

Acts 24:1-27

“A Convenient Time...”

When Paul 1st got saved, the Lord made His plan for Paul’s life very clear when He said, “...*he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*” Acts 9:15 and When you read that you think, “My that sounds pretty prestigious, what an incredible way to be used of the Lord.” and Then you read the next vs, “*For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.*” Acts 9:16

You see one of the things that we need to realize as a bible believing people is that to the degree God lifts us up, He 1st allows us to be broken down. Which translates like this, to be greatly used of God is to be greatly broken *by* God, to be used in the deep things of God; one must 1st pass through deep things. Because the nature of humanity is to pride oneself on one’s accomplishments, the problem is that God hates pride, and if He’s the one doing the work, why do we have a tendency to take the credit anyway? So God has this way of balancing our lives, lifting us up, but in the spirit of humility, keeping us mindful of our frail humanity.

It’s true that God had an incredible plan for Paul the apostle’s life, but the toll for that plan was very high, undergoing excruciatingly difficult days throughout seasons of his life. Learning to die to self, getting acquainted with the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings that the power of the resurrection might rest upon his life.

When you read the book of 2nd Cor you get a brief glimpse into a portion of what Paul’s life was like when he says there of himself, “...*in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness -- besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*” . 2 Cor 11:23-28 He was a man who knew what it was like to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ Yeah God was going to use his life in a radical way, bearing His name before Gentiles, kings (various rulers) and the children of Israel, but at a radical cost.

I think sometimes we want God to use our lives, and God *wants* to use our lives, but we don’t stop 1st to count the cost, Jesus said that we’re to count the cost, that way we don’t commit on a level of convenience. I can’t tell you how frustrating it can be to count on someone who says they’ll do something, but then they don’t because the timing wasn’t convenient, or they didn’t realize what they were getting into when they signed on, or whatever. We’re to count the cost in advance and make our decision accordingly, I try to communicate to the servants around here that the Lord doesn’t honor “Convenient Commitment” but rather “Consistent Commitment.”

Paul was as committed to Christ as they come, so God used him to bear his name not only before Gentiles (in taking the gospel to so many places it had never been), and the children of Israel, but also before dignitaries, rulers of the people, and kings. But I'd bet when he came into the awareness of God's plan for his life, he didn't understand that the place from which he'd testify of Jesus Christ before kings, would be prison as he stood on trial for his life. and As we approach ch 24, here Paul is, in prison, preparing to make his defense before Felix. He'd testified in Jerusalem before the multitude, which seemed to blow up in his face. Then the next morning he was on trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court, which wound up in an uproar. 40 Jews then banded together to murder Paul and the Roman commander becoming aware of it sent Paul by night to Caesarea guarded by 470 soldiers. Well, when he arrived the governor read the letter from Claudius Lysias concerning Paul and he said when your accusers arrive I'll hear your case. So beginning in vs1

Vs1

They didn't waste much time in pursuing Paul, it was a 2-3 day journey from Jerusalem to here if they kept a pretty hot pace and seeing as how Ananias was around 80 yrs old at this point they got here pretty quick. and You begin to see the sincerity with which they're pursuing Paul and seeking a conviction, when you see the high priest, the elders, and along with them a hired gun, Tertullus who was a skilled orator, a lawyer who was there to present for them their case.

Vs2-4

Now what the bible doesn't tell us, but that secular history records is that Felix was just about anything but noble, he'd formerly been a slave, but because his brother Pallas was in favor with the Emperor Claudius he'd been freed and became the 1st slave in history to ascend into the ranks of power with in the Roman government. Tacitus the Roman historian, describes Felix as, "a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave." and Again, "he indulged in every license and excess, thinking 'that he could do any evil act with impunity.'" (Williams quoting Tacitus) The point being that he was just an incredibly corrupt man who both used and abused his power for his own personal gain and to serve his own agenda. and None of those things were a secret; his reputation preceded him.

The Jews in particular despised him, one commentator said, "In reality he [Felix] had put down several insurrections with such barbarous brutality that he earned for himself the horror, not the thanks, of the Jewish population." So when Tertullus opens their case by speaking of how great Felix was, "Seeing as how through *you* we enjoy great peace, prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, *most noble* Felix with *all* thankfulness," it's obvious and open lying flattery.

