

44b ACTS

We pick up our study here in Acts chapter 24 at verse 9 or so. We've seen that this is the equivalent of sort of being dragged up in Iraq before Saddam Hussein and accused of being a rabble rouser. Saddam, whatever else you want to say about him, he didn't put up with rabble rousing in his country.

He would oppress by brute force anybody that disturbed the peace. This was the basis of a lot of the Iraqis saying we were better off before you deposed our guy because even though he was brutal, we had order. You know, it was order by brute force.

Well, you can have order of a better and different kind without that kind of brutality, but it is a kind of thing. It's kind of like Germany. If you want to exterminate everybody that opposes you, you can have a kind of order.

It doesn't make it right, but it does tend to be orderly. You can have prison. You can go to Folsom Prison or Sing Sing or one of these places and you can have order.

It doesn't mean it's pleasant for the prisoners, but it is order. And this is the kind of order that Felix puts in. Well, here the Jews with their tutelus guy, as Matt pointed out in the break, Felix sort of prides himself on being the guy that can keep order.

You bring your Egyptian and 30,000 guys, I'll suppress them. You bring your rabble rousers, hither and yon, and he is the one guy that came into Judea and stopped the robber mafia, stopped the religious zealots, stopped all these other troublemakers, and he's going to even survive getting dragged up in front of Nero for causing trouble for the Jews. He's a survivor.

He does it by brute force. He's a manipulator. He's a hard, hard man.

This is who Paul is standing in front of, accused of disturbing the peace. It's about the worst thing you could do in front of Felix, because he is all about keeping the peace by whatever means is necessary. So this is a serious thing.

And of course, Tertullus knows this. He's been in Judea. He knows how to make his case in a way that's most likely to get a quick verdict.

So he concludes in verse 7, he says, we wanted to judge this guy by our law. Notice he speaks in the first person plural, which gives us the idea that Tertullus himself is a proselyte to Judaism. Now, how long he had been one, who knows? Like I say, he might have been converted last week, so he could come down and make this case more persuasively.

But they accuse Paul of all of these things, but we were going to judge him according to our law. We were going to handle this. Now, this is an important thing.

You see there at the end of verse 6, we wanted to judge him according to our law. You know why they say this? Because Rome had given the leadership in Jerusalem the ability to sentence to death people who violated the law. Now, this was part of their agreement, part of their understanding, part of what Rome conceded to keep the peace in the Jewish state was the law of Moses specifies the death penalty for certain religious offenses.

They said we cannot practice our religion unless we have some ability to execute. Now, the actual practice of this varied from decade to decade in the time of Christ, in the time of the apostles. And you remember, the Jews couldn't just take Jesus out and execute him.

They had to get the Romans to do it for them. But they did it on the basis of a trumped-up charge that Jesus was an insurrectionist against Rome, that he was claiming to be king of the Jews when Rome had appointed a king of the Jews in Herod, right? What was the legal basis on which the Romans nailed Jesus to the cross? It was rebellion against the state. He was accused of claiming to be the king of Judea when in fact Rome says, wait a minute, we have a Roman appointed king in Judea and you're not it.

That's why there was a sign tacked onto the cross Jesus of Nazareth, sort of, quote unquote, king of the Jews. Here's what happens to you if you think you're going to make yourself the king of the Jews. That was the import that Pilate put up there, right? But as the years went on and as these accommodations, as Rome tried to keep the peace with Jerusalem and with Israel, they granted them the right.

Remember later on, Stephen is executed by the Jews, right? He's stoned to death on religious grounds and there does not seem to have been any Roman repercussion. This is not long after Jesus and whether it was a result of Jesus' execution and the Sanhedrin coming and saying, look, we don't want to have to be dragging every raggedy heretic up here trying to get you all to execute him. We need, you know, under our law, but depending on the season and the time, Rome allowed Israel to do this.

And so, when they come up here and say, we would have judged him according to our law, they were saying, we would have handled this and it would have never come up here to trouble you, but your man Lysias down here gummed up the works. We were within our rights. We were going to handle this religious issue with our religious court until your guy Lysias came in and stopped us.

