

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Though he continues to be in chains—though more than forty Jews bound themselves by an oath to neither eat nor drink until they had killed him (Acts 23:12-13)—Paul continues to speak about faith in Christ Jesus wherever he goes, whether by word or deed.

Ananias, Felix, and King Agrippa display three very different responses to what Paul shares. The high priest Ananias was known and hated for his cruelty, ruthlessness, and corruption. It's no wonder that even Paul loses his temper when dealing with Ananias (v.3), though he apologizes once he learns who Ananias is. (v.5) While Paul's actions reflect the integrity and righteousness of his Lord Jesus Christ, Ananias and the Jews continue to hunt him down as they vow to kill him, showing no softness in their hearts for Jesus. (Acts 24:1)

For his part, Felix had heard about the followers of the Way (v.22), and so knew that the charges raised against Paul were false. When he finally hears Paul speak, Paul does not shy away from declaring God's righteousness and self-control, and the coming judgment of Jesus Christ. (v.25) This unsettles Felix, who was in an illicit marriage with his wife Drusilla, having convinced her to divorce her Jewish husband to marry him, a Gentile. Instead of being moved to repentance, Felix became alarmed (v.25) and left Paul in prison as a favor to the Jews. (v.27)

King Agrippa, who was of Jewish lineage, recognizes all that Paul has done, and he believes him—he even says that Paul had done nothing to deserve death or imprisonment. (Acts 26:31) But when it comes to following Christ, he counts the cost after receiving Paul's invitation to know Christ (v.28-29) and finds the world more compelling than Jesus.

We will receive such responses when we set out to share Jesus, church, but do not be discouraged. Only invite the Holy Spirit to move as Paul did, and let Him lead and guide you.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

As Paul stands before the council in Acts 23, he declares that he has “lived [his] life before God in all good conscience up to this day.” (v.1) For this, he is struck on the mouth.

Have you ever, like Paul, held a conviction that you know to be unpopular or likely to be misunderstood? Did you share that conviction with those around you, and if so, what was the response? If not, what was holding you back from doing so?

QUESTION TWO:

As you contemplate Ananias, Felix, and King Agrippa’s responses to the gospel (you may also add Festus, who was dismissive of Paul, into the mix)—which of these do you think is more common in today’s culture? Which one of these responses do you dread or fear the most, and why?

QUESTION THREE:

As you read about Paul’s continued attempts to share Jesus wherever he went, think of a specific person in your life whose heart might be hardened to God, or who is distracted by the things of the world.

Share that person’s name with your group, and the specific struggles that might make it hard to talk about Christ with them—then invite your group to role-play as that person as you practice sharing the gospel with them.