

Paul's Shining Character

by Steve Gallagher

The sermon explores the transformative character of Paul through various incidents in Acts, emphasizing humility, strategic decision-making, and the importance of seizing spiritual opportunities.

Duration: 50:49

Scripture: Acts 23:6

Topics: "Christian Character", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon delves into the transformation of the Apostle Paul over a 20-year period, highlighting key incidents from Acts chapters 23 to 27. It showcases Paul's meekness in the face of hostility, his balance of idealism and pragmatism, his earnestness in sharing the Gospel, his enforced rest by God, shrewdness in dealing with treacherous men, love for souls over self, and courage during calamity, revealing the profound work God did in Paul's character and heart.

Transcript

Yes, praise the Lord. Amen. God is good.

God is so good. Lord, we do just start off this session today. Just thanking you for your marvelous kindnesses.

Just your overwhelming grace and the way that you answer prayers and are constantly doing good. Mostly, usually behind the scenes, without fanfare, just in a humble way. We thank you, Lord.

We pray that you'll be with us now as we approach this next talk through the life of Paul. Help us, Lord. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Okay, so this is number 10. Number 18 through Acts.

We're almost through the book of Acts. Today I need to cover five chapters. So we have a lot of ground to cover.

And we're going to kind of hurry through. But what I'm going to do instead of trying to go through everything or just focus on one chapter. What I decided to do is I'm going to go through all five chapters.

But I'm going to just give an overview, a brief overview of the chapter. And then I'm going to share, through these five chapters, I want to share seven different incidents or things, whatever, however you want to say it, that bring out a new sight to the character of Paul and what God has accomplished in his life. Remember, if you go back 10 sessions ago to the first one, you remember what Saul was like.

And, you know, I tried to paint the picture of what this man was like in the flesh. He was ugly. He was unmerciful.

He was proud. He had an anger issue, you know, et cetera, et cetera. And I hope that somewhat, you know, through all these sessions today, that what God has done in him in the 20 years since then will, you know, be a little more clear to us.

So let's get started right here with chapter 23. Chapter 23, if you remember last week when we dealt with 21 and 22, Paul was arrested. And so today, the commander of the Roman forces there in Jerusalem brings Paul in in front of the Sanhedrin to present his defense or whatever, just so he can understand what the situation is better.

And so Paul shows once again his presence of mind in the face of hostility and does some things to get himself out of the situation, basically. And then after he gets through that, the incident with his nephew where his nephew discovered that there were 40 Jews that had developed a plot to kill Paul. And that's how that chapter ends.

All right, so our first incident that we want to look at today is Paul's argument with the high priest. Let's start right here with verse 1. Chapter 23, verse 1, Paul looking intently at the council. Now, can you imagine those eyes full of the fire of God looking at those 70 religious, hard-hearted men? You know, who knows what that exactly means.

But anyway, Paul looking intently at the council said, brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day. Well, that was a questionable opening. I don't know that I would have started off that way, but that's what Paul did.

The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall. You sit to try me according to the law and in violation of the law order me to be struck because there was a way of doing things before the Sanhedrin and you don't just hit someone in the mouth, you know, because they said something you didn't particularly care for.

But the bystanders said, do you revile God's high priest? And Paul said, I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest, for it is written, you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people. All right, let's leave it there. Now you got to remember it's been 20 years now since Paul had been in this group of men, you know, and so he doesn't know who the high priest is.

He hasn't even been in Jerusalem other than to just pop in occasionally for a few days at a time. He doesn't know that this man is the high priest, but whatever the case may be, Ananias according to Josephus was extremely prideful and angry man and most of all greedy. And he found ways to steal the money from the priests and, you know, get it into his own hands.

He was hated by most of the Jewish people, especially the zealots. And when Paul made this statement that he lived a conscientious life before God, it just infuriated this proud man. How dare you, you heretic

come before us and make such a statement, such a claim, you know? So that was his reaction.

And let me just make a couple of observations about Paul and how he responded to getting hit in the mouth. First of all, he does have a rather intense, volatile personality and I can understand. And, you know, he would react instantly.

Some people react calmly to things and, you know, outwardly they may be raging inside, but inside they just kind of hold themselves and whatever. But people like Paul would tend to be very visible in what they're feeling or may even do something. And in this case, he reacted quickly.

