

Human Responsibility in Adversity

Example from Paul

Dr. Goodluck Ofoegbu
Prof. Oby Ofoegbu
Banking Blessings Ministry
San Antonio, Texas
USA

What We Will Learn

- Paul faced relentless persecution in Jerusalem and Caesarea
- Evaluated circumstances as they arose
- Showed patience
- Respect for authority and due process
- Human responsibility to worship and serve God even in adversity
- Acts 23:12–35; Acts 24

Relentless Persecution

- Group of men hatched conspiracy to kill Paul
- Chief priests and elders joined the conspiracy
- Relentless
- Even after Paul's transfer to Caesarea
- And more than two years thereafter
- Acts 23:12–15
- Acts 24:1 and 25:1–5

Acts 23 (NIV)

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

13 More than forty men were involved in this plot.

Acts 23 (NIV)

14 They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.

15 Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here.”

Acts 24 (NIV)

- Went to Caesarea to make case against Paul before Governor Felix

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 25 (NIV)

- Two years later, they requested Governor Festus to return Paul to Jerusalem for trial in continuing conspiracy to assassinate him

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

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

Acts 25 (NIV)

3 They 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.

4 Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon.

5 Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there.”

Conspiracy Uncovered

- Paul was informed of conspiracy against him
- Determined appropriate response is to elevate the information
- Directed report to Roman commander
- Respect for authority and due process
- Acts 23:16–22

Acts 23 (NIV)

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

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 (NIV)

18 So he took him to the commander.

The centurion said, “Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.”

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 (NIV)

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

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 (NIV)

22 The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: “Don’t tell anyone that you have reported this to me.”

- Commander transferred Paul to custody of Governor Felix in Caesarea
- Transferred under heavy security
- Noted he found no valid charges against Paul

Trial Before Governor Felix

Charges against Paul

- Troublemaker
- Stirs up riot among Jews all over the world
- Ringleader of Nazarene sect
- Tried to desecrate temple
- Paul responded to every charge
- Acts 24:5–6

Acts 24 (NIV)

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

6 and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him.

Trial Before Governor Felix Paul Responds to Charges

- Was in Jerusalem to worship when arrested
- Did not argue with anyone
- Or stir up crowd in the synagogues or other places in the city
- Worships God as follower of the Way
- Believes and respects the law and Prophets
- Acts 24:10–21

Acts 24 (NIV)

10 When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense.

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

Acts 24 (NIV)

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.

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

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

Acts 24 (NIV)

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

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

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 (NIV)

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.

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 (NIV)

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

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.’”

Interactions with Gov. Felix

- No more progress on the case for two years
- Paul remained under arrest
- But free to interact with friends
- Preached the Gospel when he could
- Resisted pressure to bribe Gov. Felix
- Acts 24:22–27

Acts 24 (NIV)

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.”

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.

Acts 24 (NIV)

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

25 As Paul talked about 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 (NIV)

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.

27 When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

What We Learned

- Human responsibility to worship and serve God even in adversity
- Paul showed patience and respect for authority and due process
- Assessed and responded as issues arose
- “This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men” [Acts 24:16]
- Radiating Godliness in adversity