

Paul's Bold Witness

Acts 24

Pastor John Miller

What I want to do, as I normally do, is back up a little bit in our Bibles to Acts 23:31. We read it last Wednesday, but I want to give you a little running start to Acts 24 and set the context. Beginning in Acts 23:31, "Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 On the morrow," Antipatris, by the way, is about 25 miles from Caesarea, "they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 Who, when they came to Caesarea," sixty miles kind of northwest of Jerusalem, "and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when the governor had read the letter," that's from Claudius Lysias, "he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall."

Again, Paul has been in prison in Jerusalem, and there was a plot to kill Paul. There were about 40 men that took a vow that they were not going to eat or drink until they had done away with Paul. Paul's nephew found out about it, told the Roman authorities, so they secreted Paul away at night with about 470 Roman soldiers armed to the teeth. They took him from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Caesarea was on the coast, and it was the capital of the Roman government there, the seat of the Roman government along the coast. It mentions Caesarea there in verse 33, and then he received the letter about Paul's charges, what was going on and what the issues were, and he said, "Ok, when your accusers come up from Jerusalem, then I will hear thee of this matter." The one that's going to try Paul is Felix. I'll tell you more about him in just a moment. We'll meet him in Acts 24.

As you go into Acts 24 now, you find Paul is in Caesarea. He's under arrest (he's going to be there for two years) and then he's going to appeal to Caesar and will be sent to Rome where we'll find him there in the Roman prison as it finishes up the book of Acts. So, what we have is Paul in chains yet still bold in his witness for Jesus Christ.

In Acts 24, there are four sections to this chapter that I want to point out as we survey it. The first is the false accusations that are brought in the trial against Paul. It's his defense as he stands there in the courtroom, verses 1-9. Begin with me in Acts 24. "And after five days," there's no real thought or subject break between Acts 23 and Acts 24, "Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor," that's Felix, "against Paul." Ananias, the high priest, is come to Caesarea from Jerusalem, and notice that it says that he descended. That is a little interesting note there in the Bible because whenever you go to Jerusalem, you're always ascending. All through the Bible, any reference to going to Jerusalem, it's always, "Let us go up to Jerusalem," because it's considered a city on a hill. Even though you're coming from the north or down south to Jerusalem, when you come to Jerusalem, you're always ascending to the city that sets on the hill, so they descended from Jerusalem, west kind of north, and headed toward Caesarea.

Now, in this group that came from Jerusalem, there were also the elders (verse 1), and they brought with them their lawyer, this man named Tertullus. His name is a Roman name. It actually indicates that he was probably a Hellenistic Jew but was a lawyer, so if you're going to be in trial (they were the ones bringing the charges against Paul) they brought a lawyer with them to try to make their case to the Roman government. The Jews in Jerusalem wanted to try Paul on their own turf, on their own terms; but the Lord had His hand on Paul, and he actually was protected by Rome. It helped he was a Roman citizen and he's going to be sent all the way to Rome, but so far he's just here in Caesarea. The group that comes against him is Ananias, (the high priest, and he's a Sadducee, a liberal, and very corrupt even though he was the high priest) the elders, (it's not the whole Sanhedrin, but some of the Jewish leaders) and their lawyer named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

The governor, as I said, is Felix. The lawyer is going to come with flattery. What they would normally do is butter-up the judge to kind of win their affections so that they could get their case heard. I want you to notice what this Tertullus has to say. "And when he was called forth," verse 2, so this is the hearing, "Tertullus began to accuse him," that is, Paul, "saying, Seeing that by thee," he's speaking to Felix, "we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words."

This Felix is the governor of the Roman province there, and Tertullus comes and butters him up with flattery. He was a man that originally was a slave. He was the first in Roman history to be a man who was a slave and because he had a brother that knew the emperor actually got him a place to be a governor, so he was freed and then made a governor. Historians tell us that he always ruled with a heart of a slave. He was cruel, wicked, evil, and self-serving. He was just a bad individual. I call him Felix the rat not Felix the Cat. You've heard of Felix the Cat? This is Felix the rat! He was just a real bad guy. You don't want to stand in trial in front of this governor Felix, and we're going to be introduced to his wife in just a few verses of this chapter.

