

Paul's Trial Before Felix

(Acts 24)

Introduction

[Teacher, using an image of a stop light, explain how our consciences are like stop lights.]

When we are about to do something that we shouldn't, our conscience is warning us to stop. If we stop, we avoid danger. If we ignore that warning over and over again, our conscience is no longer sensitive to doing what is right.

If you are a believer, the Holy Spirit is like a traffic light. He will warn you if you are about to go somewhere or do something you shouldn't. If you obey His warning, you will have a clear conscience. If you ignore Him, you will have a guilty conscience. You can have a clear conscience once again by confessing your sin.

If you continue to disobey the Holy Spirit you harden your heart to Him and can't hear Him as clearly as you can when you are walking in obedience to Him.

As we have followed the life of Paul in the Book of Acts, we have seen a believer who obeys the Holy Spirit and as a result has a clear conscience before God and man.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that you give us a conscience. You use it to direct our steps and help us to make good choices in life. I pray that we would not harden our hearts against You. We want to always live our lives before You in all good conscience. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. (Acts 24:16)

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12)

Lesson

We left Paul last week in Caesarea. He was being held by Governor Felix who said that until those who were accusing Paul of committing a crime came, he would be guarded by soldiers in King Herod's palace.

After about five days, the high priest and some of the religious leaders came to make their charges against Paul before Felix.

Have you ever been in a courtroom? In a courtroom a judge is seated to hear the case that is brought before him. He listens to statements from both sides of the issue and then makes a decision of what to do.

In Paul's case, Governor Felix was the judge. He wanted to hear this case against Paul so he could decide what to do with him.

The high priest and the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem presented their charges against Paul.

Acts 24:5-8

*For we have found this man a plague, one who **stirs up riots** among all the Jews throughout the world and is a **ringleader of the sect** of the Nazarenes. (6) He even **tried to profane the temple**, but we seized him. (8) By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him."*

What are their charges against Paul?

- Vs 5. He is a troublemaker who stirs up riots among the Jews all over the world.
- Vs 5. He is the ringleader of the Nazarenes sect.
- Vr 6. He tried to profane the Temple.

All the other Jews said they were in full agreement with these charges. But none of these charges were true!

Remember, it wasn't Paul who started the riots; it was the unbelieving Jews who stirred up the crowd while Paul was preaching the gospel!

And what's this about being the ringleader of the Nazarene sect? Paul was not preaching a different religion!

Jesus was from Nazareth; people called Him the "Nazarene". So, these people were referring to Christianity as the Nazarene sect, as if it was a new and different religion.

Paul's mission in life was to tell people that Jesus came as the fulfillment to Jewish scripture. Christianity was not a different religion from the Jewish religion; Jesus came as the fulfillment of all that the Jews had been waiting for, written in the scriptures from Genesis all the way through the Prophets.

Jesus was the promised One that the Jews had been waiting for since the beginning of time. He was the Christ, the Savior of the world who came to take away the penalty of their sins and give them eternal life with God in heaven.

After hearing the unbelieving Jews' side of the issue, Felix wanted to hear from Paul.

Acts 24:10-13

The governor then motioned for Paul to speak. Paul said, "I know, sir, that you have been a judge of Jewish affairs for many years, so I gladly present my defense before you. (11) You can quickly discover that I arrived in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago to worship at the Temple. (12) My accusers never found me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor stirring up a riot in any synagogue or on the streets of the city. (13) These men cannot prove the things they accuse me of doing.

Paul clearly states the facts. What did he say in his own defense?

- Vs 11. He arrived in Jerusalem twelve days ago to worship at the Temple.
- Vs 12. His accusers never found him arguing with anyone in the Temple.

- Vs 12. His accusers never found him stirring up a riot.

Paul assures Felix that he is a true Jew who worships the one and only God, just like the Jews do. But he admits to being a Jesus follower.

Acts 24:14-16

"But I admit that I follow the Way, which they call a cult. I worship the God of our ancestors, and I firmly believe the Jewish law and everything written in the prophets. (15) I have the same hope in God that these men have, that he will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous. (16) Because of this, I always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and all people.

