

(Acts) Righteous, Self Control, and Judgement

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon explores Paul's experiences in Jerusalem, emphasizing the importance of testimony and the divine assurance of God's plan amidst opposition.

Duration: 59:43

Scripture: Mark 4:14, Acts 23:11, Acts 24:14, Acts 24:16, Acts 24:18, Acts 24:25, Acts 26:16

Topics: "Divine Providence", "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of scattering the seed of the word of God and trusting God to bring about the results. He shares a testimony of a group of people who shared the gospel at their workplace, and as a result, some employees got saved and attended church. The speaker also shares another testimony of a young man who overhears a plot against the apostle Paul and saves his life by informing him and the commander. The main point is that God often works supernaturally through natural means, and we should not always expect dramatic supernatural manifestations.

Transcript

So when we left the Apostle Paul, you remember he had gone up to Jerusalem, he had met with the elders, and he had given this great report on the many wonderful things that were happening among the Gentiles, and they were excited to hear the news, but they were concerned because there were rumors that Paul was not really supporting the Jewish perspective on the faith, and so they encouraged Paul to sort of put an end to those rumors by providing for these four young men who were going through a particular ceremony, and they felt that if Paul would do that, then that would indicate to everybody that those rumors that he was anti-Jewish would be squelched, and so Paul agreed to do that, and so he went into the temple toward the end of the purification period for those, and as he was there in the temple simply worshiping certain Jews from Asia, where Paul had been ministering for those many years, they saw him in the temple, and they had previously seen Trophimus with him in the city, and so they assumed that Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple and had desecrated the place, and so they laid hold of him, and they called out for others, and they said, come and help us. This is the fellow we've been telling you about, the one that's causing all the trouble, and so a large group gathered, and they thrust Paul out of the temple precinct, and there they were. They were ready to basically just beat him to death, and as he was in harm's way, word came to the commander of the Roman precinct, and he sent his men, and they rescued Paul.

They delivered him from this near-death experience, and as they were carrying him up the steps of the fortress, you remember the mob was still grabbing at him, trying to get him. They were still thirsty for his blood, and as they finally arrived there at the top, Paul asked for permission to speak to the people, and the captain was amazed. He said, do you speak Greek? Aren't you that Egyptian that led 4,000 assassins out into the wilderness? And Paul said, no, I'm a Hebrew.

I'm from Cilicia, no mean city, and so the commander gave him permission to speak, and Paul then addressed this vast crowd of Jews, and the minute he began to speak to them in the Hebrew language, a great silence came upon the crowd, and Paul was able to basically share his testimony with them, something that he'd wanted to do for many, many years. That moment that he had prayed for, waited for, hoped would come, it finally came, and there was Paul standing there on the steps of the Antonia fortress, looking out over a crowd of thousands of Jews and sharing his testimony, how he could identify with them because he used to be just like them. But then he tells how Jesus met him and apprehended him on the roads of Damascus, and he had their attention.

They were captivated by this message that he was giving them, and as he went on in the story, he made a strategic blunder. When he happened to mention the Gentiles, he actually stated that the Lord had told him to get out of Jerusalem because they wouldn't receive his testimony and that he was going to send Paul to the Gentiles, and when he mentioned that word Gentiles, all of a sudden they went back into a rage. They were once again foaming at the mouth.

They were once again wanting to kill him, and so the soldiers took him into the barracks and they said, OK, take this guy and give him lashes so we can ascertain what it was that he said that got the crowd so worked up. And it was then that Paul revealed to them that he was a Roman citizen. He said, is it lawful to beat a Roman who's uncondemned? And suddenly they realized, oh no, they could be in trouble.

This man is a Roman. If you were to give lashes to a Roman who hadn't been condemned, you could actually be in prison yourself. You could lose your position.

You might even face execution. And so the captain says to Paul, he comes and he says, are you a Roman citizen? I heard that. And Paul said, yes, I am.

And the man said, well, I purchased my citizenship with a large sum. Paul said I was born a citizen. And so there.

This man was inquiring about what it was that Paul said. Regarding this whole thing that had just blown up there, what what was it that he said that got them so upset? And so as we come to verse 30 of Chapter 22, it says the next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds and commanded the chief priest and all their council to appear and brought Paul down and set him before them. And so this is where we picked up.