And, you know, let's remember that Paul is a human. He's not Jesus as we'll show here in a second. You know, so he did the wrong thing.

He reacted in the wrong way. He didn't have to be so harsh, but he was, you know, a human being. But once he recovered himself, then he immediately humbled himself and responded in meekness.

You know, and sometimes that's the best you can do in a situation. When you don't handle something right, well, you can still humble yourself when you get it together and so on. And the thing that really stood out to me though was his words, God will strike you.

Paul is a prophet. Now I'm not gonna push this too far, but when a prophet says something's gonna happen, you know, watch out, be looking for the lightning bolt to come because there is power in the words of a prophet. And I don't, you know, again, I don't know, it could just be coincidental.

I'm not gonna say that this absolutely applies to Paul, but eight years later, when the Jewish zealots rose up against the Romans, one of the first things they did was burn this man's house down. He ran for his life. They chased him down and they murdered him.

You know, so God did strike him, you could say. Well, listen to what Jerome says. He says, where is that patience of the Savior who as a lamb led to the slaughter opens not his mouth? Gently asked his smiter, if I've spoken evil, bear witness to the evil.

But if well, why do you smite me? We're not detracting from the apostle, but declaring the glory of God who's suffering in the flesh reigns above the wrong and frailty of the flesh. You know, so it's good. I mean, this is good, what this contrast that Jerome is making with Jesus.

Jesus in the same place, before the same Sanhedrin, hit in the mouth in the same way, but look at the contrast in how the two reacted. Again, Paul is a human being. Jesus Christ is the son of God.

All right, the second incident that I'm gonna bring up today happens right on the heels of this one. Let's just continue reading, verse six. But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the council.

Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead. As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees and the assembly was divided.

For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And there occurred a great uproar. I'll stop there.

All right, it became obvious to Paul that he was not gonna receive a fair hearing in front of this man. So, you know, instantaneously, maybe impulsively, his, he sizes up the situation. He knows this group of men.

He was part of this group of men at one time. This was his whole life. And as a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisees, he understands fully well how different or what a conflict there was in that group between the Sadducees and Pharisees.

So it was like, maybe he had this thought in his mind before, I don't know, but he diverted the attention off of himself and immediately created a conflict there in that group of men. The Pharisees really didn't have that much of a problem with the theology of the Christians because they believed in many of the same things, you know? So it really wasn't that big of a jump from being a Pharisee to being a Christian. It was really just a matter mostly of going from law to grace, really, is the big issue.

But anyway, so when Paul makes that statement, well, it is somewhat true that he had been a Pharisee. And, you know, like I say, there's some similarities in their teachings. But listen to what Farrar says.

We cannot in this matter wholly see how St. Paul could say without qualification, I am a Pharisee. We cannot but think that this creating of a division among common enemies was hardly worthy of St. Paul. And knowing, as we do know, what the Pharisees were, we cannot imagine his divine master ever saying under any circumstances, I am a Pharisee.

But the strategy was, for the time, almost magically successful. Paul's enemies were instantly at each other's throats. So, you know, he pulled it off and managed to bring something out of it.

But anyway, the pulpit commentary rushes to Paul's defense. Let me read this as well. Is the man of God, therefore, to take no steps to secure his own safety? Is he to use no prudence by which danger may be avoided and the enemies who seek to hurt him may be baffled and eluded? To act wisely and discreetly, to take advantage of circumstances and opportunities as they arise, to bring about good results and to avert evil ones is as much the duty of a Christian as to sow in order that he may reap or to take medicine in order that he may be healed.

Paul's actions here can be added to many other such examples to prove that the safety of the righteous often lies in the disunion of sinners, which is true. But, you know, the bigger issue that he's bringing out here is that sometimes you have to do things, you know, that may not, that is just expedient for the situation. And I started thinking about this, really about the two extremes in, I don't know, I'll say in ministry, sometimes in the Christian life, in business or just regular life, whatever, but the extremes of idealism or pragmatism, which is on the other end, and finding the balance of the two.

And it's a difficult thing to find. You know, idealism, you are trying to live up to a very high standard, ideal. You know, pragmatism is the attitude, just make the thing work, it doesn't really matter how.

