

Giving & Receiving God's Word - Acts 24:1-27

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 July 2022

Preacher: Scott Liddell

[0 : 0 0] This morning if you find yourself in the midst of a trial, some form adversity, some relationship that isn't going the way you would prefer, your circumstances are unwanted, today's text is for you.

If today you find yourself having agitators, persecutors, those who are maligning you, those who are against you for the cause of Christ, this text that we find ourselves is for you.

And we will see that God is sovereign, God is in control when we go through trials, and we can still yet be a faithful witness to Jesus Christ, even in the midst of some very stressful circumstances.

If you are new with us today, we are walking through the book of Acts and we find ourselves in Acts chapter 23. We will pick up in verse 12 here in a moment, but before we get there, let me help frame where we're at in our text with regard to the book of Acts.

We have been walking through the book of Acts and we find ourselves, Paul having returned from his last missionary journey in Jerusalem.

[1 : 2 4] He takes a vow and he pays for four others to take this vow with him, and on the last day of that vow they find themselves in the temple, worshipping the Lord, and he is falsely accused that he has brought Gentiles into the temple, defiling which would have made the temple defile.

Which then incites the Jews who take him out of the temple, they beat him. He's preserved, his life is preserved by a man whose name is Claudius Lycius. He's the tribune, he's responsible for keeping peace in Jerusalem.

He rushes in with over 200 men and preserves Paul. He, on his way to the barracks, Paul then proclaims the gospel and shares with them.

And he talks about the resurrection and that gets them incensed and so in order to protect him, he puts Claudius Lycius, puts him in the barracks.

Then the next day to try to figure out what is with this guy and what is it with his message that got this civil unrest going. So he takes them to the Jewish High Court, the Sanhedrin, and he is then tried by the Sanhedrin.

[2 : 3 6] There he pits them against each other, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. He pits them against each other by talking about three things that one group believes and the other doesn't.

That gets them incensed and more unrest and so to protect his life, he, Claudius Lycius, takes him again and puts him back in the barracks for his own good and for his own protection.

That kind of brings us to our text today. Imagine Paul just off the Temple Mount in what is called the Antonia Fortress, the barracks that is just off the Temple Mount and there Paul sits.

And that's where we pick up our text today in Acts chapter 23. If you want to look with me as we read 12 verses 12 through 35, this will serve as half of our text for half of the message.

But if you would read with me this text. When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

[3 : 46] There were more than 40 who had this conspiracy. They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, we have strictly bound ourselves to an oath, to a taste no food until we have killed Paul.

Now therefore, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you as you were going to determine his case more exactly.

And we are ready to kill him before he comes near. Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Paul then called one of the centurions and said, take this young man to the tribune for he has something to tell him.

So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, Paul, the prisoner, called me and asked me to bring this young man to you. And he has said something to you, to say something to you. And the tribune took him by the hand and going aside asked him privately, what is it that you have to tell me?

And he said, the Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow and as though they were going to inquire something more closely about him, but do not be persuaded by them for more than 40 of their men are lying in ambush for him who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat or drink until they have killed him.

[5 : 04] For now they are ready waiting for you for your consent. And so the tribune dismissed the young boy charging him, tell no one that you have informed me of these things.

Reading further, verse 23, then he called the two centurions and said, get ready, 200 soldiers with 70 horsemen, 200 spearmen and go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night.

Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Fethphilix the governor. And he wrote a letter to this effect, Claudius Lysius, to his excellency the governor, Felix, greetings.

This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. And when I came upon them and their soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen and desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council.

I found that he was being accused about questions of their law but charged with nothing deserving of death or imprisonment. And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once ordering his accusers to state before you what they have against him.

[6 : 27] So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul, brought him by night to Antipatris and on the next day they returned to the barracks letting the horsemen go along with them.

And they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor and they presented Paul before him. And reading the letter, he asked what province he was from and when he learned that he was from the province of Cilicia, he said, I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.

And he had commanded him to be guarded in Herod's Praetorium. What I find interesting in that entire section is that the names of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, are not mentioned in any of these verses.