Now, Paul is here with this council as the commander is wanting to really get down to, you know, what what is the issue here? Why are they so upset? Why are they trying to kill this fellow? What was it that he said on the steps when he was speaking in the Hebrew language? And so he puts them there before his accusers, basically. And then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

Then Paul said to him, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall, for you sit to judge me according to the law. And do you command me to be struck contrary to the law? And those who stood by said, do you revile God's high priest? And then Paul said, I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest, for it is written, you shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people. So immediately Paul is in a hot situation once again, as he's standing before this group of men, this council, the Sanhedrin, which he probably had been part of at one point in his life.

There's no absolute certainty that he was part of it, but there are indications in scripture that seem to imply that he was. And so he basically claims his innocence. He claims that he's done nothing wrong whatsoever.

And this evidently enrages Ananias. And so he has Paul smitten. He has him struck.

And then Paul responds to him. Now, we don't know the tone of voice in which Paul spoke. He might have simply said, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall.

But we don't really believe that, do we? When we read it, we feel like Paul says, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall. What do you think you're doing? You know, and maybe he did. And but you could understand it, especially from the human standpoint.

Now, this guy, Ananias, historically, he was an extremely wicked man. He was one of those who would constantly take advantage of the people financially. He had this whole scam going, this whole money making racket going on there in the temple through which he was enriching himself.

And he would he wasn't even above having at his disposal sort of, you know, thugs that would go around and extort from people and even kill people. He was so hated that he was eventually murdered by his own people, killed by his own people. He was killed by the Jews.

So he was an extremely wicked man in this position. And so you can understand Paul, obviously, probably, you know, knowing these things about him speaks up and speaks out boldly against him. Now, in verse five, many have been puzzled by the fact that Paul said that he did not know that this man was the high priest.

And many have wondered, well, how how could it be that Paul would have known that? And there have been a number of suggestions. Some have suggested that Ananias wasn't necessarily dressed in the priestly garment. So and because of sort of the tumultuous situation, it might not have been easily distinguished who was the high priest.

Others have suggested that because Paul seems to have had a problem with his vision, that maybe he just couldn't see clearly enough to know who he was addressing. Others have suggested that Paul was being sarcastic here once again and saying, I didn't know that such a man as this could be God's high priest. And, you know, again, sort of referring to the character of this person.

We really don't know why it was that Paul didn't recognize him. It might have been because he did have a problem with his vision, which he alludes to in other places in his writing. So.

When Paul perceived now here he is, he's in this room, he's meeting before this. The Senate of Israel, basically, but when he perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee concerning the hope and

resurrection of the dead. I am being judged.

And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided for Sadducees say that there is no resurrection and no angel or spirit, but the Pharisees confess both. Now, some people look at this and see this as sort of a slight trick on the part of Paul to sort of divert the attention off of himself and to get these guys, you know, in a battle with one another, which he did indeed do. But others see it as, you know, Paul is simply seeking to appeal to those in the group that he thinks he might be able to reason with.

And that, of course, would be the Pharisees, because the Pharisees, although they had many problems, they were Bible believers. They were fundamental in their theology, where the Sadducees, on the other hand, were very liberal. They didn't believe in a resurrection, as it says here.

They didn't believe in the afterlife. They pretty much believe just in life in this world. And then once you were gone, you were gone.

So it seems to me that rather than, you know, just being ornery, Paul, you know, tries to get this argument going. I think Paul is genuinely wanting to appeal to the Pharisees because, of course, this was his goal to get the gospel to these people. And because knowing how the people were so bound to the opinion of their leaders, Paul was persuaded that if he could convince them, the leaders, then, of course, this would have an impact on the people.

And so he appeals to them based on the issue of the resurrection, knowing that the Pharisees believed in a resurrection. And so, verse nine says, then there arose a loud outcry and the scribes of the Pharisees party arose and protested, saying, We find no evil in this man. But if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

Remember some years earlier how Gamaliel, that leading rabbi of the day, how he stood up and gave similar counsel to the Jews back when they were harassing Peter and John and the other apostles. Now they're just sort of reiterating what Gamaliel had advised. Now, when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him into the barracks.

But the following night, the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome. Remember, as we were wrapping things up in our last study, we were talking about how Paul would have no doubt felt dejected. He would have felt that he had failed.

