
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 (Before Felix - Part 2)

(Acts 24:9-27)

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.

Let me remind you where we have been; Paul had finished his third missionary journey and traveled to Jerusalem, where he was looking forward to fellowshiping with the saints there and presenting them with a benevolent offering of monies that had been given by the Gentile churches to help the Jewish church in Jerusalem. Once Paul got there and participated in worship in the temple, the Jewish leaders provoked a riotous mob against Paul, a mob that almost killed him except that the Roman commander, a man by the name of Claudius Lysias stepped in and rescued Paul from being beaten to death. But, as you recall, a bloodied and bruised Paul asked Lysias if he could address the crowd, and in Acts 22 Paul shared his background, his testimony and the gospel, even though it caused the crowd to reel even harder against him. Wanting to find out what Paul had done wrong, Lysias was going to force a confession out of Paul by way of a whipping, that is until Paul asked if was lawful to punish a Roman citizen without a trial.

After this, Lysias called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling counsel together to try Paul. Paul, seeing what was taking place, set the two political groups, the Sadducees, who did not believe in resurrection from the dead, and the Pharisees, who did believe in resurrection, at odds

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

with one another proclaiming, “I am on trial for the hope and resurrection from the dead.” (Acts 23:6). Then, you might recall that some forty Jewish assassins made a vow not to eat or drink until Paul was dead. Finding out about this conspiracy against Paul, Lysias thought it best to move Paul to Caesarea, some fifty miles northwest and sent him there with an army to protect him.

Then, at the end of Acts 23, Paul is presented to Felix, the governor of Judea, to await a hearing with him, as soon as the Jewish leaders arrive to present their case. That brings us to Acts 24, some five days later, where we noted last week that Paul was once again on trial for Christ. Only now, and note this well, as the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy made about Paul back in Acts 9:15, Paul was standing before the Gentiles and kings for the cause of Christ. In Acts 9:15 we read:

But the Lord said to him [Ananias], “Go, for he [Paul] is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.”

What a blessing it is for us to see the authenticity and accuracy of God’s Word. Beloved, it is being proved right before our eyes and will continue through the rest of the book of Acts as Paul not only stands before the Gentiles and kings, but will also see the fulfillment of another prophecy, namely Acts 23:11, where the Lord said to Paul:

“Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause in Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”

So Paul is on trial for his faith in Christ. And last week we noted some of the tactics used by non-believers against Christians in public and legal settings, using flattery on officials, inflammatory and derogatory language against believers, and finally just flat out intimidation; seeking to shut believers down so that they will say nothing.

But where so often we can see a closing door, Paul saw an opening door. Even with all this; remember Paul is most likely physically and emotionally drained, he had been beaten, and yet, he sees this as an opportunity to proclaim the gospel. Beloved, *we need to stop seeing our difficult or trying times as reasons or excuses not to share Christ and rather see them as opportunities for sharing Christ.* Are you having a bad day at work, share the gospel of Christ with others. Did your car break down and is in need of a costly repair, seek to share the gospel of Christ with others. Are you having trouble with a disobedient child, seek to share the gospel of Christ with him and with others. We need to learn how to turn even the most difficult of moments into opportunities to minister. That is what Paul did, as he gave his testimony before Felix, a man who had some knowledge about religion, but, as we saw last week, was truly a sinful man, having done things like seducing Drusilla (now 20 years old), the wife of Azizus (king of Emesa) and daughter of Herod Agrippa I. This Felix, whose name means, “happy or fortunate” will be given an opportunity, through the gospel, to find real and lasting fortune in Christ; and yet, he will reject it.

Last week I did not get to finish the last point of the sermon, which covered the last six verses of Acts 24, a point where I was going to show you the providential working of God in the life of Paul. Rather than use that point this morning (if you would like to consider it, you may go to the website and read it), this morning I would like to present to you some lessons we glean

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

regarding the urgency believers are to have to present the Gospel. For here we find Paul, on trial for his faith, very likely to lose his freedom at best and his life at worst, and yet, in spite of the circumstances, was resolved to live for Jesus, to proclaim Jesus, even when he was on trial for Jesus. May we learn how to proclaim Jesus even in our often less trying circumstances than Paul. So then, here are five lessons we need to learn and then practice if we would be resolved to be witnesses for Christ even as Paul.

I. The Gospel is Universal (Acts 24:22-24)

Let me remind you that the gospel of Jesus Christ, this truth that the Son of God became the Son of Man, to live a perfect life, to die a perfect death in the place of sinners, so that all who trust in His life, His work, His person, as Him having done all this for you, so that you might live for Him, are given eternal life, a transformed mind, and the hope of heaven - - - this gospel, was never meant to be given to you so that you might tuck it away in your heart not to be seen, not to be shared, not to be spoken. In Acts 1:8, Jesus calls believers to be His witnesses, those who make Him known; those who continue to do and to teach that which Jesus started when on this earth. Thus, the gospel is to be regarded, to be seen by you and me as universal; that is, we are to find ways to share it with anyone and everyone, whether on trial before a king, or simply sitting with family or friends in your home.

