

Paul before Agrippa: Fighting Unbelief - Acts 26

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Preacher: Jayson Turner

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, 4th. It's good to be here. Amen. We begin our week to worship our God, to encourage one another.

The Lord delights in you. And He loves that we are beginning our week, seeking Him, meeting with Him, worshiping Him.

And this is a good place to be this morning. Despite the fact that you're left with the C team, I know it's me and Melissa, but we'll do our best.

Go ahead and turn open to Acts, chapter 26. We are going through this book and we're nearing the end.

This morning we're going to be looking at this entire chapter verses 1 through 32. And I would like to pray for us before we dive in to the text together.

[1 : 05] So join me as we talk to the Lord. Father, what a privilege to be a part of your body, to be part of your family, to be rescued by your grace, to have our sins forgiven.

Lord, I pray if there's any here this morning that have never trusted in you Jesus as their Savior, that they would hear good news. They would understand how extravagant your love and affection is for your creation, for those that you fashioned in your image and that you made man for relationship, not just with each other, but with you, our Maker.

And thank you, God, that you've done everything necessary for us to relate to you as sons and daughters, as your friends, as your children. This morning we asked that you would open our hearts and our eyes, you would speak to us.

Lord, you would reveal personal things about yourself from your Word. We thank you that you have given us the Bible that it is a light, that it is a lamp, and that we don't wander aimlessly in this life, for you have given us direction and it comes from your heart.

And so we give you thanks for that. Would you teach us something this morning? Would you speak to our hearts? True things about yourself and about us.

[2 : 41] And Lord, might you stir in us a greater urgency to be about your work in this lifetime? We will give you thanks for what you accomplished this morning and we pray that all that occurs here in our gathering would bring you glory, Jesus, and it's in your name we pray.

And all God's people said. Amen. Well, if we were to categorize this section, this chapter this morning, if it were a film or a novel, I suppose we would call this narrative a tragedy.

And I'm going to spoiler alert, tell you that the chapter, it ends in unbelief. But I share that with us here on the front end because what I want us to internalize is that we're not just looking at a story to teach us, remind us about gospel truth, but we're actually looking at a record of real people that lived, real people that made real decisions in their lifetime, and those decisions are already impacting and affecting their eternity.

So I want us as we read these stories in this narrative this morning to be reminded that this is indeed history and it is a sobering record.

So just to bring us back and up to speed contextually where we're at, Acts chapter 22 through Acts chapter 26, we have this record of five defenses that Paul makes about the gospel.

[4 : 17] In Acts 22, he defends the gospel and himself before an angry mob in Jerusalem. In Acts 23 then, he stands before the Jewish Sanhedrin.

That's Israel's Supreme Court making a defense. Then in Acts 24, he stands before the Roman governor, Felix, now in Caesarea, Felix wanted a bribe.

He met with Paul a number of times, talks about over the course of a couple years. We see no repentance on Felix's part. He dies and leaves Paul in prison.

And then last week we saw Felix's replacement, Festus, now the governor in Caesarea, the Roman governor of Caesarea. Felix, or excuse me, Festus, here's Paul's case.

We saw that in Acts 25. And after hearing Paul's case, he is befuddled in terms of why is this man in prison?

[5 : 18] Why is he seeking to be heard before Caesar? What in the world has this guy done? And so Festus hasn't got a clue, but he wants to be a good ruler, he wants to have an answer for Caesar.

And so he's thinking, well, I'm going to send him to Rome, but what am I supposed to tell Caesar? Well, fortunately for Festus, King Agrippa, the second, the last of the herds, is on holiday visiting Caesarea from Jerusalem.

And so Festus is looking to Agrippa to help him to know what to charge Paul with. In fact, in Acts 25.25 it says, I found that he had done nothing deserving death.

He had appealed to the emperor, I'm sending him, but I have nothing definite to write to my Lord about him. Which is why Festus needs to phone a friend. Agrippa happens to be in town, so he's like, okay, here's the guy.

He is going to help me figure out what to write in terms of Paul's crime. And so you now have another hearing, another defense here in chapter 26, Paul before Agrippa.

[6 : 28] Now, for some of you that are a little confused in terms of the leadership structure of Rome, you have these governors and then you have this Jewish king, and they're essentially equals before Rome.

And what would occur is when Rome would conquer a province, they would either send in a governor to rule, or they would save the capital expense and utilize an existing leader if willing to defer to Caesar.

And Rome loved this vile family of herds. And so there was no concern in terms of any disloyalty there.

Now, the immediate scene, and I've got a photo for us, a painting that hopefully can kind of put in our mind's imagination here.