You know, it's kind of like throw the ideals out the window, what's gonna work here? And you see a lot of pragmatic politicians who give up their ideals just to get, you know, legislation through or whatever. But, you know, in ministry and in the Christian life, there's a balance that we have to keep, because either way will get you in trouble or at least, you know, cause problems. For instance, on our board at Pure Life, we have men with a business background who love the Lord, but we also have men who are deeply spiritual with a tiny bit of business awareness.

And it makes for a good balance as we, as a ministry, you know, we're doing a spiritual work, but we have all this business, these business trappings and all of this stuff that we have to deal with as well. So we need voices from both sides, and we need to be able to look at these situations and questions and issues from a spiritual mindset, but also be practical about it. Let me give you a couple of examples.

One that came to me was, I don't know if you remember in the book, *The Hiding Place*, where the Nazis came storming into their house. And I think there was a couple of young guys there who went out, they had a secret room or something or a spot under the floor in the kitchen, and they dove in there and then threw the rug over it and put the table there or something, and then the Nazis come in. And Corey's sister, who is way on this side of being extremely idealistic, will not tell a lie no matter what.

And so the Nazis say, where are you hiding the young men? You know, as they were looking for workers. And she said, under the table. You know, it was like, you couldn't have done a more stupid thing, you know? Just, but the Lord protected her, so she bursts out into laughter, and they just took it as she was making fun of them.

But they were under the table, you know? So I wouldn't suggest that we handle things that way when the Antichrist comes around looking for me or something. Don't tell them where I'm at. You know, there's gotta be a practical way.

I'll just say something about lying. You know, it's the intent behind the lie. Sometimes you have to kind of color the truth.

You can't say the exact black and white truth in every situation because it'll hurt people, for instance. So you have to kind of color the truth. You have to kind of, you know, schmooze your way a little bit in certain situations just to protect the person or to protect someone else.

You know, those kinds of things where you're not lying with the intention of hurting or using or manipulating someone, but you're kind of painting the truth a little bit just to, you know what I'm saying. That's another example. I'll give you one more.

When Kathy and I first started Pure Life in 86, and the Lord had spoken to me in 85 and said, get rid of the television set or quit watching television is the way he said it. So we got rid of our television set and for several years, we didn't have a television. And we didn't watch any television whatsoever.

And to this day, it's been almost 30 years and we have never had network television or satellite or whatever, you know, that kind of stuff, cable or any of that during this whole time. But we did end up getting a television set with a DVD player and we did end up relaxing things a bit to where we could get documentaries or movies, animated movies, Christian movies, whatever. And we could pick and choose and, you know, okay, here's the two sides.

I started off extremely idealistic when I started Pure Life Ministries. And I could say that about a lot of different things like fundraising or, you know, just a lot of different things where you take this strong stand, I will not make our needs known. You know, I will not promote this ministry.

And in the late 90s, we were down to, I think it was, was it six men? Huh? Six men in the living program because we had taken such a strong stand, we won't do anything and we were waiting on God to do everything. Well, you know, that was a nice idealistic approach, but I'm not sure that it's what is pleasing to the Lord all the time. So on the other side, I don't even like saying the pragmatic side, I'll just say the

practical side, you know, actually the Lord did speak to me in 1999, we were up in Cape Cod and the Lord spoke to me very clearly one morning.

I was out on the beach praying and he said, I want you to start promoting the ministry. So I got a word from the Lord to do it. And since that time, think of all the tens of thousands of our books that have been out there helping people, you know, all the testimonies that have come in, all the hundreds of men who have gone through the program.

What if it was still down to six men because we didn't wanna, you know, do anything to promote or anything like that. So it was that kind of thinking in the early days. It was a good start in some ways, you know, but we had to relax things a little bit and find the right balance there.

And I think that's what Paul's doing here. He didn't have time to think it all through and, you know, fast and pray and all that. He just had to make an instantaneous decision.

I don't know if it was the right one or whatever. I don't know if he was doing the right thing, but I think that basically you see it so many times in his actions, his behavior, that he's not out to save his life as the number one thing in, you know, in his life. It's clear that he's not in that mindset.

So this decision, right or wrong, you know, we'll give him a pass on it. All right, chapter 24. In this chapter, basically a few days later, the Sanhedrin send a delegation to Caesarea and bring charges against Paul.