Because he seemed to have them right there, right where he wanted them, he had their attention, they were giving heed to what he was saying, but then he made that strategic blunder by mentioning the Gentiles and no doubt he would have felt condemnation over that he would have felt like he had failed. And perhaps even in this second opportunity, now before the leaders, he might have even felt that he didn't use the wisest strategy. We don't know what he was feeling, but I think because the Lord appeared to him and encouraged him, we can infer from that that he was dejected, that he was downcast.

But the Lord says, Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified for me in Jerusalem. The Lord is not disappointed with Paul's performance. The Lord didn't see it as a failure at all.

And, you know, that's something that I think we all need to realize. A lot of times we think that unless. We lead somebody in the center's prayer, unless somebody responds positively to the message that we share with them, that somehow we failed or maybe, you know, it was because we did a lousy job and that's why, you know, nobody got saved or whatever.

But testifying for the Lord, that's really all that we're responsible to do. In other words, we're responsible to speak as God gives us the opportunities to testify. But the rest of it is really in God's hands.

I can't make somebody believe in Jesus. I can't force somebody to make a decision. I can't go in and change the heart of a person.

Only God can do that. And I have to realize that God holds me accountable for really one thing only, and that's just to take the opportunities he places before me to tell others about him. To share his truth as those opportunities come my way.

And then after that, I just have to trust that God now it's up to you. But a lot of times I think we feel pressure that if we didn't, you know, close the deal, as some might say, that we somehow failed. Nobody got converted.

They're at the base of the Antonio fortress and nobody got converted in the Sanhedrin, at least on these occasions. You never know what might have happened later, but it wasn't a failure. Jesus says to Paul, you testified for me and just like you testified for me in Jerusalem, you're going to go to Rome and you're going to do the same thing.

Here's what we need to remember. We are like Jesus was were to scatter the seed. And the seeds going to fall in various places, but the great news is that the life is in the seed itself.

And as long as we do our part to just get it out to people, we can trust God to do the rest and we need to trust him to do the rest. That's what the Lord requires of us to take those opportunities and to testify as. Those occasions are.

Made available to us, but from that point. The Lord. Takes it from there and you never know what's going to happen.

Down the road when we used to do a lot of the street outreaches. When we were living in England, I never felt compelled to force anybody to to say a sinner's prayer with me or anything like that on the spot. I always was open to those kinds of opportunities developing if God should so lead in that direction, but yet sense that the Lord would, you know, he would make that clear if that's what we were to do.

But we would go out and share the gospel and then just trust that the Lord is going to take these seeds that have now been scattered. And it might be a week from now, it might be a month from now, it might be six months from now. It might be a year from now or two years or five years.

You see, we don't know. We have to trust the Lord with those things. I just received an email from John Millhouse, who pastors Calvary Chapel out in Reno Valley.

And and John's got really involved in helping out with the work in Cardiff, Wales. And he just recently went on a trip, an outreach trip, and this is the third trip they've taken in the past few years. And he was telling me some interesting things as he was communicating in his email.

He was saying that they on this last trip and this last outreach, he said it was the most fruitful that they've had yet. And he said an interesting thing. He said, kids.

Nope, I got the wrong place and the wrong person just done to me, I got two emails. One was from Cardiff, Wales, and that was a good report, and I might as well tell you, since I'm halfway into it. But anyway, he was just saying how, you know, they just had a fantastic time and a number of kids came to the Lord.

And and on the final night, they went into Kentucky Fried Chicken and. It's an amazing that stuff spread around the world, I mean, I don't know if that's good or bad, but anyway, in Cardiff, they went into Kentucky Fried Chicken and they were in there just talking with the kids and they were all sharing the Lord together and somebody broke out a guitar and they wanted to sing. So the employees at Kentucky Fried Chicken, you know, they have music playing.

They turned it off. Everybody sat and listened. And then the employees got saved, joined them, came to church the next day.

So that is a good report. And the great thing is our team that is is going, first of all, to Devon for the for the creation fest is going from Devon to Cardiff to sort of follow up and continue to water there and then on to London to minister with one of our fellowships in London. But this other report that I was telling you about came from Deborah and Hungary and our college 2020 group just got back yesterday from a two week trip to Debrecen.

And it was Bodie who wrote me today and was telling me the things that happened. But this is what he was saying. And this goes along with my point.