It's Lysias' fault that we weren't able to handle this in Jerusalem. So, you see how cleverly Tertullus is saying, first of all, this Paul is a big time rabble rouser and he's causing trouble in Israel. We would have handled it, but your guy ran amok and stopped us and that's why we're here.

We shouldn't even be here. We should have never come to this court. So, the best thing you can do is dispose of it quickly.

Either turn him over to us and we'll deal with it or you kill him and everybody will be happy. They would be happy with either outcome. By examining yourself, you may ascertain all the things of which we accuse him.

Then, Tertullus calls his prosecution witnesses and very quickly in verse 9, Luke just summarizes the whole rest of the prosecution case. The Jews also agreed. They assented.

They said, yes, that's so. Everything, that's our man. Tertullus, he's giving you the true scoop.

Then in verse 10, Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak. So, the prosecution rests. Prosecution rests, your honor.

They sit down. So then, Felix swivels around, looks at Paul, gives him the nod. Paul stands up.

Now, he's going to speak. He's talking to Felix of the heavy-handed justice. Felix of the bloody reputation.

And he says, now, is he going to do the same thing that Tertullus did and start out buttering the guy up with a lot of specious flattery? He says, inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation. Now, in point of fact, it had been about seven years. When you look at the history of governors of the Roman province of Syria, most of them only lasted a year or two and there was such insurrection and problems and thieving and Rome would pull one out and run another one on.

Felix had been there seven years. He had lasted longer than most of his predecessors. So, Paul says, I know that you've been judging for a long time.

This could be construed as a compliment, but Paul is not saying anything that isn't just a calendar fact. You've lasted longer than a lot of guys that have held your office. So, I am cheerful to stand before you and answer for myself.

He says, I'm happy. You've got experience. You've been here a while.

I'm happy to talk to you. That's what Paul says. Because you may ascertain that it is no more than 12 days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

This is where we find out that he was actually only in Jerusalem for about a week. Remember, he came in and the whole thing with the guys doing the vow and the sacrifice and the shenanigans that went on there. And then he's been in five days in Caesarea.

So, he says, I haven't even been here two weeks yet. So, all of this talk about stirring up all kinds of rebellion and fomenting insurrection and the rest of this, I mean, how much

can you do in a week and a half? They did not find me in the temple disputing with anyone. They did not find me down at the temple inciting a crowd.

I didn't incite anybody at the synagogue. Didn't raise a big ruckus in the city. They cannot prove a single thing they are accusing me of, Paul says.

This is what I will tell you. I confess to you, verse 14, according to the way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets. Now, that's pretty clever, isn't it? Do we believe everything that's written in the Law and the Prophets? Absolutement.

We believe every inspired word of it. Do we follow the Law? Do we refrain from things that cleave the hoof and chew the cud or fail to do so? You know, no swine, no shellfish. Do we wear the tassels and don't shave our beards and all of the other strictures of the Law? Worship on the seventh day? We'd have to lay off doing anything on Saturday, which is the Sabbath, according to the Bible.

We don't do any of that, do we? But there's a big difference in practicing what is written in the Law and believing what is written in the Law. I believe it all, but I don't practice Judaism because I understand that that is fulfilled in the same way that I don't build a boat and wait for the animals to come down two by two. It's not for me.

It happened in the past, I believe it, but I don't wonder when all of the creation is going to get in and God will shut the door. So Paul is sort of clever here because he says, I don't deny a single word that's in the Law or the Prophets. I believe it all.

I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust. Now this I find interesting on a couple of counts because Paul keeps coming back to the resurrection.

When you read Paul's epistles, he keeps coming back to the resurrection. He says, I am an apostle. I've been doing this a long time.

He says, you know what? I don't think that I have arrived. In the King James it says, I do not count myself as having apprehended. What he means is, I don't think I've gotten hold of it yet.

He says, I continue to press. I continue to strive. I want to learn.

