

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 21:37-26:32 | THE WAY OF THE CROSS

KEY TERMS

Felix - Felix was a former slave who was promoted to governor over Judea and Samaria by Claudius Caesar.

Agrippa - One of the Roman appointed Jewish rulers of Israel who was part of the Herod family.

Caesar - Originating from Julius Caesar, the title "Caesar" came to be applied to the emperor of Rome, the highest office in the empire.

BACKGROUND

After his arrest, Paul asks to address the Jews in Jerusalem and he appeals to them by reminding them that he was raised as a pious Jew and even persecuted Christians, before meeting Jesus and having his life completely rearranged (22:1-21). However, the crowd interrupts Paul after awhile and Paul is ordered into the barracks to be flogged (22:22-24). Before being flogged, Paul tells the tribune that he is a Roman citizen, which gives him the right for his case to be heard before he is flogged (22:25-29). Paul then testifies before the Jewish chief priest and Sanhedrin council, before a plot is made to kill him (23:1-22). During this time, Jesus appears to Paul for a second time in Paul's life, telling him to *take courage* and that he will have to testify in Rome as well (23:11).

After finding out about the plot to kill Paul, the tribune sends Paul to Felix, the governor, in Caesarea (23:23-35). In Caesarea, the Jewish high priest Ananias and some other Jewish leaders come to make their case against Paul before Felix (24:1-9) and Paul responds with the similar case he made back in Jerusalem (24:10-21). After hearing the case, Felix leaves Paul in prison for two years until he leaves office and is replaced by Festus (24:24-27). Once Festus is in office, he hears Paul's case again and this time Paul appeals to be heard before Caesar in Rome (25:1-12). Before heading to Rome, Agrippa, the Roman-appointed Jewish ruler of Israel, also hears Paul's case (26:1-32). Ultimately, Agrippa accuses Paul of being out of his mind (26:24), but Paul pleads for him to believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world (26:29). Agrippa and Festus conclude that Paul has not committed any crimes and could be freed, except that he appealed to Caesar and therefore they prepare to send him to Rome (26:31-32).

GOING DEEPER

Read Proverbs 19:21, Job 42:2, Psalm 135:6, and Ephesians 2:10. When reading about Paul's trials and travels in these chapters, how can you see God's sovereignty over it all? Do you find it easy or hard to see God's hand in your life? How does God's sovereignty in the everyday stuff of life encourage you?

DID YOU KNOW?

The *hebrew dialect* in 21:40 can refer in the NT to either Hebrew or Aramaic. Aramaic is probably meant here, since it was the common spoken language at the time. Paul's use of it demonstrates to those present that he is a Jew and respects their culture.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Because we are covering so many verses this week, take time to read the "Background" section on page one of the Reflection Guide.
2. Read Acts 25:23-26:37. What is the setting of this encounter? What is at stake for Paul?
3. In his speech, where does Paul say that his hope is found (25:6-8, 22-23)? Why is this significant, given the circumstances he is facing?
4. One of the themes in this passage is *conversion*. In verses 9-15, Paul describes his own conversion. In verses 16-18, he describes his mission to bring conversion to the Gentiles. In verse 28, Agrippa says, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" Could you explain to someone outside the church what it means to be converted by faith in Christ? Why or why not?
5. What are some specific ways that what happened to Paul in these chapters mirrors what happened to Jesus at the end of his life? What might we learn from this?

LIVING THE WORD

6. As Paul gives his defense, he is interrupted by Festus (verse 24) who says with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind." Why do Paul's claims about Jesus, forgiveness of sins, and resurrection seem so audacious to this unbelieving mind? Do people in our day sometimes respond similarly to the gospel?
7. In many of his letters, Paul wrote about his own spiritual experiences in order to teach us how to live according to God's strength. Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, 2 Corinthians 4:5-7, and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. What do these verses teach about the difference between spiritual power and worldly power? [See also John 15:5.]
8. As you consider this lesson, what is one lesson you want to apply to your own life?