
Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

R2L: On Trial for Christ

(Acts 24:1-27)

1 After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul. 2 After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, “Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, 3 we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 “But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing. 5 “For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 “And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. 7 “But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, 8 ordering his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him.” 9 The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so. 10 When the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense, 11 since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 “Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot. 13 “Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me. 14 “But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; 15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men. 17 “Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; 18 in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, without any crowd or uproar. But there were some Jews from Asia — 19 who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. 20 “Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, 21 other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.’” 22 But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.” 23 Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him. 24 But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.” 26 At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. 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.

This was a watershed moment in the life of Paul. Standing before the governor of Judea, Marcus Antonius Felix, Paul’s life up to this point had been anything but easy. He had been beaten, stoned, and run out of town after town. At least through it all, he had remained free to go wherever the Spirit of God would lead him. But this time was different. Paul is no longer free, and, as he stood before Felix, whether or not he might ever be free again was at stake.

The year is around 59 AD and Paul was on trial for his beliefs and actions concerning Christ. Remember that he arrived in Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. In the previous ten years, Paul had proclaimed the gospel of Christ to multitudes throughout the Roman Empire. Now, having brought a benevolent offering to the needy Jews in Jerusalem, he had been framed by the Jewish leaders and nearly torn apart by a mob instigated by those same jealous religious leaders. It was by the hand of the Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, that Paul’s life was spared, having arrested him and now,

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

according to the close of Acts 23, having escorted him out of town, some sixty miles to Caesarea. It was in Caesarea that Paul would stand trial before the ruler of the district, Governor Felix.

Let me ask you a question; if you were arrested and made to stand before a judge and jury, how would you react? How would you respond? What would it be like to be on trial for Christ? The truth is, beloved, whether we realize it or not, if you are a Christian, you are on trial every single day. The “world” is watching us who claim the name of Jesus, and on occasion, that jury can become hostile. Some of you have experience to a certain degree what Paul is experiencing here, having had to stand alone in the face of angry and sometimes hostile critics. Every day when you leave your home and head to the office or school, you have entered the courtroom where you are now on trial for Christ. And for some of you, you may not even need to leave the house, for you are already on trial for Christ *within* your home, as you seek to follow the Lord to the dismay and discouragement of unregenerate family members.

I stand here this morning, armed with the truth of God’s Word and exhort you to be encouraged in all this. For, as you are on trial for Christ in a hostile world, you are being given a remarkable opportunity. Some of you may be asking, “An opportunity to do what?” To do what? Beloved, you and I have the opportunity to do exactly what Paul did here in Acts 24. In Acts 24, Luke records Paul’s court appearance before Governor Felix. And in this story we find three facts that follow those who are resolved to live for Jesus; resolved to live on trial for Jesus. Like Paul, we must come to realize that there will be...

I. Those who seek to prosecute believers (24:1-9)

We might wish it otherwise, but the truth is, that from the very beginning of Christianity, there have arisen those in every generation who wish to prosecute, defame, and dismiss the beliefs and actions of genuine believers.

To that end, we are introduced to a whole team of prosecutors, those who wish to destroy Paul and his faith by the use of the legal process. Paul was already in Caesarea and it took five days for the high priest and his legal team to assemble and arrive. This is what we read in verse 1,

After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul.

The prosecution team consisted of Ananias (who, as we noted in our study of Acts 23, was one of the most corrupt high priests ever in Israel), some of the elders from the Sanhedrin, and, one who we will come to see was a smooth-talking attorney hired for just this occasion. His name was Tertullus.

Tertullus is a Roman name, and that is about all we know about him. There are those who believe that his speech is full of Latinisms, meaning that his opening presentation before Felix may have been spoken in Latin. This would suggest that Tertullus was a professional orator, as the lawyers of the first century tended to be. And the Jewish ruling council hired him, not because he loved justice, but because he was a professional and persuasive communicator. Let us note how we get this very sense from our text, seeing as well some of the ways in which the most critical unbelievers attack Christianity.

