

Acts Chapter 24

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Date: 18 December 2013

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[0 : 00] Well, if you will recall, we had just finished this one particular sheet last week, and we were at the bottom of page 609, where the Apostle Paul is appearing before Felix, and they are going to shuttle him from one Roman authority to another, handling it in a delicate kind of way, because Paul the Apostle is a Roman citizen.

And in this particular culture and in this particular time, that changed everything. That meant that all kinds of benefits and privileges were available to him that were not available to the average person in that day, because most people were not a Roman citizen, and they were not accorded the privileges, benefits, etc., that accrued to being a Roman citizen.

So at the bottom of page 609, and we're just about to go to a new page, we read about Felix, verse 22 says, When Felix heard these things, that is, that Paul was trying to explain his situation before the Jews, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them and said, When Lysias, the chief captain, shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

In other words, I will get all of the information that is necessary to render a ruling on this. And then that takes us over to page 610, down the lower left-hand corner.

And we read that in verse 23, top left-hand corner, page 610, And he, that is, Felix, commanded a centurion.

[1 : 44] A centurion was a Roman army officer who had 100 men under his authority. He commanded a centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come to him.

In other words, that again brings out the fact that he was a Roman citizen. Now, if he had not been, they would have just taken him and held him in custody, probably wouldn't have allowed anybody to see him, wouldn't allow anybody to bring anything to him or anything of the kind.

But being a Roman citizen, his custodian is told not to forbid anybody that wants to come to Paul and talk to him.

He's to have free access to him. You are not to deny that. Or to minister or come to him. Somebody wants to bring him food or items of garments or whatever. You are to allow him to receive them.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

[3 : 01] And as he reasoned of righteousness, and I want you to look at some of these translations here, But while Paul was speaking at length about righteousness, about justice, when he argued about morality, as he talked of uprightness, when he discussed purity of life, while Paul was talking about goodness, when the discourse turned to questions of morals, temperance, and judgment to come, he struck a nerve.

His argument and his reasoning penetrated this man Felix, got to him. And we are told that Felix trembled, terrified, became terrified and interrupted him, and said, Go your way for this time.

I think what that simply means is, he interrupted Paul. He got to the place where what Paul was saying was really having an effect on him.

And it was speaking to him about moral issues. And fellas, this is something that always, in my estimation, has to be present before anyone can intelligently embrace the gospel of salvation and come to faith in Christ.

And that is, they have to develop an awareness of their sin. And I have often thought that, in many times, this is the, sadly, this is the untold portion, the omitted portion in proclaiming the gospel.

[4 : 47] It is so easy to bypass the unpleasantness of one's personal sin and just go right straight to salvation as though the sin issue didn't even exist.

And as much as I admire Campus Crusade and their efforts for evangelism and everything, and they've won a ton of people to Christ, there's something misleading in their little four spiritual laws.

God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. But if you don't get to the issue of why Christ came and why you need him, and all you do is just present the positive aspect, you have truncated the gospel.

You cannot, you cannot bypass the issue of personal sin and go right to salvation because salvation makes no sense apart from the reality of personal sin.

It is our sin, our shortcoming, our failure that makes the gospel and salvation intelligible, available, and necessary.

[6 : 00] And if you skip that part and just go right to the positive aspect, there's no rationale for really putting your faith and trust in Christ. And I think this is exactly what has happened in the case of a lot of people.

And some call this easy-believe-ism, and I don't know that that's the right title for it, but if you omit it, then they don't get the full scoop. And my point is this. Before you can give people the good news about the gospel, and that's what the word gospel means, good news, you have to give them the bad news.

And we don't want to do that. We don't want to give people the bad news. We just want to give them the good news. But the bad news is we are all sinners.

We have all alienated ourselves from God because of our sin. And this is difficult to communicate to people because we think that it's going to make them feel bad.

And you know what? It's supposed to. It's supposed to. When someone has their sin revealed or talked about, it's not supposed to make them feel good.

[7 : 12] It's supposed to make them feel bad. It's supposed to make them look bad. And it does that for all of us because sin and its reality is an unpleasant subject.

It reminds us of our moral failure and our shortcoming. And nobody likes to be reminded of that. We all like to think we're pretty wonderful people.

We're really nice. We're better than average. Blah, blah, blah. And all the rest of it. But the truth of the matter is you have to be able to give people the bad news before the good news makes any sense.

People need to know what it is they are being rescued from before there is any need for their being rescued. truth of the matter is it's just a person without Christ is just like a man in a lake who is drowning and going down for the third time.

That's bad news. And he knows he's in big trouble. But there is no reason to throw a lifesaver to somebody who isn't drowning.

