Paul's first trial at Caesarea

CHARACTERS: Paul, Felix, Soldier, Tertullus, High Priest Ananias, crowd
COSTUMES: Biblical
PROPS: none specified
SETTING: Roman audience hall/courtroom
RUN TIME: 5 minutes
SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Acts 23 & 24
FK reading level: 7.3

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: Much of the dialogue is lengthy, which can cause an audience to "tune out". While FELIX reads, his face and body should show his reaction to the words (i.e. Sitting up straighter at 'Roman citizen', shaking his head "no" about the problem being over Jewish law). During the trial, as TERTULLUS and PAUL speak, their expressions and those of FELIX and a CROWD can keep the audience engaged. Communication is a two way street and the facial reactions and body language of those listening can add much to the spoken word. Watching various reactions of characters listening to the speaker keeps audience interest and aids in their emotional response, comprehension and retention. Having PAUL and TERTULLUS move some when they speak just before an important point then stopping to deliver the point helps as well.

Scene 1

At rise: FELIX seated stage right, SOLDIER delivers a letter which FELIX opens and reads aloud.

FELIX: From Claudius Lysias to His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings. The Jews seized this man, Paul, and were about to kill him. I learned that he is a Roman citizen, so I rescued him. I wanted to know what they were accusing him of, so I took him down to their Council. I found out that he had not done a thing for which he deserved to die or be put in prison; the accusation against him had to do with questions about their own law. And when I was informed that there was a plot against him, at once I decided to send him to you. I have told his accusers to make their charges against him before you. *(looking up at SOLDIER)* Where is Paul from?

SOLDIER: The province of Cilicia.

FELIX: Keep him in Herod's Palace until his accusers arrive. *Stage lights down.*

Scene 2

At rise: FELIX is seated; PAUL stands stage left, JEWS stage right with TERTULLUS standing apart from them closer to FELIX.

TERTULLUS: *(flattering, with a deep bow)* Your Excellency! Your wise leadership has brought us a long period of peace, and many necessary reforms are being made for the good of our country. We welcome this everywhere and at all times, and we are deeply grateful to you. I do not want to take up too much of your time, however, so I beg you to be kind and listen to our brief account.

(seriously, grave) We found this man to be a dangerous nuisance; he starts riots among Jews all over the world and is a leader of the party of the Nazarenes. He also tried to defile the Temple, and we arrested him. If you question this man, you yourself will be able to learn from him all the things that we are accusing him of. *(bows)*

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ANANIAS: *(bows)* This is true, your excellency. *FELIX motions to Paul to speak*

PAUL: *(bows) I* know that you have been a judge over this nation for many years, and so I am happy to defend myself before you. As you can find out for yourself, it was no more than twelve days ago that I went to Jerusalem to worship. The Jews did not find me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor did they find me stirring up the people, either in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. Nor can they give you proof of the accusations they now bring against me.

I do admit this to you: I worship the God of our ancestors by following that Way which they say is false. But I also believe in everything written in the Law of Moses and the books of the prophets. I have the same hope in God that these have, namely, that all people, both the good and the bad, will rise from death. And so I do my best always to have a clear conscience before God and people.

While bringing contributions and offering sacrifices they found me in the Temple after I had completed the ceremony of purification. There was no crowd with me and no disorder. It was actually some Jews from the province of Asia that started this trouble. They themselves ought to come before you and make their accusations if they have anything against me. Or let these who are here tell what crime they found me guilty of when I stood before the Council—except for the one thing I called out when I stood before them: 'I am being tried by you today for believing that the dead will rise to life.

FELIX: When the commander Lysias arrives, I will decide your case.

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