Paul here before Agrippa and sister Bernice. Let me read from Acts 25, 23. It says, So on the next day, Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp.

[7 : 31] Greek word Phantasia, where we get our word fantasy from. So King Agrippa used to be and treated very well, likes to put on a show, has an entourage, the red carpet dripping with privilege and power.

He'd assist her, they love this attention. And it says that they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. So there in Caesarea, they probably had upwards of 5,000 Roman soldiers present.

So you have leaders of these soldiers, military leaders as military tribune, prominent men of the city. So there's influencers here, there's people with means and authority.

And no doubt, and the thing that I want us to sort of capture in our mind's eye is that this would have been incredibly intimidating for Paul. This is very much a Goliath versus David sort of scenario.

Because it says here at the end of Acts 25, 23, it says, Then at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. And we learn later in chapter 26 that he was brought in in chains.

[8 : 44] And so that's what's occurring here. There's intimidation and I think there's something for us to identify with as we think about defending the gospel, proclaiming the gospel that it continues to grow, the intimidation factor continues to increase.

And Paul would have experienced that. And so I think there is something here for us and so as we consider Paul's here final defense, as he's fighting against the unbelief of Agrippa, what I want us to do is then to try to draw out three ways for us too, as we seek to battle against the unbelief around us in the lives of those that don't know Jesus as Savior.

So I think there's something very practical here for us as we observe Paul before Agrippa. So let's just dive in beginning here in Acts 26, the first eight verses Luke writes.

So Agrippa said to Paul, you have permission to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and we don't really know what that's about, but he's, I mean it would have been like this, I assume, as he's in chains, but and he made his defense.

I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I'm going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews.

[10 : 20] Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. Paul's obviously gearing up for having a few words to share here.

My manner of life before, my manner of life from my youth spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion, I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope and the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain as they earnestly worship night and day.

And for this hope I am accused by the Jews, O King, why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

The first thing we see here from Paul is he's interacting with King Agrippa, as he shows respect to this King. I don't believe this is disingenuous.

[11 : 27] I don't believe Paul is being some slick salesman. I believe that Paul is genuinely thankful to actually speak to someone who was aware of the Jewish customs, familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures.

And Agrippa would have been. Not that he was any sort of faithful Jew, but this is where Agrippa served there in Jerusalem.

In fact, he had authority to appoint the high priest. He was very much aware of what the Jews believed and what the Scriptures taught. And so Paul here is leveraging his knowledge to make his case.

Paul knows his audience and he speaks accordingly. And as Paul is speaking to Agrippa, he is essentially pointing out the irony of him standing as one opposed to Israel and the Old Testament prophets.

He essentially says to Agrippa, hey, I am the best of Israel. There was no better Jew alive in my day. And in fact, everyone in Jerusalem knows it.

[12 : 45] They know who I studied under, the great rabbi, Gamaliel. In fact, Jerusalem, Paul being from Tarsus, but Jerusalem was essentially Paul's college town.

He would have been at old as 16 when he started to begin to study there under this rabbi. And so he's saying, this is ironic.

I have been more faithful to the Scriptures than anyone I know. And now they want me dead because of my hope in the resurrection.

Something that the prophets pointed to. It says, the promise made by God to our fathers. And what's really pretty extraordinary is as you read the Old Testament and now you read it through the lens of the New Testament, what you see is there is Old Testament prophecies related to resurrection.

Pastor Scott's over at Grace, he's preaching Psalm 16. Psalm 16, verse 10, he's talking about resurrection of Christ. Hosea 6, 2 talks about resurrection.

[13 : 53] Psalm 22, resurrection is in there. Psalm 53, 12 and onwards, it's in there. And so Paul's saying, hey, I am teaching something that our prophets taught.

And in fact, this is a hope that we share as a people. I'm not some cult leader. This isn't some innovative truth I'm making up. Everyone in Jerusalem, aside from the Sadducees, believe in a resurrection.

Oh, that's right. It's not our future resurrection. You just don't like the resurrection of Jesus. I would say nothing's changed, church.

We live on a planet where people love to talk about, oh, the life beyond. And what it's going to be like. But the moment you insert Jesus, it's when things become tense.

Well, before Agrippa can retort, Paul brilliantly shifts his defense because he's like, I don't want to argue with you, Agrippa.

[15 : 09] In fact, I want to identify with you. I'm with you, Agrippa. And so in this next section, he basically is saying, you know what?

I too didn't immediately believe in the resurrection of Christ. And I appreciate the posture that Paul takes. This is not one of our three in terms of fighting unbelief and those without Jesus.