He was saying that this year what happened is kids that were so hardened and rebellious last year that they left the camp early, came back this year and got saved. And so, you know, as I was reading that, I was thinking, wow, you know, a year later, there they were initially a year ago. They came to this because what we do is we go in and we do these English camps.

They are allowed to go into the schools. They invite kids from the schools around Hungary to come during the summer for an English camp. And they let them know right up front that it's a Christian based camp, that they're going to use the Bible.

They're going to be talking about Jesus and so forth. But the the school system there, they want the kids to learn English so they will encourage the students to go. So they had this English camp.

And last year, evidently, a lot of the real hardened kids that just didn't want to hear anything came back again this year, but with a different attitude. And they ended up receiving the Lord. And again, as we're as we're pointing out here, you see, the life is in the word.

The word of God contains the life of God, it's the seed. And the most important thing is to get the seed out, to get the word out. And as it goes out, as Jesus said, it falls upon various types of soil.

But once it goes out, then the Lord takes it from there and he works with it. And so, Paul, you never know, even though there was an immediate positive response to his ministry in Jerusalem, you never know. But what some that listen to him at the foot of the Antonia Fortress that day might have later on come to know Christ through his witness.

But anyway, point being, Jesus didn't see it as a failure at all. Now, when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. You know, it's amazing as you read through this, because you, you know, the the bigotry, the religious animosity and hatred and the willingness to, you know, they're just going to kill this guy and.

You know, of course, the the commandments, one of the commandments was you shall not kill, you shall not commit murder. But here they are, you know, they're going to do this all for God. Sounds like some that we hear about today, even now, there were more than 40 who had formed this conspiracy.

They came to the chief priest and elders and said, we have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. Now, you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him. But we are ready to kill him before he comes.

So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, take this young man to the commander for he has something to tell him. So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, Paul, the prisoner, called me to him and asked me to bring you this young man.

He has something to say to you. Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside and asked privately, what is it that you have to tell me? And he said, the Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. But do not yield to them for more than 40 of them lie in wait for him.

Men who have bound themselves by a note that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you. So the commander let the young man depart and commanded him, tell no one that you have revealed these things to me.

It's interesting to me how this young man, however old he was, nobody really knows, but he's Paul's nephew. And how it would just happen to be. That he would be in an area where he would overhear this plot.

And then go to Paul and inform him and then be able to go to the commander and through this whole thing, he's able to save Paul's life. And the thing that you see here. Is a truth that is important for us to remember, and it's a truth that Pastor Chuck has many times alluded to, but it's this that God quite often works supernaturally in natural ways.

See, a lot of times we were limited in our ability to see God at work because we're always looking for some radical supernatural manifestation. And because there there isn't some big supernatural thing going on, we might say, well, you know, it doesn't seem like the Lord's really doing much. But yet when you step back and you look at all of the different things that are going on that could not be coincidental, people meeting and information being exchanged and, you know, arriving at a place at a certain time and all these kinds of things.

Point being, we need to realize that God is at work much more so than we give him credit for a lot of times. And if we remember that God often works supernaturally through natural means, we'll be able to see the hand of God in a lot more things than we might see his hand in now. The Lord is.

Usually working through this means it's called sometimes Providence, God working by Providence, setting up circumstances, array, array, arranging situations, getting people in touch with other people and things like that. Having somebody at the right place at the right time, overhearing a conversation or somebody actually having a conversation. You know, John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress and many other books, he was he was just a rough and tumble guy.

He was a rugged, you know, sort of a blacksmith, kind of a he was a tinker. But, you know, that was a person who worked with metal and things like that, sort of like a blacksmith. He got converted.

As he was sitting down for a meal and overheard. Three women conversing about the Lord and their relationship with the Lord. That's how his conversion took place.

You know, whenever you go to a restaurant. Whenever you're out in public somewhere, when you're mixing with other people who aren't believers. If you're with other believers, have conversations about the Lord, just talk about the Lord, talk about what God's doing in your life, just talk to each other about it.

You never know who might be listening. And you never know that God didn't set that situation up and bring those people your way just for that particular thing that happened so many times. But a lot of times we don't realize it because, you know, again, we're looking for some big supernatural manifestation.

But most of the time, God is working supernaturally through natural types of means. I always think about Joseph. And his time in Egypt and all of that, when I think about this whole idea of God working supernaturally through natural means.