As a result of Paul's beliefs, he says that he makes every effort to always keep his conscience clear before God and man.

We talked in the beginning about what a conscience is and how God uses it to help us make good choices in life.

Ask: What do you need to do to keep a clear conscience before God and man? [Teacher, Help the students discover...]

- Obey God and confess sins. (1 John 1:9)
- Stay in God's Word so we'll know God's will.

Next, Paul tries to explain to Felix what happened.

Acts 24:17-18

"After several years away, I returned to Jerusalem with money to aid my people and to offer sacrifices to God. (18) My accusers saw me in the Temple as I was completing a purification ceremony. There was no crowd around me and no rioting.

After Paul spoke, Felix ended the hearing.

Acts 24:22-23

At that point Felix, who was quite familiar with the Way, adjourned the hearing and said, "Wait until Lysias, the garrison commander, arrives. Then I will decide the case." (23) He ordered an officer to keep Paul in

custody but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to visit him and take care of his needs.

A few days after the trial, Felix and his wife brought Paul before them to hear more about his faith in Jesus.

Acts 24:24-25

A few days later Felix came back with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. Sending for Paul, they listened as he told them about faith in Christ Jesus. (25) As he reasoned with them about righteousness and self-control and the coming day of judgment, Felix became frightened. "Go away for now," he replied. "When it is more convenient, I'll call for you again."

When Felix heard Paul's message about righteousness, it frightened him and he sent Paul away.

Acts 24:26

He also hoped that Paul would bribe him, so he sent for him quite often and talked with him.

Felix was hoping that Paul would pay him to be released so he sent for Paul to come and talk to him often.

Ask: But do you think that Paul would have a clear conscience if he bribed Governor Felix to be set free?

The power of the Holy Spirit living in Paul enabled him to be obedient as a prisoner. He had the Lord Jesus' comfort and promise that he would testify about Him in Rome. Paul patiently waited, he wanted to do things God's way, even if that meant he had to sit in prison for a while.

Acts 24:27

After two years went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people, he left Paul in prison.

Felix had an opportunity to do what was right. He could have released Paul right away because he had not committed a crime. But Felix was a weak man. He wanted to please the Jews, so he kept Paul in prison for two years.

Ask: Who else do you know that was falsely accused and punished for a crime they did not do? (Jesus was falsely accused by unbelieving Jews, too! He was punished for a crime He did not commit.)

Sometimes unfair things happen to us. But, if we trust that the Lord has a plan and a purpose for our lives, we learn to accept disappointments and unfairness's that happen in life.

Know that God has everything under control; even the bad stuff in life!

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, sometimes we are so anxious to get things done the way we want them. Help us to be patient and to wait for You. Your timing is always perfect. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Ask-It-Basket

Write the review questions on separate pieces of paper. Wad them up into balls and put them in a decorated basket. Ask each child to choose a question to answer.

Or use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. What crime did the unbelieving Jews accuse Paul of? (Vs 5-6. Being a troublemaker, stirring up riots, desecrating the Temple.)

2. Who did Paul say he worshiped? (Vs 14. The God of our fathers.)
3. What did Paul speak to Felix and his wife about? (Vs 24. Faith in Jesus Christ, righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come.)
4. When Felix heard Paul speak about the judgment to come, how did he respond? (Vs 25. Felix became frightened.)
5. Why did Felix leave Paul in prison for two years? (Vs 27. Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people.)
6. How do you feel when you have a guilty conscience? (Weighed down, sick to your stomach, etc.)
7. What does it mean to have a clear conscience? (If you obey the Holy Spirit's warnings, you will have a clear conscience. If you ignore Him, you will have a guilty conscience. You can have a clear conscience once again by confessing your sin.)
8. Explain how our consciences are like stop lights.
9. What does it mean to have a hard heart? (If you continue to disobey the Holy Spirit you harden your heart to Him and can't hear Him as clearly as you can when you are walking in obedience to Him.)

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