I want to grow in grace. I want to grow in knowledge of the Savior. He says, so that perhaps I will attain to the resurrection of the dead.

You say, now wait a minute. What's he saying? If he tries hard enough, he'll get resurrected. Is that what he's saying? Not at all.

Obviously, he already believes in the resurrection of the dead. Everybody's going to get resurrected, the just and the unjust, right? When he says, I press, I do not count myself as having already apprehended or already attained, but I press on hoping that I will attain to the resurrection from the dead. You know what he's saying there? The resurrection is the most powerful truth in the Bible.

If there is no resurrection, you remember 1 Corinthians 15? People were saying, you know, there's no resurrection. This Sadduceean belief had seeped even into Christianity, and there were some Christians who followed the Sadducees, and they said, you know, you live, grab for the gusto, because when you die, you're dead meat. It's over.

You sleep the big sleep, the big chill, dirt nap. It's over. It's done.

You're just, it's over. There's nothing beyond this life. Live it up now, because afterward, it's just over.

Well, Paul says, the resurrection is the hope. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, he says, we're a bunch of miserable people. Anybody can give you some kind of a system for this life.

You can do Scientology. You can do Buddhism. You can go after Confucius.

You can do Zoroastrianism. You can do Hindu, Buddhist, New Age. Make up your own religion, like seals and crofts, and just make up your own religion from scratch.

Write your own praise and worship music. I mean, you can do the whole thing. It doesn't matter what you do in this life.

Ultimately, if there's nothing beyond this life... I've thought about this. Most of us have had a pet that died, right? Everybody can think back. You had a pet at one point.

The thing is gone now. We had a little white cat. I liked it a lot.

We had it a long time. Persian, silver-tipped, beautiful cat, great personality, kind of cranky. I liked him.

He's gone now. All of his personality, everything that he knew, his likes and dislikes, his experiences, any pain that he might have felt at various times, where is it now? It has ceased to exist. It is as though he never was.

When those of us who had him and knew him and have pictures of him pass away... I mean, you think about somebody back in 1865 that lived in Atlanta and had a cat. Does anybody know now? No. It is as though it never was.

It has completely disappeared. The ups and downs, the joys, the sorrows. If people are dead and gone, what does it mean? What did it matter? When you pass out of the living

memory of somebody who's alive, what now? They find Egyptian mummies of people that were hugely important in their day.

They can't even figure out who it is. Some skeleton wrapped up in a lot of old moldy rags. Who was he? We don't know.

His name was Asher Nefidi or something. They decipher a hieroglyph. What was he? He was a chamberlain.

We don't know what he did. Did he have kids? Did he succeed? Did he fail? Was he popular? Was he obnoxious? He's just a moldy, wrapped up bag of bones now. Nobody knows anything about him.

If there's no resurrection, that's what your life counts for. That's what my life counts for. It's a whole bunch of nothing.

It is, like Shakespeare said, strutting for an hour on the stage, sound and fury signifying nothing. You say, well, it matters to me because I'm living it. Well, fine.

But what's the point? People who don't believe in God, who think that it's evolution and the great cosmos and we're a tiny speck in a vast universe. We're on a tiny planet around an insignificant star in a relatively small galaxy in this vast infinitude of space. The fact that we might as well be bacteria.

We spring up and we're gone. We spring up and we're gone. We're a little mold and incrustation on the planet.

We strut and fret and then we're gone. It's meaningless. It does nothing.

It accomplishes nothing. We can't survive ourselves. We can't make anything of ourselves as permanent.

Well, the resurrection is everything. The resurrection is the future. It's real.

It's not just a fantasy. It's not, well, I'd like to believe it because I don't want to think I'm just a speck on a dust ball around a small star. I want to think there's something more, so I'll just believe it.

It's a fact. There is a God who created the universe, who created our galaxy, who created our solar system, who created our planet. He created the entire universe for this planet.

We study this in our fundamentals. You remember? There is a reason. I ask myself.

I'm a thinking person. I've got a college degree. I'm not a dummy.