Its notable absence reminds me of the book of Esther, where too God's name is missing, but his fingerprints are everywhere within the story.

God works in various ways to accomplish his purposes even when we cannot see him. In this passage, God has promised Paul ministry in Rome and God works through people and circumstances to accomplish that very end.

[7 : 46] Is your life surrounded by unfavorable circumstances? And when you see unfavorable circumstances, can you trust the Lord that he is at work around you?

Can you envision the Lord behind the scenes working toward a goal of preparing you to see him one day, orchestrating events for your holiness, orchestrating events and circumstances to prepare you for his purposes?

For Paul, his purpose is that he was going to testify of the Lord in Rome. We know that from chapter 23 verse 11. Is the Lord orchestrating events in your life to proclaim the gospel to a specific audience?

And he's using all of these circumstances for that purpose and toward that end. We sometimes think God isn't working when we don't see visible signs of his sovereignty, but never mistake the lack of the spectacular for the inactivity of God.

His quiet, invisible hand is always at work and we see that beautifully in this text. And so what do we see in this text?

[8 : 55] We see that God is in control even when we face trials. And the first thing we see in this text is that God uses an unnamed nephew to thwart the plot.

There's a plot that 40 men take a vow we're not going to eat any food until we kill Paul.

And so the plot goes like this. We're going to ask Claudius Lycius, the Sanhedrin, the elders, are going to ask this Claudius Lycius, the Roman Tribune, to bring Paul back down to the Sanhedrin so that he can be tried.

And on his journey from the barracks to the Sanhedrin, there's these 40 men who are lying in wait to kill him. And for some reason, this is the only text that we find that Paul has a sibling, Paul has a sister and she has a son.

And this is the only text that we know of anything about Paul's family directly. And this nephew of Paul somehow manages to hear of this scheme, this plot against Paul.

[10 : 04] He hears of it and he goes and rushes to tell Paul. And God uses this unnamed nephew to thwart a plan against Paul.

A plan is hatched, justice is perverted, and consent to murder by commissioning a bunch of vigilantes is granted. What's the point?

Can we just marvel at the sovereignty of God here? The Lord often uses little things, even little children, to accomplish His great purposes.

The story illustrates a seamless integration between God's sovereign agenda and human decisions made by responsible people. God always promises Paul, or God already had promised Paul that he would bring him to Rome and that he would proclaim his name in Rome.

The Roman centurion does his job. Claudius Lyceus acts to protect Paul. There are no burning bushes involved, there are burning bushes involved in Paul's rescue, no light shows, no angels from heaven speaking.

[11 : 13] Paul's life is spared as a result of people doing just what is in front of them. God uses their actions to accomplish his purposes.

May we never minimize in our daily lives our daily routines, our mundane routines. They are working to accomplish God's purpose in the lives of us and the lives around us.

Let me illustrate briefly. My wife and I live in our neighborhood. We've been there for 20-something years. And so we know our neighbors, and we have a set of neighbors across the street who we've been praying for, that they would come to know the Lord.

Well, on some day this week, I don't remember the exact day, Melissa Iverson and her daughter Lily swung by to deliver a tent that I had lent some time ago. That I had lent someone to use at the retreat this last weekend to have a place to sleep.

So I lent my tent and she was returning the tent. That's all that Melissa was doing, some mundane task that was just set before her to do. While we were at our home, Melissa notes the lilies that are across in my neighbor's yard.

[12 : 23] And they're beautiful. They're about four feet tall, beautiful lilies. And her daughter Lily, she says to her daughter, hey, go stand over by those flowers so that we can get your picture taken with those lilies, her namesake.

So my neighbor is outside Troy, so I asked Troy, hey Troy, do you mind if my friends take a picture by your flowers?

They're beautiful. And of course he would overly joyed that his flowers caught the attention of someone and they would take a photo of them. He was overjoyed to see that happen. So I make the introduction.

