

## Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

**Date of Sermon:** 29 October 2017

**Speaker:** Mike Levy

**Title:** In the dock

**Read:** Acts 24 and 25

### **Introduction:**

For some while Paul's sights had been set on Jerusalem then Rome, and he had been warned that there was trouble ahead. Sure enough trouble was waiting for him in Rome and he was brought before the Roman commander, Lysias. But recognizing Paul as a Roman citizen Lysias quickly passed him onto the Governor, Felix, and sent him under guard to Caesarea. This is where Acts 24 begin.

### **Characters:**

The events in Acts 24 come alive when we understand more about the main characters:

#### Ananias

Frustrated by events in Jerusalem Ananias, the high priest, comes to Caesarea himself to see the job is done properly, and he brings some Jewish Elders with him. Hoping to put pressure on Felix. He also brings a lawyer with him.

#### Tertullus

Tertullus was not just any lawyer, he was high powered, knew Felix, understood Roman Law and Judaism and was silver tongued.

#### Felix

Felix was renowned for being a violent and corrupt Governor he had maneuvered himself into a position of power by using the influence of his brother and through a series of strategic marriages.

#### Drusilla

Drusilla was 16, a year before she had married someone else but left him to marry Felix, she was greedy for money and power and was the daughter of Herod Agrippa 1.

### **The charges**

After a bundle of flattery Tertullus lays out the charges:

1. Paul causes riots wherever he goes
2. Paul is a ringleader of a troublesome sect
3. Paul tried to bring a gentile into the forbidden part of the temple.

In other words, this is a political case, he disturbs the Roman peace and I know that you don't want that and have a track record of killing people like this.

### **The defence**

Paul has no lawyer and rather than cross examine him Felix allows Paul to speak. Paul did not use flattery he was honest, simple and struck to the facts. His defence is:

1. It is less than a fortnight since this happened I had only just arrived in Jerusalem I had no time to organize a revolt.
2. I am not a ringleader of anything I was worshipping alone in the temple.
3. There is no proof I desecrated the temple.
4. Yes, I am a follower of "The Way"
5. I was in Jerusalem to distribute money to the poor and worship at the feast of Pentecost.

In other words, this is a religious matter not political and even then there are matters of common understanding between myself and the Jewish Leaders.

### **The verdict**

Instead of making a firm decision on Paul Felix puts him under house arrest for 2 years until he is replaced by Festus as Governor and it all starts again before Paul is put on a boat to Rome. In those 2 years Paul meets with Felix and Drusilla many times to share with them but it seems they do not change their ways.

### **Acts 25**

This was not covered in the sermon so give it a scan through in your small group.

### **Application**

#### In the dock

There are countless times where we are in the dock for our faith and we deal with characters like Ananias, Tertullus, Felix and Drusilla.

At a strategic level we stand before the court of public opinion, criticized in the media and by prominent people when it is made out that our faith is a danger to society, that faith is not a religious matter but a political one. At this level it can be baffling that a faith that some describe as irrelevant causes them to attack it so vehemently as a threat.

What is harder to take is when it gets personal, when our friends and families put our faith in the dock. It is hard when they do not respect our faith or even listen. In those times it is easy to lash out, to play them at their own game, but if we don that we lose control and that will be seen as a weakness to be exploited.

#### The waiting game

Paul waited 2 years when he wanted to be on his way to Rome. At first glance it can seem that God's plans were being frustrated, that this was a waste of time. But it kept Paul safe and gave him a chance to minister to Felix and Drusilla and God did keep his promise. It can be hard to wait, maybe we are waiting on a promise of God and in the waiting doubting if and when it will come true.

**Reflect and Respond:**

1. Share experiences of where you have been or are "in the dock" what have they been like? How did you/are you handling them? What advice would you give others?
2. Share experiences of where you have met people like Ananias, Tertullus, Drusilla and Felix - how did you deal with them?
3. Share experiences of where you have or are waiting on promises from God, maybe when God seems silent. How do you feel? How did those times end? What advice would you give others?
4. God ensured Paul was safe. What evidence is there that God has over-ruled in your life? Looking back, can you think of cases where God was at work and you were not aware of it? Can God use non-Christian to get his will done?
5. Tertullus used flattery, is flattery a sin? In what situations are we tempted to do it? What does it say about us? What does it say about the person we flatter?
6. They called Christians a 'sect'. What is a sect? Who are sects today? What kind of things do they believe?
7. Bribes are still common in some parts of the world, it is an issue Aid agencies are faced with every day. Are bribes always wrong? How would you react if you were asked to provide a Bribe in order to do something you felt God wanted you to do?

**Pray**

Pray for anyone whose faith is under attack, particularly from their friends, family or work colleagues.

Pray for anyone who is currently having to deal with characters like those in Acts 24, in particular if those characters are in a position of power over them.

Pray for anyone who is waiting on God to fulfill his promise, and for anyone who feels that God is silent in their life.