I've got an engineering degree. And I think, you know, what kind of sense does it make to have this infinitude of space and all of these galaxies and all of these stars and it just

so happens that on one small galaxy and one infinitesimal little solar system and one little third rock from the sun, here's life. And, I mean, what are the odds that God has centered the entire universe around this one planet? Well, guess what? He did.

Why is there the rest of the universe and the Hubble and all of these galaxies and stars out there? Because that is the factory that created the elements in our periodic table everything from hydrogen all the way up to the last one, whatever it is. I don't even remember anymore. But, you know, we've got all of these elements, all these different kinds of atoms.

We've got carbon and oxygen and lithium and all of these other elements. And where do you get the stuff so that God can reach down and scoop soil out of the crust of this planet and create a living man? He made a great big factory to generate this stuff. And we are made of stardust.

That's the only thing that old Stephen Stills ever said that was true in his song about we've got to get back to the garden, which is a totally obnoxious and misguided song. But one thing in there, he says, I mean, it's a neat sounding song, but it's a nutcase song. But one thing he says in there that's right is we are stardust.

And we are. We are made of dust that was manufactured in the stars. And it took a galaxy.

It took a universe full of galaxies to create the stuff that we are made of. And God did that. He created the universe to generate us.

And we are here. And he didn't do it just so we could rise up and fall like dandelions in your yard and be gone and forgotten. We are eternal.

Every single human being. Did you ever think about this? Every human being that has ever lived has eternal life of a kind. Everyone is going to live forever.

Everyone. The question is not will you live forever? Will you be resurrected? What does Paul say here? There will be a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust. Everybody is coming back.

I love, Johnny Carson is still around, but they asked him one time, well, you know, you've had all these accomplishments, you hosted the Tonight Show all these years, and you're so well-known and so popular, you're one of America's most beloved entertainment figures. When you die, what would you like to have engraved on your tombstone? And he thought for a minute. He's got great timing.

He came back and he said, I'll be right back. Be right back after this message. I'll be right back.

It's true. He and every other human being will be right back at the resurrection. The question is not will you live forever? It is how will you live forever? And it's a big question.

Paul says, I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept that there will be a resurrection of the dead, the just and the unjust. This being so, Paul says, verse 16, I myself always strive to have a conscience that is without offense toward God and toward men. What are the two great commandments? Jesus said all the law and the prophets are summed up in what? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said the law and the prophets, if you boil them down, that's what it amounts to. You need to live with a conscience that is without offense toward God and toward men.

Well, it's a tall order. Because the only way you can have a heart that is sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, when you go over to Hebrews chapter 10, Hebrews chapter 10 says, we can't just decide to have a conscience without offense toward God. You can't just decide that you're not going to have offense toward people.

Don't do this for real, but mentally when I ask you this question, could you raise your hand if someone said, everybody raise their hand that has never offended God and that has never offended their fellow man. You've never hurt anybody. You've never caused anybody pain.

And you've never broken any of God's laws and commands. You've never caused God any offense, any grief. Never lied.

Never sinned in your heart. Never got angry. Never were impatient.

Never were petty or self-centered. Never were evictive. Never wished that you could do someone a hurt.

Never thought in your heart, I could kill that person. Never done that. You have been sweet and nice as pie ever since you were born to everybody around you, all your brothers and sisters, your friends, your parents.

Never got mad at your parents. Always honored your parents. Nobody can do that, can they? So guess what? Resurrection of the unjust left to ourselves.

We'd all be in the resurrection of the unjust. It is because of salvation in Christ. Christ has been made our righteousness.

So it is to the extent to which we claim that righteousness of Christ. It's one thing to be saved. It's something else to stand on the resurrection of those who are saved and find

out that there are those who are going to have a great resurrection and those who are going to be ashamed and who are going to stand naked with no robe of righteousness, no opportunities destined to chop cotton on somebody's plantation for a thousand years in the kingdom.

Still be glad you're saved. Still be glad you're not in the lake of fire. But what a dismal prospect to have missed it, to have had the opportunity, to have known better and not to have availed ourselves of it.