You know, they've kind of regrouped. Okay, now we can't get in big arguments in front of Felix. That's not gonna help our cause.

So they send a delegation there. They bring their charges. Paul, you know, defends himself with the truth.

And, you know, and basically Felix, who can't seem to make a good decision about anything, just says, well, I'll get to it later. And then a few days later, Felix and his Jewish wife bring Paul in, just, you know, just bring him in to hear what he's got to say. And the chapter ends with, you know, just Luke making note of the fact that Paul was in jail there for two years and then Festus replaced Felix.

All right, so number three incident here is Paul's convicting message to Felix and Drusilla. This was about one thing. This had nothing to do with Paul defending himself in a trial setting, none of that.

This had only to do with one thing, entertainment. These people were entertainment starved. You know, they didn't have TV to watch at night and stuff like that.

So people would do anything to just break the monotony. Okay, let's hear what this wacko Paul, the, you know, this Christian heretic guy, let's hear what he's got to say. It'll give us something to do tonight.

That's really what it amounted to. So Paul goes before these two and, you know, probably Felix's wife being Jewish had heard about Paul and just had some curiosity, but she got more than she bargained for because Paul goes in there and pours his heart out to these two and warns them of the spiritual danger that they're in. I use this illustration in my book, *The Time of Our Lives in Light of Eternity* to illustrate the Greek term *kairos*.

And, you know, that whole book is about the concept of time and how it plays in the Christian life and so on. *Kairos* is translated as times, as time sometimes, but other times, okay, enough already. Other times it's translated as opportunity.

Anyway, the point I made in the book is that an unbeliever will typically only have certain occasions when he will come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and all the circumstances are ripe for a conversion. You know, and he's only gonna come into that occasionally and he dare not miss his opportunities. So, you know, and of course Felix put off till tomorrow what he should have dealt with right then and there.

And that was the point that I brought out in the book. I used that to talk about procrastinating, you know, in the, when God's dealing with you. All right, so we see here though, the main thing I'm trying to bring out here is that Paul is standing in front of these two hard-hearted, cynical people, you know, who are just looking for some amusement, but he goes in there probably with tears in his eyes and pours his heart out about the great danger they're in.

And I mean, it must have been full of the Spirit of God, the anointing of God, because you could tell by Felix's reaction the great conviction that he came under. But, you know, he turned away and said no, basically, and I would assume to his eternal regret. Okay, number four also happens in this chapter.

It's the last verse and basically isn't an incident, it's just referring to his time of confinement. Look at verse 27. But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

All right, Paul had been imprisoned in Caesarea about the middle of 58, and then we know that his voyage to Rome took about six months, and then he was imprisoned in Rome for two more years. So he is put out of commission for four and a half years. Why would the Lord allow such a fruitful and powerful ministry to be put on the shelf for four and a half years? You know, this is one of the mysteries of the way that God does things.

Because if we had things the way we think they should be, you know, everyone would be a Billy Graham and have tens of thousands, you know what I mean? Every preacher that ever lived would have that kind of ministry, because they, you know, we all tend to think that way. But God doesn't always think that way. Let me just mention a few things that stood out to me as possibilities why the Lord allowed this to happen.

For one thing, Paul needed a rest. I mean, this guy had been involved in intense spiritual warfare for years. And I know enough from having run this ministry what it's like to live in the pressure and live with that constant opposition from the enemy that you feel at times, and constantly, everything you're trying to do, you feel the enemy resisting you, trying to throw roadblocks in front of you, trying to trip you up, cause problems, cause incidents, cause people to come against you, just constantly going upstream.

That's what it's like to run a godly ministry. And, you know, I can only imagine what Paul must have gone through. I'm sure it was much more intense than what we experience here.

And this went on for years. And then he had the conflicts with the Judaizers and all the problems that they caused. Everywhere he had really laid down his life and they're going behind him, trying to uproot and overthrow all his efforts and work.

And how many times he was beaten, you know? Could you imagine what his body must have been like 20 years into this? And then all the traveling he had done. And so the Lord, whatever else was involved with this, I think he felt like Paul needed a rest. But also, this gave Paul a greater opportunity to really intercede for people.