Be careful when you're in the presence of a flattering mouth, the bible warns against and rejects flattery. Why? Because there's always a self-serving agenda lurking underneath, it's like when your kids come up to you and start singing your praises, automatically you know that they're wanting something *from* you or they wouldn't be being so nice *to* you. They're flattering you for selfish gain, in order that *their own* agenda might be accomplished. In the 12th Psalm we read in regards to the ungodly, "*They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; With flattering lips and a double heart they speak.*" Ps 12:2 and What I want you to see there is the connection between flattering lips, and a double heart. There's another agenda underneath the surface. Sort of like when the Lord spoke of people who draw near to Him with their lips, and honor Him with their mouths, but their hearts are far from Him. There's no real substance to it, its just lip service. You're just flattering the Lord, not really worshipping, or offering the deep recesses of your heart *to* the Lord, it's just offering the Lord a lying tongue. That's what the bible says, Ps 78 "*Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue; For their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant.*" Ps 78:36-37 Prov 26:28 "*A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin.*" Rom 16 tells us to, "*...note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*" Rom 16:17-18

So we see that consistent thread of a self-serving agenda that goes along with flattery, there's a difference between honest encouragement and deceitful flattery, and at it's root is the underlying intent of the heart. Is it to build up your brother or sister, or to somehow, in someway gain you a greater platform in their presence. Are you building them up simply for who they are to you, or flattering them for what they can do *for* you? Jude, in speaking of the ungodly says that they're those, "*...walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.*" Jude 16 So be aware of the danger of flattery, whether you're the one flattering, or being flattered.

At least 4 times the proverbs associate, or connect flattery with sexual immorality. How many times have people been seduced into immorality through flattery? Being told all that they are, and how much they're loved, or whatever they need to hear that they might succumb to the flatterers ultimate self-serving agenda. Prov 20:19 speaks of the talebearer revealing secrets, therefore don't associate with one who flatters with his lips, we're not to make close friends out of someone who flatters with his/her mouth. So be aware of the dangers of flattery, here Tertullus is seeking to smooth up to Felix that he might win his favor through flattery. and In vs 5 he says,

Vs5-9

So this guy is just hammering away at Paul, making them look innocent, the commander as though he budded in where he didn't belong, and Paul as though with out him there'd be nothing but peace in the Roman empire, he alone is the primary problem of the empire. Kind of an interesting perspective he has of Paul isn't it?

How is it that the righteous are the best thing that could happen to the wicked in that you have the message, and the hope that they need, yet they see you as the root of all their problems? But Paul is in good company here, Ahab called Elijah the “troubler” of Israel, Jeremiah was accused of “weakening the hands of the nation.” The fact of the matter is that these guys were just about the last remnant of righteousness and representatives of God left, but rather than being seen in the light of having the message of hope that they were in need of, “If we could just get rid of those fundamentalists our problems would be over.” Jesus said, *“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* Matt 5:11-12 and Again, *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!”* Matt 10:24-25 When you’re reviled and spoken evil of just because you love the Lord and refuse to compromise your standards in the Lord, than great is your reward.

3 Primary indictments against the apostle, #1 “This man is a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world.” Now unknowingly he sort of compliments Paul in this because he’s saying that he’s had a global impact with the gospel of Jesus Christ and It’s true that everywhere Paul went there seemed to be either a riot or a revival, but not because *he* was stirring up trouble, but because of the way that the Jews responded to the message of the gospel of the grace of God.

If you’ll allow me to deviate just a bit from the context but I think it makes for a good segue, you should know that the gospel *does* divide. Because you’re either for Christ or against Him and there’s nothing in between, to make no decision is to make a “no” decision. So when he mentions, “A creator of dissension” the gospel by its very nature can bring discord into the mix. Remember Jesus said, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'”* Matt 10:34-36 and The idea there is that when you begin to place your priority upon Christ and the eternal perspective, but those around you are still prioritizing the things of this world, it’s going to create some friction. and You’ve got to decide who it is you’re going to follow, be it that particular person and their priorities, or the person of Jesus Christ and His priorities for your life.

The 2nd indictment being that he’s a “Ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” and Tertullus is really trying to paint Paul in a negative political light, saying 1st of all that he’s a creator of dissension, or perhaps your bible says, “A mover of sedition.” and Then he says that Paul is a ringleader of this sect of the Nazarenes (which is a slam against Jesus of Nazareth and His followers). and What he’s doing is saying, “Look, Paul is an insurrectionist, he’s a rebel, he creates uproars everywhere he goes and he’s a threat to the peace of Rome.”