A. The critics use flattery (24:1-4)

Let us read verses 2-4 and see if you can pick up how Tertullus flatters Felix to get him on his side. We read...

2 After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, “Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, 3 we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.”

What is Tertullus selling? I call it a bunch of hot air. To be sure, there was the expectation of formality when addressing someone of such rank and stature as that of Felix, but Tertullus is really just

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

“buttering up the judge.” And there was not one person present in that courtroom that did not know Tertullus was blowing hot air. It is a fact of first century history that the Jews hated the Romans and yet Tertullus makes it seem as though the Jews and Romans were best of friends.

Tertullus had to put Felix at ease, for he well knew that ever since Felix had been appointed to this post in 52 AD, that Judea and the Jews had suffered massive bloodshed from the insurrections he provoked, and from the increase in political murders after he had arranged for the ex-high priest, Jonathan, to be assassinated in the Temple. Felix’s greed and treachery was well known. Yet note again Tertullus’ words... “*Since we have through you attained this much peace...*” This much peace...how much? Like maybe fifteen minutes worth. Such idle flattery. What is Tertullus doing? As we will see, he has no case. And so, he is doing what any attorney who has no case must do, try to win the favor of the judge through idle flattery. The skeptics use flattery against believers. But there is more

B. The critics use inflammatory language (24:5-8)

Like the media who refers to Christians using terms like right-winged, homo-phobic, anti-choice, self-moralizers, Tertullus uses inflammatory language, words meant to stir up antagonism and hatred against Paul. We read in verses 5-8...

5 For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 “And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. 7 But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, 8 ordering his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him.

Let’s dissect this and see the three crimes Tertullus charged Paul with. Did you catch them? 1) Paul is accused of breaking Roman law, saying he stirred up dissensions and riots; 2) Paul is accused of breaking Jewish law by being a ringleader of the Nazarene sect (Anti-Semitism); and 3) Paul is accused of breaking God’s law by supposedly desecrating the temple.

Those are the charges, but notice that there is no tangible evidence given here; there is no proofs or examples of his damning accusations. Rather what we see is the use of pejoratives, derogatory language against Paul. He is a “pest”; he is a “ringleader” and he is a desecrator. Without tangible specifics, Tertullus used emotionally charged language, descriptions designed to create a negative opinion against Paul. This is not an overstatement. Our English translations do not carry the harshness that would be understood in the original text. When Tertullus calls Paul a “pest” – we might be inclined to think of a bug that is a nuisance, a mouse in the house. Spray some bug spray or get a cat; easy enough. But the word “pest” here in our text referred not to a nuisance, but to a ‘plague’ or ‘pestilence.’ In other words, Tertullus was calling Paul and his beliefs an infectious and dangerous disease; one that, if he were set free, would spread nothing but turmoil and destruction in the world. And where is the evidence for this charge? Notice there is not one example or witness given; only the charge couched in inflammatory language.

Are there people like Tertullus around today? Indeed there are; those who rather than hear and discuss ideas will dismiss you with names. Someone once noted, “Our Lord Jesus was nailed to a cross; so you can count on being nailed to a wall. Beloved, if you are resolved to live for Jesus, then know this, you must be able to deal with criticism and get used to wild things being said about you and what you believe. Let me give you a couple of things to be looking for as you find yourself or other believers attacked like this.

First of all, watch for people who use lots of words, but in actually say nothing. Proverbs 10:19, and this is a sobering statement, says,

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

Sometimes, as a preacher, I struggle with that verse...but the principle is this, if someone is talking a lot, sin is often just around the corner. Beloved, we are to be a people who say what we mean and mean what we say. To borrow from Ephesians 4:15, we are to be those who “Speak the truth in love...”