The things that Tertullus the lawyer said were pure flattery. He was just buttering him up. You could see the butter flowing from his lips. Everyone knew that Felix was a rat, but he says, "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence," he's just telling him what a great guy he is, trying to win his affections and all that kind of stuff, "...most noble Felix," and says, "I don't want to go too long, but would you listen to me as I say a few words."

Beginning in verse 5, Tertullus brings three accusations against Paul the Apostle. These three accusations are going to be answered sequentially by Paul one by one. Notice the first one is an accusation there that he has committed treason. Tertullus gives him a personal attack. He calls him a "pestilent fellow" and "mover of sedition." He attacks him personally and politically. "He's a persistent fellow," or "He's a pest," is what he's saying, "...a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have

judged according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, 8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. 9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so." All the religious Jews that were there were saying, "Yeah! Yeah, that's right, Tertullus. Yeah, you got it. He did these things."

Let me point out the accusations that he brings against him. The first, he says that he's a pest, "a pestilent fellow," so he attacks him personally. It's interesting that things haven't changed much today, right? When the world looks at Christians, they see them as basically pests. "They're pesty. They just bug us. They're pestilent fellows." Then, he's "a mover of sedition." It's an accusation against him politically. They also said that he is "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." They give a political accusation, they attack him personally, and they attack him religiously, "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."

That term "Nazarenes" for Christians at that time was a derogatory term. They were calling them the Nazarenes because Nazareth was considered a hick town, a kind of place that wasn't very religious. It was irreligious, and good Jews didn't really live in Galilee. They despised these Christians, and they were following Jesus of Nazareth. Remember that Nathaniel, in the gospel of John 1:46, when he heard that they found the Messiah, that He was Jesus of Nazareth, remember what he said? He said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" The answer is yes, the Son of God! You think of just the dirtiest, scummiest, cheesiest town you could ever imagine, and I'll stop naming towns, forgive me. To think if the Messiah were to come into the world, that He would actually be from that region or from that area, it's kind of a mind-blowing thought. They were looking down on them—they're of the sect of the Nazarenes. Most of the Christians at this time were still Jewish, especially in the Judean area, so they despised them because they were following these, they called, "the Nazarenes."

They said in verse 6, "Who also hath gone about to profane the temple," we know that's not true. Paul was taking a vow. He was sponsoring others who were taking the Nazarite vow. He shaved his head. He was in the temple. He was not causing a riot. He wasn't doing anything wrong. Basically, it's kind of, "Liar, liar, pants on fire, hanging from a telephone wire," kind of thing. Tertullus was flattering the governor and lying about Paul, but God is our defender and our shield. Amen? Even though our enemies rise up against us, and they come against us with lies, the Lord knows our heart. I sometimes have people come to me quite frustrated, "Pastor, this person said this," and "...this person said that. This person attacked me here." My question is always, "Is it true?" "Well, no. It's not true." "Well, then, thank God it's not true and let your life testify to the reality that it's not true." Just live your life. Don't try to defend yourself. Don't get all freaked out about it. Don't get all upset. Don't get angry. Just put it in God's hands and let God defend you. Right? You know, if you try to defend yourself, guess what? God lets you. But if you let God defend you, then what more would you want, right? It's God to be your defender, God to be your protector, God to be your shield. If the Lord is your defender, then let Him defend you. You don't have to defend yourself.

Paul is going to speak in his own defense, but he doesn't use flattery. He doesn't use lies. He just speaks the facts truthfully, and he always used it to preach the gospel. We're going to see that so clearly tonight. In verse 7, they said that "captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away," they were in an angry mob beating Paul, remember? They were beating Paul up, and the Roman captain came and saved and rescued him from this angry mob. They were tearing him limb from limb. Then, he had the audacity to tell his accusers that they had to come all the way here to Caesarea and that you would examine the situation and try that. All the Jews nodded their agreement to the words of Tertullus in verse 9. By the way, to nod to a lie is to tell a lie.

Did you know that you could lie by not saying anything? If you're privy to the truth and you hear someone lie, first of all if you agree to it, then you're lying as well. I believe that you can go beyond that...by the way, in the ten commandments is thou shalt not lie. To know the truth and to be silent and not speak the truth when you can bring truth and clarity to the situation, then you are responsible—you too are a liar—so you need to think about that. You can lie by saying nothing or by being quiet in a situation. They just kind of like, "Yeah, oh yeah! That's right!" They knew good and well that these were all lies, but they were giving their agreement and their consent.

