Paul on Trial in Caesarea

(Paul was falsely accused and was kept in prison over a period of two years while he appeared before a succession of governors and leaders. At every turn Paul shared the message of Jesus Christ.)

Acts chapters 24-26
Paul was a man who loved God. He was a missionary who travelled to many places telling people about Jesus. He was also an educated man and a Roman citizen. Being a Roman citizen meant that Paul had special rights.
3. Not everyone liked Paul. The High Priest and other Jewish leaders from Jerusalem had accused Paul of being a troublemaker. They said he had disrespected God’s temple and that he had tried to cause riots. They wanted him put to death. But, since Paul was a Roman citizen, he had the right to appear before a Roman official. A Roman official could decide whether or not the accusations were fair and true. So Paul was taken to the Roman city of Caesarea for a trial before the Roman governor, Felix. The Jewish leaders who had accused Paul brought a lawyer, Tertullus, with them to the trial. The lawyer tried to convince the governor that Paul deserved to be punished.
Finally, Paul was given the chance to speak to Felix, the governor. He told Felix that he was not a troublemaker. He had been to the temple but he showed respect when he was there. He said that he worshipped God but he followed the way of Jesus.
He said that other people were making false accusations against him and that Felix could check this out by investigating the facts.
But Felix did not want to make a decision yet. He said he would keep Paul in prison until the Roman commander from Jerusalem came to Caesarea and told his side of the story.
7. So Paul stayed in the prison in the place known as Herod's Palace. Festus allowed him some freedom and let Paul's friends take care of him. Festus and his wife, Drusilla, also liked to invite Paul to come to them and talk about faith in Jesus Christ.
But Festus did not want to follow Jesus. In fact, part of the reason he kept listening to Paul was because he hoped Paul would pay him a bribe to get out of prison. But Paul did not pay a bribe and ended up staying in prison for 2 years.
When Felix's time as the Roman governor finished, a new governor named Festus took his place. Once again, the Jews from Jerusalem made accusations against Paul. They told Festus that he should send Paul to Jerusalem so he could have a trial there. But really it was just a trick so they could kill Paul.
10. Even though Festus wanted to keep the Jewish leaders happy he told them he planned to have the trial in Caesarea where all official Roman government business took place. So, back in Caesarea, Festus asked Paul to tell his side of the story. After hearing this Festus knew the Jews did not have enough proof against Paul. But Festus did not want to make a decision and risk making them angry. He asked Paul if he would be willing to go back to Jerusalem and let the Jewish make the decision. Paul knew that the Jews would probably kill him if he went back to Jerusalem so he did not want to go.
He had been in prison for two years and Paul knew it was time to remind the governor that he was a Roman citizen. "If this Roman court cannot make a decision," Paul said, "then, as a Roman citizen, I want to make an appeal to the higher courts of Caesar in Rome."

Festus knew that Paul was right so he said that his request was granted. Paul would now be going to Rome.
Meanwhile, Festus had a visit from King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice. The Roman government recognized Agrippa as the King of the Jews so Festus told him all about the Jews accusing Paul. King Agrippa found this very interesting and asked to meet Paul.
So the governor decided to gather all the city leaders and King Agrippa together in one big and important meeting. The meeting had many ceremonies and probably lots of speeches. Paul was called to speak in front of all of these important people.
14. What do you think Paul talked about? Do you think he begged them to let him out of prison? No, Paul used this opportunity to tell these important people all about Jesus! Paul told Agrippa that for many years he had been like the other Jewish leaders. He used to think Christians were troublemakers too. But now he knew the truth. Jesus had come to him in a vision. Now he followed Jesus and always tried to tell people about Jesus.
15. Paul said that God wanted everyone to hear about Jesus. This is the reason the Jews wanted to kill him.

When he said that Festus interrupted him and said, "Paul, you have been studying so much that you are going crazy!"
But Paul was not crazy. He just wanted everyone to know about Jesus and how Jesus can forgive their sins. He even told King Agrippa that he wanted him to follow Jesus too. But King Agrippa did not want to follow Jesus.
17. After leaving Paul, King Agrippa told Festus that Paul had not done anything to deserve death. He should have been set free. But because Paul had appealed to Caesar's official court in Rome Festus had no choice but to send him there.
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3. Not everyone liked Paul. The High Priest and other Jewish leaders from Jerusalem had accused Paul of being a troublemaker. They said he had disrespected God’s temple and that he had tried to cause riots. They wanted him put to death. But, since Paul was a Roman citizen, he had the right to appear before a Roman official. A Roman official could decide whether or not the accusations were fair and true.

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