You know, as you read the story back there in Genesis, there's going to be a famine. God knows there's going to be a famine. The famine potentially could wipe out the chosen race, Jacob and his children.

So what does God do now? You see, I would tend to think just because of the way I think that if God wanted to remedy the problem, he ought to just supernaturally overrule the thing to where the famine doesn't happen. I mean, that's simple enough. Let's just say, OK, we won't have a famine and then end of problem.

But God doesn't do it that way. Instead, God says now there's going to be a famine. Well, Lord, could you stop the famine? Well, yes, I could, but I'm not going to.

Instead, what we're going to do is we're going to take this man, Joseph, and we're going to send him to Egypt. And he's going to get into a position of power eventually, and through his position, he's actually going to be able to save my people from extinction. You think, well, what a roundabout way to go about it.

When you could just say no famine, I decided. But you see, God, he's not just interested in working in a general way, he's interested in working in a specific way and through allowing things to go on like this and through using natural means to accomplish his supernatural purposes. What he does is he builds something in individual lives.

You see, if God would have just simply said there's going to be no famine, Joseph never would have had the character built into him that was built into him. His brothers never would have had been dealt with in the way that they needed to be dealt with to come to repentance and to become the men that they needed to be. Jacob would have never learned many of the lessons that God wanted to teach him about his faithfulness.

So you see, as we're quite often looking for the shortcut, as we're quite often looking for the immediate remedy and we're saying, God, how come you're not working? How come you didn't just step in and supernaturally take care of this? We have to remember that God is working and he is working supernaturally, but quite often it's through natural means, just like it was here. I mean, God could have just overruled he could have killed these 40 guys himself. That's how some might think that God should have dealt with it, or he might have intervened and just changed their mind, they decided we don't want to kill Paul.

We like him. But no, instead, he allows them to go through with what they're determined to do. But he has this young man.

Just within earshot of the conversation to find out the plot and to go back and inform, and it was all part of God's working. And I think, you know, really affirming the fact that he was with Paul, you see, if this plot would have never been exposed. Let's just say God decided to deal with the way we might think he ought to that, you know, he just killed those 40 guys.

Nobody would have even known anything about what had gone on or if they had just changed their minds. Nobody would have necessarily known it. But now, Paul, he's able because he finds out about the plot.

He's able to see the hand of God guarding and protecting him and assuring him that he's going to get to where the Lord is ultimately going to take him. And he's going to fulfill what God has for him to do. And so verse 23 says, and he called for two centurions, this is the commander.

He called for two centurions saying, prepare 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night and provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix, the governor. He wrote a letter in the following manner, Claudius Lysias to the most excellent Governor Felix. Greetings.

This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with troops, I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their counsel.

I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for him, I sent him immediately to you and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.

Now, just a quick comment here. Claudius Lysias was obviously a helpful man to Paul. He wasn't totally accurate in his reporting of the situation.

He makes it sound like he rescued Paul because he knew that he was a Roman citizen. But remember, he didn't find out he was a Roman citizen until he was about to beat him after he had rescued him. So it's just typical human nature, just sort of looking out for himself in the process here.

But regardless of that, then the soldiers, as they were commanded, they took Paul. They brought him by night to Antipater's. Now, Antipater's was a little, oh, about halfway or so between Jerusalem and Caesarea.

And once you reached Antipater's, you you were out of sort of the Jewish district and into more of a Gentile district. So they they left off with him there. Now, when they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia, he said, I will hear you when your accusers have come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

Now, after five days, Ananias, the high priest, came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying, seeing that through you we enjoy great peace and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

Now, this was basically a high powered lawyer hired by these aristocratic priest, and this guy's coming in to schmooze Felix, because if there was one thing you could not call Felix, it was noble. This guy was as corrupt as you could possibly get a typical politician. He had been married.

This is his third marriage that he's on stolen his present wife away from another man. He was a slave originally, but because his brother was close friends with Claudius Caesar, he was not only liberated, but he was given the position of governorship. He was the first slave in history to become a Roman official, but he was hated for the most part by the Jews because he was very intolerant.

He persecuted them. He slaughtered them. And so this whole thing is just really a big schmooze session to try to get Felix sympathetic toward their cause against the apostle Paul.