The final charge (and really the only charge that this all sprang from) is that he, “Tried to profane the temple.” They accused him of trying to bring a Gentile into the inner courts of the temple, something that if you remember when we went through ch 21 was completely made up and in no way substantiated because it didn’t happen. Of course at that time they stated it like it was a solid fact but here (because there was no evidence) Tertullus throttled the charge back a bit saying that he “tried” to profane the temple. and All the elders and Ananias agreed with him.

But something you need to realize here is that in all these charges he hasn’t presented 1 shred of evidence, neither are there any witnesses present to substantiate any of his claims. These guys are bringing charges with out a single witness to stand on. Interesting that this guy who finds it so ez to flatter Felix finds it just as ez to incriminate and accuse Paul with no evidence. and That’s typical, someone who’ll flatter you today, generally has no problems accusing you tomorrow behind your back.

Vs10

Peter said, “...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.” 1 Peter 3:15-16 Paul says, “I’d be glad to answer for myself.” He knows the facts are in his favor, he doesn’t flatter Felix, he just honors the office, basically says, “You’ve got a head on your shoulders, so you should have no problem with this case.”

Vs11-13

So Paul systematically answers all 3 charges and shows himself blameless on all counts. He told the Philippians, “*Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*” Phil 2:14-15 We’re to lead lives that are blameless, the truth is a friend to the child of God. The truth shouldn’t frighten you, if it does there’s apparently a deeper issue going on that you need to get right with God. The truth should comfort you, because the fact is you haven’t done anything to be ashamed of or indicted over, you’re blameless. Paul says, “Add it up, it was 12 days ago that I went to Jerusalem. 1 Day to arrive, the next with James, days 3,4,5 and 6 in the temple observing the purification ceremony, day 7 the tumult broke out, day 8 on trial before the Sanhedrin, the next day the Jews plotted to kill me, so that night was forced march here, and I’ve been here awaiting trial..” and The point he’s making is that even if he wanted to start an uprising, when did he have the time, time doesn’t even allow for the accusation to hold water, “Not only that #2 when they found me in the temple I wasn’t arguing with anyone, nor inciting the crowd, be it in the synagogue or the city. and 3^{rdly} they can’t furbish any proof of me profaning the temple because it doesn’t exist, I didn’t bring any Gentile beyond the outer courts and there are no witnesses that can testify otherwise.” It’s an air tight case.

Vs14-16

Which we spoke about last week so we won't spend time on it today except to say that a clear conscience doesn't necessarily indicate vindication before God. Paul himself said, "*For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.*" 1 Cor 4:4 Which is to say that my conscience isn't what clears me, it's the blood of Jesus Christ The Lord will judge. If you want more than that you'll need to snag up the cd, or the tape.

What we want to focus on here is Paul's confession, he's witnessing the good confession before Felix, he quickly blows buckshot into their case and then slides into a testimony regarding the word of God and the resurrection, the hope we have in God. He says, "I do confess that I worship according to the "Way" which they call a sect," (which is to say,) "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ the way the truth and the life through which is the only access to the Father."

He says here that Christianity is really just the full fruition of all that's foreshadowed in the OT, he says, "I'm worshipping the same God as my fathers, believing all things written in the Law and the Prophets." Not just some things, you guys this is so critical, we believe all of the Word of God from cover to cover, we believe that, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" 2 Tim 3:16-17

We don't believe that some things are true but other things are just allegories, Moses didn't really cross the Red Sea on dry ground, Jonah was really swallowed alive by a great fish, if you don't believe those things, then you don't believe all things in the Law and in the prophets. Jesus believed it, he quoted from the most controversial passages in the scripture, even placing the veracity of who He is on the sign of the prophet Jonah, one of the single most controversial accounts of the bible. But Jesus said, my resurrection (being 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth) is just as sure as Jonah's being 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of that great fish. and Even as that fish spewed Jonah back up alive, so to I'll come up from that grave alive.

Remember what Jesus told His disciples on the Emmaus road, post resurrection? He was walking beside them, but they didn't recognize Him, they were saying how the women had said they'd seen Him alive, but they just didn't know... and He said, "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*" Luke 24:25-27

In the volume of the book it's written of Him. Paul says here, "I believe it all" he knew that Isaiah 53 was a picture of the Messiah suffering for the sin of the world, the Lamb of God led to the slaughter, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Ps 22 being that graphic portrayal of crucifixion hundreds of years before it was even invented as a method of execution. The prophecies of the resurrection, not allowing Your Holy one to see corruption, Paul says, "It's all there, and I believe it that's why I'm here today, because of my hope in God."

