

Appealing to Caesar, Part 1 - Acts 25:1-27

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[0 : 00] Heather just read well the text for today and in order to define, to put definition around the text, I want to provide a historical definition, or a historical context.

That was the fourth defense that Paul gave of his life and his ministry. Upon his third missionary journey, he returns to Jerusalem and he nearly was beaten to death by the Jews and he was rescued or saved by the Roman leaders, the Roman Tribune, who then he turned to the crowd who just had beaten him and he gave his first defense.

The second one was before the Sanhedrin. A few days later he goes to the Sanhedrin and he gives a defense of his life and ministry to them.

Third, he is then taken under the cover of night by Roman security down to Caesarea where he gives his third defense before Felix.

Felix is replaced as the Roman governor and Festus is the man who replaces him and this was his fourth defense that we read in the text. And the last one we will get to next week is his fifth defense where he will provide his defense before Herod Agrippa and we will look at that next week.

[1 : 33] And in these chapters 24 through 26, it's interesting, no one in these defense passages. Luke spends a great deal of his time in the book of Acts writing about this, chapters 21 almost to the end till 28 of these defenses.

Specifically in chapters 24 through 26, no one really gets saved, no churches are planted, no missionary enterprise is undertaken, no doctrine is really developed per se, and only in our text one occasion is there an allusion to the gospel and that's in verse 19.

It's just largely a historical narrative, it's an account of what occurred and Paul or Luke is really advancing the account of what happened to Paul.

So that brings us to our text today and we're going to look at since there isn't really a doctrine to develop or a missionary or a salvation account or something like this.

What I want to do today is talk about the underlying principles that are in our text but they're under the surface. For example, I may tell the truth, I may, and you would say thank you Scott for telling us the truth, I may say the truth, but what is the underlying principle and the underlying motive to that is I want to be pleasing to the Lord.

[2 : 56] So it doesn't express itself as I'm being pleasing to the Lord, it just expresses itself as I'm telling the truth. So Luke is giving the account of what happened to Paul's life but there's underlying principles and it's those underlying principles that I want to talk about today.

First we're going to see that there's a hatred of religious people toward Christianity. It is amazing that the most volatile hostility that the world has known toward Christians has often come at the hand of religionists.

And it is this reason that the master of all other religion is ultimately Satan and Satan is fighting against the things of God and Satan is fighting against Christ and often Christians find themselves in that crosshair.

If you think of a historical, how have we seen this? You can see that persecutors of Christianity have been religious, you can whether it be Judaism, you can think around the world of the Muslim context of those who serve in those areas and who live and minister in those areas.

You can think of Ireland in the 80s and 90s, you can think of the reformation years of this past millennia where Christians have paid a high price from and at the hands of religionists, if you will.

[4 : 26] So second we're going to see a principle that undergirds this passage of a binding power of sin. We will look at that in a moment and have you ever noticed that when someone begins to sin and they become captive to that and a habit begins to form that is almost unbreakable.

And then thirdly we're going to see that there's courage of a surrendered believer to Christ. Paul is very courageous and he is a surrendered man unto the Lord.

Courage is a diminishing virtue. Courage is if you will the outward expression of a faith that exists inside. Courage is just the legitimizing of the faith that one has.

Courage if you will also is a response to faith. I have courage because I take the Lord at His word. Paul does well at expressing this unbelievable courage because he is believed in the Lord.

So with that Heather has read our passage to us for today. I'm not going to reread it but we're going to call upon our memory the passage and I'm going to cite a few things.

[5 : 42] But the Roman governor Felix has been recalled to Rome. He has mismanaged the Judean region that he was governor over that Jerusalem exists within.

And he has mismanaged that to the point that it has caught Rome's ears and he has been recalled to Rome. He has been replaced with a man whose name is Festus.

And Festus he is eager to get at his work. If you look at verse 1 with me chapter 25 verse 1 and 3 days after Festus had arrived in the province he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

He only spent 3 days in his capital city of Caesarea. It's the Roman port city, the Roman capital city and seat of power if you will. And he only spends 3 days there.

So he's the new governor on the block and I'm sure he meets with everybody in charge. Where are the skirmishes going on? How's our military going? How are the collection of taxes? That's always important to Rome and so on and so forth.

[6 : 46] And he's getting a lay of the land. He only spends 3 days and he goes to Caesarea. Or he leaves Caesarea up to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish leaders. And to provide a historical context for this I want to provide history because I think it's odd.

What is normative to us in Scripture may be unique in the Roman Empire. And let me try to explain a broader historical narrative to give weight to this.

And here's what I'm trying to illustrate. I think it's odd that a Roman rule, Roman governor, he wants to meet with the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders of the Jewish people.

If he's in charge, just execute your power over them and do what you want. You're Rome. So I want us to see that throughout the Roman Empire there was a region of the world.

And again, we're familiar with this because we have the New Testament. It's our native air that we breathe as Christians because we're people of the text. And yet I want to illustrate that throughout the Roman world, all but the pink there, or the dark purple rather, was the Roman Empire in the first century.

[8 : 10] And what was unique is that the Jewish people had some measure of authority that Rome delegated to them and allowed them to have that gives reason for why Festus wants to go talk to them.

He handles things in Caesarea and he beelines it to Jerusalem to meet some of his constituents and those who have some delegated authority. So let me illustrate. Here is an image that I want us to kind of picture as the image that I have in my mind with regard to Rome.

Rome could squish the Israelites living in Israel in the first century. They have legions and legions of armies.

They are expanding, they have wealth, they could squish the Jews. And yet they've given them some delegated authority and so there's this tenuous relationship that exists between the Jews in Israel and Rome.

So let me try to provide the historical context. The Jews had in Israel a reputation for being an unbending group of people.

[9 : 23] There was always these little rebellious factions, internal conflicts, zealots, who caused problems for foreign occupiers. Especially when the foreign occupiers didn't appreciate the law of Moses or they did something toward the temple.

And Israel always had reason to rally behind those two things, the law of Moses and or our temple. You touch either of those, now we're going to be a contentious people.

The Greek Empire was waning. I want us to put ourselves back about 150 years before Christ.

Everyone there in our minds, 150 years before Christ, approximately around 168 BC.

There was a leader who was called Antiochus Epiphanes. So Rome is burgeoning, the Greek Empire is waning, but on the tail end of the Greek Empire, before Rome takes over this area, on the tail end of the Greek Empire there was this man whose name was Antiochus Epiphanes.

And he gave himself that name, Epiphany means illustrious one or God manifest. And so he was not shy on ego, he had plenty of that. And he was known as this ruthless and capricious leader. [10:51] He was so ruthless that he earned the nickname Antiochus Epimenees, which means Antiochus the Mad One. So everyone called him Antiochus Epimenees, even though his taken title was Epiphanes.

He conquered the Judean region, again 168 BC under the Greek waning empire. The first of these, there were two factions in Israel.

There were the Hellenistic Jews, that are the Jews that ascribed and really didn't have too much of a problem of being Greek, of taking on the traditions and the culture of the Greek and the practices of the Greek culture.

And then there are the traditionalists, those who were faithful to the law of Moses. So within about 168 BC, within the Israel there were two groups of Jews, one Hellenistic, one who were traditionalists, those who kept the Mosaic law.

Along comes Antiochus and he outrages the Jews. And because he outlaws Jewish rights and worship, he orders Jews to worship Zeus rather than Yahweh.

[12:04] He was attempting to eliminate all of Jewish culture and this is very Greek. You want to replace the culture that is and you want to replace it with the Greek culture.

And an act of brazen disrespect, Antiochus raided the temple in Jerusalem, stealing its treasures and setting up an altar of Zeus. Sacrificing, get this, a pig on the altar, one of the unclean animal to a Jewish person.

When the Jews expressed outrage at him profaning the temple, Antiochus responds with a great slaughter of Jews. And then he takes some Jews and he even commits even more of them into slavery.

He announces that performing the right of circumcision was punishable by death. And think about this, what are you supposed to do if you're a good Jewish family? You have a boy on the eighth day that child is to be circumcised.

Because it is the outward expression, a sign of a covenant people of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And he says that act is punishable by death.

[13:10] Jews everywhere were ordered to sacrifice to pagan gods and to eat pigs flesh. He outlawed Sabbath observance, no more worshiping on the Sabbath.

And he burned copies of God's law, all of this Antiochus did. So there was one family who, he was a priestly family.

His name was Matthias, he lived just outside of Jerusalem. And he refused to do this. He refused to sacrifice a pig and he refused to ask the people who he was a priest over to eat pigs flesh.

One day there was a young Jewish person who ate pigs flesh from the sacrifice pig. And he killed that man. And then he killed the Greek officer over the man ordering the young man to do it.

And he killed both of them. He fled to the mountains and this is Matthias and his son was Judas.

And this was the beginning of the Maccabean revolt. That revolt, they kick out Greece.

[14:17] They have a sovereign nation for a little while. It lasts about a hundred years. And so that brings us to about 50 years before Christ comes. So here's what I want you to see.

These Jews, if you don't keep them happy, if you touch the law of Moses, if you touch the temple, these are troublesome people.

You're always going to have trouble. And so Rome, rather than just putting them all down, they give them some authority. And they say, okay, you guys just super intend your own people.

You're the Sanhedrin. You guys super intend your own people. We will, you can't kill anyone. We're Rome. The death penalty is on us, but you got to manage your own people.

And there's this delegated authority to the Jewish people. Some delegated authority to the Jewish people. And Rome, not like Greece, Greece wanted to Hellenize everyone.

[15:17] They did this through the culture, through the educational system, through the establishment of cities where every city had an agora, a bathhouse, a theater and such. They unified the language, they unified deities, they unified education, they unified coinage, currency, they unified entertainment.

This was Greece. Rome is much more hands off. Your God of this is our God of that and just will add to the gods. And if you want to educate, if you want to homeschool, if you don't want to educate, that's okay.

Two values we have is Rome, pay your taxes. Second is this, Pax Romana. And so I'm trying to establish the air that is in the air when Jesus is, the things that are in the air that the, around the time of Jesus.

Pax Romana. This is a piece of Rome, the piece of Rome. This was established by Octavian Caesar Augustus. He was the first Roman emperor about 27 BC and it lasts for about 200 years. And this, this piece, but it's also a value. It's basically, I'm going to oversimplify it and say it this way. Every Roman governor and every Roman leader out there, don't make Caesar hear about it.

[16:40] If it gets to Caesar, you're not doing your job. Do your job. Keep the peace in the region that you've been given authority over.

That's an oversimplification of it, but let me share with you what Pilate said now. We're at Christ's crucifixion. Let me share with you what Pilate did. The Jews are cunning people.

They have this delegated authority and they know they can report Roman leaders to, to, to Caesar. And so Pilate shows up in Jerusalem when he arrives in Jerusalem.

He has idols all over his shields and all over his armor. He brings us a wagon of idols that he puts up around Jerusalem and the Jews can't stand it.

That is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We don't like your idols and Pilate refused to take them down. So you know what the Jews did? They wrote to Caesar, dear Caesar, you have this wonderful governor here named Pilate and he is refusing.

[17:39] He is, he is causing dissension in your empire because of his idolatry. So Caesar writes back to Pilate and says, hey, buddy, take them down.

So now notice who has authority? Is it Rome or is it the Jews? So because they have this delegated authority and they exploit it. And so now when we read the account of Jesus, think Pax Romana in your head, value, collect taxes, Pax Romana.

These are the Roman values. So then we come to the text in Matthew about Christ and it says this, when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere because they were saying, crucify him, crucify him.

Then it says, and when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water, washed his hands in front of the crowd saying, I am innocent of this man's blood.

He is your responsibility. Now, can you hear what may be washing through Pilate's mind? If I don't give Jesus to them to be crucified, they're going to write to Rome.

[18:52] They're going to keep writing and keep writing and keep writing until I give them what they want. And Caesar is going to hear about it. So, okay, now we know God is sovereign and from the foundation of the world, Christ was crucified.

And Pilate had to do this, right? We understand that from an eternal God sovereign perspective. But from a human perspective, you can see how Pax Romana and this special relationship with the Jews kind of was an influence perhaps.

And Pilate's saying, fine, I'll give you what you want. Just keep down. Back to our text.

So now, why is Festus only in Caesarea three days and why does he go? Verse 2, it's of the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul and they urged him, asking a favor against Paul, that he be summoned to Jerusalem because he was planning an ambush to kill him on the way.

Insurrection was always under the surface. So Festus wants to meet his new constituencies and show, have a good showing. And so Festus goes up to the members of the same, he'd run the Jews are having, this is, if you will, from the Jews perspective.

[20:19] This is a bait for Festus that he doesn't even know he's walking into. This is a trap rather than he, the Jews are laying a trap. So, and you say, well, how is this a trap?

If he goes up and they say, hey, you got this prisoner down there in Caesarea, his name is Paul, he's a troublemaker and you should bring him up here and let us try him.

And now you know, and we know, and the text reads, that they have no intention of trying him.

They're just going to kill him on the way. They're going to ambush him. If Festus grants this and says, okay, let's bring him up, he denies it.

Now, because he denied it, they could write to Roman and say, listen, your Roman governor has one of your people under his command and he has committed a crime against us, the Jewish people, and he's not giving us our fair trial.

And so he needs to do this. So Festus, he's in this situation. Second, if he grants this and Paul gets killed on the way, they could say, dear Caesar, you have a Roman leader who is ill-equipped to do his command because he jeopardized one of your Roman citizens on the way, he knew he was a wanted man and he was, without the appropriate number of armor, brought him to Jerusalem and he was killed.

[21 : 41] He's not even, he doesn't even care about you Roman citizens. It's a trap.

Here is one I want you to see. Yes, persecution comes from the world, but there is a steep hatred in our text and that is common to history, but it is great and it is antagonistic toward Christianity, often from other religion people.

It is amazing that they claim to love God, yet their hatred and murder was on their minds. Paul was chosen by this very court.

Imagine the Sanhedrin, the members of that court, that system. He was a leader of all forms of persecution, Paul was. He was a friend to everyone.

He was a student of Gamaliel. He was one of their top boys, but when the Lord saved him, when he identified with Jesus, they immediately hated him, but not for his sake, but for Christ's sake.

[22 : 52] Religionists hate truth. And that's our first point. Second, I want us to see is this, there's a binding, there's a binding enslaving power of sin.

Before, I want us to see this, that in John we're told this, if the world hates you, know that it hates me before you.

If you were of this world and the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of this world, therefore the world hates you.

Yes, the world, but also at the hands of religionists. Do not be surprised by the hatred you may face as a believer in Christ, and it may come from some of the most surprising places, other religionists.

The world may hate you because you're a contanker, a stinky person, but I'm not talking about that. This is talking about a person who out of their love for Jesus, his word and truth, no longer

participates in the things of this world, and they will hate you.

[24 : 08] Paul was saved on the road to Damascus. No longer could he continue persecuting, wrongly beating, wrongly imprisoning, falsely accusing, consenting to killing, even as he stood at Stephen's death.

His love for Jesus made it impossible for him to continue along going with that crowd. And by doing so, the truth shined a spotlight on the Sanhedrin's misdeeds, and the way of Jesus that Paul now represented served to prick the conscience of the members of the Sanhedrin, so they hated him.

Second, the enslaving power of sin, these religious leaders are hell-bent on their hate. While Paul was in prison for two years, Paul was free to love, and while these members of the Sanhedrin have been living free, but they were slaves to hate.

One of the worst forms of slavery to sin is the slavery to hatred. This is why unforgiveness and holding on to the harm others have caused you is so pernicious.

Let us just go down memory lane of Scripture and remind ourselves the perils of hatred. In Genesis 4, we see that hatred overtook Cain, and it caused him murder to his brother.

[25 : 29] Esau, you can read the account, you will read of a man that is driven by hatred his whole life. And if that doesn't satisfy you, you should go to the Jacob's sons, and you will find that they hated Joseph so badly.

And if that doesn't catch you, read the account of Saul, and you will find what it did to him. Being suspicious of David, jealous of David, going on a murderous campaign to kill David, Saul's hatred for another turned inward, and he even ultimately killed himself.

If that doesn't convince you enough, you should look at Absalom and see what it did to him in 2 Samuel 13. And if that sin isn't enough to convince you, you should read the book of Esther, and you will see what hatred did to a man named Haman, who built the gallows for Mordecai, that he himself was hung.

And you think, and I think, we can hold on to unforgiveness without any consequences. You think that you can avoid becoming bitter, you can avoid becoming cynical, you can avoid having murderous thoughts.

You can think somehow you can avoid your heart becoming hardened toward the Lord or to others. You think you have the right to hold on to not forgive someone of the same sin that Christ has forgiven you.

[26 : 54] You are sadly mistaken. Scripture informs and appeals to believers in Christ and Colossians, just as Christ has forgave you, so you must do.

Today, I encourage all of us to go home. Find a trusted friend, call a trusted friend, and ask them this question, are you aware of any unforgiveness in my heart?

Don't minimize their response. They have been listening to you, they have heard you, they have heard what is in your heart, and I beg you to ask them the question, are you aware of any unforgiveness in my heart?

Their answer, combined with your humility and receiving their response, may just save your life. In Romans 16, it says that if you obey sin, you will become a slave to sin.

Sin is a cruel taskmaster, and sin is a binding to slavery. What starts out as a simple little activity becomes a habit that leads to slavery. That is how deceitful sin is, and you see it in the Jewish leadership.

[28 : 08] They are enslaved to the power of sin. They have hatred toward Paul. If you are caught today in some form of unforgiveness, some form of slavery that you cannot seem to break out of, some addiction, whether that be online or gambling or some substance, I would encourage you to come talk to one of the pastors.

Encourage you to talk, if you are a lady, and that makes you uncomfortable, talk to Melissa, and she has a host of ladies that she can recommend as well.

But the word of God is the word of hope. So, the only release of this slavery to sin is death. And isn't it beautiful to realize that we are ones who are crucified to Christ?

As in Romans 6 says that you have died to Christ, and you are alive, I am sorry, you have died to Christ. And that we are free from death to live, and as we spiritually woke up in the resurrection, slave to a new master, to Christ, not to sin, not any longer.

We are still slaves, but now I am a slave to Christ, and there is liberty and not slavery. Thirdly, we will see this in our text.

[29 : 35] There is a courage of a surrendered believer to Christ. There is courage of a surrendered believer in Christ.

Paul in this defense and his appealed phoenix and going ultimately before Herod, he demonstrates such courage, and I am going to point out a few of those, and before we do, I want us to read 1 Peter together, and I will make a few points here and we will be done.

But when, if you suffer for righteousness sake, which Paul is doing in our text, you will be blessed, have no fear of them, nor be troubled.

But in your hearts, honor Christ as Lord, as holy. Always be prepared to make a defense of anyone who asks you for the reason, for the hope that is within you, yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience.

And so, when you are slandered, those who revile you for your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. There's three things that I see in this passage that when I look at our text today in Acts chapter 25, I see, number one, take care of who you are.

[30 : 53] In this passage it says, but in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, or some translations may say, sanctify the Lord Christ in your heart.

So take care of who you are, who are you here to be holy? Set apart Christ in your heart and as your chief affection.

The result of doing this will be holiness. We will see in Paul that Paul is set apart. He was innocent in his words and his actions. Look with me in chapter 25, 7 through 10.

Look with me in these verses. And when Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him that no one could prove.

That no one could prove. He had not sinned in the ways that he was being charged against.

Serious charges were being charged against him, but they could not prove him.

[31 : 52] And in responding to Felix in verse 10, the Jews, Paul in his defense says, to the Jews I have done no wrong and as yourselves very well know.

Festus reporting on how he has handled things to King Agrippa in verse 18. Look when verse 18 with me. And when the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in this case as such evils as I suppose.

And so this is Festus reporting to King Agrippa and he says, listen, I can't find anything about these charges that have any legitimacy.

How do we do that? He lived a blameless life. He has sanctified the Lord Jesus Christ in his hearts and that's what Peter has told us to do. An application. Are you and I holy in our affections for Christ demonstrated by the way we live?

Do you and do I surround? I'm sorry. Do those around you know that you are Christian?

[32 : 56] By not what you necessarily declare, but by your actions as well in addition to what you declare. Are people asking you for the reason, for the hope that is within you?

Number two, the second one. We see take care of who you are. Second, take care of what you say. In our text in Peter here, it says always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is within you.

The lost governor speaking to the lost King Agrippa knows that what Paul has proclaimed in his defense. Looking with me in verse 19. So this is Festus reporting to Herod Agrippa.

Paul is not in the room and he's trying to give him an update. Here's the thing, he has appealed to Caesar. I want to send him to Caesar, but before I do, you can examine him if you want.

But here's what I find in verse 19. Here's the issue. Rather, they had a certain point of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul asserts to be alive.

[34 : 06] Don't you love that? You have a lost governor reporting to a lost King the Gospel. What's the charge against him? I don't know.

I don't get it. I think it's a theological thing, but there's this guy Jesus who is dead and Paul asserts he's convinced that guy's alive. Good job.

Good job. He understood the issue. My point, take care of what you say.

Are you ready to give a reason for the hope that is within you? Paul's defense has been heard and understood to even those without Christ talking to each other.

And Luke has made it clear Festus doesn't believe it, but he communicates what that Paul does. But whom Paul asserts to be alive.