The second thing to be looking for are people who give off lots of heat, but give very little light. In other words, their language is filled with anger, name-calling, and lacking in any real evidence. Tertullus was not interested in revealing the truth, but rather in winning the argument. And so, he chose words that inflamed rather than illuminated. When a person does that he tends to give off a lot heat, but very little light. Listen to the Tertullus’s of today. I know I run a risk of getting off the text, but consider the words of a modern day Tertullus, Michael L. Weinstein who founded the civil rights fighting organization the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). This organization has but on key goal. In the words of Weinstein himself, the MRFF is “to do one thing: fight those monsters who would tear down the Constitutionally-mandated wall separating church and state in the technologically most lethal entity ever created by humankind, the U.S. military.” This organization was sought by the Pentagon to help them determine what Christians in the military can or cannot do. Listen to his language and see if these words, written just over a year ago, are not just like Tertullus’. Who are these monsters to which Weinstein refers? He writes:

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me tell you of monsters and monstrous wrongs. And let me tell you what these bloody monsters thrive on....

Today, we face incredibly well-funded gangs of fundamentalist Christian monsters who terrorize their fellow Americans by forcing their weaponized and twisted version of Christianity upon their helpless subordinates in our nation’s armed forces. Oh my, my, my, how “Papa’s got a brand new bag.”

What’s Papa’s new tactic? You’re gonna just love this! These days, when ANYone attempts to bravely stand up against virulent religious oppression, these monstrosities cry out alligator tears in overflowing torrents and scream that it is, in fact, THEY who are the dispossessed, bereft and oppressed. C’mon, really, you pitiable unconstitutional carpetbaggers? It would be like the utter folly of 1960’s-era southern bigots howling like stuck pigs in protest that Rosa Parks’ civil rights activism is “abusing” them by destroying and disenfranchising their rights to sit in the front seat of buses in Montgomery, Alabama. Please, I beseech you! Let us call these ignoble actions what they are: the senseless and cowardly squallings of human monsters.

Queasy with the bright and promising lights of the cultural realities of the present day, those evil, fundamentalist Christian creatures and their spiritual heirs have taken refuge behind flimsy, well-worn, gauze-like euphemistic facades such as “family values” and “religious liberty.” These bandits coagulate their stenchful substances in organizations such as the American Family Association (AFA), the ultra-fundamentalist Family Research Council (FRC), and the Chaplains Alliance for Religious Liberty (CARL). The basis of their ruinous unity is the bane of human existence and progress: horrific hatred and blinding bigotry.¹

There is a lot of heat in those words, but there is no light. Yes, we have our Tertullus’ today. The attacks on Christianity will be filled with such unilluminated, inflammatory statements. Why must we note all this? Beloved, one of Luke’s motives for including this trial (and others in Acts) is apologetic. He is revealing that even as critic after critic blasted Christianity, impartial Roman authorities repeatedly confirmed its innocence. But there is more. The skeptics will use idle flattery, inflammatory language and...

C. The critics use intimidation (24:9)

The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-l-weinstein/fundamentalist-christian-_b_3072651.html

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

We live in a strange world that so often and so easily succumbs to the notion that if enough people believe the lie, the lie somehow becomes truth. Beloved, if one person shares an opinion, it's still an opinion. But if fifty, or fifty-thousand people say the same thing? Then it becomes fact, right? No, particularly if those people have an agenda and a bias that prevent them from being objective. I promise you that the Jews who agreed with Tertullus and asserted his words were “true” had an agenda.

Remember that less than a week before all this, some forty Jews took a vow not to eat or drink anything until they killed Paul (23:12). These so called “witnesses” aren't interested in justice, for sure, and neither is this prosecution team that's willing to do whatever it can to “prove” Paul's guilt, including trying to intimidate Felix with numbers. So this is the first fact, there will be those who seek to prosecute believers. But there is a second fact...

II. There will be opportunities to make a defense (24:10-21)

Beginning in verse 10 of our text, we see Paul take up his response; his defense or apology. And from his defense we can see at least four qualities that ought to characterize the believer's response to his critics. We need to note and then imitate these characteristics.

