

## Aim of lesson

To consider Paul's attitude when on trial, and the judgment before God which we all face.

## Bible background

Acts 24, 25 and 26.

## Outline of lesson

### Five trials

This lesson is suitable for using drama, if you wish to. If your class enjoy acting and you have plenty of time, consider using some or all of the following scenes:

Scene	Characters	Reference
Trial before Felix	Paul, Felix, Tertullus, Jewish crowd	Acts 24:1-23
Felix listens to Paul	Paul, Felix, Drusilla	Acts 24:24-27
Trial before Festus	Paul, Festus, Jewish leaders	Acts 25:1-12
Arrival of Agrippa	Festus, Agrippa, Bernice	Acts 25:13-22
Trial before Agrippa	Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, Paul	Acts 25:23-27; Acts 26

A simple arrangement of suitable chairs for the Court scenes is all that is needed as a setting. For each scene you will need a narrator. The other characters can mime or read their parts from the Bible text. If you have a very large class the three trial scenes could be organised by one group each. If, however, you have a smaller class and insufficient time for all the scenes, it would be best to summarise the events of Acts 24 and dramatically read chapters 25 and 26, or just 25:1-12. If you think it will help the class to read their parts well, characters could be chosen during the week before the lesson and the class could have the opportunity to read 'their' part. However, there is a lot of material in this lesson and the use of drama takes up a lot of time; you may prefer to use the drama at Youth Circle. If you do not introduce the narrative by using drama, you will need to summarise the events of the three chapters. You may like to tell the class that, in these chapters, Paul is on trial for his faith three times. Ask them to search through the chapters to find out who is the judge in each case.

### Before Felix

Ask the class to look at the subjects of Paul's talk with Felix, Acts 24:24 and 25. Help them to see how Paul, himself facing judgment, points out to Felix and Drusilla that they also have to face judgment before God. The class can use the worksheet to consider what God's view of Felix, Festus, Agrippa and Paul might be. For example, Felix (Acts 24):

- was well acquainted with 'the Way' (v22)
- gave Paul some freedom (v23)
- was afraid of God's judgment (v25)
- but wanted a bribe (v26)
- and wanted to 'keep in' with the Jews (v27)

### Festus

- wants to please the Jews (Acts 25:9)
- is concerned with justice (v24-25)
- considers Paul mad when he preaches the gospel (26:24)

### Agrippa

- believed the prophets (26:27)
- was concerned about justice (v31-32)
- was not sure about becoming a Christian (v28)

### Paul

- had preached the gospel to each of the rulers
- would not give a bribe to gain his freedom (24:26,27)
- shows that he is not afraid to die (25:11) because
- he believed in the resurrection (26:6,23).

Discuss with the class the meaning of righteousness, self-control and judgment to come. Righteousness includes right actions and obedience to God's commands, but real righteousness is that which God gives us freely in Christ. Self-control involves choosing to do what is right before God rather than putting what we want first. Use the topic of judgment to come to have the class consider the work of Jesus as God's appointed judge when he comes. You could have different members of the class took up some of the following references and then read and explain them to the class:

John 5:22

Acts 10:42

Acts 17:31

Romans 14:10,12

2 Corinthians 5:10      2 Thessalonians 1:5-10  
2 Timothy 4:1,8      Hebrews 9:27,28  
James 2:13      1 Peter 4:5

You could collect on a large sheet the ideas learned about the judgment.

## **Digging deeper**

### **Paul the prisoner**

Paul reflects before Agrippa that he had locked up many believers. Now he is in chains himself. This section investigates Paul's imprisonments and his attitude to them.

### **Relevance to our lives**

Have the class consider why Felix might have trembled, and how we may feel when considering God's coming judgment.

Use the last section on the worksheet to have the class consider what God will be looking for when he judges us. Make sure they appreciate that no one will be able to stand before God righteous in himself; all will depend on God's mercy brought to us in the death of Christ. You may find 1 John 4:16-17 or Romans 8:31-34 helpful here.

### **Prayer**

The class may like to consider Paul's prayers in Philippians 1:9-11 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 and to write their own prayer about the coming judgment.

### **Other suggestions for activities**

- You may like to have each of the class take the role of one of the characters in today's lesson. The others should question the character in the 'hot seat' about their part in the events.
- If in your meeting there is a member who has been on trial for his beliefs, you could have the class plan some questions to ask him about his experience.