

Doctrine of the Trials of Paul

1. After the Third Missionary Journey Paul returns to Jerusalem in hopes of gaining access to the hearts and minds of the many Jewish converts living in the city.

1.1 Paul spends several days in the Temple participating in a purification rite, the purpose of which being to assure his Jewish brethren that he is not a heretic.

2. The Jews at Jerusalem are however implacable and outraged thinking that Paul had taught the Jews of Asia Minor to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to Jewish customs.

2.1 Certain Jews from Asia Minor traveled to Jerusalem where they spread specious rumors concerning Paul, even alleging he had desecrated the Temple by bringing his gentile friends inside.

Acts 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

3. An angry mob gathers outside the Temple to confront Paul concerning his perceived heresies; without warning Paul leaves the Temple where he is physically accosted.

4. Paul is rescued by a platoon of Roman soldiers. Acts 21:31-36

Acts 21:31 While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar.

Acts 21:32 He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

Acts 21:33 The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done.

Acts 21:34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks ...

Acts 21:36 The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Away with him!"

5. Paul's first defense is before the unruly mob where he speaks from the steps of Fort Antonia. Paul witnesses by telling of his conversion.

Acts 21:37-40

Acts 21:38 "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?"

Acts 21:39 Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."

Acts 21:40 Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic:

6. Paul witnesses to the angry gathering by telling of his conversion experience. Acts 22:1-21

Acts 22:2 When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said:

Acts 22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.

Acts 22:4 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,

Acts 22:5 as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

Acts 22:6 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me.

Acts 22:7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'

Acts 22:8 "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied.

Acts 22:9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

Acts 22:10 "'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. "'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'

Acts 22:11 My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

Acts 22:12 "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.

Acts 22:13 He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him ...

Acts 22:21 "Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

7. All seems well until he mentions he took the Gospel to the gentiles, then the Jews go berserk. Acts 22:22

Acts 22:22 The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"

8. Paul is saved from the crowd by the Roman soldiers who take him into custody. Paul declares himself a Roman citizen and the Centurion becomes concerned that he has bound a Roman without examination and just cause. Acts 22:24-29

Acts 22:25 As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

Acts 22:26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen."

Acts 22:27 The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes, I am," he answered ...

Acts 22:29 Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.

8.1 Roman citizenship could be obtained by birth from parents who were Roman citizens, or by purchase with money, or as a gift from the Roman government. After the abuse he had just suffered, Paul did not look like your ordinary Roman citizen; the Roman Tribune accordingly, assumed Paul had acquired his citizenship very cheaply.

8.2 Paul replied that he did not buy citizenship but was born of parents who were already citizens.

8.3 We do not know how his parents became citizens, but it is usually supposed that citizenship was given them as a reward for some service rendered to an earlier Roman ruler.

9. Paul is brought before the Sanhedrin. Acts 22:30-23:5

Acts 22:30 The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.

9.1 After being told he had reviled the High Priest; Paul apologizes and divides the Sanhedrin by bringing up the question of the resurrection. It is questionable if Paul did this because he did not recognize Ananias or whether Paul was being his sometimes cantankerous-self.

9.2 Paul began his defense before the Sanhedrin by claiming that he had acted in good conscience before God, not only in these affairs for which he was being accused but throughout his entire life.

9.3 Ananias was the high priest from c. A.D. 48 to c. A.D. 58. He was reputedly a very greedy, insolent, overbearing man. Angered by this bold claim of Paul, he commanded some who stood near the apostle to strike him on the mouth.

9.4 With indignant words Paul now challenged this irregular conduct from a member of the Sanhedrin, accusing those who claimed they were enforcing the Law of actually violating the Law themselves.

9.5 Whited wall suggests a tottering and dirty wall which has been disguised by a generous coat of whitewash. The meaning is that although he held a high position, Ananias was bound to come to grief. In fact, Ananias was assassinated some eight years later.

10. Paul decides to divide the Sanhedrin by letting it be known he was a Pharisee who was on trial because he believed in the resurrection of the dead. Acts 23:6-9

Acts 23:6 Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees ... "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead."