And they've hired this slick lawyer to come in and do this. So he says in verse four, nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further. I beg you to hear by your courtesy a few words from us, for we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

He even tried to profane the temple and we seized him and wanted to judge him according to our law. But the commander, Lysias, came by and with great violence, took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come to you by examining him yourself. You may ascertain.

All these things of which we accuse him and the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so. Now, notice the charges in verse five that they that Tertullus leveled against Paul. He was a creator of dissension among the Jews there.

The Romans were fairly tolerant of other religions, but what they did not tolerate in any way, shape or form was any sort of dissension, any any kind of uprising, anything that would at all look like it was something against the government. Was. Major offense.

And so that's what they're accusing Paul of. They're accusing him of going throughout the world, wherever he finds Jews and stirring up dissension, discontent and arousing hostilities against Rome. That's kind of what they're implying here.

Secondly, he's a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Now, the Jews were notorious for having messianic expectations and hopes, and many of the groups that were hoping for the Messiah were were

revolutionary type of groups, because, you see, the Jewish concept of the Messiah was not Jesus. The Jewish concept of the Messiah was somebody who was going to overthrow Rome and set up a political kingdom.

So as he's alluding to Paul being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, there's a messianic overtone. And in the mind of a Roman, that would mean rebellion to Roman authority. And then thirdly, they accused him of profaning the temple.

Now, remember, the priest who oversaw the temple, they were in cahoots with the Romans. They were completely corrupt. They completely had sold out and they they had basically wedded themselves to Rome.

And so Rome had given them authority over the temple to exercise even the death penalty, if need be, if a person were to desecrate the temple. That was an agreement that they had. So these charges that they're leveling against Paul are basically charges that could get him condemned to death.

And that's, of course, what they were seeking to do. Now, Paul, verse 10, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered in as much as I know that you have been a judge of this nation. I do the more cheerfully answer for myself because you may ascertain that it is no more than 12 days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship and they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone or inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. But this, I confess to you that according to the way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my father's believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets. Now, notice what Paul's doing.

He's giving his defense to Felix, but he's testifying at the same time. He's taking this as an opportunity to witness to Felix, as well as the crowd that's gathered, says, all right, I'm going to let you guys have it again. I don't believe anything except what's written in the law and the prophets, which, incidentally, most of them didn't believe.

He says, I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. Now, after many years, I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with mob nor with tumult.

They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council. You see, this was another problem. They claimed there were eyewitnesses, but none of them were there.

That was that could get you in trouble in a Roman court, he says, unless it is for this one statement, which I cried out standing among them concerning the resurrection of the dead. I am being judged by you this day. So Paul just brings it down to this.

He says, Felix, if you want to know why I'm here, really, it's because I believe in the resurrection of the dead. That's what this whole thing comes down to. And that was the opposition.

Remember, these are predominantly Sadducees. This is the high priest and those with him. They did not believe in the resurrection from the dead.

So there's there's a theological issue behind their hostility toward Paul. Because he's preaching not only a resurrection, but he's preaching that Jesus rose from the dead, the one that they, of course, had executed. But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the way he adjourned the proceedings.

So it's interesting that Luke comments that Felix had already heard this story. He knew the gospel to some extent. He knew about these things.

So he adjourns the proceedings and he says, when Lysias, the commander, comes down, I will make a decision on your case. So Felix is a politician. He knows Paul's innocent.

It's obvious. But yet he has to appease the Jews to some extent. And so he procrastinates making a judgment.

He says, oh, I've got to wait for Lysias to come. So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or to visit him. So he was very lenient toward Paul and very kind in many ways, obviously.

Now, after some days, when Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning faith in Christ. Now, Drusilla is an interesting person. She is the daughter of Herod Agrippa, the first Herod Agrippa, the first is the one who had James, the apostle, beheaded.

She's the sister of Herod Agrippa, the second, who will come into the story a little bit further down the road. She's a Jew now. This, you know, this would give you an idea of where the people were at at the time.

I mean, the high priest there in cahoots with the Romans, they're completely corrupt. Here's this this woman who's part of the the royal family. She's Jewish, but she's married to Felix, who wooed her away from her previous husband.

She was also the granddaughter of Cleopatra, interestingly enough, or great granddaughter, I think it was. But now, Felix, here's the intriguing thing. Felix gets Drusilla, his wife, and they call for Paul to hear the gospel.

You know, it's a fascinating thing how how people who even ultimately end up refusing the gospel, they're they're intrigued by it. They're curious. They wonder.