In our text, we find Paul being incarcerated, yet with some freedoms. But notice in verse 24 the opportunity given to Paul. He was sent for; summoned, by the governor to come and speak; and speak about what? About **“faith in Christ Jesus.”** I am not sure what comes to your mind when you read that Paul was called to speak about his faith; what he believes about Jesus before Felix, but we know Paul in fact does speak this gospel to this sinful, half-Jew, half-religious man. And all of this serves to remind us of something that was clear in Paul’s mind, *everyone needs to hear the gospel.* And to that end, you might be the only Bible, the only gospel presentation someone else might hear. How do we know that everyone needs to hear the gospel and that you and I, like Paul, are to have sharing Jesus ever as our goal? Remember the words of Jesus in Mark 16:15? What did Jesus say?

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

That sounds pretty universal to me. We need to remind ourselves every day of the truth of 2 Peter 3:9 which says, **“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”** And let me ask you this question. How has the Lord determined to make the truth of the gospel known? Through you and through me.

But just what does the gospel do? I mean, the word gospel means what? Yes, “good news.” Yet can I tell you what a proper, biblical presentation of the gospel will always do? It will always confront the issue of sin, of missing God’s mark. **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). Or, as Paul put it to the men of Athens, **“Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead”** (Acts 17:30-31). For the gospel to be good news, people need to understand the bad news under which they are living.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

Now, in our text, Paul was aware of Felix being a murderous, adulterous man, yet, Paul does not prejudge how Felix is going to react to the gospel, but, as we will see, confronts Felix, this man who has the power of life and death, with his own sin. Beloved, we must tell people the gospel without reservation, without fear, and even without the hope of favor. The bottom line, the gospel is universal, for all people, and until you and I see it that way, we will be inclined to hide the gospel from others. But not only is the gospel universal, but also...

II. The Gospel is Reasonable (Acts 24:24-25)

Verses 24 and 25 of our text are quite remarkable. They reveal to us a few things to keep in mind about sharing the gospel.

First of all, the gospel, this good news we hold dear, is a word of both truth and therefore reasonable. What do I mean by truth and reasonable? By truth, we mean that which is true, accurate, trustworthy, spot on, that which applies to all people for all times. That is truth. So then, when God says all of sinned and fall short of the glory of God; that must be both true and reasonable. And what do we see about people, that on our own, even the best of us fail to live up to the glory of God.

Now, by saying the gospel is reasonable, I mean that the gospel can be reasoned out; it is not unreasonable; we have good reasons for believing it and those reasons are to be used to persuade sinners to turn to Christ. We see Paul speaking of this this in 2 Corinthians 5:11, and 20.

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences...20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Notice what Paul does in Acts 24:25. We read there, ***“But as he [Paul] was discussing...”*** The word “discussing” here means “to converse, discourse, to argue, discuss, dispute and reason.” Paul is reasoning with Felix and Drusilla about the truth of the gospel. And what do you suppose is the basis, the foundation upon which Paul forms his reasons? Yes, from the Scriptures, as would be consistent with his pattern. Let’s not this pattern by turning back to Acts 17:2-3. There we read:

2 And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.”

Beloved, like Paul, we must give reasons for what we believe and do so using Scripture, not man’s opinions, not science, not pop-culture, but the Word of God. Do you believe the words of 2 Timothy 3:16-17?

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

What else do we have as believers by which to reason with other than the Scriptures? And Paul seized any and every opportunity to reason from the Scriptures. Look at Acts 18:4. What do we see there?

And he [Paul] was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

We are to be apologetic in our thinking, ready to give a defense, to give the reasons for what we believe, just as we read in 1 Peter 3:15:

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

How are you preparing and equipping yourself to do this? Are you reading the Word, studying the Word; asking other believers about the Word so that you can give your defense? Beloved, the gospel is universal, for everyone, and it is reasonable, it has and we are to know the reasons why we believe. But additionally...

III. The Gospel is Clear (Acts 24:25)

Ok, let me remind you one more time about who Felix was. History tells us he was a treacherous, murderous, deceitful man who was living in open adultery with Drusilla. And with that knowledge, what do you see Paul speaking to Felix about according to verse 25? Go on...say them out loud! Righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. Let's consider those for a moment:

Paul preached, first of all, righteousness. The word used speaks of that which possesses integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, correctness in feeling, and correctness in acting.” How do you suppose that went over with Felix. Yet Paul knew that his sins needed to be exposed and revealing God's righteousness reveals man's own sinfulness. Having started with faith in Christ back in verse 24 and now righteousness here in verse 25, it is clear that Paul is revealing to Felix his own need of Christ in order to be righteous. As Romans 3:21-22 makes clear:

21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe...

