

## 45b ACTS

We pick up our study now in Acts chapter 25. We've seen Felix exit stage left and almost literally because he has gone to Rome. Let me give you a little bit of history on that.

Felix's downfall came because of an outbreak of hostilities between Jews and Greeks at Caesarea. It was a squabble over civil rights. It was like a civil rights issue where the Jews felt that they were the majority.

There were more Jews than anybody else in the town of Caesarea. Historically, Herod the Great, who was Jewish, had built the city. So they felt like they ought to have the upper hand there.

But the Greeks had the support of the military and the city was in fact a Roman-built city, Roman-funded. So they felt like they had the claim. This led to fistcuffs.

Josephus talks about this in his Jewish War Volume 2. But Felix intervened in the squabble. He had Syrian troops, not exactly mercenaries, but they're neither Roman per se nor Jewish per se. They're Syrian, so he doesn't have to worry about them defecting or taking sides.

But he used the Syrian troops and retaliated basically against the Jews. He cited he's the Roman guy, so he put down the Jews with these Syrian troops. Well, you know how the Jews feel about the Syrians anyway.

There's some history there. So they were greatly aggrieved and went to Rome and said, Look, we have an understanding here. Your guy has killed and taken prisoner and plundered a lot of us and basically made a devastation out of the Jewish community in Caesarea.

So they sent this delegation to Rome. And Felix was recalled to Rome and was in line for severe punishment. But his brother, Pallas, P-A-L-L-A-S, was a big friend of the Emperor's and interceded on his behalf and said, You know, he's not a heavy, he's my brother type of thing.

But he lost his seat in 60 A.D. and Festus came in. And we know this from Roman history and from Josephus and so on. And so we know what year we're looking at here with the Apostle Paul in front of Festus because this is within a week of Festus arriving.

And we know Festus came and took over this oversight of the province in 60 A.D. So we are now 30 odd years after the time that the Lord Jesus began His public ministry, say 26 or 27 years after the time of the crucifixion and Pentecost and so on. And you can understand that Felix, having already greatly antagonized the Jews, isn't going to turn Paul loose and make matters any worse. And so he left him in custody and so Festus comes on him.

So Festus goes to Jerusalem, he hears the arguments of the Jews there. And he says, Paul is being held at Caesarea. I myself am going there soon.

Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there if he has done anything wrong. He says, I'm not going to stick around here in Jerusalem. I'm taking over the reins of government.

I've hardly even seen the place. I haven't even unpacked my suitcase. And y'all don't want me to get involved in what could be a drawn out affair.

And he, I think, sensed that there was some ugliness going on. And he said, look, we'll take a cue from Felix. We'll handle this in Caesarea.

So you get to verse 6. After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. Just in passing, you'll notice the language here, as is always the case in the Bible.

In chapter 25, verse 1, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. And when he leaves Jerusalem, he goes down to Caesarea. Jerusalem universally is up.

And to leave Jerusalem is to go down. Spending eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court.

When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove. Then Paul made his apologia. This is actually a verb in Greek.

Paul, the apologoumenou, the one apologizing, the one arguing a defense, the one pleading a case. It doesn't have the modern sense of saying, I'm sorry that something happened. Apologetics, if you're familiar with that, is the science of making your case.

And basically, our usage of the word, meaning I'm so sorry, is derived from that in the sense that when you say, well, I demand an apology, originally that was, I demand that you make a case for why you've acted in such a beastly manner. And you say, well, I really had no excuse, and that is my apology. That's my best case.

I just messed up. Sorry about that. And so we have sort of warped the meaning of the word.

But logos being a fact or a matter or a word, and apa meaning upon or from, depending on how it's used. And so you have this idea, these are the words that stem from the case. This is what you're going to say upon the matter.

Apologia, upon the matter, kind of a thing. Epi is more usually used for something that is upon, and apa typically means more like from. But this is what comes from the matter,

your case.

So Paul made his apologia here. He says, I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar. Now there were three legal bases, any one of which could condemn Paul to death, because the Roman Empire had given the Jews sort of a sovereignty over the temple.

