to Jerusalem even further in Caesarea?

Acts 21:10-11 = Sent Agabus to prophesy that Paul would be bound in Jerusalem

Had Paul heard of the accuracy of Agabus' prophecies?

Acts 11:27-30 = Agabus had prophesied famine during Paul's early days in Antioch

How did the Christians in Caesarea respond to this vivid prophecy?

Acts 21:12 = They pleaded with Paul not to go, others could take the gifts

Did all of this change Paul's mind?

Acts 21:13-16 = No, needed to follow the Spirit's lead and do the Lord's will, went to Jerusalem

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### I Became Like a Jew to Win the Jews (Acts 21:17-26)

- Besides giving contributions from the churches, what did Paul do in Jerusalem? = James led Jer church  
Acts 21:17-19 = Reported the successes of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles  
How did the Jerusalem Christians, who focused on Jews, respond to this report?  
Acts 21:20-22 = They praised God, BUT had concern of animosity from Christian Jews  
How did they feel they could disprove these rumors that Paul turned Jews from their traditions?  
Acts 21:23-24 = Wealthier Jews sometimes paid sacrifice costs for Nazarite vows, a pious act  
How did Paul go further than just paying for their purification expenses?  
Acts 21:26 = He participated in them  
Why did Paul do this when he knew the rumors were false? = knocked down obstacles vs building  
1 Corinthians 9:19-23 = He happily met people where they were for the sake of Gospel

### Away With Him! (Acts 21:27-30)

- Did Paul's efforts accomplish their desired goal?  
Acts 21:27-29 = No, Jews from Ephesus recognized and identified him to others  
Temple had 13 stone signs with: *Let no Gentile enter within the balustrade and enclosure surrounding the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will be personally responsible for his consequent death.*  
What did other Jews think about a Jew bringing a forbidden Gentile into the temple?  
Acts 21:30 = He had disgraced God's holy place and deserved to die

### Romans to the Rescue (Acts 21:31-40)

- What happened when the mob noise was heard in the Tower Antonia (at NW corner of temple)?  
Acts 21:31-36 = Roman commander (over 1000) saved Paul from mob, arrested for protection  
Was the commander able to understand anything about the situation through the commotion?  
Acts 21:37-38 = Thought Paul was Dagger-bearer leader who tried to destroy Jer. in 54 AD  
Besides speaking fluent Greek, how did Paul inform the commander who he was?  
Acts 21:39-40 = Said he was a Jew from a large city, Spoke in Aramaic to crowd

### Here Is My Defense (Acts 22:1-21)

- Was Paul able to quiet the frenzied mob enough to talk to them? = Steps from temple courts to Castle  
Acts 22:1-2 = Yes, they listened when he spoke Aramaic  
Besides speaking their language, how did Paul try to *become like a Jew to win the Jews*?  
Acts 22:3-4, 12-15 = Jew, trained by Gamaliel, very zealous, sent by respected Jew  
How did he transition further into his Christian faith?  
Acts 22:17-18, 21 = While praying in temple as a good Jew, God sent him to Gentiles

### The Verdict (Acts 22:22-30)

- Was the crowd satisfied with Paul's explanation of why he spent time with Gentiles?  
Acts 22:22 = It was further proof that he likely brought a Gentile into the temple  
Did this help the commander understand why the mob was so upset? = Didn't know Aramaic  
Acts 22:23-24 = No, he decided to find out from Paul with the normal means of torture  
How did Paul keep himself from being flogged?  
Acts 22:25, 29 = Revealed he was Roman citizen, couldn't be punished without a trial  
What did the commander decide to do to get to the bottom of this near-riot?  
Acts 22:30 = He brought the two sides together to have them make charges

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### Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-11)

How did Paul's stand before the Sanhedrin take an immediate bad turn?

Acts 23:1-5 = Paul insulted high priest then apologized, high priest was wrong  
Knowing that the Jews *would not accept his testimony* (22:18), what defense did Paul take?

Acts 23:6 = He claimed he was on trial for his belief in the resurrection of the dead  
Did this statement have any effect? = Majority of Sanhedrin were Saducees

Acts 23:7-10 = Yes, he successfully turned the Sanhedrin on itself and away from him  
With things getting hotter and hotter, how was Paul assured he was doing the right thing?

Acts 23:11 = Vision told him he would be going to Rome

### Paul's Nephew Saves the Day (Acts 23:12-24)

Having blown their chance to nail Paul before the commander, what did the Jews decide to do?

Acts 23:12-15 = Assassinate Paul

How did this plan fall apart?

Acts 23:16-18a, 22 = Paul's nephew learned of plot and told the commander

What did the commander decide to do? = Army easier to protect Paul than stop possible riot

Acts 23:23-24 = Send Paul to the governor in Caesarea via a huge army for protection

### Moving the Prisoner (Acts 23:25-35)

How would Governor Felix know what to do with Paul?