Because he's pulled out of the closeness of all of these problems, and he's able to get back out of it in this setting and be a little more objective, be a little more, I don't know, controlled, and really pray for people and churches and situations and the church at large and church in Jerusalem and the elders there and the disciples and what they're doing. And all these different things Paul was able to really focus on in prayer. Also a better opportunity to really think through the gospel and some of the deep things of God.

I'm sure that he had a better opportunity to think deeply. Excuse me. And also, apparently, Luke used this time to investigate the life of Christ.

And it's almost certain that he did. I mean, there's nothing said anywhere about it, but it's almost certain that he did. There were still a lot of people alive in Palestine who had interacted with the Savior.

So he could go around and interview people and get anecdotes and stories and different teachings that Jesus had shared and so on. So he was able to gather together a lot of information. Now, Irenaeus, who lived right after Paul, wrote that Luke wrote the gospel under the direction and guidance of Paul.

I had never heard that before. I don't know how I missed that. Or maybe I did know it and forgot it.

But I started thinking about this. Think of that. You could almost say the gospel according to Paul.

And think about it. Who is the main audience for the gospel of Luke? The Gentiles. And so that makes perfect sense.

Of course, Luke was a Gentile. But I started thinking about some of the realities of that. And I looked through Luke real briefly at some of the parables that Jesus taught that are not shared in any of the other gospels.

Let me just go through them real quickly. The two debtors in Luke 7. The good Samaritan in Luke 10. And then the praying friend who visits his other friend in the middle of the night in Luke 11.

The rich man who had stored up all his stuff in his barn in Luke 12. The barren fig tree in Luke 13. The lost piece of silver in Luke 15.

The prodigal son. What a story. You know, I don't know why the other gospel writers didn't include that.

But what's it about? Repentance. It's all about repentance. And it makes perfect sense that Paul would wanna make sure that that story got told.

The unrighteous manager in Luke 16. Lazarus and the rich man. Remember Lazarus died, the rich man died.

And the rich man sees Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham in heaven as he's in hell. Paul wanted that story told. You know, think about that.

The unjust judge. That's about prayer. Again, you know, battling through in prayer to get the answers.

And God is willing to give those answers. That's in Luke 18. And then this one's the capper to me.

This is like, wow, yeah. That is, I could sure see Paul wanting to make sure this story, this parable got in there. Like to know what it is? The Pharisee and the tax collector both went up to the temple to pray.

And which one went away justified? And you know that there was a time that Paul was Saul the Pharisee. And he could certainly identify with that story. So anyway, I just wanted to throw that in.

I thought that was very interesting to me to think about the gospel of Luke and Paul's involvement with the writing of it and compiling those stories and parables and so on. And you know, with his influence on putting that together. And that happened apparently while he was in Caesarea.

Aren't you glad Paul was in Caesarea for a while and not just out running around preaching in marketplaces. Okay, but I should also mention that Paul wasn't entirely, you know, sitting there doing nothing during this time. He was no doubt ministering to the people who would come to him from Caesarea.

Philip and his group member and probably other believers lived in Palestine. Maybe even some believers would come up from Jerusalem. Maybe even some from the West, you know, would come and visit him.

He probably wrote letters that we don't have anymore to individuals or the churches. And we know that when he was in Rome, he preached and ministered and testified to the guards and won some of them to Christ. No doubt he did that here as well.

So you can see that, you know, he did make good use of his time. All right, let's get to chapter 25 now. In chapter 25, Festus is now the governor of Palestine and the Jews are right there to bring charges against Paul.

You know, they just won't let this thing die. And it seems as though Festus was a fair man. He seems like he was a pretty good ruler, but he was inexperienced with the Jews and he had no idea probably how treacherous these Jewish leaders could be.

And, you know, when Festus suggested that he take Paul to Jerusalem to stand, you know, in front of the Sanhedrin and face the charges, I think Paul could see the handwriting on the wall and he appealed to Caesar. All right, so our fifth incident then is Paul's appeal to Caesar. Let's take a look at that.

It may seem, you know, somewhat strange that Paul would want to appeal to go stand before Caesar Nero. You know, who wants to stand before Nero and explain why you're a Christian? Not me, but anyway, let me just bring out a couple of points about that. For one thing, at that time, you know, in those early days, he didn't know Festus and he didn't know if he could trust Festus and so on.