So we go from verses 1-9, the false accusations, to verses 10-21, the second section (if you're taking notes or outlining this chapter). We have Paul's faithful answer. Notice verse 10, "Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years," many years actually being about six or seven of Felix being a governor, "a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself." Here's Paul with God on his side. I love what Martin Luther once said. He said, "One man with God is a majority." I like that. Though everyone is against me, when God is with me and on my side, one person with God is a majority.

First, Paul deals with this accusation that he is treasonous, that he is against the Roman government, and they had to prove to the Roman authorities that Paul was a threat to them as a government. He starts in verses 11-13 in dealing with the accusation of treason. He says, "Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. 12 And they neither found me," that is, the Jews, "in the temple disputing with any man," I wasn't arguing in the temple, debating, or preaching, "neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me."

Here's Paul's first defense. He said, "Look, I've only been in Jerusalem for twelve days. That's not enough time to create an insurrection. That's not enough time to gather people and bring opposition to the Roman government. I've only been here for twelve days." He says, "I came not to be an insurrectionist, but I came (verse 11) to worship God, and they didn't find me in the temple disputing with any man nor raising up the people nor in the synagogue nor in the city. They didn't find me preaching anything. They didn't find me disputing anything. I've only been there twelve days, not enough time for insurrection, and they didn't find me in the act of doing

anything that was illegal or disputing.” Paul, very calmly, very matter-of-factly just kind of states the facts and lets them speak for themselves.

It’s interesting that the Bible tells us to speak the truth in love. You can’t lose if you do that—if you speak the truth in love. If you just speak in love and not truth, then it can become hypocrisy. If you speak truth but no love, then it becomes brutality, so you want both. You want to be loving and truthful as you speak.

Notice the second defense Paul gives that they brought against him, heresy against the Jewish religion, verses 14-16. He says, “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way,” now, that’s a statement...the word “way” there should be capitalized because it’s a reference to the Christian faith, “which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”

This is an amazing statement that Paul makes (verses 14-16), and I want to point out five things that he affirms. First, he says, “I confess...that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I...God.” The first thing he says is, “I confess.” Then, he says, “I worship God,” that’s the second statement. Then, the third statement is “believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.” The fourth statement is in verse 15, “And have hope toward God,” and the fifth statement in verse 16, he says, “And herein do I exercise myself,” so if you put it together he says, “I confess, I worship, I believe, I hope, and I exercise” or some translations have I strive or I do my best, the NIV renders that. So, what is Paul saying here? He’s saying, “Look, I believe in God. I believe in His Word. I believe in the hope of the resurrection. Where’s my crime? What have I done wrong? I’m just a Bible-believing Christian. I’m a Jew, but I’m a Christian who believes the Word of God.” He refers to the Christian faith as the Way, and he makes a reference to, “I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.”

Let me try to make a couple of statements here that are important. I was asked just a few days ago by somebody, I was preaching at another church and someone came up to ask a question. They were asking about the God of the Jews. At first, they were confused and thought that the Jews worshipped a different God than the Christians do. The same God the Jews worship, Christians worship, but hang with me. Don’t let me lose you yet. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—it’s the same God. There’s only one God, too, by the way, so you talk about, “Well, this religion has their god, and this religion has their god, and this religion has their god.” Well, these are gods of their own makings—gods and lords many they have—but they’re not real gods, right? There’s really only One, true and living God, and He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Here’s the catch. The only way to know that One, true God is through His Son, Jesus Christ. It doesn’t matter if you’re a Jew or a Gentile—Jew or Gentile—you must still come to God through Jesus Christ. You can’t be just Jewish today and know God or have a relationship to God or have access to God apart from Jesus Christ. It’s not like, “Well,

okay, they have their religion and they're worshipping the same God, and so it's okay." No, it's not okay.