[35 : 06] I don't believe it, but this guy believes Jesus is alive. Have you and I made the Gospel so clear that to those whom we share, even though they do not believe it, they could repeat it.

Thirdly, take care of what you think. So we've covered take care of who you are, take care of what you say, take care of what you think.

In our text in Peter, it says always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that you do. Do it with gentleness and respect. Have any clear conscience.

Do it with a clear conscience. Take care of what you think. A clear conscience is priceless. And in verses seven and eight, when those serious charges are brought against him, verse eight says Paul argued in his defense, neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I committed any offense.

My conscience is clear. To the Jews, whether it be to the temple or whether it be to Caesar, I have done nothing wrong. I'm innocent and my conscience is clear.

[36 : 18] Have you comported, he, Paul had comported himself in a manner that he had no regret, no shame, no need to ask for forgiveness, no wrongdoing, his conscience was clear, knowing he honored the Lord and had done nothing wrong.

The manner, hmm, courage. This point is under the courage of a surrendered believer.

That principle is undergirding our whole text. Paul is this surrendered believer. Again, courage is the outward expression of a faith that exists inside.

Paul takes the Lord at his word. Courage is this response to faith. I believe therefore I act and I don't know what the consequences are and I don't care, but I'm going to have a clean conscience before the Lord, that's what matters.

Paul will express an unbelievable courage, all because he believed the Lord and he took him at his word. I never had a chance to meet a man who I wish I did.

[37 : 29] Having been in Romania several times, I would hear this man's name often cited, and he was a Romanian pastor who was under Communist Romania, under Nikolai Ceaușescu, there in Romania.

And in throughout Ceaușescu's reign of terror, he was a pastor that was often in prison, and you can read about him online, but his name is Joseph Sohn, and he was a wonderful man and people in Romania revered this man, and there's a Romanian church in Portland, Oregon that I'm familiar with, and they would often quote this man, so I looked him up, and he died in the late 80s, and I

wish I had the opportunity to meet him when he was living, but I want to share with you two things that he did.

When he was in detention, his interrogators threatened him with death often, and they would wear him out keeping him awake in an interrogation setting for 10 hours, and they would do this for six months at a time, give him a day break, and then they would go back at him with interrogation. And he was tired and exhausted of just being beaten, and all that goes on with that, and he won't get into the details.

But finally one day, Joseph Sohn looked at his interrogator, and he said, listen, your supreme weapon that you keep threatening with me is death. He said, my supreme weapon is dying.

[39 : 11] My preaching will speak 10 times louder after you kill me. Kill me if you like, that the gospel of Jesus may shine brighter.

The courage of a surrendered believer to Christ. Second, when Communism fell, he didn't die there in prison, and he made some trips to America, and in America, he was speaking to many Americans about being committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, being surrendered to Christ, and he said this in Romania, he said, all I hear about in America is being committed to Christ, being committed to Christ, being committed to Christ, and truthfully, I have to be honest, when I was writing this bullet point, I was like, courage of a committed believer to Christ.

I almost said committed, then I remembered Joseph Sohn, and he said, all I ever hear in America is committed to believers in Christ, committed to Christ, and he said, in Romania, we have no such word, and the closest word that we have is surrendered, and he said, perhaps that's the American church's problem, is that you're committed one day, but not another.

One who is surrendered has no choice whether to follow Christ. I surrendered to him. And so what I see in this passage is the fruit of a courage that this man had, Paul had, being tried one more time, and next week we'll get to another, his fifth and final defense, that he gives before it Herod Agrippa, before going to Rome, and may I say he's a beautiful picture of courage, of a surrendered, not a committed, a surrendered believer to Christ.

Let's pray. Father, as we sing now, and worship You in song, as we have the opportunity to take communion together, and we cherish the work that You did on the cross for our behalf.

[41 : 35] I pray that we would be a people who would be courageous, surrendered unto You, that the courage that we have would just be a response of our faith.

We take You at Your word, we want to live holy to You. Being a slave of Christ is where freedom lies.

May You thank You for freeing us from the bondage of sin. We have a debt of gratitude that we desire to, for You to receive back in terms of praise with our mouth, in terms of actions with our body that they would be pleasing to You, and internally they would be motivated by the motivations of our heart, that from our mouth will, emotions and motives, actions, may You be pleasing.

May we be wholly devoted to You, wholly surrendered. Thank you for the example that Paul plays and gives for us, and it's in Your name, Jesus, we pray, amen.