He didn't know how Festus would handle his case. So he was very concerned that Festus wanting to please the Jews, you know, as he's coming into his new office there and there's all these problems in the land that, you know, maybe he would make him a sacrificial goat. I don't know, you know, I could see where Paul might think that and he did not want to be put in the hands of the Jews.

He would rather be put in the hands of the Romans any day because he knew at least he had an opportunity for justice there because he was a Roman citizen. And also the other thing is we have to take into consideration at this point in 60 AD, Nero was still considered a pretty good emperor. Believe it or not, there was a time, his early years, he was considered a good emperor.

He hadn't yet gotten into some of the bizarre things that he got into and he definitely had not gotten into persecuting Christians at this point. So, you know, it was a pretty good decision really. Let me read what F.B. Meyer said.

How inveterately must these Jews have hated Paul when after two years they still thirsted for his blood? How strangely God was fulfilling his own word, quote, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. Paul had always desired to visit the imperial city to bear there the message of the cross, but he never expected to go under the safeguard of Roman soldiers and at Roman expense. Deep in unfathomable minds of never failing skill, God fulfills his purposes.

Yeah, isn't that amazing? Chapter 26, this chapter, basically Paul is awaiting to go on his voyage to Rome. I don't know how long this period lasts. It's probably just, you know, a couple of weeks or something, I don't know.

But anyway, during this time, King Agrippa shows up in Caesarea and Festus decides to put Paul on display in front of King Agrippa. This is basically the same as when he appeared before Felix and Drusilla. It's just an entertainment thing.

It's an excuse to get together for the new Roman governor and this king, you know, descendant of Herod, who kind of worked under the auspices of the Roman empire, but kind of a separate sort of area of responsibility and so on. Anyway, it was just a way of getting them together. But you know, and also in this, I should mention that this is the third time that Paul records Paul sharing, did I say Paul? That Luke records Paul sharing his testimony.

So, you know, and if you study these three testimonies, you see, you get little bits and pieces in each one that are different from the others and it kind of brings out a fuller picture. But anyway, number six incident that we're gonna touch on is his earnest speech before Festus and Agrippa. Paul is not intimidated by man's position.

You know, he doesn't care if the guy is a king or a governor, all he sees is a human soul that is on its way to hell, unless it gets redeemed. You know, and his primary concern is not to win his case or to impress these worldly leaders. He's not concerned about that.

He doesn't have any fear of man. It's amazing. His only concern is to plead the cause of Christ.

It's really remarkable. Again, let me read Farrar. Festus could only listen open mouth to this impassioned tale of visions and revelations and ancient prophecies and of a Jewish prophet who had been crucified and yet had risen from the dead and was divine and who could forgive sins and lighten the darkness of Jews as well as Gentiles.

He had been getting more and more astonished. And the last remark was too much for him. So when Festus couldn't take it any longer, he interrupted Paul and said, Paul, you're out of your mind.

Your great learning is driving you mad. You know, so Festus made the conclusion that most worldly minded men make. And that is that spiritual things are of no value and of no interest.

And that decision or that dynamic in the mind, that process of thinking has sent how many people to damnation? I don't know. You know, people who don't wanna be bothered thinking about the hereafter. Well, anyway, so Paul sees that things aren't going, he's not getting anywhere with Festus.

So he turns to Agrippa, who at least has a background understanding of the Jewish nation and God's dealings with them and so on. And well, let me just read verses 27, 28 here. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do.

Agrippa replied to Paul, in a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian. So there were other things expressed there, no doubt. And Luke's just given the bare bones here of the story.

But basically, again, Paul is earnestly pouring his heart out to these men. And there's other dignitaries there as well. In fact, some people believe that this occasion here actually happened in the Roman, I don't think it's called the Colosseum there.

Maybe it is, in Caesarea. I've been there. I've sat in the steps there in Caesarea.

I don't know if it's called a theater or Colosseum. Anybody remember, Ed? Yeah, I can't remember what it is. But anyway, it's still there.

And some people believe that was full of important people and that Paul is standing before all of these people, pouring out his heart. Again, sharing God's word with mostly Gentile people. Anyway, again, let me read what Farrar has to say here.