It's like someone handing you the winning lottery ticket in the Texas lottery for \$10 million and you said, wow, \$10 million lottery ticket, this is great. But you never go down and redeem it and the time expires and you're holding your ticket saying, but it was worth \$10 million. Well, it was if you would have redeemed it but you sat around thinking about something else and now it's too late.

We have something better than a \$10 million lottery ticket. We have the opportunity for life with God in the future that is beyond what we could ask or think. The Bible says, no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, it has never entered into the heart of any man the things that God has prepared for those who love him.

It is going to be beyond anything we could imagine, the greatness of it. But God says, I'm not revealing it to you, I'm not going to tell you what it is. I want you to live the life I call you to, to live a life without offense to God, without offense to man.

That morality that we talked about ought to be a motivation and God says, trust me, it will be worth it. You think, oh, but won't I have to give up all the fun? Won't I have to live kind of a dull life and kind of kick my toe in the dirt and walk around like some kind of a saint with a cross on my back or something and all of the fun stuff will be gone? Listen, you do not know what God has prepared both in this life and in the next until you live the life that pleases God. He is the one that designed our soul.

He knows where all of the keys are in our mind and in our heart for happiness, for peace, for fulfillment, for contentment. There is nothing in this life that can even begin to fulfill our life and give us happiness and give us peace and give us a destiny like God can. He built us.

He knows exactly how we are made. He formed us in the womb. He is the one that knows.

So when Paul says, I have hope in God, that is what you and I ought to have. This life is not always that great. There is hardship.

There is difficulty. We have to make decisions. Look at this.

Look at what Paul says in verse 17. After many years, I came to bring alms and offerings

to my nation. He is trying to do a good thing and he gets abused for it.

There are a lot of poor people in Jerusalem. I was trying to bring them money and help them out. But in the midst of this, some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple.

I didn't have a mob. I wasn't starting a tumult. I was just down there trying to practice my religion.

They ought to have been here to object if they had any charge against me or else let those who are here say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council. Of course they didn't. They didn't find a single accusation, a single wrong thing that Paul had done except this one statement which I cried out standing among them concerning the resurrection of the dead.

I am being judged by you this day. You see, Paul gets a chance two times now to talk about the resurrection. The one theological truth he brings up in this court case is there is a resurrection of the dead and everybody here ought to be thinking about it.

Well, when Felix heard these things, verse 22, having a more accurate knowledge of the way. Felix has been in Judea here as the governor of the state, so to speak, for seven years. He has heard before.

Why do you think he's heard of it? Who lives in Caesarea with his four virgin daughters? Philip. Philip the evangelist. Do you think that Felix could be governor there for seven years with Philip in the same town and not find out about Christianity? It says he has a more accurate knowledge.

This Akribos, A-K-R-I-B-O-S is the word here that means something accurate. He has a very accurate understanding of Christianity. The Jews are coming up here trying to make this case against Paul and are saying, oh, he's fomenting rebellion.

What they don't realize is Felix knows exactly what Christianity is. He has already looked into it. He has kind of a fascination.

He's the hard, cruel, crush-them-with-violence guy. But on the other side, a lot of people that are that way also have sort of a mystical side. You think about Hitler.

He was very cruel. Exterminate the Jews. Six million to the gas chambers.

He also exterminated a lot of Christians, which they don't talk about. There were like eight million Christians that got killed under the Third Reich. You don't hear about that.

When they talk about the Holocaust, more Christians died under the Third Reich than Jews. If you go add them up. But it doesn't get talked about because they were not a racial, homogenous group.

They were scattered in Poland and in Czechoslovakia and in France and in a lot of other places. But quietly, the Germans wiped out huge numbers of Christians, more than they did Jews. Anyway, Felix, having a more accurate knowledge, having a very accurate knowledge of the way, he's sitting there like the Cheshire Cat.

He's sitting there like the Sphinx, not letting on. But he can sort this out very well. He knows exactly what it means when they're trying to accuse Paul of being the leader of the Nazarene sect.