But I think there's something here that you see this humility that's present in Paul. I'm not here to, I want to identify. I'm like you. And I think he carries that spirit of 1 Peter 3.15, right?

As he's making his defense, as he's given a reason for the hope that he has in Christ, he's doing it with gentleness. He's doing it with respect. So let's read here, verses 9 to 11.

He says, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem.

[16 : 10] I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

And I punished them often in the synagogues. You have to wonder if this just pains Paul as he retraces who he used to be. And I tried to make them blaspheme.

And in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. I love that Paul places himself not above a grippa.

He says, I was just like you. I didn't believe in the resurrection of Christ. I was the leading doubter. And I didn't just doubt, I was angry about it.

And I like that Paul here, he actually is doing what he's inserting his own story in his defense of the gospel. He's actually using his own unbelief, his doubt, to disarm a grippa.

[17 : 28] And part of Paul's evangelistic strategy here, I was just like you. I was a critic. I doubted. And I would just, as an aside, this is for free.

It's not really in the outline. Just related to doubt, because I seem to have more and more conversations with more and more believers in terms of struggling with doubt.

I want to put something just to rest, to bed this morning. And it's the notion of, I must not be saved if I'm doubting.

If I doubt, wow, I probably not saved then. And I want to tell you that faith only exists in the seedbed of doubt.

There's going to be a day when we know, we don't know, so the righteous live by faith, which means doubt is always present, maybe not in the foreground but in the background. It's always present to some degree, even pastors on occasion doubt.

[18 : 43] Last night I had a doubting night. It's a hard night. We had a friend pass away last night that we had been praying for as a family. Gal by the name of Tiffany, 33. Kids, 5, 3, and 1.

And we prayed and we prayed. We sought to encourage. And then we get the news that she passed away. And it was just like a punch to the gut. And I'm just, I felt some doubt.

You know, why do we pray? God, why? You're supposed to be good. Why? What in the world? And I don't know. Mysterious things belong to the Lord.

I have to go back and look at the Gospel. Be reminded that the cross that Christ intervened, that He did, that He cares, that she's fully healed today.

But you just ache. We all doubt. And what I want to say in terms of doubt, I believe that doubt in that manner of like, man, if I'm doubting, I must not be saved.

[19 : 53] I think that's actually evidence that faith is present. So hear me here. Doubting one's faith is only possible if one possesses faith.

You catch that? See, the unbeliever is only able to doubt his unbelief in God.

His thoughts are rather, well, maybe I do believe? And so I just want you to take some comfort there, encouragement.

I also want to exhort us in terms of, you know, this sort of line of reasoning. I'm doubting, so I must not be saved. Like, I want us also to take our thoughts captive. Right?

Look back to the cross. Be reminded that salvation is fully of the Lord. There's not this threshold of faith, well, I have 3% faith.

[20 : 56] So I'm in. No, it's based upon what Christ did. I praise God for your 3% of faith. It's enough.

Well, interestingly enough, Paul says at the end of his life, in terms of doubt, he says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

And he says this, I have kept the faith. Now, certainly he's talking about, yeah, I've kept sound doctrine. I've been faithful to the charge the Lord has given me.

But I believe within that statement, I have kept the faith. There's also this sense of I continued to believe Christ.

Which is interesting that he recognized too that unbelief is a battle for the Christian.

[21 : 57] And I take encouragement from that. Well, Paul continues to get more personal in his defense. Sharing the gospel, looking at verses 12 to 18 says, in this connection I journeyed, I'm going to get to the three points. I know you're like, I know Jay said there's three points.

When's he going to get there? It's going to happen. Okay? Just trying to keep you, you know, listening for it. It won't be subtle. It'll be so obvious. Okay? All you outlining people, just hang on. Right?

It says, in this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. We're 13 at midday, oh king. I saw on the way a light from heaven brighter than the sun that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.

And when we had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goats. And I said, who are you Lord?

And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I'm sending you.

[23 : 13] I love that. Delivery from them, now preach to them. Verse 18, and to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness, a sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

This one's for free. I'm just giving you all these freebies. I don't know why. I'm feeling benevolent this morning. It's interesting. Some people go, oh, that's when Saul became Paul.

It's not. Jesus changed his name. He didn't. Okay? I mean, it preaches, but it's not biblical. Paul began to use that name.

Luke records, as he is now ministering to Gentiles, he uses his Greek name, Paul. But Jesus didn't change his name. So just don't tell people that.

He says here, I fought against God. He's sharing his story with the grippa. This exchange, he's like on trial, all of these influential people around him.