[8 : 21] So, like old Vance Havner used to say, one of the greatest problems in getting people saved is you can't get them lost. You have to get people lost before they know they need to be saved.

And that's exactly what Paul is dealing with here. He is talking about righteousness. And I'm sure that he is explaining the fact that the righteousness that God will accept is not a matter of quantity.

It isn't an issue of how righteous are you. Because however much you have isn't enough to satisfy an utterly holy and righteous God.

It just isn't. So, the righteousness that God will accept is not an issue of quantity, how much you have or how much you lack. It is what kind of righteousness do you have.

Because there is only one kind that God will accept. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is the coin of the realm. And when you come to faith in Him and put your faith in Jesus Christ, He gives you as a free gift His righteousness and applies it to your account.

[9 : 46] That's what makes you acceptable to God. that's the issue that Paul is talking to Felix about here. He's reasoning of righteousness. 20th century New Testament says Paul was speaking at length about righteousness.

Argued about justice. Argued about morality. Talked of uprightness. And all the while, Paul is laying out this case for God's righteousness.

Old Felix is becoming more and more uncomfortable because the truth is penetrating him and he is discovering that he sorely lacks the kind of righteousness that Paul is talking about.

And finally, he can't handle it anymore. And he abruptly cuts Paul off and he trembles and answers, well, okay Paul, well now, you go your way now.

Go your way now. He just wanted to get rid of this guy. Get him out of his way because he was really making him uncomfortable. Go your way for this time and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

[10 : 56] When I have a convenient season, do you know when this convenient season usually comes for most people? You're right.

It doesn't. And that, by the way, that's one of the issues dealt with on this CD. In the midst of all of the objectives that people have, reasons that they give for not putting their faith and trust in Christ, objections that they have, the very last one is perhaps the most prevalent of all.

You know, you're right. I need to do that. I need to get my spiritual life in order. I need to look into this more deeply.

And I probably really do need to put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ. But, not yet. Not now.

Later. Later, I'm going to get serious about this. On down the road, I'm going to look into this. but not right now. And, the later, very often, never comes.

[12 : 11] That's the last objection on there that is dealt with. And it is one that has, unfortunately, that has damned a lot of souls. People say, that's something that I'm going to do one of these days.

Or they say something like, yeah, I've got some bad habits that I need to get rid of, some things that I need to clean up. Actually, I would be embarrassed to come to God in the shape I'm in right now.

And I, I just wouldn't want to do that. I don't feel that God would or could accept me because I'm this or I'm that or I haven't done this enough or I haven't done that enough.

And I need to get my act together and then, then I'll do that. Hey, if you think you can clean yourself up to make yourself acceptable to God, then you wouldn't need Christ.

Truth is, none of us can clean our sins. None of us has the kind of detergent that will do the job, but God does.

[13 : 18] And when we come just as we are, sin and all, failure and all, faults and all, imperfections and all, that's the way God wants us to come, just like we are.

And when we do, he does the cleansing. And he reaches into the human spirit and the human heart and cleanses that which really needs to be cleansed and he's the only one who can do that, the only one who can get there.

Paul said when he wrote to Titus, it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he has saved us. By the washing, the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

So when we put our faith in Christ, he comes in, we don't know how he does that. We just know that he does. And he makes you over again on the inside where only he can reach.

And this is something that Paul is dealing with with Felix and he wants to get rid of him when I have a convenient season, and I'll call for you and we'll continue this discussion later.

[14 : 28] The time isn't now. And also, he had an ulterior motive. He was looking for some kind of a payoff.

Can you believe that they had such a thing as corruption back in this day? Nothing has changed, has it? He'd hoped that money should have been given him of Paul. Just grease his palm a little bit, you know.

That he might lose him. In other words, purchase his freedom. Wherefore, he sent for him the oftener and communed with him.

But we have no indication that he ever did make a decision for Christ. He saw Paul as this preacher of righteousness, but he also saw him as a Roman citizen who might be well healed enough to be willing to slip him some money under the table.

So, each time he would call for him and they would talk a little bit more and then he would send him back again to the authorities and he communed with him and we are told that in verse 27, but after two years, Portius Festus, this is another Roman authority, came into Felix's room and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound, left him in protective custody, Paul in chains, and we come to chapter 25 now.

[16 : 00] Now, when Festus was come into the province, after three days, you see, Paul's been here for quite a while, verse 27 makes it clear that he's here, two years in Caesarea.

See, if we think the wheels of justice grind slowly today, the wheels of Roman justice ground pretty slow too. Here, Paul is remaining in protective custody all of his time, doesn't have his freedom.

And when Festus was come into the province, after three days, he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. And then, the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul.