And when Paul says, I follow the way, Felix knows exactly what he's talking about, knows exactly what he believes, knows exactly why the Jews are upset over it, because of the jealousy. They're losing proselytes to the way because the Gentiles are flocking to it in droves, the Jews are flocking to it in droves, and the old mainline traditional Judaism that gets people to drop money in the plate at the temple is waning, and they're upset. Felix knows all about this.

He's no fool. So he adjourns the proceedings, and he says, look, when Lysias the commander comes down, I'll make a decision on your case. Felix is also smart enough to know that he can't decide this one way or the other on the spot, because if he decides with the Jews, he's going to make a martyr out of Paul the way Stephen had been made a martyr, and this is going to fan the flames of Christianity, which is going to foment conflict.

The Christians are going to be mad at the Jews for killing their main apostle. The Jews are going to be mad at the Christians and try to get others to run up on charges, and once they succeed with one, they'll try to get the rest of the apostles and wipe them all out. Felix says, you know, I don't want to have a full-scale civil war on my hands here.

And if he sides with Paul, the Jews are going to be upset. If he sides with the Jews, the Christians are going to be upset. So he says, look, I'm going to put this whole thing on hold.

He's going to delay it, and he gives the excuse, I'll let my man Lysias come down and tell me his side. Well, this is a delaying tactic. If you notice in the rest of the chapter, we never hear that Lysias even showed up.

We don't know that he ever did, because Felix is going to keep him. Look at verse 23. He commanded the centurion to keep Paul.

This is like protective custody. He lets him have liberty. He told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for him or visit him.

See, he's keeping the Christians happy. They're not going to be mad at Felix. They're not going to be mad at the Jews, because Paul has some liberty.

They can visit. They can provide. They can give him stuff.

And the Jews, he can say, look, I've got the guy locked up. I'm holding him for trial. Lysias is a busy man.

I can't spare him to come down here right now. So he's basically letting everybody's feelings die down. He's put him on the back burner, and he's turned the power all the way off.

After some days, Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish, sent for Paul, and listened to him concerning faith in Christ. Now, this is very interesting, because this Drusilla is an interesting lady. Felix and Drusilla are not a wonderful, happy couple that got married as high school sweethearts or something.

Felix was married three times, and two of his wives were named Drusilla. One Drusilla, the first Drusilla, was a Roman. She was a granddaughter or a niece of Antony and Cleopatra.

So he's kind of a monkey-monk. He married into this famous family. And this Drusilla that he was married to is mentioned by Tacitus, the Roman historian.

The other Drusilla, which is the one we have here, was Jewish. She was a daughter of Herod Agrippa the Great. The guy knows how to marry into wealth and influence.

I mean, I tell you, he's a manipulating, hard-driving guy. So this Drusilla is a daughter to Herod Agrippa. Remember, the Herods were all kind of Jewish.

She was six years old, and she was promised to Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus. You've heard Antiochus Epiphanes? Well, when she was six years old, she got engaged. She was promised to Epiphanes.

Now, this is not the Antiochus Epiphanes, but it's like a later harking back to him. He was earlier. But Epiphanes was the son of Antiochus, the king of Comogeny.

And this Epiphanes said, I'll become Jewish and marry her when she comes of age. Well, when she came of age, he said, you're going to do what? Circumcision? What? No, I think not. And so, he didn't keep his word.

And so, her brother, Agrippa, said, well, boo on you. You're not going to become a Jew. You can't marry my sister.

And so, he would not bless the marriage, and she didn't wind up marrying him. Instead, he married her off to Azizus, the king of the Amessines. I don't even know who they are, but it's some guy on the peripheral border of the Judean area there.

Azizus married her, and he received her because Agrippa said, look, you've got to get

circumcised, then you can marry. And he says, well, all right. And so, he did it, and she showed up.

So, that was her first husband. But then Felix saw her and fell desperately in love with her. And so, he hires this guy who was a... It's a long story.

Felix fell madly in love with her. He said, this gal is a prize. I must have her.