In the book of Hebrews it opens with, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by," and the Greek word could actually be in, by, and through, "his Son," His own dear Son, "by whom also he made the worlds." The Bible is very clear all through the New Testament that if you reject the doctrine of Christ you have not God. If you reject Jesus Christ, you do not have the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Granted, in a general sense, yes they worship the same God, but they have no way to make a connection with that God or have access to that God other than through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Now, the early Christians who were Jewish didn't consider themselves as no longer Jewish. They considered themselves as completed Jews. They were maybe what someone called a Messianic Jew. They found their Messiah. "We've found Him of whom the law and the prophets has spoken of, Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of David, but God has opened the door to the Gentiles to come and believe and to trust Him. It's not the Jews have their religion and Christians have their religion. There's only one way to God and it's a relationship—it's not a religion—through His Son Jesus Christ who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This question they asked me after I explained it to them, "Well, don't they go to heaven just because they're Jewish?" I said, "No." Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, and he was a very religious Jew, he said, "Nic," (that's short for Nicodemus. J. Vernon McGee used to call him lil ol Nicky. I love that!) "you must be born again." That whole famous teaching of Jesus about being born again was directed to a very religious Jewish man; and unless you are born again, you can't see the kingdom of heaven. So, no one gets to go to heaven because of their religion or their race or a rite or a ritual. You go to heaven because you've trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Paul says, "You know what? I'm just worshipping the same God that they do, the God of our fathers," but I love the statement there in verse 14, "...believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets," I love that! That's my question to you tonight (you don't have to answer me. Just answer in your own mind). Do you believe all that is written in the law and the prophets? Now, probably this religious group from Jerusalem were made up of Sadducees and Pharisees. Remember last week when he was before the Sanhedrin and he saw half Sadducee and half Pharisee and said, "I'm a Pharisee, and for the hope of the resurrection I'm called in question." They started fighting among themselves, the Sadducees against the Pharisees, because the Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection. The Sadducees only believed in the first five books of the Bible. It's known as the Pentateuch and was written by Moses. Beyond that, they didn't believe that there were any Scriptures that were from God. They didn't believe that in the Pentateuch you could support the idea of a resurrection from the dead, so they rejected that. Paul, now again, is trying to play to this division between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and he said, "I believe it all. I believe all the law of Moses and the prophets." Those two categories actually summarize the entire Old Testament in the Jewish mind. Those are the two divisions of the Old Testament.

What Paul is actually saying is, "I believe the Bible." At that time there was no New Testament. All they had was the Old Testament, and he's saying I believe in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." I believe that there's actually an Adam and an Eve, that God made them the first human beings. They sinned in the garden, they fell, they were driven from the garden, and sin came into the world. I believe in Noah and the great flood, and there was an ark and a universal flood. I believe in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I believe in the stories of Jonah being swallowed by a whale, and I say the same thing, "I believe that."

There's a real move today, in even evangelical so-called Christianity, to deny that all the Bible is the Word of God. I heard a pastor friend of mine once call that "dalmatian" Christianity. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" Spotting. Only spots of the Bible are true, not all of it. I don't know how he came up with that, but it was cute. Like the sermon on the mount and maybe some of the beatitudes, "I don't believe this," and "I don't believe that," and "I don't believe this," and "I don't believe that. I don't really believe in Jonah and the whale. I don't really believe in this," and we take out things of the Bible rather than just, "I believe that all of it is God's Word." You know, if in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, what's so hard for God to perform a miracle, right? What's the big deal that God would raise someone from the dead, if God can speak all things into existence?

You know, before God said that He created the heavens and the earth, there was just God all by Himself. Think about that. There was nothing but God, and then God spoke everything into existence. By right of God's creative power, He owns everything. That's why it's such folly for us to shake our little fist at God and say, "God, that's not fair," and "God, that's not right." What insanity! He was here first. It all belongs to Him. He made it; He created it. We don't really make anything, we just assemble existing parts. God actually made it out of nothing. He just spoke and created all things.

Paul says, "I believe the Bible. I believe all of the law and all of the prophets." He says, "I confess, I worship, and I believe," and then I love it, verse 15, "I have hope." Do you have hope? I believe if you believe God's Word and you believe in Christ and His death and resurrection, then you also have hope and you can hang to that. Notice verse 15, "...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."