A. Paul's response was respectful (24:10)

When the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense,

What I would have you see here is simply the difference between the beginning of Paul's speech and that of Tertullus. Tertullus used idle flattery to win the judge. On the contrary, Paul showed him respect, but in so doing he said nothing false or untrue. Christian must be respectful when speaking to authorities.

B. Paul's response was factual (24:11-13).

11 since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot. 13 Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me.

Notice again the stark contrast between the generalities presented by Tertullus and the specifics given by Paul. The apostle gave concrete information that served two purposes for Felix.

First, Paul sought to answer the “what” question for Felix; revealing “what” really happened. Notice the facts to this end that refute the charges made against him:

--Fact: Twelve days ago I went to Jerusalem.

--Fact: I went there to worship.

--Fact: I did not debate with anyone in the temple, nor did I cause a riot in any synagogue or anywhere else in the city.

This is “what” happened. These are the facts. But notice secondly that as Paul presented these facts, he merely gave a defense without being defensive. In other words, Paul wanted the facts to speak for themselves.

C. Paul's response was biblical (24:14-16).

14 But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; 15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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Did you notice Paul’s use of the Scriptures here in defense? He does this accomplish two things we would do well to remember when we are on trial for Christ. First, Paul is answering now the “why” question. “Why” had Paul done what he did do? And so Paul explains why he came to Jerusalem thus exposing the real reason for the hostile charges of these men. What were the facts?

--Fact: I worship God.

--Fact: I am a follower of the Way, that is Jesus.

--Fact: I believe in the Hebrew Scriptures, *all* of them; “everything”.

--Fact: I have the same hope these men do, that there will be a resurrection.

--Fact: I do what I do in life because I want to keep my conscience clear.

Beloved, Paul NEVER hides the fact that he was a Christian, but he did deny that Christianity was anti-Jewish or some false teaching. Rather, he said, in essence that he was a complete Jew for he believed *everything* written in the Law and the prophets about the Messiah, something his critics had not done. Thus, rather than being a heretic, Paul demonstrated himself to be more orthodox, that his beliefs were more consistent with Scripture than his accusers. So Paul answers the “why” question and he does one more thing...

Second, Paul draws his hearers to Christ. When Paul confessed himself to be a follower of the Way, he made one thing clear. What motivated Paul was Jesus Christ. Paul followed the One who is the way, the truth, and the life, and, notice this, he sought to turn every conversation to the subject of Christ.

Beloved, I find myself increasingly dismayed by people who call themselves “Christian,” but who rarely, secondarily, or never talk about *Christ*. I see it even in the church; that when the final song is over, you find those more interested in talking about the ballgame, the weather, what they are going to eat; or how they look in their new outfit. But the name of Christ seldom, if ever falls from their lips in their conversation. This is simply not right. Paul loved Christ and he showed it by talking about Him whenever he could, even when it cost him his own freedom. There is one more characteristic of Paul’s response...

D. Paul’s response was evidential (24:17-21).

17 “Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; 18 in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, without any crowd or uproar. But there were some Jews from Asia — 19 who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. 20 “Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, 21 other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.’”

Do you see the evidence Paul reveals here? He does it two ways. First, he clearly states the charge and then dismisses it with evidence. Paul’s critics said he came to Jerusalem to cause trouble. Wrong. The evidence says Paul brought a benevolent offering to help the poor. The critics said Paul desecrated the temple. Wrong. The evidence says Paul was ceremonially clean. The critics said Paul was a ringleader. Wrong. The evidence says there was no crowd with Paul.

Beloved, this is one way to deal with a critic; don’t argue, just state the evidence. But in addition to this, Paul secondly used this opportunity to be a witness for Christ. As he closes, he does what he had done when on trial before the Sanhedrin. Since he had the floor, he put the true spiritual issue out for discussion; and even though it was in a secular courtroom, Paul exclaims in verse 21, *‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.’*

So, there will be those who seek to persecute and prosecute believers and when this happens there will be opportunities to make our defense, and finally...