By the way, I wonder if those forty guys who took that pledge to not eat or drink until Paul was dead, I wonder whatever happened to them. I think they broke down and took a little nourishment, don't you?

Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him, this is Festus, against Paul and besought him and desired favor against him that he would send for him to Jerusalem laying weight in the way to kill him.

[17 : 14] Okay, let's go to our next sheet now. 6-12 down in the corner.

But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, that is, the Roman garrison there, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me and accuse this man, lay your accusations against him, if there be any wickedness in him.

But when he had tarried among them for more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea, and the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, commanded Paul to be brought.

And when he was come, the Jews, which came down from Jerusalem, stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

[18 : 25] And the reason they couldn't prove them is because they weren't true. They could not back up their charges. You know, people can make accusations that have no validity or no basis behind them, but they still can be effective and do a job.

And we are living in a climate like that today where it is really very, very obvious. I remember, and this may sound political, but it's got nothing to do with politics.

It's a principle that I'm looking at. Several months ago, when the election was on between Romney and Obama, do you remember Harry Reid standing in the Senate and the dais and saying that he had received information that Romney had not paid or filed any income tax for the last X number of years?

Do you remember that? Do you remember that? There wasn't a shred of truth in it. that was a complete falsification. And the only reason that he could say that was because he was on the floor of the Senate, and that makes him exempt from a libel suit.

If you are an elected official, either in the House or in the Senate, you can stand there in that public forum, and you can say anything about anybody, and you cannot be sued.

[20 : 03] You are exempt from a lawsuit. Now, if he said that in a campaign rally, if he said that in an interview for TV or something, he would be open for a humongous libel suit against the person, by the person that he said it about.

But he had protection on the Senate floor. And yet, even though there wasn't a shred of truth in that, and he knew it. But he said it anyway.

And guess what effect that had on a huge number of people? They believed it. This is the gullibility of the American public. Something doesn't have to be true.

It just needs to be said that it's true. Had no basis in fact at all. And yet, they used it to do a job. And by the way, this works both ways.

Both sides do this. It's an unscrupulous thing to do. But it goes on. And here, these Jews had made many and grievous complaints against Paul, and none of them were true.

[21 : 13] But they were still damaging. And people thought, hmm, well, you know, where there's smoke, there's fire. Maybe there's this Internet thing today.

Do you realize you can get on the Internet and say anything that you want to say about anybody? And it doesn't have to have a shred of truth to it? And there are people who will read that and believe it?

Accusations can be made that have no basis in fact. Someone can say of another person that he's cheating on his wife.

He may not be cheating on his wife at all. And it may never have occurred to him. But do you know how many people are going to pick up on that and take it as gospel fact?

And this kind of thing goes on. Go ahead, Larry. Feel free to leave. Have a great day. Thanks for being here. Sometimes guys have to leave early, so if anybody does, why, you know, feel free to leave.

[22 : 14] But sometimes people can make accusations like that. Somebody's cheating on his wife and the guy could be completely innocent of it. But you know what some people are going to think?

I didn't think that he would do that. But you never know about some people. Where there's smoke, there's fire. He probably is. And somebody's reputation can be absolutely decimated just by an innuendo or an accusation that has no truth to it at all.

But it does its job in the minds of a lot of people because it puts a cloud of suspicion over that individual and people never look at that person the same way again.

When they see him, they say, I wonder if that's true. I bet maybe he really is. It's a terrible thing. That's exactly what's taking place here with Paul, which they could not prove.

While he answered for himself and said, neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all.

[23 : 24] But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure. All this means is he is trying to get himself in good with the Jews because he knows that he may be in a position for them to return a favor later on.

This is politics that is stinking worse. It is you grease my palm and I'll agree to yours. Willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul and said, okay?

Now, what they want to do, what the Jews want to do is get Paul in Jerusalem where they will be more likely to have more clout and more control.

They desperately want Paul on their home turf in Jerusalem. as long as he's in Caesarea and under Roman authority, he's going to be protected and they can't really get to him.

But if we get him in Jerusalem, we'll take care of him then. So, he's trying to accommodate the Jews and he's trying to maneuver this situation.

[24 : 30] I guess we'd call it a change of venue. And he says to Paul, okay, will you go up to Jerusalem? and there be judged of these things before me?

Where all of these Jewish witnesses, accusation makers, etc. will be there? And I want you to look at Paul's response. Then said, Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged.

In other words, Paul is saying, nothing doing. You're not going to get me to go to church. I know exactly what would be awaiting me there in Jerusalem. And all these accusations, charges, innuendos would be leveled.

