



**CHRISTIAN
ENDEAVOUR**
for Christ and the Church



Early Christians

You're mad!

Paul before Festus and Agrippa

Acts 25-26

Teaching Aim

To show that we must take every opportunity to tell others about Jesus.

Setting the scene

Paul had answered charges brought against him by the Jewish leaders before Felix in Caesarea. It was clear that he was innocent. Felix refused to give a verdict so Paul was still in prison when the new governor, Festus, replaced him. How would he treat Paul? Let's find out.

Another court appearance

Read Acts 25:1-12. Three days after taking up residence, Festus travelled to Jerusalem where Paul's previous accusers informed him of their accusations. What petition did they make to Festus and what was behind this request?

Paul's life was once again under threat. How was the evil plan thwarted? The day after Festus returned to Caesarea he convened the court and Paul was brought to stand trial again. Serious charges, which could not be proved, were brought against him. Paul had nothing to fear for his conscience was clear. Unfortunately, Festus, just like his predecessor, willing to please the Jews, asked Paul to go to Jerusalem to have his case heard. As a Roman citizen, Paul had certain rights which he insisted on by saying he would appeal to Caesar. This bold stand by Paul appeared to take Festus by surprise and he agreed. He hadn't convicted Paul of any crime in this lower court so to allow Paul to appeal to a higher court was going to cause problems for Festus.

Consultation

Read Acts 25:13-22. After a few days, king Agrippa, accompanied by Bernice (who was his sister but was living in a sinful relationship with him) came to meet Festus. During their stay, Festus raised Paul's case and summarised what happened at the trial he had conducted. He obviously expected Paul to be charged with serious offences. How did he describe the accusations brought against Paul? The claim about Jesus which seemed so trivial to Festus would turn the world upside down. He informed Agrippa of Paul's appeal to Caesar. Agrippa had a good knowledge of the Jewish religion and had obviously heard about "the Way", the new Christian movement. He expressed an interest in hearing what Paul had to say so a meeting with him was arranged.

Opportunity to witness

Read Acts 25:23-26:32. Paul was brought into a room where Agrippa and a number of dignitaries were seated. Festus informed them of the charges against Paul and of his appeal to be heard by Caesar. He admitted that he had brought Paul before them because he hadn't found anything deserving of death. Paul was then given permission by Agrippa to speak and he seized the opportunity to witness for his Lord. He spoke of his strict Jewish upbringing and of the crimes he had committed against Christians in his unconverted days. He went on to tell of his life-changing experience on the Damascus road when he met the risen Jesus, put his trust in Him, and was called into His service to witness to people everywhere to repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus Christ. Reference to Paul's conversion appears five times in the New Testament. This teaches us that it is very important to tell others about how Jesus saved us. When he acknowledged God's help in his ministry, it all got too much for the sceptic Festus so he accused Paul of being mad. Paul calmly assured him of the truth of what he was saying and turned to Agrippa for support. What do you think Agrippa's reply meant? Paul's earnest desire was that all present would put their trust in Christ. Agrippa agreed that Paul was innocent and could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to Caesar. Why did God allow Paul to make this appeal to go to Rome for further interrogation? God works in mysterious ways and this would give Paul further opportunities to witness. If you're a Christian, do you look for opportunities to witness for Christ?

Summing up

Paul had to face charges again before the new governor but there was no evidence to convict him. When Agrippa heard of Paul, he said he would like to hear what he had to say. When Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak, he told of his conversion and how God had called him to witness to all people of their need to repent of their sins and put their trust in Christ. Have you put your trust in Christ? Are you witnessing to others?

Resources

Discussion

- Why does God allow Christians to go through difficult experiences?
- How difficult is it to witness to your peers who are not Christians?
- It is said that procrastination is the thief of time! In what ways could this be true for both Christians and non-Christians?

Prayer Points

Thank God that:

- He forgives all who put their trust in Him.
- He gives us the courage to tell others about Jesus.

Pray for:

- Those who do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead.
- Christians who are suffering for their faith.