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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III. There will be the providential working of God (24:22-27)

In our text we see God accomplishing three things through the use of Paul's defense.

A. God protected Paul (24:22-23).

22 *But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.”* 23 *Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.*

What is going on here? Truthfully, Felix was playing politics. By now He realized the charges against Paul were trumped up, and that Paul deserved freedom. But, Felix was also aware that to proclaim Paul innocent would infuriate this riotous crowd of his Jewish constituents and could lead to further unrest and violence. As John MacArthur so rightly noted here, “Like many politicians before and since who have been trapped between justice and popularity, Felix decided his wisest course was to avoid making a decision.” And herein lies the providence and protection of God for Paul, using a self-seeking ruler to provide protection for His servant, even if that protection happened to be undeserved jail time! Not only did the Lord protect Paul, but...

B. God gave more opportunities for Paul to witness (24:24-26)

24 *But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.* 25 *But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”* 26 *At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him.*

Notice the even though the motives were wrong on the part of Felix and Drusilla, God continued to give Paul opportunities to share Christ. And there are a couple of things we need to note about Paul's witness.

First, Paul's witness forced Felix and Drusilla to face the truth that to be saved, one must confess himself to be a sinner. Our text reveals three subjects that Paul knew Felix and Drusilla needed to hear about; note them there in verse 25; righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. Why did they need to hear this?

Well, Drusilla was a Jewess, the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. As a young girl she was betrothed to marry the prince of Commagene, in eastern Asia Minor. The marriage did not take place because the prospective bridegroom refused to embrace her Judaism. Then her brother, Agrippa II, gave her in marriage to the king of Emesa in Syria. She was only sixteen years old at the time and soon Felix entered the picture. Captivated by her beauty, Felix lured her away from her husband with the help of a magician who persuaded her to marry him. She did so and became Felix's third wife. At the time of Paul's trial here in Acts 24, she was but twenty years old. Now, you have to credit to Paul for being willing to talk straight with the man who controlled his freedom. And what did Paul tell him? He told him about *righteousness*, that is, that there is a righteous God who has established a righteous standard that He expects His creatures to follow.

He also told Felix about *self-control*, that is, the response God demands of His own, in light of this righteous standard. In other words, the standard says, amongst other things, “You shall not commit adultery.” It takes self-control to be faithful to your sacred wedding vow. What happens if you are not? Paul told him about *the judgment to come*; the inevitable result of failing to demonstrate self-control in response to God's standard is judgment, *God's judgment*.

What was Felix's response to all this? According to the end of verse 25, he was “frightened. The KJV says, “he “trembled.” And no wonder, for he was living in adultery. He lacked righteousness and self-control and he knew it. What he may not have known was that divine judgment was waiting for him. But now he knew.

Can you imagine the fortitude it took Paul to say this? Why would Paul risk it? Beloved, Paul understood something that we tend to forget in evangelism, namely, that if people are going to be saved

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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they must face their sin. And it is not just the “big” sins, but all or any sin. You may not be living in blatant adultery like Felix, but if you are in violation of any of God’s righteous standard; and the Bible tells us we all are; and if you lack self-control to say no to sin; and the Bible tells us we all do, then you are heading for divine judgment. For the wages of sin is *death*. Let this sink in. If you are to be saved you must *face your sin*.

But there is a second requirement and it is this; to be saved, you must believe in the only Savior, Jesus Christ. In addition to righteousness, self-control, and judgment, Paul also talk about, note this in verse 24, highlight it, **“faith in Christ Jesus.”** In the Greek there is a definite before faith; Paul spoke about *the faith in Christ Jesus*; that is, he presented the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. He told him how it was God, through His grace, who took the initiative to meet our need for righteousness and self-control. It was God who sent His own Son into the world, and on the basis of His Son’s righteous life, His Son’s death in our place, and His Son’s victorious resurrection, that God will save sinners. But to be saved, in addition to facing your sin, you must *believe in the Savior*.