And here's this man, this guy's corrupt. I mean, you know, I don't think we've ever had politicians in our national experience. We've had some corrupt people, certainly, but I don't think we've had people this corrupt, or at least that anybody knew were this corrupt.

I mean, this guy is he's just rotten to the core. But my point is this, Paul does not miss the opportunity to share the gospel with him. You know, we live in a day of political debate and intensity and fighting, and, you know, I mean, that's always been the case to a certain degree, the parties arguing and bickering and fighting back and forth, but it's becoming more and more hostile the further down the road we get.

I think you'll all agree with that. And we ourselves as Christians, although we can certainly have political views and be passionate about them and things, we have to be careful. That we do not just write people off because of political disagreements and things like that, we have to be careful to remember that behind

all of that and more important than that is the fact that there's a soul.

There's a human life that Christ died for. Paul could have said, I'm not going to talk to this guy, so corrupt, I'm not going to cast my pearls before swine, and there certainly is a place where we would consider that as a possibility, not doing that. But here Paul takes advantage of the opportunity.

And so it says that he reasoned with them about three things, righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. Now, these three things and they would have hit home with Felix and Drusilla majorly righteousness. The guy was unrighteous to the core.

He was corrupt in all of his dealings with everybody. He obviously had no self-control. He lived according to his lust.

But then Paul reminded him that there is a judgment to come. And this is so interesting to me, listen, Felix was afraid and answered, go away for now. When I have a convenient time, I'll call you again.

He was afraid. And rightfully so, he should have been afraid. But sadly, we have no record of him ever turning to Christ, and we're certain really that he didn't from the historical record.

But here he is. Here's a moment of opportunity. Instead of humbling himself, instead of seizing that moment in his fear, which was valid, he could have cried out to God for mercy, but he doesn't.

He says, no, no, go away for now. I wonder how many people there are that have done that. You know, somebody was telling me a few days ago about it on the biography channel they watched.

I think it was the biography of I guess it was Catherine Hepburn, but Spencer Tracy was part of the whole biographical sketch that they gave because, you know, they had a longstanding relationship and so forth. But they were saying that in this interview, the whole issue of death came up and the person being interviewed, which was the niece of Catherine Hepburn, mentioned how Spencer Tracy was frightened of death because he believed he was a sinner and that he was going to go to hell. Catherine Hepburn was very disinterested in anything like that, you know, very much humanistic in her thinking process and just she would never she would never allow him to discuss that or bring that up at all.

It was talking about how in the final weeks of his life, Spencer Tracy's life, how he desperately wanted to talk to somebody about his soul because he was petrified of dying and going to hell. He knew he was a sinner and I don't know that he ever did talk to anybody. But, you know, as I was listening to the story, I was thinking, you know, how interesting.

And of course, this all had to do with Catherine Hepburn recently dying and how she just, you know, she just looked death in the face and just thought it's no problem for me. I've been a wonderful person and, you know, it's that I don't even need to think about it. It's not a concern.

But, you know, the differences, but yet, you know, both of them, I would imagine probably the same fate, but yet one sort of like Felix here with with Spencer Tracy, just that afraid knowing his guilt, knowing that he had sinned, having had a Catholic background and that sense of, you know, adjust and and judging God and all of that. But these three things are things that every human being needs to consider righteousness. God calls people to live righteously, but here's the reality.

There's none righteous, no, not one. God calls us to live with self-control, but who's ever done that totally and completely. But you see, here's the good news.

The good news is that although there is none righteous, no, not one among us, one who is righteous did come. The righteous one, Jesus Christ, he came from heaven, he lived a perfect life, he died on behalf of those who have lived unrighteously, and the righteousness that's revealed in the pages of Scripture is the righteousness that God will grant to those who put their trust in Jesus. And those who trust in Jesus, God gives them the righteousness of Christ, and that means that there is no judgment for us in the future.

There is no judgment to come because Jesus took our judgment on the cross and we've received his grace and his mercy. And I'm sure that Paul didn't merely reason with Felix about the need to live righteously. I'm absolutely positive that Paul, who wrote Romans, would have declared to Felix the righteousness that God provided through faith in Jesus Christ.