So, he hired like a bogus Jewish magician from Cyprus. And he went in and told her, oh, I've seen it in the stars, mystical this and magic that. You've got to leave the king of the Amessines, and you need to go with this Felix guy.

Well, he had hired the magician guy to spook her into leaving her husband, which she did. And so, then Felix married her. So, she was a very famous woman, but the historians say she was a person of indifferent character.

She wasn't particularly famous for having good character. Ultimately, she and her son that she had with Felix died in the eruption of Vesuvius. And she's under the lava there somewhere.

She and her son. Anyway, this is the lady who comes with Felix to hear Paul. And you know she's kind of mystically oriented because that's how she got connived into this marriage was by listening to the bogus magician.

So, she's up for any new thing. Oh, you've got a sect leader here. Let me hear him.

Let's hear what he has to say. And Felix says, you know, this guy is one of the prominent leaders of the Way. I know a lot about this.

Let me find it. This is how he knew as much as he did. As he would look into stuff like this, it's good to know.

So, they both come over. Now, he's under sort of house arrest out in the town in Caesarea. Might be staying at Philip's house again.

Who knows? But, he leaves the governor's mansion with Drusilla in tow and comes over to see Paul. And he says, all right, let's hear your pitch. Tell me what you know.

Tell me about the Way. So, what does Paul say on this occasion? It says he heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And then, verse 25, here is the summary of what Paul says to Felix and Drusilla.

You think, man, he's talking to the governor of the state. They have come to hear him. They're sitting in the parlor, sipping on a mint julep or something, and say, all right, Paul, let fly.

Tell us what you know. Give us the scoop. Well, if you were in that position, if the governor of the state of Texas or somebody called you up and said, all right, you're a Christian.

What's it all about? Give me the short version. What would you say? What would you talk about? Well, of course, we don't necessarily have that gift. We're not necessarily called to do that, but Paul was.

Jesus told him, you will bear witness to me before kings and before rulers. Well, here he is. And this is a Gentile ruler.

By the way, apparently Agrippa wasn't around to stop Felix, who is a dyed-in-the-wool Gentile, from marrying his... I guess he figured, well, the jig's up. She's been promised and engaged and married and left, and there's no point in trying to maintain her purity at this point. She's kind of past it now anyway.

So she's married to Felix, who is a Gentile. So they come and sit down. Now Paul is doing what Christ called him to on the Damascus Road, isn't he? He's standing before a Gentile ruler and his Jewish wife and talking about the way.

And look at verse 25. He reasoned about three things. Righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

What have we talked about tonight? Righteousness. If you're going to live with God for eternity, if you're not going to go to the lake of fire, you have to have righteousness that you're not born with, right? We all have to have a ticket that we don't have any way to claim. We need something that we don't have and we can't generate.

Nobody can be good enough on their own. We are corrupt. We're a broken machine from the outset.

We can't produce anything that pleases God. The Bible says our righteousness is like filthy rags. And if you knew what it was in Hebrew, they're really filthy rags.

You can't imagine how filthy they are. That's an understatement. That's the way God looks at our righteousness.

It's like a guy in prison for mass murder trying to do something nice. Would you like to get a card in the mail from Saddam Hussein? Happy birthday. Would this be a good deed? Is there anything that guy can do that you would say, wow, what a nice guy.

He's corrupt. He has murdered thousands of people in cold blood. Spawned a couple of sons who did the same thing.

There's nothing that guy could do that I would consider righteous. He could buy me a Rolex watch. I wouldn't consider that a good deed.

The guy is a murderer. He is a filthy, rotten enemy of Christianity, enemy of Christ, anarchist, and anything else you want to say. That's about how much chance we have of doing something that impresses God.

You say, you know, I'm a pretty good person. No, you're not. None of us are.

And we are all held down and lost. So when Paul says, look, the first issue here is righteousness. You have to have righteousness to dwell with God.

God cannot abide on righteousness. The Bible says God is light. In Him is no darkness at all.