Where do you place your hope? If it's anywhere other than God you do well to seriously re-evaluate your priority, that word hope speaking of the guaranteed certainty and assured expectation, that there will be a resurrection of the dead. Both of the just and the unjust, 2 resurrections, believe me when I say you want to be in the 1st. Rev 20:6 "*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*" and It goes on there to speak of the great white throne judgment that will take place and how that anyone whose name isn't found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire which is the 2nd death. and Time doesn't permit us to really develop this, but suffice it to say for now that if you give your heart to Jesus Christ you're going to be apart of the 1st resurrection, absent from the body, present with the Lord. If you leave the planet apart from Jesus Christ you'll be eternally separated from God 1st in hell, or outer darkness, then at the end cast into the lake of fire after you've stood before the judgment seat of God. My recommendation is to just surrender your life to Christ, that your hope might be in God. Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*" John 11:25-26 and That's what's so critical, that you believe it.

Vs17-21

"I came to offer alms, not incite insurrection, they found me purified, not polluting the temple, and if they had a leg to stand on they should be here to testify. If I'm guilty of anything it's declaring the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Vs22-25

Vs 22 we don't really know how he had more accurate knowledge of the "Way" some say perhaps his wife who was the great granddaughter of the Herod who tried to kill Jesus at his birth, her great uncle was the Herod who mocked Jesus and had J.B. beheaded, so there was some history there. Secular history points to Simon the sorcerer from Acts ch 8 became buddies with Felix and perhaps that's how.

Vs23 Because of the great liberty he gave Paul it seems obvious that he knew he was innocent, but he put off setting Paul free until he said he could hear from Lysias personally, did Lysias ever come? Again the record is silent.

Vs24-25 Felix and his wife get a personal interview with Paul the apostle whereby he shares with them the gospel, concerning the faith in Christ. and Notice he reasoned with them,

the gospel is very reasonable. Your sin, for Christ's righteousness, your guilt for His innocence, He died your death, you obtain everlasting life in Him. "*Come now, and let us reason together,*" Says the LORD, "*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*" Isa 1:18

Three things he spoke to them about, #1 Righteousness, the perfect standard of God's law and how we all fall short of it. The fact that we need to be made righteous by faith in Christ before we're seen as acceptable before God, so he spoke to him of righteousness, and I'm sure that rattled his cage considering how immoral both he and his wife *were*. But not only do we need to be made righteous, and need forgiveness for our past, but we need the power refrain from further sin in the present. Or as it says here, "Self-control" Felix indulged himself in whatever he felt the need. But sin is so often addictive, only the power of the Holy Spirit can break the bonds of sin in our life, the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness...self control. We need the forgiveness and atoning work of Jesus Christ imputed to our account, the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. and Finally he spoke of the judgment to come, God is a holy and righteous God and will require an account of each of our lives. What did you do with the person of Jesus Christ? Accept Him, or reject Him. When Paul was finished speaking Felix was afraid, literally it speaks of him trembling, he was literally shaking, coming under the conviction of the Holy Spirit because of the sin in his life.

Did he commit? No, the timing wasn't "Convenient" "When I have a *convenient* time I'll call for you." How sad, people think they'll get right with God at a convenient time, they drink in a life of sin to the full and then give God the dregs, or what's leftover of their lives at a later time. The problem is that convenient time never comes, today is the day of salvation (the bible says) you're never guaranteed tomorrow. If you hear His voice don't harden your heart, open your heart, don't get into the pattern of rejecting Jesus Christ Because it just gets easier and easier to reject Him, and harder and harder to accept Him, your conscience will become seared, the convenient time is ever elusive, perhaps tomorrow, turns another day, turns to never, the claims of Christ are never "convenient" for us, we're to count the cost, and commit our lives to Him.

Vs26-27

2 years later, still not ready... still not convenient, to bad so many people's lives end just like that. It was just never convenient, but it doesn't have to be that way. As we prepare to partake of communion, now is the time to get right with Jesus Christ it's not going to ever get any easier than it is right now.

Prayer Points: Thank You for the righteousness You've given us in Your Son, fill us with the power of You Holy Spirit that we might live in this present world in a way that brings glory to

You. Thank You Lord that You bore our judgment upon the cross that we might take part in the 1st resurrection living forever as kings and priests unto You, our God.

If Jesus is knocking on the door of Your heart today and you've never given your heart to Him, don't resist Him, receive Him. If the conviction of the Holy Spirit is resting upon you, don't put it off for a convenient time, commit your heart and life to the Lord today. (Share the gospel.)