I said, Troy, this is Melissa and her daughter Lily. I have the privilege of working with Melissa at the church. Later that day, he asks in a text, hey Scott, tell me what church do you pastor?

All he knows is I'm a pastor, which is like the lowest of occupations one could have. But I know the Lord is doing something.

[13 : 26] I know the Lord is doing something. Here Melissa is, here Lily is, they're just doing a mundane task. But the Lord is orchestrating events behind the scenes for his purposes.

Don't underestimate ever your mundane task, getting a haircut, going to the grocery store, taking your car to see a mechanic. Going to work.

Second, we see that God is in control and God uses Claudius Lycius to protect Paul, verses 23 through 30.

We read those verses. Claudius commissions 470 men to escort Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

He hears the plot, he takes it seriously, they depart at nine o'clock at night, they march through the night. Claudius is taking this threat so seriously to protect this Roman citizen he has under his custody.

[14 : 32] Riding on a horse with 470 armed men, Paul looks more like a king than he does a prisoner. And who is Felix?

This governor, this person under Roman authority who has authority over all of the Israel's territory. He's at his home base there in Caesarea on the port city of, on the port city.

Felix, let me share just a little bit about who Felix is. He was formerly a freed slave. He is appointed by the Roman emperor Claudius.

He was the governor from around 52 AD to 59 AD there in Caesarea. Felix had married three women, all of them of royal birth. His third wife, Jerusalem, is the daughter of Herod the first, Herod Agrippa the first.

And that is his third wife. Claudius calls Felix most excellent in verse 26. He says, greetings most excellent governor Felix.

[15 : 39] This is a common pleasantry that you would give to someone in authority, but please know that Felix is not a noble man. He was known for violence, licentiousness, and he was an ineffective governor.

He was recalled because of his ineffectiveness and he mishandled and uprising in Caesarea. And so the emperor called him back to Rome to stand trial for, to get him out of that role.

It isn't safe in Jerusalem, so he appeals to the regional governor, Felix, that is Claudius does. What I find interesting in Claudius' letter to Felix is that Claudius testifies to Paul's innocence.

Look at this in verse 29. I found that he has been accused of a questions of their law. So he says, okay, so this is one Roman writing to another Roman saying, I don't really understand what's going on, but it's something with regard to their law, first of all.

But verse 29, I find nothing that is chargeable deserving of death or imprisonment. He essentially says, I'm giving you this man and I think he's innocent.

[16 : 51] And it's something with regard to the law, the Jewish law that is causing this disruption. So he notices it's a theological problem and not one deserving of death.

And all of these should remind us that God can even use secular governments to achieve his purposes. Let me share a few illustrations. Rome built roads.

Now the purpose of Rome wanting to build roads throughout the entire Roman empires for commerce and military might to move troops and commerce easily. But what that also did causing an ease of travel is for the gospel to explode all over the Roman Empire.

God used a decision to build roads to expand his gospel. Under Chairman Mao of the People's Republic in China in 1949, wanting to unify his country, he standardized the language making the people more of a homogenous people.

And however in doing so, he standardized the language both written and spoken. And now there is one official language in China and in so doing, he is allowed for the gospel to be transmitted in one language, the Mandarin language of the Chinese people.

[18 : 14] Mao had his purposes, but God has his purposes. Thirdly, more recently even in America, the recent ruling of the Supreme Court overturning Rome.

I see this as God's hand using a secular establishment for God's purposes to preserve innocent life. However, a quick note on this. It is not a time for the church to gloat.

Court rulings will soon likely overturn many things. We don't know how long this will last and we must have mercy on those who find themselves in an unanticipated or unwanted pregnancies.

And given the already abundant glut of unwanted children, the church, the people of God should stand ready and prayerfully consider adoption and fostering children.

So we celebrate, but we do not gloat. And our hope is not in our government, but in our Lord. So don't miss the point. God can use secular governments to achieve his purposes.

[19 : 24] And he did this in Paul's case. Thirdly, God uses the Roman army to transport Paul. Again, 470 soldiers take Paul to, and I'm going to show you his route on the screen behind me, where Antipartis is.