Felix, Paul, you and I, our children, our neighbors, friends and family all need an alien righteousness; one that comes only from knowing Christ. This is what Paul shared. But in addition to righteousness, Paul also spoke to Felix of self-control. Self-control is the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions; most especially his sensual appetites. In 2 Peter 1:6 we read that we are to add to our knowledge of truth, self-control. Once we know what is right and wrong, we are to exercise increasing self-control to do that which is good and to abstain and abhor that which is evil. Paul pointed out to Felix what was righteous, what was right and then spoke to him about the doing of what was right. That is a part of the gospel presentation, calling

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

people to repentance, the turning away from that which is wrong, evil, sinful and a turning to that which is right, godly and pleasing to God. Are you turning away from your passions and pride in order to practice God’s righteousness and humility?

And finally, Paul speaks to Felix about...the judgment to come; that time when those who have refused Christ will be judged according to all the sin they have committed. Hebrews 10:31 tells us, **“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”** This is what Paul communicated to Felix as part of the gospel. And let me remind you, each of us will face this day as Romans 14:12 reminds us, that **“...each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”** Have you trusted in the work of Christ first on the cross to pardon your sin and second in your heart to transform your desires to love and serve God? If not, your day before God will be terrifying.

Beloved, we need to pray for courage to speak the gospel. Is it okay to pray for courage daily to speak the gospel? Paul did and asked others to join him. In Ephesians 6:19-20 we read:

19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Do you pray that prayer for yourself and for others? If not, why not? Beloved, souls are at stake and it is the responsibility of every believer to love the lost and to speak the gospel to the lost. But pastor, so many resist. I know, but what of the few that will respond? The gospel is clear, it speaks of righteousness, self-control and of the judgment to come. Let us be clear as we share the gospel. The gospel is universal, it is reasonable, it is clear and next...

IV. The Gospel is Life-changing (Acts 24:25)

As the gospel is clearly communicated, it brings people to make a determination. Now, I don’t want to over-simplify this, but I think a case can be made that a clear presentation of the gospel brings people to a place of fear. We read in verse 25 that Felix **“became frightened”** as Paul shared the gospel. Now, there are two kinds of fear that people will experience. There is a fear that leads to obedience to Christ. Peter spoke of this in Acts 10:34-35 where we read:

34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, 35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.”

This is the fear that leads to following Christ. But there is another kind of fear the gospel brings people to; a fear that following Christ means being sinful, not in control and thus leads a person to deny and reject the truth. Jesus speaks of this in John 3:19-21. There we read:

21 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

Let me ask you, when you hear the gospel, do you fear God and desire to obey, or do you fear what hearing the gospel means must change in your life, causing you to find ways to deny or reject the truth; or perhaps closer to home, to find ways to justify why the points of the gospel don't apply to you. Make sure your fear of the Lord leads you to active obedience.

So the gospel is universal, it is reasonable, it is clear, it is life-changing, and finally...

V. The Gospel is Urgent (24:25)

In 2 Corinthians 6:2, the apostle Paul wrote, “...**behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION."** The question that we must ask ourselves after every sermon heard, which we must ask of those to whom we have had an opportunity to share the gospel with is this, “What is your response?” The gospel, this good news is also an urgent invitation to come see, come taste, and to come receive Christ as Lord and Savior. If you have truly presented the gospel, and if those who have heard your presentation, then the gospel assumes a few things. It assumes the lost know they have a need; it assumes the lost now know what or who it is they need; it assumes that they are aware that a response to what they have heard is needed; it assumes that they know what they need to do (repent); it assumes they no longer need to be told about their need, simply exhorted to respond.

But there is another response that we often encounter. One that we see in our text here in verse 25 and 25. Too often the response to the gospel is an issue of convenience. And let me tell you, the gospel is not convenient. And for the one who is not willing to put God first, this one will put family, job, self-pursuits before following Christ. How do you know if God is working on your heart? Do you respond immediately to the call of the gospel, to the preaching of the Word to align your life with the Word of God.

In Matthew 4:18-20 we see this principle at work. We read: **18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.** It certainly was not convenient to follow Christ. Messed with their jobs; their family life. Felix looked to the gospel for personal advantage. See there in verse 26 one of the motivations for calling Paul back time after time? Felix... “was hoping that money would be given him by Paul [like he had lots of money]...” But let me tell you this, following Jesus will ALWAYS involve sacrifice. Remember what Jesus said? In Luke 14:25-27 we read:

25 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, 26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Can your live be said to be characterized by an unrelenting commitment to see Christ and His people first? Is this not the kingdom of God? Are we not called to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness? The gospel calls to people like Felix and Drusilla, calling them to change their lives, because the gospel can save them, it is reasonable, it is clear that we are great sinners and Jesus is a great Savior; it is life-changing, constantly changing your priorities to put God first and it is urgent; do not delay to see these lessons of the gospel to be true in your life. Be saved, be

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

transformed, be a follower of Jesus now! I close with the words of Peter from Acts 2:40. There we read:

And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

Soli Deo Gloria

Copyright © 2014 Edward K. Godfrey. *This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, 1001 W. Walnut Suite 5a, Rogers, AR 72756.*

R2L: On Trial for Christ (Part 2)
August 17, 2014