

Paul Accused - False Witness

Foundation

Bible passage: Acts 21-25 & Ex 20.16

Paul Falsely Accused

Paul had travelled to Jerusalem to take money to Christians in need. Whilst there he was arrested by the Temple guards, dragged out and beaten (21.31-32). But the Roman Tribune heard of this and taking soldiers stopped the crowd. Paul was bound with chains but allowed to address the crowd. Paul spoke about Jesus but when he mentioned the good news being sent to the non-Jews (Gentiles) the crowd erupted again.

To keep Paul safe, he was sent to Caesarea avoiding a plot to kill him. After several days the governor, Felix, heard accusations by people who had travelled from Jerusalem. They gave false witness distorting the truth and repeating false claims. They said Paul had stirred up riots (21.5) but it was when Paul had spoken about taking the good news to others that the crowd got violent. Similarly in Ephesus it had been the silversmiths who had stirred up trouble fearing that their livelihood would be affected if people stopped worshipping idols.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour”

Paul was also accused of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, which was partly true, though not in Jerusalem. He was accused of ‘profaning the Temple’, which seems to refer to the fact that he had been seen in Jerusalem with Trophimus the Ephesian (21.29), who was a



Bronze prutah coin minted by Antonius Felix. Felix was well known for accepting bribes and Acts 25.26 says that he hoped Paul would also offer money for freedom.

gentile. His accusers assumed Trophimus had gone into the Temple. Again, we see that bearing false witness is not just about telling blatant lies but also about distorting the truth.

The 9th Commandment

The ninth of the Ten Commandments given by God to Israel at Mount Sinai says “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour”. These commandments are given by God to help us in the world. We all know what it is like when other people lie about us and how that can make us feel, and yet we do the same sort of thing. If we all obeyed God’s commandments the world would be a better place. Sadly, we don’t and the commands of God therefore show up our sin and show us the need of a Saviour.

This commandment, like others, also shows us something about God, that He is trustworthy and does not lie.

We have seen how false witnesses were brought forward to accuse both Jesus and Paul because people did not like what they were saying but had to invent things to have them arrested.



People gave false witness against Paul, but this is condemned by God who is Himself trustworthy.