And so they take them 470 to that first town. And then 70 horsemen ride, continue on with Paul down to Caesarea.

And they do this, 470 men go with Paul, while 40 men go hungry in Jerusalem. And so again, don't miss the point. So a nephew thwarts a plan, Claudius Lycius reports it to Felix, soldiers transport a prisoner, and all of this occurs under the sovereign rule of the Lord.

God has an infinite number of options for working out his purposes in your life and mine. And while in our daily lives, it may not look spectacular, we can be assured that God is involved in the affairs of his people.

Do you see the Lord's fingerprint in your life every day, orchestrating events for your holiness, and the propagation of his gospel?

[20 : 48] Do you see the fingerprints of the Lord each day as you abide in him, reading your word, praying to the Lord, living in community with other believers, cultivating a motivation to desire more of the Lord and less of this world?

Do you see the Lord's hand in your life blossoming, the one who uses gifts courageously, your time, talent, and treasure, becoming bold in proclaiming the gospel?

Paul says this, and I'll conclude with this thought. I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

The Lord is at work in your life and often in the very mundane things you do every day. Second section here, I'm going to now read all of chapter 24 because we come to our second point of the sermon.

We can be faithful witnesses even in stressful circumstances. Let me read chapter 24 of Acts. So now let's imagine before I read Paul is now in Caesarea.

[22 : 05] He is being held under house arrest in Herod's Praetorium, and then we read this, chapter 24. And after five days, the high priest Ananias came down and with some elders and a spokesman, Tertullus, and they laid before the governor their case against Paul.

And when he had summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him saying, Since through you we have enjoyed much peace and since by your foresight most excellent phoenix reforms are being made for this nation.

And in every way and in everywhere we accept these with all gratitude. But to detain you no further, I beg you and your kindness to hear us briefly, for we have found this man a plague for one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout all the world and is the ringleader of a sect of the Nazarenes.

Verse 6, And he tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. By examining him yourself, you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.

And the Jews also joined in the charge affirming all the things that were so. Verse 10, And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied, Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.

[23 : 29] You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I came up to worship in Jerusalem and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd either in the temple or in the synagogues or in this city.

Neither can they prove to you that they now bring up, prove to you what they now bring up against me.

For this I confess to you that according to the way which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers believing everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets, having a hope in God which these men accept and there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. Now after several years I came and brought alms to my nation and to present offerings, which I was doing when they found me purified in the temple without a crowd or a tumult.

And some Jews from Asia, they ought to be here before you to make an accusation should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what's wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council.

[24 : 46] Other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them, it was with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.

But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the way, put them off saying, when Lysius the Tribune comes down I will decide your case. When he gave orders for the centurion to that he should be kept in custody and have some liberty and none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

After some days Felix came with his wife, Jerusalem, who was Jewish and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about the faith in Jesus Christ. And as he reasoned about the righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.

At the same time he hoped that money would be given to him by Paul, so he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had lapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcheus, Festus, and desired to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison. What do you do? What can we do to be a faithful witness even in stressful circumstances?

I think Paul handles things very well. Firstly, enemies of the gospel will oppose Christians, verses 1 through 9. Ananias the high priest is brought and some elders and a professional orator comes with them.

[26 : 25] His name is Tortulis and Tortulis begins trying to make a first good impression to Mr. Felix. And so verses 2 through 4 drip with flattery. And Jews did not necessarily believe everything that is being said.

In verse 2, your foresight, most excellent, reforms are being made to this nation in every way and everywhere we accept this with gratitude. All the reforms that Felix is making, all the Jews everywhere are accepting these things. That's not true.

But there's a bunch of flattery. In reality, one thing that that group does appreciate is one thing that Felix did do is he put down zealots.

And zealots threatened those in the established Jewish power. And so by putting down the zealots, that did help the Sanhedrin, that did help the ones speaking here accusing Paul.

So that part is true. But there's a bunch of things that Felix did that they would have had deep problem with. So they accuse Paul. Secondly, well, first, let me continue on this point.