Acts 23:25-30 = Claudius sent a letter explaining situation, had no problem with Paul

Did the army have any trouble taking Paul? = Antipatris to Caesarea was open, safe from ambush

Acts 23:31-32 = No, 470 went 35 mi all night to Antipatris, 70 went other 25 mi to Caesarea

Did Felix have Paul held in the federal prison? = Pontius Pilate had lived in Herod's Palace

Acts 23:35 = No, had him put under guard in Herod's palace for protection

*Felix* - Raised as a slave; Got position since brother Pallas was close to Nero; cruel and oppressive

*Tacitus* (Roman historian): *Felix exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave*

### Trial Before Felix (Acts 24)

How were the Jewish leaders more prepared this time?

Acts 24:1 = They hired a high-powered lawyer and built a legal case around Roman laws

What three charges did the Jews bring against Paul?

Acts 24:5-9 = Trouble and riot maker, ringleader of Nazarene sect, desecrated the temple

How did Paul address the charge of being *a troublemaker and stirring up riots*?

Acts 24:11-13 = In Jerusalem only a few days, never even argued in temple or anywhere

How did Paul address the charge of being *a ringleader of the Nazarene sect*?

Acts 24:14-16 = He accepted it and said he had the same hope in the same God

How did Paul address the charge of *trying to desecrate the temple*? = accusers need specifics

Acts 24:17-21 = Posed no threat to the temple, was even ceremonially clean

With no basis to punish Paul, but in trouble with the Jews for other reasons, what did Felix do?

Acts 24:22-23, 27 = Kept Paul guarded for 2 yrs, Likely when Luke researched Gospel

Did Felix forget entirely about Paul during this time?

Acts 24:24-26 = No, he talked with him frequently, hoping for a bribe

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### Trial Before Festus (*Acts 25:1-8*)

How long did it take the new governor to learn about Paul's case?

Acts 25:1-2 = Right away, Diplomatically spent first days in Jerusalem

What did the Jewish leaders ask Festus to do?

Acts 25:3-5 = Bring Paul to Jerusalem for trial, Festus told them to come to Caesarea

How did the prosecution and defense arguments go during this trial?

Acts 25:7-8 = Prosecution couldn't prove anything, defense pointed this out

### Result of the Trial (*Acts 25:9-12*)

Faced with upsetting his new constituency with an inevitable acquittal, what did Festus do?

Acts 25:9 = Tried to have a trial in Jerusalem as the Jews had originally requested

What did Paul think of this idea? = I'm already standing trial! Why should I go to Jerusalem?

Acts 25:10-12 = Frustrated at lack of just decisions, he appealed to Caesar

Note: Emperor Nero was too young to rule, so his tutor, Seneca, led in his place

Seneca was a positive and just leader, Paul would have stood trial before Seneca

Seneca's brother was Gallio, Achaia proconsul who sided with Paul (*Acts 18:12-17*)

Besides acquitting Paul, winning the appeal would recognize Christianity distinct from Judaism

### Festus Consults King Agrippa (*Acts 25:13-26:32*)

Who came to visit the new governor just a few weeks after Festus took office?

Acts 25:13 = Herod Agrippa II (4th generation from Herod the Great) and sister Bernice

Why was Paul brought to trial before King Agrippa? = Started relationship by asking advise

Acts 25:24-27 = Needed help finding a charge with which to send Paul to Caesar

How did King Agrippa reply after Paul told his story?

Acts 26:28-29 = Asked if Paul was defending himself or trying to make him a Christian

What did King Agrippa think about everything he had heard?

Acts 26:30-32 = Paul was innocent, could have been freed if he hadn't appealed to Caesar

### Closing Prayer

### Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I jumped to a conclusion and later found it was wrong?  
(*Acts 21:27-29; Joshua 9 [Deuteronomy 7:1-2]; Matthew 16:21-23; John 7:52*)
2. When have I been caught up in something mainly because of others or public opinion?  
(*Acts 21:30-36; 22:22-24; 1 Kings 12:1-20; Matthew 27:15-26; Galatians 1:6-9; 5:7-12*)
3. When have I taken a stand based on my opinion without trying to seek the truth?  
(*Acts 23:6-10; 1 Kings 12:26-30; John 11:45-53; 12:37-41*)
4. When have I over-zealously pursued a goal that hurt others in the process?  
(*Acts 23:12-15; 25:1-3; Daniel 6; Galatians 4:17-18; 2 Peter 2*)
5. How have I uniquely used situations in my life to share the gospel?  
(*Acts 21:35-22:21; 24:10-16, 24-25; 26:1-29; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 3:15*)