The righteousness that was testified by the law and the prophets, how God would send his son into the world and he, the righteous one, would die for the unrighteous, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. Only by receiving the righteousness of Christ do I avoid the judgment to come. If I refuse the righteousness of Christ, then I've got to face the judgment and the crucifixion of Jesus and the brutal experience that he had in that whole process is what every person has to look forward to who rejects his salvation.

You see, he was dying in our place. If we accept that, then his righteousness is put on our account. If we reject that, then we've got to stand before God in judgment that ought to frighten the bravest and the most brazen.

So he sends him away. Meanwhile, he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. So he was still looking out for himself, looking for a bribe here, therefore, he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

An interesting thing, it's almost you know, it's it's sort of like you remember back in the gospel stories, John the Baptist and Herod. How there was this strange fascination that Herod had with John the Baptist and Mark tells us that Herod heard John gladly hated what he said, but he knew it was true. And then, of course, you know, he was manipulated by his wife and his stepdaughter and they, you know, they ended up requesting the head of John and he gave it.

But it's a similar sort of thing. It seems here that Felix is really he's intrigued by Paul. There's something attractive.

And so he's calling for him often in conversing with him. And look at this, how a person could listen. You know, we're talking earlier about feeling like maybe we dropped the ball or we don't do a good job.

Here's the Apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament. And he's laying it on this guy, but he doesn't get it, he doesn't get saved, the fault was not in Paul's presentation, the fault was in Felix's heart. Sometimes we think that the only reason people don't believe is because they haven't heard, and in some cases there is some truth to that, and that's why it's important to get the word to him.

But, you know, there are people that have heard clearly. They've heard it more clearly than a lot of others, and they have still rejected for those people. Judgment will be of the most severe sort.

The scripture makes that clear. So final verse here, verse 27. But after two years, so Paul is there in that situation for two years.

But after two years, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix and Felix wanting to do the Jews a favor left Paul bound. So after all that time and all of those encounters with Paul, knowing Paul was innocent, you see, Felix was forced out of his governorship because of his continued conflict with the Jews. But now he's still hoping to save himself politically, so on his way out, he's hoping that he can somehow, you know, to some extent redeem himself.

So he leaves Paul bound, knowing that he was innocent, but he wanted to do a favor for the Jews, looking out for his own interest. And so when we pick up again, Festus will be introduced to him and he will kind of pick up with Paul where Felix left off. But as we close tonight, one final thought, Paul said when he was giving his testimony there before that group of men.

Remember, he talked about how he did strive always to have a conscience that was pure before God and man. And just a closing thought, are we striving to live a godly life? Are we putting forth effort? Are we serious? Sometimes I think in our day and age we can be just a little bit too flippant and a little bit too casual about our relationship with God. Paul was a man, he said, I strive to do this.

He was he was serious about not only the ministry, not only about, you know, planning churches and getting the gospel out and writing epistles. And he was serious about all of that, of course, but he was serious about his own personal walk. And that's something that we need to be serious about, too.

We need to strive in that area and strive means to just work hard, put forth the effort to make sure that we are really godly men and women, because at the end of the day, that's the thing that makes the difference. When it comes down to it and we've said it all and done it and everything else, people are going to really finally look at us and say, but did they live it? And if we did, that will move them. If we didn't, then, well, we didn't and we should have.

So let's follow Paul's example in that area. And let's strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men put forth a strong, diligent effort as we seek the Lord personally. Lord, we do thank you for these chapters that we've studied tonight and once again for the life of your servant, Paul and Lord, this most interesting history and Lord, all the many lessons that you have for us in it.

Lord, we want to in our day and age, in our generation. Be your servants. Lord, we want to testify for you.

We want to live for you. And so, Lord, here we are, take us, fill us, use us. Draw us close to you, help us, Lord, to see your hand at work.

Help us, Lord, to recognize your dealings with us, even through what seemed to be natural things, but yet you're behind it. Orchestrating so many of those things and Lord, even this week as we go, all of us in different directions, Lord, may our conversation, may our lives, may the things that we do, may they be those things that are working into your providential plan. To impact this world for Jesus, whether it be a conversation around a table at a restaurant or just conversing on the phone to a friend.

Or Lord, just doing something around the neighborhood, wherever we are, whatever we're doing, wherever we're going. Lord, may you be incorporating our lives into your eternal plan and purpose, and may we sense that and rejoice in it, in Jesus name, Amen.

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