[27 : 40] Tortulis makes a list of four charges against Paul. If you're writing these down, first, Tortulis accuses Paul of being a pest in verse 5. For we have found this man to be a plague, is how he says it. He calls, he tells Felix, this man is a pestilent fellow.

He is public nuisance number one. He is a plague. Paul infects people with the gospel and believers have come to have more affections for Jesus than anything else. Second, Tortulis accuses Paul of being a political agitator. He says, one who stirs up riots among the Jewish people throughout the world.

So he stirs up riots. There is a grain of truth to that. But however, the ones who stir up riots are not Paul. Paul proclaims the gospel. They are the ones who stir up riots. And you can look in chapter 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, this to be true.

Paul proclaims the gospel. Others stir up riots against him. It's not Paul. First, number three, the third accusation. Tortulis calls Paul the leader of a sectarian movement.

He is the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, is what he says. Paul is a factional, dogmatic, extreme fanatical leader.

[29 : 01] He is the leader of the cult of the Nazarenes, is the tone of which Tortulis is referring to Paul toward Felix. Jesus being of Nazareth, Nazareth is the region of Galilee, is remote and backwards, and this is a condescending implication to it.

Jesus's followers that Paul is leading are like a cult of the Nazarite. And you know nothing good can come from Nazareth, is the tone.

Fourthly, Tortulis makes a specific charge. Paul was disruptive in the temple. Now this is the specific charge. All the other stuff appealed to this.

The Pax Romana, the peace of Rome, was of high priority to anyone in Roman authority. And so to this governor, Felix, because this guy is an agitator, he's this person who stirs up trouble, that threatens the highest value of peace of Rome.

And so that is appealing to something, but that's not a crime. The only crime that they state, per se, is Tortulis makes a specific charge that he's disruptive in the temple.

[30 : 15] And that is found in verse 6. And this charge is to profane the temple and remember what Paul was doing. He was fulfilling a vow with four other men, and he was seen and falsely accused.

But that's their accusation. And so to those who oppose Christ, they will go to great lengths to oppose the things of God and the people of God.

They will use their skill, their persuasive speech, political maneuverings, and lies to accomplish that end. Let us not be surprised when it's our turn.

Second, a faithful witness of the gospel speaks calmly and courageously.

Paul's defense provides, he provides two things. He declares his innocence, but he also proclaims the gospel.

[31 : 14] He first says that my religious record is clear in verses 11 through 16. Paul informs Felix that he has been in Jerusalem for only 12 days, and his point is this.

If you think I'm such a troublemaker, what trouble can you stir up and aright in 12 days? I've only been there 12 days. So there may be some exaggeration to the claim and the accusation against me.

I've only been there 12 days. He also states that he is blameless in his civil behavior.

He gives Felix the version of his story, and he first tells Felix that he brought charitable gifts to Jerusalem, and remember that, because I think Felix locks onto that. This man had the capacity to take up an offering all throughout Asia.

If you remember the book of Acts, why he was up there in Philippi and throughout modern-day Greece, what he was taking up an offering to bring down to the church of Jerusalem, and he declares that to Felix.

[32 : 21] This is what I was doing. But remember that, because Felix has that in his mind. I believe that locked into Felix's mind, and we'll see that later in the future. But he was blameless in his civil behavior. I was just, I was being charitable.

I was doing what was set before me. I was doing right. I wasn't causing up a dissension. And then lastly, he has a personal message, and that is Jesus is alive in verse 21.

Other than this one thing that I cried out verse 21 while standing among them, it is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am now on trial before you to this day.

Felix, you want to know why I'm here? It's because I go around proclaiming Jesus is alive. That's, that's the real issue, Felix.

What was really on trial, what was really the issue, is that Paul preaches Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected. It is the message that was and still today is divisive and disruptive.

[33 : 36] The knowledge of Jesus Christ crucified outside of Jerusalem at Golgotha, and the conspiracy to throw, cover up the resurrection with rumors that someone stole the body, is within the living memory of everyone in this room.