And they had the right to go all the way up to capital punishment in defense of the temple. And there were times when Caligula or Claudius thought, well, I'm going to go do something, I think it was Caligula that decided he was going to set up an image of himself in the temple. And Herod, if you've ever seen I, Claudius, the dark-haired fellow that played Herod, well, that's the Herod, one of whom we're going to be looking at tonight.

Herod counseled Caligula, and later Claudius, about how to deal with the Jews. Caligula said, well, you know, they're an empire like any other. I mean, they're a people group like any other.

I'm going to subject them to the empire. I'm going to have a statue of myself set up in their temple. And Herod said, you don't want to do that.

You just don't understand these people. They will impale themselves on Roman spears before they will let you do that. And, of course, this is sort of a misplaced zeal, but nevertheless it was a fact.

And so Caligula relented. Later on, Claudius would also benefit from Herod Agrippa's advice about how to deal with the Jews. But they had significant powers when it came to defending the temple and preserving the sanctity of the temple.

That's the second thing that Paul mentions. The first is the law of the Jews. And the Romans had come to an agreement, hammered out over a long period of time, that the religion of the Jews could be practiced.

They could worship their god. Remember, Caesar is a god in the Roman Empire. He is the god.

He is the highest god. But they sort of made an exception in the case of the Jews because they just had so much trouble with them. And they were monotheistic and they were so stubborn and bull-headed about not... They would have basically had to slaughter the entire population to subjugate them.

And so they said, look, you acknowledge the civil authority of Caesar and you can worship your own god. And you can impose your law. We will respect your religious law as long as it does not... And the Jews on their part said, we will not rebel against Caesar.

We will not become a problem in the area of civil disobedience. Just let us acknowledge the god who is not of this world. Caesar, for all practical purposes, will be the god of this world.

And so they hammered out this arrangement. This is why people frowned on the Zealots. Because the Zealots wanted to breach this arrangement and foment civil disobedience.

Same thing with a lot of these false Christs that were coming out who wanted to throw off the Roman yoke. And the Jews were saying, look, it took us a lot of sweat and blood to come to this accommodation. Don't screw it up.

We at least have the law and we have the temple. We can basically function, so don't rock the boat. And this is why the Zealots were so ill-thought of in the majority of Jewish circles.

So Paul, when he makes his defense, he says, look, I have not broken the law of the Jews. And I have not violated the sanctity of the temple. So on Jewish grounds, both of the concessions that the Romans made to the Jews, Paul is on solid footing here.

He is not liable to any of the authority that Rome has granted to the Jews to inflict punishment on people because he has not broken the Mosaic law. And he has not defiled the temple or in any way interfered. In fact, he was down there doing just the opposite when they created the riot and got him arrested.

He was completely within, probably to excess. The third basis, of course, is Roman law. And if you break Roman law, citizen or not, you come under the Roman penalties.

And the Roman justicism was and is greatly admired as one of the great ones of history. And ours in this country is modeled on the one that came, this is the justice system that undergirded and supported Pax Romana and the right of representation, the right of being considered innocent until proven guilty. All of that goes back to the Romans.

And this, fortunately, is the system under which Paul is now being subjected to judgment. So Paul, this is a summary, obviously he probably said more on this occasion, but Luke sums it up, I've done nothing wrong against A, the law of the Jews, he could come under legitimate punishment for that, or against the temple or against Caesar. Well, those are the only three upon which you can come under some sort of punishment or adjudication as if you have breached one of these three areas of authority.

And Paul says, I am innocent on all three, and I defy anybody to show me where I have broken the law in any of these three areas. Well, the Jews who came and brought the serious charges, trying to get some kind of traction in one of these three areas, can't prove any of their charges. And so, Festus could, at this point, with his authority, turn Paul loose.

But, wishing to do the Jews a favor. Why would Festus wish to do the Jews a favor? Why is he here? Felix has just been run out of town on a rail. Caesar has recalled him because he couldn't keep the peace with the Jews.