I don't know how unbelievers cope in this world without hope beyond the grave. I know you can say, "It's a wonderful life," but sooner or later it's going to wind down. I don't care how wonderful your life is, sooner or later it's going to wind down. Even the rich die. Did you ever notice that? Rich people actually die, too? Some of them agonizing death and their money can't bring them happiness. If there isn't hope beyond the grave, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, "...we are of all men most miserable." It's when you come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior and you know that when you die that you're going to go to heaven or He's going to come and take you to heaven, then you can start to enjoy living. You can then start to live because you know that this world is not your home, that it's just kind of a dressing/robing room for eternity, and there's purpose and meaning beyond the grave. What a blessed hope that is! Paul says, "I confess, I worship, I believe, and I have the hope of the resurrection." So, what did he do (verse 16)? He

said, "And herein do I exercise myself," or I do my best, or I strive, or I exercise myself "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

The third defense that Paul gives, verses 17-21, was that Paul desecrated the temple, that he'd polluted the temple. Paul answers that in verse 17. Follow with me, "Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings." This is the only place in Acts that he actually mentions the fact that when he came back to Jerusalem, he came with an offering from the Gentile church to the Jewish church. By the way, it had been five years. He said, "Now after many years," it had been about five years since Paul had been in Jerusalem, "I came to bring alms," gifts, "...offerings." I didn't come to desecrate the temple or to overthrow the Roman government. I came as a good Jew. I was helping out the economy and taking care of Jews in need.

Paul says, "Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult," I wasn't in a big group, "Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me." Interesting that the Jews from Asia that accused Paul of desecrating the temple are nowhere to be found. You know, if you're going to be brought into a trial and charges brought against you, under Roman law, your accusers needed to stand in the trial face-to-face and accuse you. They aren't even anywhere to be found. They've kind of flew the coop. He says, "If they have something against me, they ought to be here, "Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council," I stood before the council in Jerusalem. Let them say what evil I've done, "Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day."

There's Paul's defense. Now, If I were in the courtroom, I would've stood up and started clapping. Yeah, the judge would've told me to sit down and be quiet. I just love the dignity, the majesty, the confidence, and the boldness of Paul, but it's not over yet. In verses 22-27 we have the third division. We have now a foolish attitude (that's of Felix the rat), the attitude of procrastination—I don't need Christianity. Notice verse 22, " And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way," that's a reference to the Christian faith, "he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down," that is, from Jerusalem, "I will know the uttermost of your matter."

After the Jews and Paul spoke, then Felix said, "When Lysias, the Roman captain, comes here, I'll listen to what he has to say." He already had his letter saying what happened. He should've dismissed the case and let Paul go free, but God had plans for Paul to go to Rome. He says, "When Lysias...shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter." Felix already had a pretty good knowledge of Christianity from his upbringing and from his time in the Roman government, but the principle in the Bible is this: Knowledge brings responsibility; to whom much is given, much is required. Felix is listening to Paul and hearing the gospel of Christ. He is going to be responsible.

When you come to church and you hear the gospel, you are going to be accountable. When

you stand before God, you're not going to be able to say, "Well, I didn't know. No one ever told me. I didn't know I needed to trust in Jesus or believe in Jesus. God, you can't send me to hell. This isn't fair." He's going to play the tape back of you at Revival Christian Fellowship on a Wednesday night listening to Pastor John Miller share the good news of Christ, and He's going to say, "There it is." "Well, I wasn't listening. I was goofing off on my phone." "Well, that's too bad." You come to church and hear the gospel, then you're going to be accountable for it. Light brings responsibility. It's the same with people today. There's people who know about Christianity but haven't trusted the Christ of Christianity.

Notice verse 23, "And he," that is, Felix, "commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him." He's going to be in this situation for two years. He's going to be in chains, but he's going to be able to have people come visit him. He's not really in a dungeon, he's in the Roman kind of headquarters, but he's chained to a Roman soldier. Again, he would share the gospel with them. I would take note of that, that his acquaintances could come and spend time with him, talk with him, encourage him, be with him. No doubt, Dr. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, spent hours and days with Paul at this time in this place and was asking him questions, writing things down, recording things, and doing his work not only on the gospel but also on the book of Acts. The same guy who wrote the gospel of Luke wrote the book of Acts and was one of Paul's traveling companions.

Notice what happened. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife," now we're introduced to his wife, "Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." Paul's in chains in Caesarea. They're waiting for further trial, and Felix is curious. He goes, "Ahhh, it's kind of boring, nothing going on. Let's bring that Christian, Paul, back in and let him tell us more about Jesus and Christianity. Let's listen to Paul preach." We're going to learn later that he was actually listening to Paul hoping that Paul would offer a bribery or money to him to let him go. He was also listening to the gospel and listening to Paul preach, so he brings his wife in. They're in their fancy robes on their chairs in the beautiful palace there at Caesarea. They bring the prisoner in and Felix comes in.

Now, Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. There was a whole succession of Herods. She was an Edomite. She has kind of a wicked heritage, and she was actually, it's believed, about 19 years of age. This is her second marriage. It's Felix's third marriage. He kind of enticed her away from her previous husband and stole her to be his wife. They are basically a very ungodly, very wicked, very worldly, very vicious couple in political power. He comes with his wife, Drusilla, and she has a Jewish heritage or background. She, no doubt, knew about Christianity from her time there in that area. They send for Paul, "and heard him concerning the faith in Christ."

I want you to just note something, that Christianity is about faith in Christ. It's not about creeds. It's not about codes. It's not about rites and rituals and religious things. It's about Jesus Christ. Christianity is Jesus Christ. You can't take Jesus out of Christianity. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism and it stays intact, but you can't take Jesus out of Christianity. It's built upon His

life and His work. So, a recommendation that you do your homework to understand who Jesus is, what He has done, and why He came because that's what Christianity is all about and faith in Him.

Now, Luke records for us, I want you to have more detail, the three main points of Paul's sermon to this wicked and ungodly Roman leader. I love the fact that Paul in power and boldness and confidence doesn't back down. If you were in chains and a wicked Roman leader was up there, you might try to use flattery to butter him up and try to be nice and try to win him over or try to soft-pedal the gospel, especially if you knew that he was a very unchaste, very ungodly, very wicked person. You're certainly not going to preach on sin, that's going to ruffle his feathers, right? That it's not going to upset him—wrong. Paul did that.

There's a story about a man by the name of Hugh Latimer during the English reforming days. He often preached before King Henry VIII. Can you imagine preaching before King Henry VIII? On one occasion, Hugh Latimer, this English reformer, was preaching a message, and King Henry was there. He offended the king by what he preached, so he was commanded to come back the next Sunday and preach another sermon for King Henry VIII and in his sermon to apologize to the king for offending him. So, Hugh Latimer comes into the presence of the king. He's going to preach his second sermon. When he begins to speak on the next Sunday, after reading his text, he began to talk to himself as he began his sermon. This is a quote of what Hugh Latimer said in front of King Henry VIII. He said,

"Hugh Latimer, dost thou know before whom thou art this day to speak? To the high and mighty monarch, the King's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease! And then consider well, Hugh, dost thou not know from whence comest thou; upon whose message thou art sent? Even by the great and mighty God! Who is all present! and Who beholdeth all thy ways! and Who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully."

Then, he gave his message—the same message he gave the week before—and he did it with more energy and more power. Now, if you know your church history, Hugh Latimer lost his head. Can you imagine that? If I preached the gospel and I rebuked the sin of the king, it's off with his head. You talk about being tempted to preach a happy, positive, feel-good sermon when king Henry VIII is in the congregation, but no. He was faithful to the Word of God and preached the Word of God without compromise. I love that!

So what did Paul do? Notice it in verse 25. "And as he reasoned," the word "reasoned" indicates a very logical and intellectual setting forth of the Christian doctrine. He reasoned of three things, "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." Those were the three points of Paul's sermon. He's standing before this great and austere governor of Rome who had the power to release him, and he doesn't compromise. He doesn't water it down, and he doesn't soften the Word. He preaches those three things: Righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. All three of these would hit Felix right between the eyes. They would

convict him powerfully for his sin. We can't spend much time on each one, but righteousness would involve yesterday's sin or your past sin that you can be forgiven, and both Drusilla and Felix were sinners and needed forgiveness, as we have sinned. The Bible says all have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God. The Bible says there is no one righteous, no, not one.

Have you ever wondered what ever happened to sin? We've eliminated that from our vocabulary—they're mistakes, they're faults, they are our environment, I'm born that way, that's the way I'm made, it's not my problem, it's because my parents spanked me when I was little, that's why I'm tweaked. We have all these excuses. What about sin and rebellion against God? Righteousness indicates that you need that righteousness that's given to us through Jesus who died on the cross for our sins, but the point is you can be forgiven of yesterday's sin.

The second thing was about temperance. Temperance was self control, and the governor had no self control. By that, he's saying that today's temptations you can be free from. So, your past sins can be forgiven, you can find victory over the temptations of present sin, and of judgment to come—future. So, there's past, present, and future. The future judgments you can go to heaven. You don't have to go to hell when you die. Do you know that you can actually go to heaven when you die? You can know beyond any shadow of a doubt that when you die you will go to heaven. That's good news, don't you think? Isn't it good news to know that your sins can be forgiven and to know that if you die that you will go to heaven? I don't know about you but that's good news! The older I get, the gooder the news gets because the closer you get to eternity and to know that I can live a life free from temptation's power. What an awesome thought!

What happens to Felix? How does he respond? It says, "Felix trembled," you might translate that, he was terrified. He was shaking with fear and terror. What he did was "answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season," when the time is right, "I will call for thee." This is that classic passage where Felix procrastinates. He hears the message your sins can be forgiven. You can be tempered or you can have control over your sinful desires. You don't have to die and go to hell. You don't have to face the judgment or the wrath of God, and Felix, instead of repenting and believing, he started to shake. You know, you're not going to be saved just because you're moved emotionally or just because you start to cry. Sometimes people hear the gospel and get emotional and teary and their heart starts to beat and they feel the presence of the Spirit convicting them. That's not enough. You must actually take a step of faith and believe in Jesus Christ. You must actually trust in Jesus Christ. The Bible says in the book of James that demons believe in God and they tremble and fear, but they're not saved.

Maybe you're here tonight...sometimes people come to church every week and hear the gospel, but they go, "Manana, tomorrow," or later. "I'll do it another time when I have a convenient season." "When I get my life together." "I'm too young." "I'm too old." "I'm too middle-aged." "I'm too busy." "It's not the right time." Pretty soon it'll be too late, and you don't know what tomorrow might bring. You don't have a lease on life.

I heard the story of satan who gathered with his demons in hell and said, "We've gotta figure

out a way to keep people from believing in Jesus Christ and going to heaven.” One demon said, “I know. I’ll convince them there is no God.” He said, “No, no, no. That won’t work. It’s too simple. People can look at the creation and know there’s a God.” Another demon said, “I know. I’ll tell them there is no heaven.” Satan says, “No. That’s not going to work. People realize there’s life beyond the grave. You don’t just die and cease to exist. People have this innate knowledge and understanding that life must go on even beyond the grave.” Another demon said, “I’ll just tell them that they can be good and get to heaven.” “No, no, no. That’s not going to work.” And finally the last demon said, “I know. I’ll just tell them there’s no hurry.” Satan said, “Go and you will prosper.” There’s no hurry. “Yes, it’s true. Yes, I know it’s real. Yeah, I know Jesus died for me. I know that if I die outside Christ I’ll go to hell and I’ll be lost,” and “Yeah, I may be moved in my emotion,” but have you trusted Jesus Christ? Have you put your faith in Him? You procrastinate, you never know what a day might bring forth. You can blaspheme the Holy Spirit and harden your heart against God and you can be lost and go to hell for all eternity.

So, Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled,” but he didn’t repent and he didn’t believe, but (verse 26), “He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener,” so he brought Paul to listen to him often hoping that he might give him some money and he could be bribed and be released. “But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix’ room,” or office, “and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.” Paul is still in prison.

In closing tonight, I can’t help but use this closing story to encourage you. If you’re here tonight and you haven’t trusted Jesus Christ, don’t be a fool and procrastinate any longer. The Bible says, “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,” don’t harden your hearts. Every moment that you reject Jesus Christ, you’re playing Russian roulette with all of eternity because you never know what tomorrow might bring. If God’s Spirit is convicting you right now, the Bible says if you hear His voice, today if you hear God’s voice don’t harden your heart. Don’t say, “Tomorrow,” or “Some other time,” or “When I get my marriage straightened out,” or “I get things worked out. I’m not ready right now.” Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door,” of your heart, “and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in” and have fellowship with you, and I’ll forgive your sins. If you’re here tonight and you haven’t trusted Jesus Christ, I’m going to ask you to open your heart, to believe in Him, and receive Him.