Acts 23:7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

10.1 The Jews were so divided they became violent; soon Paul's life was in jeopardy so the Roman officer in charge ordered his men take Paul into Fort Antonia. Acts 23:10

Acts 23:10 The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops ... to take him ... by force and bring him into the barracks.

11. The Lord visits and comforts Paul in a night vision.

Acts 23:11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12. Paul is removed from Jerusalem under armed guard because a plot to kill Paul is discovered. Acts 23:12-22

Acts 23:12 The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

Acts 23:13 More than forty men were involved in this plot ...

Acts 23:16 But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.

Acts 23:17 Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him."...

Acts 23:19 The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"

Acts 23:20 He said: "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him.

Acts 23:21 Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request."

Acts 23:22 The commander dismissed the young man and cautioned him, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

13. Paul is taken to Caesarea. Acts 23:23-24

Acts 23:23 Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight.

Acts 23:24 Provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix."

14. At Caesarea Paul first appears before Felix. Acts 23:25-35

Acts 23:25 The Roman Centurion wrote a letter as follows:

Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings.

Acts 23:27 This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen.

Acts 23:28 I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin.

Acts 23:29 I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment.

Acts 23:30 When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him.

Acts 23:31 So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris ...

Acts 23:32 The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks.

Acts 23:33 When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.

Acts 23:34 The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia,

Acts 23:35 he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

14.1 Felix was the Procurator of Judea under Claudius and Nero (A.D. 52-60). The descriptions by Tacitus (Annals xii. 54 and Histories v. 9) are classic. "He thought he could do any evil act with impunity," and "(He) exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave."

14.2 Felix listened to Paul's defense, postponed any decision pending more information from Lysias, the Roman commander in Jerusalem who had originally arrested Paul.

14.3 Felix reads the indictment sent by the Roman Centurion Claudius Lysias; Felix then remands Paul to Herod's judgment hall to await his accusers. Felix then sends for Ananias the Chief Priest. While waiting for Ananias to arrive, Felix and Paul often conversed.

15. Ananias arrives from Jerusalem with his chief prosecutor. Paul is accused by Ananias' chief prosecutor Tertullus who accuses Paul of disturbing the quietude, profaning the Temple and inciting sedition among the Jews throughout the world. Acts 24:1-9

Acts 24:1 Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.

Acts 24:2 When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation ...

Acts 24:5 "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect Acts 24:6 and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him.

Acts 27:7 The words found here are not in the best manuscripts, but they may well be authentic. Tertullus alleged that the Jewish Sanhedrin was handling Paul's case in perfectly legal fashion, when the Roman tribune, Lysias, without justification, intervened. This is, of course, a serious distortion of the facts; but Lysias was not present to give his side of the story.

Acts 24:8 By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him."

Acts 24:9 The Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

15.1 Paul defends himself before Felix. He first denies the charges ... he further makes the point there was not sufficient time to have done all concerning with which he was charged. He admits raising the question of the resurrection. Acts 24:10-23

Acts 24:11 You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

Acts 24:12 My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city.

Acts 24:13 And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me.

Acts 24:14 However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets,

Acts 24:15 and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Acts 24:16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Acts 24:17 "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.

Acts 24:18 I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance.

Acts 24:19 But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me.

Acts 24:20 Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin--

Acts 24:21 unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'

Acts 24:22 Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case."

Acts 24:23 He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

16. Paul witnesses to Felix and Drusilla, the wife of Felix. Acts 24:24-26

Acts 24:24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.

Acts 24:25 As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

Acts 24:26 At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

17. Paul is placed in a Caesarean prison for two years.

17.1 Felix was recalled to Rome by the emperor Nero under accusation by the Jews of bad administration. Porcius Festus succeeded him as procurator of Judea in c. A.D 60. Though Felix knew that justice required Paul's dismissal, he left him in prison because he saw that he could thereby ingratiate himself with the Jews. Acts 24:27

Acts 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

17.2 While this two-year incarceration must have been very trying on Paul, one redeeming feature was that throughout this entire time Luke was with the apostle.