Festus is coming in to be the troubleshooter. He's going to fix the problem. The last thing he wants to do is antagonize these people that are just now calmed down from Felix.

So, he wishes to do them a favor. And he says to Paul, are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges? What is Festus thinking? He is no fool. He has no doubt come to know that they intend to assassinate Paul on the road.

And he says, well, I'll throw him a bone. If this Paul is willing to go to Jerusalem, I'll let him go. They'll kill him.

Problem solved. It's off my table. It's out of my hands.

They can't blame me. They can't blame Rome. It's a nice tidy solution.

The guy loses his life, but what's one apostle more or less? So, are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges? Well, obviously all that's going to do is strengthen the prosecution's case because they can try to grab more Jewish witnesses, right? Try to find some other sort of attack on the temple or something. So, Paul says, what do I look like? Some kind of moron? I am now standing before Caesar's court where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well.

And Paul sort of punctures this fabricated excuse to go back to Jerusalem. He says, look, you know good and well I haven't broken a single law here. There's no basis for any further trial of any kind.

If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. Just prove the charge and I'll tie my own blindfold. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them.

I appeal to Caesar. Now, under Roman law, and this is one place where our justice system has not copied them and probably should, but under Roman law, if you brought a false charge and then couldn't prove it, the law came down on you. There were severe penalties for failing to successfully prosecute a case.

If you brought charges against someone, you better be able to make them stick because the Romans didn't like people wasting their time. And frivolous lawsuits did not happen in Rome. Because if a Felix or a Festus or a Caesar found something frivolous coming before him, he would just nod to the guy with the red mohawk on his helmet and they'd just haul you off and you're out of here.

Don't waste the court's time is how they looked at it. And we need more of that. You cannot believe, well maybe you can if you've seen some of the examples of frivolous lawsuits.

The most recent one I heard of, sort of secondhand, but I read it firsthand a couple of years ago, a guy here in Texas broke into a house and was trying to rob it, but he tripped over a loose piece of tile or something and fell and hurt himself and sued the homeowner for damages and won. Sued and won in the state of Texas. Where if the homeowner had just wakened up and shot him, he would have been in the clear in the state of Texas, which is more like it.

But we have so much frivolity. I am privy to the insides of a couple of lawsuits right now, and I will tell you that somebody can make up any wild charge that they want. It can be completely groundless, completely baseless, can fly in the face of the law, and it has to be considered.

They have to, what's the thing where you tell somebody you have to produce all the documents? They subpoena things. They say, well, so and so says, the particular one I know about has to do with copyright. So you have a bunch of recordings, and you take them to a guy and you say, could you please take these tapes and turn them into digital files? I had Joseph do this for me.

I say, Joseph, I've got these tapes. Can you turn these into digital files? He says, sure, no problem. He digitizes them, gives me back the tapes, gives me back the files.

He gets paid, and all is well. It's work for hire under the law. Now, five years later, Joseph comes back and says, you know, I now own the copyright on those digital files that I made for you because I took at work and I made a unique product out of it, and so I own the copyright on those digital files, and you need to cease and desist using them because I own the copyright now.

Well, it flies in the face of the law. It's work for hire. But because someone does this, and I know of a case where someone has, now the people who paid to have the work done have to produce documentation, have to pay lawyers, have to go through this long, drawn-out legal battle, and it's completely baseless.

It's completely frivolous. It is completely contrary to law. There's a simple law that says work for hire does not establish a basis for copyright.

It's fundamental. It's one of the underpinning structures of our whole copyright system. But if somebody alleges, now you've got this multi-hundred-thousand-dollar business going on, much ado about nothing, and it's the strategy of bleeding your opponent dry.

I'll make them pay lawyers. I'll make them produce copies. I'll make them spend time and energy, and we'll just see who can last the longest.

It's a marathon. And you just say, how much stuff can I throw into the fan? How long can I keep the air obscured? Somebody will eventually get tired of not being able to breathe and settle. This is the modern legal system in America, not so in Rome.