[24 : 26] And Paul's like, I'm going to share my story. It's very personal. God pursued me. He won.

Kicking against the goats, sharp sticks, right? You're in front of an ox cart and a goat. You whip the ox. It kind of kicks and hurts them.

It doesn't work. God, like man versus God. It's not even worth your time to watch.

It's not a real battle. God wins in Paul's life. And I love that Paul is sharing that, you know what, God violently interrupted my life.

And man, it was his kindness to me. And so I think the first thing, number one of the three, you want to battle unbelief in the life of another? You've got to share personal things about the gospel.

[25 : 29] Your own experience with the living God with them. Make it personal. Because it is.

Because it is. Move beyond. Yes, share the truth of the gospel, that Christ, His deity, that He is God in the flesh, that He died, that He rose, and His death was sufficient to make payment for every sin that we would ever commit in this life.

And we access that through faith. It's a gift. We don't earn it. We don't start trying to be good to get it. We simply, it's a transfer of will.

Jesus, you did that. I want you. You get me. You get everything. We've got to move beyond the truth of the gospel to our experience of the gospel.

I'm not minimizing the truth. We need to proclaim the truth. This is what God has said. But man, testify to how God has been good to you. There's power there.

[26 : 52] I was talking to Julie about this. I'm going to ask permission, sorry. It's really dangerous to be married to a preacher.

But we were talking about, she has some ink. I think that's okay to say at church. I don't know. It's a tattoo. But anyhow, it's Yahweh Rohe, right?

The Lord who shepherds me. And she had an occasion, somebody asked her about it just a couple days ago, and she was sharing with me, yeah, this is what it means. This is what the Hebrew means. It's the Lord who shepherds me.

And we were talking about then following it, like, how do I go from there? And as we're talking, she's sharing, you know, I have this because the Lord has been faithful to care for me, to care for our family through some of the most difficult seasons of life.

I said, man, that's what you share. Because there's power there. It's true. It's personal.

[27 : 59] Make the gospel personal. You want to battle unbelief in another? Make it personal. Because it is. Jesus didn't just die for sinners. He died for you.

And this is, and I've shared this before, but in my ubering, this is something that I strive to follow this principle, making the gospel personal.

I don't want to just talk in the realm of, let's talk doctrine, theology, ideas. I want the person to know that there is a God who actually died on their behalf.

That Jesus, he died for you. That he is your Messiah, they're Jewish.

And there's power there. There's power. First thing, make the gospel personal.

[28 : 57] Well, Paul, he doesn't just leave it there. He now calls for a response from a grippa. I mean, Paul is a lion here.

Let's read verses 9 to 23, he says, Therefore, O grippa, O king of grippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds and keeping with repentance.

For this reason, the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day, I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both too small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass, that the Christ must suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.

What is Paul's objective here? Is he really seeking to exonerate himself? Because I don't catch that here, church.

I see him here striving to share good news with this king. He's not here to get himself out of prison. I believe he's sharing to rescue this man.

[30 : 35] He's throwing him a life preserver. You're drowning. Repent, Agrippa. Turn to Jesus.

He proved to be God through His resurrection, and I stand here today both too small and great, and today, Agrippa, I'm standing before you.

And it's amazing to me that Paul has such a heart for this man. You would think that Paul would just despise this individual.

That he would see this king as simply nothing more than his enemy. Unredeemable.

And church, can we do this with folks? Yeah, yes we can. And I would say the second way we battle against unbelief in the life of another, we have to remember who the enemy is and who the enemy is not.

[31 : 51] And maybe you're like, Jay, it's kind of hard for me because I don't really like people in general.

I would encourage you to make that a matter of prayer between you and the Lord. But Jay, I don't want to feel broken over people I see as dumb or irritating or mean.

I don't want to share the gospel with mean people. None of you have ever thought that, I'm sure.

But I want us to see something here that Paul was laboring, he was fighting for the faith of this man to trust in Christ as his Savior, and Paul had every reason to hate this man, to see a grippa, not saying as the enemy, but a grippa.

This was a filthy man from a filthy family. Herod the Great, his great grandfather, murdered infants.

[33 : 09] The toddlers in Bethlehem. His great uncle, Herod Antipas, murdered John the Baptizer.

That's what you call the ultimate cancel culture. I don't like what you're saying. I don't like that you're calling out my sin. You're done.

A grippa the second, his father, a grippa the first, he arrested Peter and he had James executed. And a grippa, his life was a train wreck because his sister, Brunese, Trusillus, her sister, but Brunese, that was not a good relationship.