17.2.1 Quite certainly Luke used this time to gather information about the life and ministry of Jesus and to compile notes about the life of the early church. This material later appeared in the Gospel of Luke and in the Book of Acts.

18. Festus soon after taking over from Felix goes to Jerusalem where he parties for several days with the Jewish leadership and agrees to a second trial Acts 25:1-5

Acts 25:1 Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem,

Acts 25:2 where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul.

Acts 25:3 They urgently requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way.

Acts 25:4 Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon.

Acts 25:5 Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there, if he has done anything wrong."

19. Paul is again tried but this time before Festus; he will at this time appeal to Caesar. Acts 25:6-9

Acts 25:6 After spending eight or ten days with the Jews at Jerusalem, he went back to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him.

Acts 25:7 When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove.

Acts 25:8 Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

Acts 25:9 Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

19.1 Festus could find no offense against Paul but wanted to please the Jews therefore, he orders that Paul be returned to Jerusalem to be judged before the Sanhedrin. Paul refuses and demands he be sent to Caesar.

Acts 25:10-12.

Acts 25:10 Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well.

Acts 25:11 If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

Acts 25:12 After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

20. About this time, King Agrippa and his sister (and wife) Bernice arrive at Caesarea. Act 25:13

Acts 25:13 A few days later King Agrippa II and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus.

20.1 Before Paul could be sent to Rome, a native king, Agrippa, came to Caesarea to greet Festus as the new Roman governor. Herod Agrippa II was the son of the first persecutor of the church (his father Agrippa I) being infamous for the execution of James and the imprisonment of Peter.

20.2 When Agrippa I died, his kingdom was not bestowed upon his son but was placed under Roman governors. In A.D. 53 Agrippa II was given the rulership of a small area north of Palestine called Abilene. Later, certain towns in Galilee and Perea were added to his domain.

20.3 In addition, he was entrusted with the important function of supervising the temple treasury in Jerusalem. He was also given the responsibility of appointing the High Priest. This gave him significant influence in Jewish affairs, and his interests thus overlapped with those of Festus.

20.4 Bernice, sister of Herod, had been wife of an uncle, Herod of Chalcis. Her husband had died, and she was now living with her brother in Caesarea Philippi. Many historians believed she was living in an incestuous relationship with her brother Agrippa II.

21. Festus and King Agrippa review Paul's case. Agrippa agrees to hear Paul. Acts 25:14-22

Acts 25:14 Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. He said: "There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner.

Acts 25:15 When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

Acts 25:16 "I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges.

Acts 25:17 When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in.

Acts 25:18 When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes the two men had expected.

Acts 25:19 Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.

Acts 25:20 Festus was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges.

Acts 25:21 When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar."

Acts 25:22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself." He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him."

22. Paul defends himself before King Agrippa. Paul first reviews his personal history and his experience on the road to Damascus making the claims of Christ clear. Acts 26:1-23.

Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense:

Acts 26:2 "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews,

Acts 26:3 and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

Acts 26:4 "The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem.

Acts 26:5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.

Acts 26:6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today.

Acts 26:7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me.

Acts 26:8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

Acts 26:9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

Acts 26:11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

Acts 26:12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

Acts 26:13 About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

Acts 26:14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Acts 26:15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.

Acts 26:16 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

Acts 26:17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Acts 26:19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

Acts 26:21 That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.

Acts 26:22 But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen ...

Acts 26:23 that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

23. Paul appeals to King Agrippa's knowledge of the Prophets. Festus interrupts, demeaning Paul, however, Agrippa is almost persuaded. Agrippa decides Paul has done nothing worthy of death and agrees with Paul and accedes to his appeal to Caesar. Acts 26:24-32

Acts 26:24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

Acts 26:25 "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable.

Acts 26:26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.

Acts 26:27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Acts 26:29 Paul replied, "Short time or long-- I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

Acts 26:30 The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them.

Acts 26:31 They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment."

Acts 26:32 Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

24. Paul is sent to Rome. Acts 27:1-6

Acts 27:1 When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment.



Acts 27:2 We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

Acts 27:3 The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs.

Acts 27:4 From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us.

Acts 27:5 When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.

Acts 27:6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board.