And Paul here turns the tables. He says, if the charge is brought against me, understand this now. He says, if they are not true, and you imagine that he sort of paused for effect right there.

If these charges are not true, then he says, no one has the right to hand me over to them. And the silent implication is not only that, but you need to be dragging them up here and having them explain why they have brought these baseless charges. So now, a few beads of sweat are starting to pop out on the brow of the Jewish prosecution.

Because under Roman law, if you're wasting the court's time, you're in serious trouble. You can be executed. You can be imprisoned.

You can be garnished in the sense of all of your stuff being confiscated by the government to pay for the court's ire. And so Paul says, you know, they haven't been able to prove anything. You know what that means, right? And then he says, at the very least, you can't hand me over to them.

Quite the contrary, you ought to be handing them over to me. Or over to yourself. So then he says, I appeal to Caesar.

Now these are fatalistic words. Paul has already spoken before Felix. And now he speaks before Festus.

And he says, I appeal to Caesar. He is going the route of Roman law and Roman justice. Gentile law.

Gentile justice. He has manifestly separated himself. And this is just the opposite.

When he said, I must go to Jerusalem. I must speak to the people. Let me talk to them.

Now he says, you know, you can't turn me over to them. Don't send me back. Take me to Rome.

Now why does Paul say this? If there is any doubt this far along, from the Holy Spirit saying, don't go to Jerusalem, you're supposed to represent me before kings and rulers and all of that. But it's not going to happen in the Jewish world. And Paul realizes that now.

And he doesn't say, I would love another crack at the Sanhedrin. Take me to Jerusalem. That's where I want to be.

Maybe I can check up on those poor people I tried to give them money. He doesn't say

that, does he? Oh no. Don't turn me over to them.

Take me the other way. Take me across the sea. Take me to Rome.

Why does he say this? What did the Lord Jesus tell him? Do you have words in red in your Bible? What did Jesus tell him? You have testified in Jerusalem. Now you must represent me in Rome. That's what Jesus said.

Does Paul pay attention when the Lord Jesus speaks to him? He didn't pay attention when the Holy Spirit spoke to him. The Lord Jesus shows up and says, alright Paul, you've done the Jerusalem thing, now let's do the Rome thing that I told you about way back after the road incident. And you kind of forgot.

So Paul is totally ready to leave Jerusalem in his rear view mirror and head for Rome now. So this is what he says. How can he get to Rome? Not by going back to Jerusalem.

So he says the one thing that will take him in the direction that the Lord Jesus has specified. I appeal to Caesar. That's a guaranteed one-way ticket to Rome.

Right? How does that tie into the end of chapter 24? Paul is back thinking in terms of righteousness, self-control, and the judgment, right? Now when God speaks, Paul listens. The Lord Jesus says, you must represent me in Rome. Paul says, I will get to Rome.

I appeal to Caesar. He didn't have to say this. If he had kept silent, there is a fair chance that Festus could have turned him loose, figuring that the Jews would assassinate him later.

Wouldn't be his fault. I found no fault with the man. I turned him loose.

Sure sorry to hear that he was mugged and killed, but we didn't have anything to do with that. No Roman complicity except by omission. But Paul says, oh no.

I'm not even going to take my chances. I want a Roman escort taking me to Rome. Not going to even depend on angelic defense or anything else.

You get the soldiers, you get the boat, you get the cavalry. Take me to Rome. I want to see the Caesar.

So my question as I read through this was, why does Paul say this? He's that close to being free. The charges have been unproven and are in the standard category in Roman law where they can easily be dismissed. Festus has the authority to turn him loose, but once he appeals to Caesar, nobody can turn him loose until he has seen Caesar.

The criteria under Roman law, when you go and look this up and read all the Latin and that, is that Festus has authority and is supposed to exercise his authority under ordinary, in Latin it's called *ordinum*. The *ordinum* case, Festus is supposed to adjudicate

it. He's not supposed to pass along a lot of frivolous stuff upstairs.