The deck would be stacked against me. No way! I'm not going back to Jerusalem. And he says as much, I don't have to. I'm going to stay right here at Caesar's judgment seat.

Well, Caesar wasn't there. But Caesar was Rome. And Rome was Caesar. And he was at Caesarea. And that's, of course, Caesar's turf. Where I ought to be judged. To the Jews, have I done no wrong, as you very well know.

[25 : 42] For if I be an offender, if I'm guilty of the things that they've charged me, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die.

I'm willing to take my punishment. punishment. But if there be none of these things, and let's go to the next page, 614. You can see why we're traveling so fast through this, because this is all dialogue, and it's not so much doctrinal.

If there be none of these things, whereof they accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

Caesar, and then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, after conference with his advisors, Philip says, after conversing with the council, answered and said, hast thou appealed unto Caesar?

Unto Caesar shalt thou go. In other words, when Paul invoked that privilege of his, I am not going to Caesarea, I stand before Caesar, I appeal to Caesar, and I can just see, I can just see him wincing, ooh, this is getting nasty, he's appealing to Caesar, now what are we going to do?

[27 : 05] So, he gets some of his council and his advisors together and says, well, you heard what he said, what are we going to do? And the council as much as says this, listen, there isn't anything we can do.

He has invoked this plea that he appeals to Caesar, we've got to honor that. Do you know, can you believe what would happen if a Roman citizen says he appeals to Caesar, and we short circuit that, and don't allow him to go to Caesar, our necks would be in the noose.

No way in the world we can, our hands are tied, hey, we don't have any choice. He has said the magic words, I appeal to Caesar. We've got to let him do that.

We are absolutely bound to let him do that. We don't have a choice in this matter. So, he goes back to Paul and he says, okay, you've appealed unto Caesar, unto Caesar thou shalt go.

In effect, there is nothing else we can do. And, of course, Paul's appealing to Caesar extends his own life because he knows that this will be a process and he will have an opportunity to even appear before Caesar of Rome and present his case.

[28 : 35] And, eventually, that's what he's going to do. And, to make a long story short, the indication that we get as the book of Acts concludes is that Paul goes to Caesar, makes this voyage to Rome after the shipwreck and everything.

He gets to Caesar, has his day in court, Caesar tries him, listens to the charges, and exonerates him. And, Caesar, as much as says, this man hasn't done anything worthy of death or imprisonment, and I'm finding him not guilty, and he's set free.

And, the book of Acts makes it quite clear that Paul is not found guilty before Caesar, and we know historically that he will enjoy about two years of liberty after having been before Caesar, and then persecution all throughout the Mediterranean world really heats up, Roman persecution, and Jews and Christians are both being persecuted, and Paul is re-arrested again, and this next time, he will not be released, he will be executed, but that's ahead of the story.

So, we read in verse 13, and after certain days, King Agrippa and Bernice come to Caesarea to salute Festus, that is, they're having a Roman get-together, and when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king.

He's saying, you know, we've got a situation here that you might find interesting, and he starts telling King Agrippa about this man, Paul the apostle, and the fact that he has heard him give his plea and everything, and that he appealed to Caesar, and Agrippa is saying, really, is that right?

[30 : 37] You know, I'd like to talk to him. That sounds interesting. I'd like to see what he's got to say. And the text goes on to say, he declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, there is a certain man left in bonds by Felix, about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priest and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him, to whom I answered, it is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him.

By the way, our jurisprudence is based upon this very principle. We do respond to Roman law in many respects, and even many of our legal insignia and writings, etc., are still preserved in Latin, and the terms of the court are still in Latin, of course, which is a hangover from Rome, and he says in verse 17, therefore, when they were come together, without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth, against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and what he is telling this Roman king, Felix, I'm sorry,

I got my kings mixed up, this is Festus, he says, when the Jews brought these charges against him, the charges that they leveled, weren't anything like I expected, in fact, the charges that they leveled, don't even belong in the Roman court, this is Jewish stuff about their religion, and their traditions, and stuff like that, and it wasn't anything like what I expected, and actually, I would have just set the man free, but then when he invoked his plea, and said he appealed to Caesar, that put me under obligation to see to it that he goes to Caesar, so, they've got a really interesting and different kind of case on their hands here, and that's what they are deliberating about as they are determining what Paul's fate is going to be.

Questions or comments? Because the food is here. We've covered a lot of territory, but you can see how most of this just comes along with being read. So keep your seats, and we'll finish this next time.

We're nearing the end of the book of Acts, and it won't be long, and we'll have it concluded. 6 10 11 12 21 11 22 21 23 22 23 22 25 21 21 22 28 28 29 29 29 20 29 30 31 31 32 31 31 31 31 32