We are only 20 years separated from the crucifixion and the resurrection. And Paul standing at Caesarea with this audience, the religious leaders certainly know it.

Felix may or may not. But surely he knows it also because of his wife being Jewish. Number four, the resurrection is indeed the central doctrine of the Christian faith.

The resurrection shows the sufficiency of Christ's death, the supremacy of his lordship, and the inevitability that he will return and judge.

We would do well to follow Paul's example, funneling conversations to the life-changing, world-altering event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[34 : 41] That was Paul's public witness. Now Paul has a private hearing and a private witness with Felix and his wife, Jerusalem.

In verses 22 through 27, he, in verse 22 it says, when Lysius the Tribune comes down, we will decide your case.

Felix dismisses everyone and delays his decision of the case, whether there's innocence or guilt and what he's going to do with it. And he waits, it says in the last verse in the chapter, it says, he waits two years.

And he did this because he's a coward, because he said he pacified the Jews. This decision was welcomed by the Jews. So he didn't want to make a decision and he kept him in custody for two years. Why was that?

Because he was a coward. Second, Felix, we're told, has an accurate knowledge of the way, verse 22.

[35 : 41] It says he has a pretty accurate knowledge of the way, suggesting that he had a sympathetic view toward Christians. But keep in mind, Felix is no gem of a man.

And it says that Paul is under house arrest and he is keeping, he is not kept from people tending to him, bringing him food or clothing or whatever. He is not prohibited by people seeing him.

So that's why many people, this is just a quick side note. Many people believe this is when Luke would go to the apostle Paul, while he was under house arrest at Caesarea under Felix's authority.

This is when Luke, because we know Luke traveled with Paul through the book of Acts and some of the missionary journeys. We knew he was with him and we believe it's at this time that Luke went to Paul and he took notes to write what we call the book of Luke and the book of Acts.

So we have the very book, the book of Acts, likely being written during this time when Luke would have met with the apostle Paul for two years in there in Caesarea.

[36 : 51] Likely this is the time period when the very book that we're studying and preaching today was written, or at least the notes taken to begin writing that.

That's a side note. Let me just briefly, it says he went there with his wife, Jerusalem, and it says because she was Jewish. Let me just mention a few things about Jerusalem and I'll share why here in a second.

Paul's testimony reaches the highest social levels. Jerusalem was born in 38 AD. She was not yet 20 years old when she, in this setting, when we read of this account.

So she is a young bride to Mr. Felix and she is the third of his wives. Josephus notes that she was beautiful in form and was persuaded by Felix to divorce her previous husband who she married at age 14 and Mary Felix.

She was the great-granddaughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra for those who like history. I provide this color because the Gospel is now being proclaimed at the highest, some of the highest forms of Roman officials in the region.

[38 : 09] Notice the topics though of this private hearing. Notice what Paul says, verse 25, and as he reasoned, so he says verse 24, the bottom of 24, and he sent for Paul and he heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

There's the Gospel being declared, but then notice in verse 25, Paul does not pull any punches and he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment.

This is what Paul was talking about. All three topics would have been convicting and fitting for Mr. Felix. One cannot be saved unless someone recognizes they are a sinner and in need of forgiveness and God's saving grace.

And they are highlighted by highlighting God's righteousness and holiness and man's sinfulness and the judgment to come. Paul is showing Felix why he needs Jesus.

So this is not a nice uplifting warm conversation. The conversation is likely confronting and a call to repentance, but notice what Felix does. Felix was alarmed by my translation reads and said, go away for the present.

[39 : 22] Leave me for now, in essence is what he says. And it says that he was alarmed. The Greek word carries with the idea of being afraid.

So he was afraid. It's the Greek word *infobos* of where we get phobia. He was fearful. He was frightened. He literally was frightened by what he had heard Paul just say.

God's righteousness and the need for self-control and God's impending judgment. Felix was perhaps convicted by what he heard but not changed. And sadly, Felix did not respond to in repentance to sin and placing faith in Christ.

