



# Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



## Episode 158 - The Road from Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 23-26)

### Assassination Plot

The Roman tribune was in charge of maintaining law and order in Jerusalem. To do this, troops had rushed into the temple courts in the nick of time to prevent Paul from being attacked by the angry mob. Then they had to step in again to save him from being torn to pieces by the Jewish high court. Realizing Paul's presence resulted in a growing riot risk, a change of venue was decided, moving Paul's trial from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Being warned of a Jewish plot on Paul's life, the tribune sent 470 soldiers to escort him safely to Felix, the Roman governor in Caesarea.

- How do we know the Jewish assassins were serious about their plot against Paul?
- What motivated the tribune to go to such lengths to deliver the Jewish prisoner Paul safely to Caesarea?
- What confidence can we take from Paul's experience, especially when we're fearful of violent reactions to our Christian witness?

### Three Roman Magistrates - Felix, Festus, Agrippa

The Roman governor Felix was well acquainted with the controversy between the Jews and Christians. Like Pilate before him, he knew he was in a no-man's land. If he gave in to the Jews' demands, he would be unjustly condemning a Roman citizen. If he set Paul free, he would anger his Jewish subjects. In a self-serving compromise, he decided to put off a decision, keeping Paul in custody instead. But he did grant Paul some freedom, when it came to visitors.

- Describe a situation where you have been in Felix's position—caught in a no-win situation, between a rock and a hard place.
- What considerations helped you decide which way to go?
- What things would you do differently, if you had the decision to make all over again?

When Felix's time as governor was over he was replaced by Festus. Wanting to win the favor of his testy and sometimes unpredictable Jewish subjects, the new governor asked the Roman citizen Paul if he was willing to stand trial in Jerusalem.

- Why do you think Paul stood his ground and refused to go back to Jerusalem?
- What risks would Paul have taken in returning to Jerusalem?
- What risks did he face when demanding his Roman right to stand trial before Caesar in Rome?

### "I Appeal To Caesar"

After Paul's appeal took the case out of Festus' hand, Herod Agrippa and his sister Bernice heard the case.

- How did Paul take advantage of this opportunity to speak with this descendant of King Herod the Great?
- Why do you think Paul chose not to answer Festus' charge that he was being driven insane, and pressed on in presenting his case to Agrippa?
- Do you think Paul would have appealed to Caesar if he had known Agrippa, Bernice and Festus all agreed to set him free had he not appealed to Caesar? Why or why not?
- How do you decide how strongly to confront sin when you are preparing to share the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ?