

(Through the Bible) Acts 24-25

by Chuck Smith

In this sermon, Chuck Smith explores Paul's defense before Felix, emphasizing the significance of the resurrection and the transition from earthly to heavenly existence.

Duration: 1:09:16

Scripture: Daniel 12:2, Matthew 22:29, John 5:39, Acts 8:35, Acts 24:16, Philippians 3:6, Hebrews 10:7

Topics: "Salvation Decision", "Spiritual Conviction"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of making a decision for Jesus Christ, particularly during the teenage years. He explains that nine out of ten Christians became Christians as teenagers before negative brain patterns were established. The speaker uses the example of Felix, who trembled under conviction but ultimately passed off the decision. He also discusses how repeated actions create patterns in the brain, making it harder to break bad habits. The sermon concludes with the message that it is necessary to submit one's life to Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness and cleansing.

Transcript

Shall we turn now to chapter 24 in the book of Acts. Paul had been seen in the temple worshipping God by some of the Jews that were from Asia who were familiar with Paul's ministry among the Gentiles. They immediately began to cry out against his being there in the temple, stirring up the Jews who grabbed hold of Paul and were in the process of beating him to death.

When Paul was rescued by those Roman soldiers, the guards, who were dispatched from Antonio Fortress to free him from this angry mob there on the Temple Mount, Paul attempted to talk to the people from the steps of the Antonio Fortress, recounting for them his conversion. But when he made mention of the Gentiles, it just created a riot. The next day, the Roman captain, Lysias, wanted to find out just what the ruckus was all about.

So he called for the Sanhedrin and had Paul appear before them that they might make their charges. And Paul, in giving his defense, knowing that they were divided between the Sadducees and Pharisees, said, I am a Pharisee, the son of the Pharisee, and because I believe in the resurrection from the dead, I'm here before you. And the Pharisees immediately took his part.

The Sadducees took out against him. They had such a rabble between themselves. The captain thought they were going to tear Paul to pieces.

So the second time he rescued them from the Roman or from the Jewish people. And then Paul's nephew heard that 40 men had taken a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. And so they went to the high priest, exposed their vow and their plot.

And they said, now you call for Paul tomorrow afternoon, like you want to ask him some questions. And while they're bringing him to you, we're going to jump him and kill him. So the nephew came in and told Paul.

Paul sent his nephew to the captain, who then commanded that in the middle of the night, some 200 spearmen, 70 cavalry men and 200 foot soldiers accompanied Paul from Jerusalem to take him to Caesarea under the protective custody of the Roman government. And now Paul has come down to Caesarea and the elders of Israel are invited to come down and prefer their charges against Paul there. So that brings us to the beginning of chapter 24.

After five days, Ananias, the high priest, descended with the elders and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. And now we have this fellow Tertullus, the orator, who is so flattering to this wicked man, Felix, that it is nauseating. And so when this Tertullus, when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse Paul, saying first of all to Felix, seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness.

And that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence. We accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that you would hear of us thy clemency a few words.

For we have found this man a pestilent fellow and a mover of sedition among all of the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Now these are very serious charges that Tertullus is pressing against Paul, because one thing that the Roman government did not tolerate, and that was an uprising in the provinces against Rome. And the Jews had a history of rebellion that the Roman Empire had to already put down in the past.

And they knew that there were those who were constantly inciting the people to riot against the Roman rule. And so the charges of a pestilent fellow, one who stirs up sedition among the Jews, the idea is that he is stirring up sedition against the Roman rule, and he is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarene. Now there were many religious uprisings in Israel, many men who would gather together groups of men around them, and who would then in their religious fanaticism inspire them to rebel against Rome.

So he's saying, you've got a fellow here who is the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and as such he is apt to stir them into a religious fervor to rebel against Rome. And who also hath gone about to profane the temple, whom we took and would have judged according to our law. Now it sounds from Tertullus that they arrested Paul and were going to bring him to trial.

Far from the truth. Paul was caught by a mob and it was a lynching mob. They were going to lynch him.

And so he is certainly misrepresenting the truth to Felix. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us and with great violence took him away out of our hands. In reality, Lysias rescued Paul from being beaten to death by the mob.

And then he commanded his accusers to come unto thee and by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all of the things whereof we accuse them. And all of the Jews that had come with him were

assenting, saying that these things were so. Now, notice that all of the charges were without substantial witnesses.

Everything that they were declaring was hearsay. None of them could give actual testimony against Paul in these things. So Paul speaking in his own defense, after the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, he answered, for as much as I know that you have been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself.

Because that you may understand that there are yet but 12 days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. So it was just 12 days earlier, Paul had gone to Jerusalem from Caesarea, or actually it was just 12 days that he'd been in Jerusalem. He had probably been 15 days from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

And it was just 12 days that I was in Jerusalem. I'd gone to worship the Lord. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues nor in the city.

They didn't find me doing any of these things. Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. And so Paul is denying the charges that are made against him, declaring that they are not able to prove any of them.

They have not found me doing these things that they declare so that their declarations would only be hearsay. This I confess unto thee that after the way, which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers. The term the way was the term used in the early church to describe themselves.

They were living a new way of life with Jesus at the center of their life. Jesus had said to his disciples, I am the way. No man comes to the Father but by me.

And so they picked up this term, the way, and they used it to describe the Christian fellowship in the early years of the church. And at least six times, this term, the way is used to describe the believers in the book of Acts. The term Christian was not at all a common term, nor really a biblical term for Christianity in the beginning.

It became a term used ultimately because Peter in writing his epistle said, if any of you suffer as a Christian. But that is the only time the term Christian was used by Christians in the New Testament. Whereas the term the way was used many different times and was a far more common name for the followers of Jesus Christ than the name Christian.

The name Christian is used only three times in all of the New Testament, where it mentions in Antioch that there the disciples were first called Christians. Next week in the 26th chapter of Acts, as Agrippa challenges Paul, almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian. So that there it was used not by the Christians themselves, but by others who were referring to those who were believers in Jesus Christ.

But the way, the way to God through Christ. And so after the way which they call heresy, I worship the God of my fathers, or he had come to worship God through Jesus Christ. Recognizing that Jesus is the only way by which a man can approach God.

The second thing Paul confessed, I believe all the things which are written in the law and in the prophets. In making this declaration, he is declaring his belief in all of those prophecies concerning Jesus or concerning the Messiah and then his belief that Jesus was the Messiah. The Old Testament is full of prophecies, all relating to the Messiah.

Prophecies that Jesus literally fulfilled. And if you will just take the chance factors of one man fulfilling these prophecies, you will find that it becomes solid proof that Jesus indeed was the Messiah, could not have fulfilled these unless he was indeed the Messiah. His place of birth, and thou Bethlehem, though thou be little among the provinces of Judah, yet out of thee shall come he who is to rule my people, whose going forth is from old, from everlasting.

There's only one chance in 250,000 for a person to be born in Bethlehem, a little village. And yet Jesus was born in Bethlehem. And right on down the line, you can take the prediction after prediction and find out that Jesus literally fulfilled it.

And so, Paul said, I believe the prophets and the law, all of the things which are written in the law and in the prophets. That's more than what you can say for a lot of ministers today who have sought to eliminate much of the law and the prophets. As well as much of the New Testament.

Paul declared himself to be a believer in all of these things. Paul the Apostle, when he would go into a new community, would usually go into the synagogue and just take their scriptures and teach them concerning the Messiah out of their own scriptures. And then he would go about to show that Jesus was the Messiah.

And that can be done very easily with the scriptures of the Old Testament. Jesus said, you do search the scriptures because in them you think you have life, but actually they testify of me. And again, I have come as it is written of me in the volume of the book to do thy will, O Lord.

And as you go through the Old Testament with the anointing and in the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, you find that Jesus is there in every page. You remember how the Ethiopian eunuch was on his way back? And there in the Gaza Strip, when Philip met him, he was reading the scriptures and Philip began at that place and preached Christ. Unto him, and that would be possible in just about any place in the Old Testament.

You could begin at that verse and preach Christ. The volume of the book is written of him. And so Paul just declares, hey, I believe in those prophecies.

And of course, even in the law, there were so many prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. And then Paul confessed, and I have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. So Paul's belief in the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust.

Now, of course, in the book of Revelation, we find out that there will be actually two resurrections, one of the just and the second of the unjust. And there will be approximately a thousand years intervening between the two resurrections. The rest of the dead live not until the thousand years were expired.

Blessed is he who taketh part in the first resurrection. Over him, the second death has no power. I believe that the first resurrection takes place over a period of time, that Jesus was indeed the first fruits of those who rise from the dead.

And as he said, he who lives and believes in me shall never die. And that for the child of God, death is an immediate transition from this old tent into the new house. And that Revelation chapter 19 is in fact the account of the first resurrection.

That is the completion of it. The final ones to enter into that first resurrection are those martyred saints during the tribulation period. And they complete the first resurrection.

But I believe that the minute a person's spirit has moved out of this body, that it moves in to the new building of God, not made with hands. Paul the Apostle, writing his Corinthian epistle, the second one, said that we know that when this earthly tabernacle or this earthly tent, our earthly body, this tabernacle is dissolved. That is when my body goes back to dust.

That we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. So then we who are in these bodies do often groan, earnestly desiring to be delivered or earnestly desiring to move out of them. Not, he said, that I would become unclothed or not that I would be an unembodied spirit.

My earnest desire isn't to be some ether essence in the atmosphere, unembodied spirit. But I desire to be clothed upon with the body which is from heaven. Or I desire to move into my new house, the building of God, not made with hands.

So then we who are in this body do often groan, earnestly desiring to be delivered. Not that we would be unclothed, but to be clothed upon with the body which is from heaven. For we know that as long as we are living in these bodies, at home in these bodies, we are absent from the Lord.

But we would choose rather to be absent from these bodies and be present with the Lord. So someday when you read in the paper, Chuck Smith died, don't believe that. Jesus said, if I live and believe in him, I'll never die.

So call the reporters and say, that's poor reporting. Chuck Smith moved out of an old worn out tent and into a beautiful new house, a building of God, not made with hands. You see, the Bible teaches that man basically is spirit, not body.

We relate to each other through our bodies and we come to associate each other with our bodies. But the real me is spirit. The body is just the instrument by which my spirit can express itself.

But the body isn't me. And one day I'm going to leave this body. And I'm going to leave this body and I'm going to move in to a new house.

This is an old tent, it's wearing out. But I'm going to move in to the building of God. Jesus said in my father's house are many mansions.

Now people, I'm sure, have a wrong concept of that. As you think of some beautiful estate on 10 acres with beautiful gardens and a 10 bedroom mansion, you know, big columns in the front and, you know, you each have your dream mansion. I really believe that Jesus was referring to the building of God, not made with hands, that new body that he has for me.

He said, I'm going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place, I'm going to come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also. You see, in my new body, I'm not going to need a bathroom or a bedroom, you know.

So he's talking about the building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Notice the contrast, a tent. A tent is always considered as transient, temporal.

The building of God, eternal in the heavens. The tent to the building of God. Paul, in writing his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 15, uses nature to illustrate the principle of resurrection.

How that the persons were asking, how are the dead raised and with what body will they come? And that is a question that people often ask, you know, what kind of a body am I going to have? And, you know, when this body is changed and all, and a lot of people seem to be quite attached to these bodies, in their minds at least, and they want to somehow hold on to this body. Well, I've held on to mine long enough. I'm ready to discard it for the new building of God, not made with hands.

Paul said, don't you realize that when you plant a seed into the ground, the seed does not come forth into new life until it first of all dies. And then the body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted. Take special note of that.

The body that comes out of the ground is not the body that you planted. For all you planted was a bare grain. And now God has given to it a body that pleases him.

And so is the resurrection from the dead. You are planted in weakness, but you'll be raised in power. You are planted in corruption.

You'll be raised in incorruption. You're planted in dishonor. You'll be raised in glory.

You're planted as a natural body. You'll be raised in a spiritual body, where there's a natural body and a spiritual body. And the difference between the celestial and the terrestrial.

So that even as we have borne the image of the earth and have been earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavens. When God made this body for me, he made it and adapted it for the environmental conditions of the earth. My body withstands 14 pounds of pressure per square inch.

My body takes the oxygen out of the 79-20 nitrogen-oxygen balance of the atmosphere. God designed me for the earth, the body that is. He didn't design it for heaven.

If man takes his body out of the earth's environmental conditions, he can only do it by taking artificial environment with him. Now, God could give you a pressurized space suit, and he could give you nitrogen and oxygen tanks, and he could revive this old body if he so desired. And you could go clomping around heaven with your weighted shoes to hold you down in the clumsy, awkward space suit with the tanks on your back.

But I would just as soon have that new building of God not made with hands eternal in the heavens. A new body designed for the heavenly conditions. Now, God wants me to be with him in his kingdom.

And so, in order that I might transfer from the environment of the earth into the heavenly kingdom, I need this change of body, which shall take place at death when the earthly tent is dissolved, and I move into the building of God not made with hands. Man says he died. The Bible says I've moved.

So, Paul said, I believe in the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust. We will have part in the first resurrection. Blessed is he for over him the second death has no power.

Now, this concept immediately puts to silence the ridicule of the atheist and the unbeliever who foresee horrible problems in the resurrection day when the bodies are trying to assemble themselves together again. Those that have been cremated and their ashes spread, or those that have been buried and their

bodies decomposed and become a part of the soil and the nutrients from their bodies feeding the roots of the grass that the cows eat to produce the milk that you drink which assimilates and becomes a part of your body. So, actually, in your body is possibly chemicals from someone else's body of some previous age, you see.

It's now in the resurrection. Where do these chemicals go? Or, of course, more recently, in the case of kidney transplants and heart transplants and so forth, you know, who gets it? And so, they foresee all kinds of problems with the resurrection. Well, there would be, I guess, if this body were to be the instrument in which I live.

But, thank God, it isn't. I have a building of God not made with hands eternal in the heavens. And Paul said to the Philippians, I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.

Nevertheless, for your sakes, I need to stick around a while longer. But I believe, Paul said, in the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust. The unjust will be resurrected at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the great white throne. And the death and hell gave up the dead which were within them. The sea gave up the dead which was in it.

And they all stood there before the throne of God. And the books were opened and they were judged. This is the second resurrection, the resurrection of the unjust unto everlasting shame and contempt.

So, Paul believes in the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust, even as was declared by Daniel chapter 12 verse 2. And herein do I exercise myself because I believe in the resurrection, because I believe that there is a day of accounting for all men when every man shall give an account of himself before God. He said, I exercise myself to always have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. Now, that is something that is quite remarkable.

And as we were pointing out Thursday night, Paul had to be quite a remarkable person. Surely, I cannot with Paul say that I have a conscience void of offense before God or man. Paul testifying of his life as a Pharisee said, and concerning the righteousness which is of the law, blameless.

No way can I say that. But Paul's strong belief and convictions in the resurrection, knowing that a man is going to have to make an accounting of his life, sought, exercised himself to always have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. I believe that the realization that this life is not all.

But only a preparation for eternity is one of the safeguards to pure living. And where people truly believe in a heaven to gain and a hell to shun, there is a much greater endeavor to live the right kind of life. But there has been so many dispersions cast at the concept of hell and even the concept of heaven that people are prone to believe as the naturalist or the humanist that this life is all she wrote.

So, you live like a hog and die like a dog and that's the end. And we see the effect in our society. As people are following that concept and living like animals, getting by with just as much as they possibly can, feeling, hey, this is all I've got.

I'm going to make the most of it because death is an end. No way. Death is just the beginning for the child of God of a more complete, fuller revelation of God's grace and goodness to us.

Death is just the beginning for that one who has rebelled against God, of the fearful, certain, looking forward to the fiery indignation of God's wrath that will devour his adversaries. Now, Paul goes on, After many years being gone from Jerusalem, I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings. You remember, Paul had gone among the Gentile churches and had collected offerings for the poor saints in Jerusalem, which he had brought to them from the generosity of the churches in Macedonia and Greece.

And so after many years, I came to bring these alms and offerings to my nation, whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple. Paul had gone through the rites of purification and he was there worshipping God in the temple. And I was neither with a multitude nor with a tumult.

I was minding my own business, just worshipping God. And these men actually should be here before you if they object or if they have anything against me. You see, you don't have any actual witnesses, Felix.

The men that should be here bearing witness, if I am a pestilent fellow and a rabble rouser, are the men who saw me there worshipping God in the temple. They're the ones that ought to be here making accusations. Or else let these same ones who are here, if they have found any evil doing in me while I stood before the council.

Now, I stood before these guys the other day, and if I did any evil while I was there, let them go ahead and testify of it now. Except the only thing I did 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. That's all I said.

And if they find offense with that, let them speak up. And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way. Now again, Felix had a knowledge of the Christians.

Where he received the knowledge is not known from the Bible. But Felix knew about the way. He knew about Jesus Christ and those who believed in Jesus Christ.

Now, there is in secular history a story that somehow Simon Magus got together with Felix and shared with him his experiences and that they became close friends. And it is from him that he got his understanding of Christianity, for they would sit up late hours in the night talking about it. That is from secular history, and whether or not that is the actual source of his knowledge of Christianity, we do not know for certain.

But he did have a good understanding of Christianity. And because he had this good understanding, he deferred them and said, when Lysias, the chief captain, shall come down, I will know the complete story. I'll get his side of the story.

Lysias, of course, was the captain who rescued Paul from the mob. Now, here we see a weakness in Felix, who before becoming governor was actually a slave. But his brother, Pallas, was a close confidant of Nero.

And through the influence of his brother, Pallas, Nero made him the ruler, the governor over the province, which was a unique situation because never before had a slave become a governor in the Roman Empire. But Tacitus, the Roman historian, said that he ruled over the people with tyranny and violence as a slave. So his weakness, though, was his always deferring an issue, postponing decisions.

There are some people that have that same weakness, postponing, procrastinating. There was an interesting article in the Reader's Digest a year or so ago on procrastination. And it talks about those

people who have difficulty doing something now.

They always seem to want to put off the decision or put off the action. And my wife was talking to my daughter about the article. And she said, did you notice that article in Reader's Digest on procrastination? And my daughter said, oh, yes.

She said, I intend to read that one day. He deferred making the decision. He said, I'll wait until Lysias comes down.

And then I'll hear the uttermost of the matter from him. And so he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintances to minister or to come unto him. And so Paul had sort of a free run.

He was in the protective custody of the Roman government, but had freedom. His friends could come at any time and minister to him at all. Now, after certain days, when Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, which was a Jewess.

Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Herod Agrippa I was the Herod who had beheaded James, the brother of John, and had Peter put in prison, intending to bring him forth. But the Lord delivered Peter out of the jail at night. He then went down to Caesarea, where he made the great oration.

And the men of Tyre began to cry, it's the words of a god and not man. And the angel of the Lord smote him, and his body was eaten by worms. That's Herod Agrippa I. Drusilla was his daughter.

Drusilla had been married to a king, Azizas, but through the help of a magician, Felix had enticed her away from her husband, and now she had become the wife of this slave maid governor, Felix. And so Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, and he sent for Paul, and he heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, of temperance, and of judgment to come, Felix trembled.

Paul began to witness to this man, Felix, of righteousness, the way that God would have a man to live. Of temperance, Felix was a very intemperate man. And Paul was laying on him, hey, there is a judgment day coming for all men.

And as Paul reasoned with him of these things, Felix began to tremble because he had a lot to fear from the coming day of judgment for the things that he had done, for the way that he had lived. And he began to tremble, no doubt, with the conviction of the Spirit upon his heart. And he answered, go thy way for this time.

When I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee. The man who defers making decisions, the man who postpones. Felix continued to postpone until finally, there was always a conflict in Caesarea between the Greeks and the Jews as to whose city it was.

And there broke out some two years after this incident of Felix's procrastination, there broke out a big fight, mob violence, the Jews against the Greeks over the control of the city of Caesarea. The Jews were victorious in the fight. And so Felix ordered the Roman soldiers to side with the Greeks and destroy the Jews.

And they killed hundreds of Jews. And then he encouraged them to go ahead and sack the houses of the wealthy Jews, killing them and just spoiling their goods. And so the Jews reported this to Nero.

And Felix lost his authority, was stripped of the authority, would have been executed, but his brother Pallas interceded for him. And instead, he was banished. His more convenient time never came.

As is often the case of a person who defers his decision for Jesus Christ, waiting for some more convenient day. It will never be easier than today. There is a law of metaphysics concerning repeated actions and how it creates pattern responses in our brains.

You ever watched a lady knit who had been knitting for years? They don't even look. You know, it's just what has happened is that they've got grooves in their brain so deep, all they have to do is, you know, set the pattern in their brain and, you know, sort of turn the switch and their hands going. It's just automatic pattern responses because it's been done so much, they can do it without, you know, they can watch TV or they can sit there and talk with you and yet be doing their knitting because of these patterns that have been established in the brain.

The grooves or the patterns are so deeply embedded that it becomes an automatic action, one that you don't even have to think to do. Have you ever noticed that many times when you were fighting with your own conscience concerning a wrong deed, what a fight and what a struggle it was for you and after you did it, how bad you felt, how guilty you felt, vowing to yourself, oh, that's terrible, I'll never do that again. But the next time the issue came up, it wasn't quite so hard to yield.

You didn't have quite a battle as you did before against the evil and it continues to create the patterns until finally a person can do without any pangs of conscience that which one time disturbed him tremendously. Paul calls that a seared conscience with a hot iron. That is, you've destroyed the sensitivity against evil and that's always a sad case to observe.

Any repeated action becomes patterned in the brain so that it becomes harder to break. Re-learning is always a more difficult process than learning. That's why if you take up golf, you should spend the first few hours with a pro to get your stroke correct because if you learn the wrong stroke, it's awfully hard to correct and to get into that groove-type swing.

Bad habits are hard to break because they've set the pattern in the brain. Now, when you continually are deferring your decision for Jesus Christ, you're setting a pattern, making it more difficult to accept. Each time you say no, it'll become harder to say yes.

And that is why nine-tenths of the decisions made for Jesus Christ are made while in the teenage years. Nine out of ten Christians became Christians while they were teenagers, before they had set these negative brain patterns. And so Felix, though he trembled under conviction, passed off the decision.

And he also had hoped for bribery, that money should have been given to him from Paul that he might lose him. He had heard that Paul had brought this offering, you know, to the poor saints, you know, why not for poor Felix, you know, and so he was looking for a bribe. Whereof he sent for him the offender and communed with him.

Kept giving Paul an opportunity to bribe him. He was looking for an excuse to release Paul. But after two years, Porteus Festus replaced Felix.

And Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound. And now when Festus was coming to the province after three days, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Ascended, and you always go up to Jerusalem, you never go down to Jerusalem.

No one ever says, let's go down to Jerusalem. It's always, let's go up to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul and besought him and desired a favor against him that he would send for him to Jerusalem that they might lie in wait and ambush him on the way.

So Festus now has become the governor, replacing Felix. And when he went up to Jerusalem, immediately the high priest. Now this was a different high priest.

And Ananias had passed now from the scene in the intervening two years, a new high priest. But they were still so incensed against Paul that they were still plotting to kill him. So they wanted, they mentioned about Paul, let's bring him up to Jerusalem to stand trial here.

And then on the way to Jerusalem, they were planning to ambush him. But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself would depart shortly to Caesarea. And so he said, let them, therefore, which are among you who are able go down with me and accuse this man if there is some wickedness in him.

And when he had carried among them more than 10 days, he went down into Caesarea. And the next day he was sitting on the judgment seat and he commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews, which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and they laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

One thing about Roman justice is that you had to prove your case against a man. So though they made many complaints, yet they couldn't prove any. And while he answered for himself, neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all.

I haven't offended, you know, the law. I haven't offended the temple. I haven't offended Caesar.

But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure. He had just come into office and he was wanting to get on the good side of these people, accommodating them. Answered Paul, will you go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me? And at this point, Paul was tired of being a political pawn in the hands of the Roman governors.

And he exercised a right of every Roman citizen, unless he was accused of first-degree murder, rape, or kidnap. Paul said, caesare appellate. The two words that any Roman citizen could utter when he felt that he was getting a raw deal in the local courts.

I stand at Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged. To the Jews, I have done no wrong as you very well know. And listen, fella, you're not fooling.

You know that I haven't done them any wrong. For if I be offender, I've committed anything worthy of death. I refuse not to die.

I'm not afraid to die if I've done something worthy of death. But if there be none of these things where they accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal to Caesar, caesare appellate.

The legal phrase that could be used. And so they had a consultation. And so he answered, have you appealed to Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go.

Now, notice, Paul is ready to die for Christ. He said that to his friends on the road to Jerusalem. Hey, what mean you by these tears, you know, to dissuade me? I'm not afraid to be bound.

I'm ready to die for Jesus in Jerusalem. But he's not going to just recklessly give his life for nothing. There are some people that recklessly and foolishly just expose themselves to danger.

And I don't believe that that is God's will or even wise. So Paul used his right of appeal. And after certain days, King Agrippa and Bernice came on to Caesarea to greet Festus.

Now, this is King Agrippa, Herod Agrippa the second. It was his great grandfather, Herod, who had ordered the death of the innocent children at the time of the birth of Christ. His great uncle, Herod, had ordered the death of John the Baptist.

His father, Herod Agrippa, had ordered the death of James that we mentioned earlier. This is Herod Agrippa the second. His wife was Bernice, who was also his sister.

She also was a daughter of Herod Agrippa the first. So she was the sister also to Drusilla, who was the wife of Felix. So it's getting to be a mixed-up family affair here.

Now, Bernice had originally been married to her uncle, whom she divorced and married a wealthy Roman merchant man. And when Herod Agrippa met her in Rome, he enticed her to leave him and to come and live with him. So it was really a very unsavory situation that existed here between Herod Agrippa the second and Bernice.

Now, because Festus was new in the office, a new governor, and Herod Agrippa was still the king over a portion of the province, he came to greet him. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause to the king, saying, there is a certain man who has been left in bonds by Felix, about whom when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have a judgment against him, whom I answered it is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die before he has been able to meet his accusers face to face. And to have a license to answer for himself concerning the crimes that he's charged with.

Therefore, when they were come hither without any delay on the next day, I sat at the judgment seat and I commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they did not bring any accusation of such things as I supposed. All they had were certain questions against him of their own beliefs or superstitions and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

So they were just, you know, arguing over Paul's belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him if he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

Then Agrippus said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. And Festus answered, tomorrow you will hear him. Now, Festus had no jurisdiction or ruling over Paul.

So it was not really a legal process. Paul had already appealed to Caesar and that's where Paul's next legal official hearing would take place. But this was just an entertainment for Herod Agrippa and his wife.

It was just a big occasion to have a big time of entertainment. We'll listen to this fellow. However, Herod Agrippa was a student of the Jewish scriptures and he had studied the customs and the manners of the Jews carefully so that he is interested, no doubt, in what Paul might have to say concerning Jesus Christ.

As we will get into Paul's defense before Agrippa next week. This will be brought up. So on the morrow, when Agrippa was come and Bernice with great pomp, that is, they were dressed in their royal purple apparel.

Festus was probably dressed in his crimson robes. And of course, there stood the legionnaires who were the tallest of the Romans, the special elite guard standing there at attention with their fancy uniforms. And the whole assembly of the notable people.

It was a public occasion, you know, where the king might show off his glory. And so he comes into the arena and all of the others. And probably this was done at the arena there in Caesarea that still exists to the present day.

And you who have made your pilgrimage to Israel have had the privilege of sitting in that arena in Caesarea. And it's always just sort of awesome to sit there and to realize that this is probably the arena where Paul came to make his defense before Herod Agrippa. And so they had come with great pomp and entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains, the principal men of the city at Festus' commandment, Paul was brought forth.

And Festus said, King Agrippa and all men which are here present with us, you see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem and also here, crying that he ought not to live anymore. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself has appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him, of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my Lord. Wherefore, I have brought him forth before you and especially before thee, O King Agrippa, that after examination, I might have something to write.

For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not be able to signify the crimes that he's charged with. So, Festus had been put in a real pickle by Paul. When Paul appealed to Caesar, because he was a Roman citizen, he had that right.

Festus had to send him to Caesar. However, being just a political pawn and there are no real charges against him, if Paul comes to Caesar without legitimate charges, then Festus is in trouble. Because he hasn't been exercising his position as judge in fairness, which the Roman government always sought.

Fairness for the Roman citizens. And so, Festus had a real problem when Paul appealed to Caesar, because there weren't any legitimate charges that he could make against Paul. And it would immediately be obvious to Caesar that Festus had failed to do his job as a governor and it would look bad for Festus.

So, Festus was really sort of glad for this occasion because he was hoping that by Caesar's listening to Paul, they might be able to get some kind of charges that will seem to be legitimate charges against Paul when he is sent to stand before Caesar, that at least there might seem to be legitimate charges. And so, this is what Festus says the purpose of this now is that we might formulate our charges against this man as we send him to Caesar so that we'll have the formal charges that we might make. Because it really doesn't seem right to send a prisoner and not be able to signify the crimes of which he is guilty.

And so, Festus was in big trouble. Hopefully now Agrippa will help him out by being able to formulate charges against Paul. As we get into the next chapter, we'll find out that unfortunately for Festus, it didn't work.

And Caesar just said, hey, you've got a problem and let it go at that, but did not really help in formulating any charges against Paul. So, next week, Paul's exciting defense before Agrippa. It's one of my favorite chapters in the book of Acts.

There's so much here in Paul's defense before Agrippa and I think you'll find it extremely fascinating in your study. And then we will begin to journey towards Rome with Paul in chapter 27 next week as he is on his way finally to Rome. I must see Rome.

And now he's getting on his way. As Paul testified to Felix of righteousness, of temperance, and of judgment to come, he trembled. And he said, I will hear you again on a more convenient day.

It is not enough that you feel sorry for your sins. It is not enough that you experience the conviction of the Holy Spirit and even tremble at the thought of the judgment to come. It is necessary that you submit your life to Jesus Christ and to receive His forgiveness and cleansing.

For there is to be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. And whosoever names are not found written in the land's book of life will be cast into the lake burning with fire and this is the second death. Don't think that that's just someone's wild concept.

Or superstitious belief. That is the word of God. Plain, powerful.

And you would be wise to take heed. And you would be wise not to follow the weakness of Felix who deferred making decisions. But you would be wise to make your decision tonight to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and as your Lord.

You would be welcome to go back to the prayer room, which is on the far corner over here. The door goes behind the block wall. The prayer room is behind that block wall.

And there will be counselors and pastors back there who will be happy to pray with you. And I would suggest you not say, well, some other night. I intend to do it sometime.

I would encourage you do it tonight. You don't know. But what this may be your last opportunity.

As Amos said, prepare to meet thy God. One day you're going to meet God. But if you have it prepared by receiving Jesus Christ, it's going to be an awesome, horrible experience.

May the Lord be with you. May the Lord bless you. May the Lord keep you by his power and in his love.

That you might be God's instrument this week to share his love with others. That you might be a blessing to those that you come in contact with as they sort of draw from your relationship with Jesus. And are strengthened and blessed because of your walk with him.

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