Not old in years, but accustomed from his boyhood to an atmosphere of cynicism and unbelief, Agrippa could only smile with the good-natured contempt of a man of the world at the enthusiastic earnestness, which could even for a moment fancy that he would be converted to the heresy of the Nazarenes with their crucified Messiah. Doubtless, his polished remarks sounded very witty to that distinguished company, and they would with difficulty suppress their laughter at the notion that Agrippa would become a Christian. But the laugh would be instantly suppressed in pity and admiration of the poor but noble prisoner.

As with perfect dignity, he took advantage of Agrippa's ambiguous expression and said, with all the fervent sincerity of a loving heart, I would wish to God that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am, except for these chains. And Longenecker, let me read Longenecker's quote too. It kind of adds just one little piece to this picture.

Undoubtedly, he spoke with evangelistic fervor, directing his appeal not only to the king, but also to the other dignitaries. Then in a lighter vein, recognizing the apparent incongruity of appealing for their acceptance of spiritual freedom while he himself stood chained before them, he raised his hands and added, except for these chains. Paul had had the last word and his light touch at the end of his response evidently broke the silence.

He spoke up the meeting. So, once again, we see Paul pouring his heart out to people, many of whom would laugh at him or at least pity him, feel sorry for him, and so on. All right, chapter 27 is his voyage to Rome, the shipwreck and all of that.

So our last thing we're gonna look at is Paul's composure during that shipwreck. And that's all expressed in the last half of the chapter. We don't have time for me to read it, but basically from verses 18 on, especially.

Basically, the story is that for 14 days, these sailors fought to save that ship and fought to save their lives. But this gale is overwhelming the boat, you know? And, well, let me read what Coney Baranhausen says. No one who has never been in a leaking ship in a continued gale can know what has suffered under such circumstances.

The strain both of mind and body, the incessant demand for the labor of all the crew, the terror of the passengers, the hopeless working at the pumps, the laboring of the ship's frame and cordage, the driving

of the storm, the numbing effect of the cold and wet make up a scene of great confusion, anxiety, and fatigue. You know, so you get a sense here that these men have been in a state of panic. But if you've ever experienced something of real fear, I remember one time I did something, almost.

I've done a number of things that almost got me sent to prison or hurt really badly. But this one particular time I did something, and this was even before I knew Kathy, and it looked like there's a possibility of prison time, and I just was, I was all upset, you know? And that went on for days. But after a while, you start getting into this place of numbness.

You know, you can only stay in a panicked state for so long, and you just kind of get to a place where you just acquiesce, and you just, you know, whatever. Whatever happens, happens. You just kind of get to that place where you give up inside.

And I think that that's sort of what these men went through, these sailors. Again, let me read this last quote from Farrar. But in that desperate crisis, one man retained his calm and courage.

It was Paul the prisoner, probably in physical health, the weakest of them all, but it is in such moments that the courage of the noblest soul shines with the purest luster, and the soul of Paul was inwardly enlightened. As he prayed in all the peacefulness of a blameless conscience, it was revealed to him that God would fulfill the promised destiny, which was to lead him to Rome, and that with the preservation of his own life, God would also grant to him the lives of those unhappy sufferers. You know, so, I mean, I don't know why he said it the way he said it, and it wasn't just some kind of an inward sense.

An angel appeared to him and told him that God is gonna see you through this thing. Your life is being protected and covered by the Lord, so don't worry about it. You can just rest easy.

So you can imagine going through something like that. Anyway, Paul shares these things with these sailors, and it seemed to encourage, you know what the word encourage, I guess, started off to mean, to infuse courage into a person, to encourage them, and I think that that's what happened, and so they regained their, you know, fighting spirit, and went back into the battle and saved that ship, and I'm sure that the Lord put strength behind his words. All right, so what do we see in Paul through all these incidents? Meekness in the face of haughtiness, a good balance of idealism and pragmatism, earnestness in an intimidating environment, enforced rest by a compassionate God, shrewdness in dealing with treacherous men, a love for souls rather than a love for self, and finally, courage in the midst of calamity.

That's the Apostle Paul, and you really see what God has done in this man's life, in his heart, in his character during that 20-year period up till now, how he has been transformed from Saul, the self-centered, prideful, angry, haughty Pharisee to this loving, meek, godly, unselfish man. It's just a tremendous story. Okay, so next week, we will get into his time that he spent there in Rome and what came out of that.

That two-year period. God bless you. God bless you.

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