You can't be a big blot of darkness and come dwell with God for eternity. You just can't. You have to have righteousness.

Where do you get it? You can't generate it. You can't buy it. You can't earn it.

You can't deserve it. You have to accept it as a gift from Christ, right? This is what Paul tells Felix and Drusilla. What else? Once you receive that righteousness, now what? You've got to have self-control.

You can't just run amuck. The worst thing that could happen on board a wooden sailing ship was for one of the giant iron cannons to come loose from its moorings. You know, they were on a truck on wheels.

You run the guns forward loaded with powder and shot, and when you touch them off and they fire, there's this backward recoil, right? And then there are ropes and chains and things that check the recoil and keep it from... But it rolls back and forth, right? And just the weight of the gun, and you hope the thing will stop and the ropes will hold and so on. Well, if in a storm or whatever, those guns were to break loose and just start rolling around the decks, I mean, you've got two and a half tons of cast iron rolling around, smashing into beams and running over guys and turning them to bloody pulp. I mean, it is out of control.

How do you stop on a pitching deck a two and a half ton rolling piece of iron? I mean, you just... It's out of control. Well, the same thing with us. We have a sinful nature that just goes out of control.

We do not have the strength to control our nature. We have to have God's power. The fruit of the Spirit? What is it? Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Temperance, the modern translation of that is self-control. That's the fruit of God's Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit here for? He's not here to heal or to make people wave their hands or roll around.

He is here to give us the power to control ourselves, to make good choices in the right direction, to think clearly based on the Word of God. Self-control. Paul says, Felix, Drusilla, you want to know about the way? I'll tell you about the way.

It's not about laws. It's not about rules. It is about having a righteousness that God can look at and accept and can bring us into His presence for all eternity and we can stand there and not get incinerated because of our sinfulness, because of our corrupted nature.

It is about self-control that we can think and act in a way that pleases God. God will give us the power of self-control. And the judgment to come.

There's going to be an evaluation. Where is your righteousness? Where is your self-control? At that resurrection of the just and the unjust? Who says people are just? Who says they're unjust? It's the judgment. The judgment, we stand in the cold light of God's righteousness and justice and we either stand or fall, not based on who and what we are, not based on who and what we do, but on what we have claimed from the Lord Jesus Christ, what we have accepted as a gift from Him by faith.

And if you don't have it, you will fall on the day of judgment. Righteousness. Self-control.

Day of judgment. The judgment to come. That is the essence of the way.

That is the essence of Christianity. Where is the power to live a meaningful life? Where is the power to live a productive, fruitful, significant life? We don't have it. We have to get it from God.

It takes some humility, doesn't it? We have to admit that we can't do it. We have to understand that it is a free gift from God that we have to accept by faith. When you think about the spotted history of Felix and all the things he's done wrong, all of the murders he's perpetrated and the brute force and the finagling he did in his marital aspect and Drusilla and all of that, when he hears about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come, even hard-boiled Felix becomes afraid.

Emphobos. Like phobia. That's the Greek word here.

He becomes fearful inside. Emphobos. Fear within.

It happens to Felix because the impact of what Paul is saying hits him. And he knows it's true. He knows about the way.

He knows about righteousness and judgment. It's the same thing Jesus said the Holy Spirit will convict the world of. Righteousness and judgment.

So he becomes afraid. He says, go away for now. When I have a convenient time, I will call for you.

This is his answer to everything that's a problem. Let me put it on the back burner and I'll think about it later. And he puts it off.

We cannot afford to put off this decision. Felix died, as far as we know, in unbelief. Drusilla died, as far as we know, in unbelief.

We can't afford to put that decision off. As believers, we have to choose to prepare ourselves for a future life with God, to stand on the day of judgment unashamed, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We have to choose it day by day.

God will give us self-control. He will give us peace. He will give us things that pass understanding.

That's the essence of the message of the Apostle Paul here in chapter 24. Well, we'll finish up the last couple of verses and get into chapter 25 next time. Father, thank you for revealing these truths to us.

Thank you for this vivid story and the motivation that it provides us to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.