It's kind of like a state supreme court that's supposed to handle stuff in the state and just handle it. Don't let a bunch of frivolous stuff be floating up to the federal level. And Festus is supposed to handle it if it's ordinary.

Why would Festus say, alright, you're appealing to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go, which is what he says in verse 12. What legal basis does he use to say this? Well, it is *extra ordinum*. That's where we get our word extraordinary.

It is outside the ordinary. Why is it outside? Well, because Paul is accused of disturbing the peace, which has been ramped up or trumped up into sedition. It is seditious to stir people up and create mob scenes.

And there's just enough of a glimmer of a case of sedition. What Festus wants is peace in the land. And when Paul says, take me out of the land, Festus says, this is good.

This solves my problem. You want to go to Caesar? Great. At the flimsiest of legal excuses, I will send you to Caesar.

Caesar doesn't like what you have to say. He can decide you're wasting the court's time, and he can chop your head off. But you're out of my hair.

You're off my plate. I've got enough troubles, without you making all of these people mount some kind of insurrection. So, with some of this background, you can see why it goes this way, regardless of the merits of the case.

So, he says, okay, you're going to go to Caesar. But, just a few days later, look at verse 13. King Agrippa and Bernice arrive at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus.

Now, I don't know about you, but I sometimes need sort of a guide to figure out who's who and what's happening. You've got Felix, Festus, Drusilla, you've got Bernice, you've got Agrippa, you've got all these people floating around. Well, this gets into the complexity of the family tree of the Herods.

And, trust me, it's complex. I thought about making a handout out of this, but if I give this to you, it will just blow your mind. When we talked about John the Baptist way back, we took a look at the intermarriages in the family of the Herods.

Just to give you an example, Herod Agrippa I married... He is a great-grandson of Herod the Great. He marries a grandniece of Herod the Great. They're constantly... Herodias is a sister to Herod Agrippa, and she marries Herod Antipas, who's kind of like her uncle.

You can't believe the convolutions of it. But here's the part that pertains to Acts chapter 25. Drusilla is married to Felix.

They just left. They heard Paul. Felix got afraid.

Drusilla was a Jewess, wanted to hear more about it, right? The reason she's a Jewess is she is a daughter of Herod Agrippa. Herod Agrippa I, who was in charge from 41 to 44 A.D., that's her dad. This Agrippa that is coming down to see Festus is the son of Herod Agrippa I. He's Drusilla's brother.

This guy with Bernice, this is Drusilla's brother. Bernice, who's coming with him, is not his wife, although he treats her like a wife. And they live together and do the things that husbands and wives do.

Bernice is his sister, full sister. Drusilla and Bernice, and Agrippa too here, are all peas out of the same pod. They all have the same mother and father.

Drusilla had been married to a guy named Assizus. He was an old king. It was a political alliance deal.

She went over there and didn't like it. She was a teenager. He was a geezer.

And she said, boo on this. I don't like this. And she left and came back and took up housekeeping with her brother Agrippa.

And that's the people you have here. This is brother and sister living as man and wife right here. Who are brother and sister to Drusilla who just left.

So that's who we're dealing with here. And so you ask yourself, when the Apostle Paul is standing there and here comes in... I mean it was bad enough when John the Baptist looked at Herodias who, by the way, was these people's aunt, right? Agrippa's aunt is Herodias Salome's mother. Who had been married to Philip.

And then came back and took up with Agrippa. I mean this family is so screwed up you can't believe it. So the Apostle Paul is standing there and he's looking at Agrippa and Bernice coming in as escort and escorted.

Hard on the heels of Drusilla who just left. What's he thinking? How many different sermons are running through his mind? You claim to be Jewish. You claim to know the law of Moses.

What are you doing? But when they come down, and the reason is, and there's a long story here about who is king of what, but basically Agrippa too here and his sister, they've got the land up north. They have like Galilee and the northern part of their territory, his territory, is the northern and sort of eastern surrounding area to the province of Syria. He's the king of that and Festus has got control over the province of Syria.

So they're neighbors. And Agrippa's been around a long time. So Festus says, hey,

you've got the whole Jewish thing figured out.

