



Resources for

**Week 3.**

*Stuck in*

*Caesarea*

*(Progress from Jerusalem towards Rome = 60 miles)*

### SETTLING

Try and think of a time when on a journey you become unexpectedly stuck. Perhaps a very long traffic jam, a cancelled or delayed flight, a missed bus, or train, a vehicle breakdown etc. Try and recall how you felt about it; was it a good experience or a bad one. How did you cope with it?

### FOCUSING

For this time of bringing our focus onto God, try to relax and settle yourself as you prepare to embrace the presence of God, and receive from “the U.K. Blessing”. You might recall this from early on in the pandemic when churches around the country submitted recordings that were then brought together as this one, rather wonderful offering. It is based on the priestly blessing found in Numbers chapter 6 vs 24-26. The video lasts nearly 7 minutes, so take the time, delight in the blessing and allow yourself to draw close to God through it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtll3mNj5U>



Read through Acts chapter 24 vs 1-27 – *The Trial of Paul before the Roman Governor, Felix.*

### Verse 1-9: The Case for the Prosecution.

The Jewish high priest Ananias, (he whom Paul had quite badly upset back in Jerusalem the week before) travels to Caesarea to press the case against Paul, now that it has been brought before the Roman Governor. The legal team with him includes, members of the Sanhedrin, and Tertullus, a “lawyer” and skilled speaker, experienced in presenting a legal case.

So, the stage is set; Jewish religious leaders versus Paul, in front of Felix, the Roman Governor of the province of Judea. Apparently the rather sycophantic approach of the lawyer to the judge was typical of the time and an expected part of the preamble of a legal presentation. (While Felix may have accomplished some good things, history generally records that he was not a great success and was recalled to Rome two years later to answer charges of misrule.)

In order to present their case convincingly, the Jews couched their accusations against Paul in terms that would convey to Felix that the real issue was one of being anti-Roman. Calling Paul, “a troublemaker” and “one who stirred up riots” would have registered with Felix as treason against the Emperor. To be a leader of a sect without the approval of the Roman authorities, would also have been understood to be illegal.

The accusation of trying to desecrate the temple is a rather toned-down version of what was said in Acts 21 vs28.

When we talk to someone about Jesus, is there a danger that we might also try to make the gospel more acceptable to our hearers, and in so doing, misrepresent the truth?

### **Verses 10-21: The case for the Defence.**

Paul acknowledges Felix's record as a judge but doesn't replicate the lawyers ingratiating approach. He goes on then to refute each of the accusations brought against him. However, he doesn't hide his adherence to "The Way" (Christianity) but rejects the idea of it being a sect. In fact, Paul seeks to affirm his Jewish roots and that in many ways he and his accusers have much in common. That said, he insists that the real issue isn't one that concerns anything against Rome but a matter of belief about the resurrection. It was this that caused the chaos back in Jerusalem.

Think back over your own experience of "owning up" to being a Christian. Perhaps it was with family, friends, work colleagues etc. How did it go? Was it easy or hard? Straightforward or embarrassing? How did those you were sharing with respond? Is there ever a time to keep quiet about our faith in Jesus?

### **Verse 22-27: The judgement of Governor Felix.**

Try and work out just what the impact of this "trial" was on Felix. Was he perhaps a genuine enquirer into what "The Way" was all about? Was he deceitful and dishonest in his dealings with Paul? Was he lazy? Was he, may be, genuinely torn over being reasonable to Paul, as a Roman citizen, and being diplomatic in trying to keep the peace with the Jews?

How do you think Paul felt about the situation and his prolonged sojourn at the seaside, in Caesarea, which yielded nil progress towards Rome?



In many parts of the world Christians do not enjoy the freedom to practice their faith and speak freely about Jesus. Pray for any situations that you know of and in general for those who are fearful of being known as followers of "The Way."

Pray for those who here in the UK, find lack of liberty to speak of Jesus, especially in the workplace environment.

Sadly, there appears to be increasing opposition in the UK to Christianity, especially in the broadcast and print media. Pray now for Christians who work in these areas that they might be equipped and enabled to live out their faith with both courage and wisdom. Give thanks for those Christians known to you who are working in these challenging situations.

Pray too for our church leaders, and those who, through their positions of responsibility in society, are able to influence the life of the nation.