What was Felix’s respond to this? Look again at verse 25, *“Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”* And in verse 26 we find that Felix did send for Paul often. But what was initially a fearful heart became a greedy heart. For how long did Paul have to await a decision. According to verse 27 for *two years*. How is that fair? How is that right? To be sure, because Felix put off making a decision for two years, it was, in some ways bad for Paul. It was certainly bad for justice. But do you know what is worse? That for two years Felix refused to make a decision about Jesus Christ. Let us be wary of thinking that there will be enough time tomorrow to do something for the Lord. Serve Him today, worship Him today, be saved today, read your bible today, memorize another verse today, tell somebody else about him today. For the Christian, your relationship with Christ is always today!

Look at what Felix squandered and consider if you squander your faith. Not only was Felix acquainted with the Way, but he had the privilege to sit under the personal Bible teaching of the apostle Paul himself for some two years! At points he realized he was a sinner and trembled in fear. Yet, in spite of all this, he postponed his decision. *“When it is convenient,”* he said.

Do not be like Felix; and there are many such types in the church today. Those who have been taught the truth about Jesus Christ. Those whose parents opened the Word of God to you; those who know of family members and friends praying for them; those who come to church regularly because they like to learn new things; those who read Christian books and listen to Christian radio. Through all of these things, they know enough about Jesus to be saved. And like Felix, they have no reason to doubt these truths. In fact, they agree it makes sense. They know that God deserves and demands to be first in their lives. They know they are sinners. They know that Christ came to save sinners. They have seen Him save and change other people.

And, like Felix, these may even think about spiritual matters. They really do wonder what will happen to them in the next life; they think about God; think about their sinfulness; think about what Jesus did; think about the coming judgment; and like Felix, it frightens them. And yet they are lost. And when the preacher urges them to come to faith in Jesus, they, like Felix, foolishly say, *“Not now. It’s not time yet. I need to think about it.”*

Beloved, God says, **“Behold, now is *THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,* behold, now is *THE DAY OF SALVATION*” (2 Corinthians 6:2).** Right now is the time; there is no better time to repent of your sins and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior than *right now*. Felix put it off and as best we can tell, he died in his sins. That means he will be in hell’s eternal torments; not because he did not have the opportunities, but because he wasted them. Do not be like Felix, I beg of you. Come to Christ today, while there is still time and then give the rest of your life in exhorting others to do the same. I need to wrap this up. There is one final thing God did here...

C. God gave Paul a new kind of ministry (24:27).

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.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

We are not given this information in our text, but we know from history that Felix was replaced by Festus because of a foolish blunder he made. Felix responded to severe strife between Jews and Gentiles in Caesarea by sending in soldiers and brutally killing the Jewish leaders. Rome found out about it and removed him from office. This was the beginning of the end for Felix. But for Paul, this was just to be another way by which the Lord would use him for the furtherance of the gospel. It is interesting to note that in some ways, the results of his work in prison would be more far-reaching than those prior to his arrest. In the years ahead as a prisoner, he would end up taking the gospel to the highest government officials in the Roman world and eventually he would write a number of New Testament books, including Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and others.

But for now, Paul had to wait for two years in Caesarea. Luke really does not give us much information about what Paul did for these two years. I suspect that he was in part learning to be content in Christ.

But let me close by asking you an important question. This morning we have seen Paul on trial for Christ. How about you? If you were on trial for Christ, would there be enough evidence to prove that you are for Christ? Do people know you are a Christian? Is there ample evidence to prove it? And have you lived your life in such a way that even if it was proved that you are a Christian, the behavior of your life would make the authorities hard-pressed concerning what to do with you? That is a resolve to live on trial for Christ. May God grant us the grace to so live for Him.

Soli Deo Gloria

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