You've been here a long time. You're married to one or you're hanging around with one. Your sister is sort of one.

I don't know what he thought. But he figured, here's a guy that knows how to deal. He's got some Jews up in his part of it.

So I'll get this guy to come in. Plus, Agrippa, by some special dispensation, has control of the temple. Even though it's in Jerusalem and in the Syrian province, Agrippa has like a special dispensation that belonged to his father for the center of Jerusalem.

It's complex. Anyway, this is why Festus is happy for Agrippa and Bernice to come down. Because this is a temple thing.

This is a Jewish thing. I'm coming in trying to fix all of these problems. Agrippa is going to be my neighbor and my fellow king guy here.

Let's get him in and get him to give me some advice on this case. So that when I send him to Caesar, I don't end up with egg on my face. Right? There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner.

And of course, do they know who Felix is? Well, he's their brother-in-law. Sort of. There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner.

When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asked that he be condemned. I told them it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he faces his accusers and has an opportunity to defend himself. We take that so much for granted in this country.

And around the world, you find that this is not always the case. It is a precious right, and we ought to be grateful to God that we have it. Our whole justice system.

When they came here with me, I did not delay the case. I convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected.

Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus whom Paul claimed was alive. I was at a loss how to investigate such matters, so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar.

So he has read Agrippa into the picture. But to hear it put in these terms is really comical. They are disputing over some finer points of Jewish law, and Paul says he sees dead people.

That is basically it. So Agrippa said to Festus, I would like to hear this man myself. He replied, tomorrow you will hear him.

Well, if we had to stop right here, what would we conclude? What is a point of application from seeing this interaction of the civil authorities? Keep in mind, always, always, always, in scripture, when you are looking at the rulers of the people, and the Bible puts the lens pointed in their direction, they are a mirror. They are a summary and sort of a condensation of the people at large. These are the rulers of the Jews.

They are a mix of Jew and Gentile. The Herods are Edomians. They have Jewish blood.

They have a Jewish interest. But they are no longer Jewish. The Jews don't always acknowledge them.

When it is convenient, they acknowledge them. When it is not convenient, they don't. They are sort of almost like Samaritans.

They are impervious to the gospel. They hear it. They consider it.

But they don't take to it. This is exactly what we saw earlier, when an earlier Herod heard John the Baptist, and was fascinated, was interested, but did not commit himself, did not come on board, didn't express faith in the message, and ultimately ends up killing the prophet, killing the messenger. Ultimately, the nation of Israel rejects the Apostle Paul and what he stands for, and sends him to Rome, where he will die.

And there is sort of a parallel to the other messengers that have been sent to Israel. Peter is going to die. James has already died.

All of the apostles are eventually going to be rejected and driven out and are going to die in various ways, with the majority of the nation unrepentant, uninterested, and unfaithful to the God who gave them birth as a nation. And this is mirrored. This is reflected even in these people.

And you look at those to whom the Jews are looking for their vindication. They want Festus. They want Felix and Drusilla.

They want Agrippa and Bernice to let them do what they want to do. They want to partner with them. They want to cooperate with them to get Paul killed.

This is their goal. This is their desire. And it sort of reminds you of what the Old Testament says about those who worship idols.

Those who worship them are like them. And in using the Roman machine and the Roman government to accomplish their purposes of destruction, instead of coming out from among them and being separate, instead of standing for righteousness, standing for the Word of God, they now are pictured and represented by the likes of Agrippa and Bernice

and Felix and Drusilla. These are the people who now stand at the head of the Jews.

And the Jews don't want to acknowledge them, but it's looking in the mirror. That's what they are like. That's what they are like as a nation.

Well, we ask ourselves, to what extent am I compromising? To what extent am I becoming a part of the world around me? We are in the world, but we are not to be of the world. We are supposed to remember that our citizenship is in heaven. That our life, our day, our thought life has a purpose.

And it's not the common goals of people around us in modern American culture. We are not here for entertainment. We are not here for comfort.