He rejected the message. He rejected the messenger sending Paul away. And Felix would summon Paul over the next couple of years, but his motive was not pure. Look with me.

Verse 26, and at the same time he hoped money would be given to him by Paul. Remember what Paul said to Felix?

[40 : 30] I went throughout Asia and I brought this offering to give to my people. And so he's thinking, oh, this guy has contacts all throughout Asia. And I could use him to get money as a bribe to get him released.

And so I'll have a hearing with you from time to time, Paul. But my real motive is greed. Felix is hoping to offer, Paul would offer him a bribe.

Felix is a coward and he kept Paul in prison to placate the Jews. A couple of applications for us when we think about our text today is this.

Let's not be like Felix. I plead with you to respond to the gospel. The life, Jesus Christ's sinless life, his death for your sin, and resurrection, overcoming sin and death, he did that on your behalf.

Felix heard that message, but did nothing. And I pray that if today you have not responded by faith, believing in Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sin, I pray that you would do that today.

[42 : 02] Second, don't allow the love of money to have a grip on you. Felix's problem is that he was greedy.

Well, Felix had a lot of problems. One of which is that he was greedy. He had a lot of love for money. And you cannot serve both God and money.

Be generous with your time, your talent, and treasure. It's a great antidote to greed.

This love of money. When circumstances are difficult, be reminded that God has authority over the trial and he is with you through the trial. Let me close with this illustration.

And some of you, perhaps, may be in that season of life where the adversity and the things pressing in on you are hard. And it's hard to see God's hand around you and behind you.

[43 : 05] Let me close with this illustration. If you have a hard time picturing that, think of this illustration. Petrushki, he was a Polish great composer and pianist.

He was born in the 1860s and he died in 1941. He was scheduled to perform at a great concert hall here in America. And it was a black tux, long evening dress, high society event.

And in the audience was a mother who had a nine-year-old son who would fidget a lot. And he was becoming restless before the show would start. And he just could not sit still in his seat. He was a little precocious young man and he just could not do it.

And mom was starting to lose a little bit of control, but she became distracted by those around her. And so she turned and had a conversation. And she didn't realize that her nine-year-old son left.

To find out, the nine-year-old went on stage and there it was. This concert grand piano on stage. That's the only thing that was up there.

[44 : 13] Nice black shiny object and that little boy got up there. And he did only thing he knew how to do, and that was to play chopsticks. And so the crowd became hushed.

The crowd became hushed because they knew, oh, this must be the start of the concert. And so the crowd became hushed and began to listen. But they found out that this young man probably didn't know much beyond what he was playing. And so they began to boo because that's not what they paid good money to be in here.

And Petaruski, he was behind stage hearing that the piano had just been played. And so he quickly came behind stage, put his jacket on, and went out, saw what was happening, the young man.

And behind him, he wrapped his arms around him and began to play. And he said to the young boy, keep going, keep going. You're doing great. Keep going.

And he made a beautiful song out of chopsticks that the boy was doing. And he added to it and composed a masterpiece on the spot. And if today you're saying, man, I'm having a hard time seeing the Lord around me.

[45 : 20] Life is difficult. Circumstances are difficult. I'm trying to remain faithful to the Lord, but it just seems like all I'm getting out of my life is just chopsticks.

Take comfort. The Lord is behind you, and he's saying, good job. Keep going. And watch him make a masterpiece out of your life.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this day. You are kind. You are good. And we want to honor you with our lives. Lord, when trials come, circumstances are difficult, I pray that we would acknowledge that you are behind the scenes doing much.

May we never take lightly the mundane things that you have set before us each day going to work. Greeting our children.

Devotion times in the home. Getting our hair cut. Going to the store. Returning a tent.

[46 : 32] Lord, you're at work all around us. You are sovereign, and you are accomplishing your purposes in and through us. And may we, like Paul, calmly respond in a chaotic environment that's around us.

May we look to you to give us a grace and courage. We love you, Lord. Amen.