We are not here for whatever it is that makes us feel good. We are people on a mission. You look at the movies, all of the popular movies that show some heroic action.

Somebody goes undercover and they go into a foreign country and they sneak across the border and they put on a disguise and they are getting here and going there and they are sleeping in holes and they are going through all kinds of discomfort because they are trying to get something done. The far end of the spectrum is you look at Bruce Willis and at the beginning of the movie he looks like an American. By the end of the movie, he looks like he has been swept up by a street cleaning machine.

He is bleeding from every pore in his body. He is bruised and broken and battered and teeth missing and everything. But he has saved America or he has saved the building or whatever it is from the terrorists in these die hard movies.

But people look at those and they say, Look how selfless, how dedicated, at the expense of himself. He didn't care about his comfort. He didn't care about his safety.

He didn't just leave and say, well, I got out of there. He does something selfless because he is a man on a mission. We admire and we hold up, at least cinematically, people who are selfless and dedicated to a goal at whatever personal cost.

Well, that is supposed to be us. We are the genuine people who are called to be selflessly devoted to the ultimate great cause. Which is the glory of God and the furtherance of the plan and purpose of God.

That is what the Apostle Paul does. Whether he gets stoned, whether he gets beaten, whether he is imprisoned. He is supposed to go to Rome and he says, I will get to Rome.

I see how God is working this together. Once I am a Roman citizen, I say I appeal to Caesar. I will go to Caesar and they will make sure I get there in one piece.

The Roman Empire will make it their business to get me there. And that is what he does. Is this his first choice in terms of personal comfort? Or he won't see Antioch again? He

won't see his family again? His correspondence with a lot of these people is going to be all the contact he has with them evermore? But what is most important? Jesus said, you must bear witness to me in Rome.

And Paul says, that is my marching order. That is what I am going to do. Whatever it takes, that is where I am going.

Where is our commitment? Where is our dedication? Are we too busy? When you see these guys, Jean-Claude Van Damme or whoever that other guy is that does the martial arts movies. You know how guys are always getting shot in the arm. Or they get a knife in the thigh or something like that.

And they tie a rag around it with their teeth. And little Rocky sews up his arm. He wasn't Rocky, he was somebody else.

But they say, look, I took a hit but I am going to keep on going. I am not going to let this slow me down. It seems like in the spiritual life, a lot of times the first time somebody draws our blood, we just faint.

Can you imagine if, who was Sylvester Stallone? What was the guy? He wasn't Rocky. Rambo. If Rambo saw his arm ripped and he just went and fell over.

And that was the end of the movie. I mean, but this is what happens to us as believers. We have got to have a little bit of spiritual intestinal fortitude, don't we? We are going to take some hits.

Jesus said, in this world you are going to have trouble. Count on it. But be of good cheer.

The world is under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not going to have too much trouble. You are not going to have trouble that you can't bear.

So when we see the blood, we have got to stitch it up. We have got to tie the rag around it and keep going. We can't fade.

We can't get preoccupied and lose sight of what is the goal? Why am I here? What is righteousness? Where is my self-control? What is the basis of the judgment? That defines us as people. That defines us as believers. Where is the righteousness? And how do I find it out? Where is the self-control? And where do I get the power to exercise it? What is the judgment going to be? And how do I make sure that on that day I will stand and not be ashamed? If we ask ourselves those questions every single day, we will live a productive, fruitful Christian life where we abide in the vine and we bear much fruit.

It is all about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come. Paul has that figured out. And he not only talks the talk, he walks the walk.

And that is why he is going to stand in front of these kings and make his case and get

himself sentenced to a one-way ticket to Rome because that is where Jesus sent him. Well, it is food for thought, isn't it? Let's close here. We will pick up in verse 23 with great pomp next time.

Father, thank you for the privilege of seeing the truth of your word. Thank you for the presence of the Holy Spirit who ministers it to our hearts. We pray that we can remember and apply what we have heard in such a way that our lives fulfill your purpose and glorify our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray it in his name. Amen.