Do we getch that? Do I have to go further? Don't think so. It was a very, very sort of messed up family situation there.

And so I'm sure it could have been easy for Paul to go, a grippa's lost. He is so entrenched in sin, in lust. He's never going to repent.

[34 : 18] But for Paul, a grippa wasn't the enemy. He wasn't the enemy. And so it should break our heart as we encounter people that reject the gospel.

We should feel something. I love that C.S. Lewis taps into this ache in his Narnia series.

We find out at the end, spoiler alert, if you're reading it, the final last battle, just plug your ears for about five seconds. Susan doesn't make it.

She doesn't make it to Narnia. She's not fit for Narnia. And it kills me. That's why I don't like to read the last battle. She gets concerned with shallow things of life.

And in fact, he writes, my sister Susan answered Peter shortly and gravely, is no longer a friend of Narnia.

[35 : 21] Oh! That's just a story, but you feel something. We're playing for keeps. Like this man, it's appointed for man to die once.

And if you have the sun, you have life. If you don't have the sun, you don't have life. And then it's forever. How do you wrap your mind around forever?

And then think about forever apart from your maker, eternally separated. That's the burden we're to carry as ambassadors.

And it's remarkable that Paul didn't see a grip of the enemy, but he saw somebody who needed a Savior. You don't have a shepherd, and you need one.

Well, this is a grip of the response. Look at verse 24 to the end. And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festa said with a loud voice, Paul, you're out of your mind.

[36 : 32] Your great learning is driving you out of your mind. But Paul said, I'm not out of my mind, most excellent Festa's, but I'm speaking true and rational words.

For the King knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly, for I'm persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice for this has not been done in a corner.

King of Gryppa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe. And a Gryppa said to Paul, in short time would you persuade me to be a Christian? And Paul said, whether short or long, I would to God that not only you, but also all, think about this crowded auditorium, all who hear me this day might become such as I am, except for these chains.

Then the King rose and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them, and when they had withdrawn they said to one another, this man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.

And a Gryppa said to Festa, this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. So Paul, he's in shackles, he's sharing this transformed life.

[37 : 54] A Gryppa, I persecuted Jesus, he forgave me. He is the Messiah, the prophet, spoke about, crucified, rose from the grave. And let me tell you, he forgave me.

I was a murderer, he forgave me. I took life, he forgave me. And as Paul is sharing this, all of a sudden the governor who's President Festa, who's listening, he's wanting Paul to speak to a Grippa, but he just had enough.

I don't know if he's starting to feel convicted. I don't know if he's just tired of sitting on his hands, but he interrupts, cuts him off mid-sentence, right?

So it's Paul, you're crazy. You're nuts, you're out of your mind.

You're speaking fairy tales. And I love Paul's composure here.

[39 : 07] He just responds, I'm not out of my mind. He wits about me. And I am saying, what I am saying is true.

I mean, there is a confidence, a boldness. I think much of Paul's confidence stems from his very own personal experience with the living Savior.

But we see this courage in Paul, no doubt intimidating, called dumb, called stupid for the things that he believes in his heart, and then he's actually willing to speak.

It's not secret. By the way, Church Christianity is not this secret religion. Things weren't done in a corner. Somebody comes to you and says, hey, I want you to believe something that it's kind of a mystery to everybody, but I...run away!

Okay? Run away. Paul doesn't shrink back, even though he's being attacked personally. And so the final thing I want to say in terms of fighting, unbelief in the life of another, we have to be relentless.

[40 : 21] We have to be relentless in our courage to speak, to open our mouth. And discouragement's going to come, and we have to continue.

We have to continue. God makes his appeal through who? Through people.

That's what Romans 10 says. Do we believe that?

Paul deals with Festus, the interruption, but he's relentless, undistracted. I'm not going to chase that argument. He's a laser beam.

And he comes back to a grippa. And it's very odd that he's actually able to have this personal interaction as he's standing trial and he is a prisoner speaking to the King.

[41 : 24] And he says, you know what? Festus, the King knows. Whether he admits it or not, none of these things have escaped his notice.

A grippa, he knows about Jesus. He's the King in Jerusalem. Jesus has been the talk, the resurrection for the last three decades or so.

He knows about the crucifixion because his father, a grippa the first, was involved. He knows about this talk of resurrection. He knows the prophecies, the promise of a Messiah.

In verse 27, Paul says, King, a grippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe. Ho, ho, ho!

It doesn't get any more personal. And church, this is Paul's kindness to this man. This is a grippa's moment of salvation. This is our of decision.

[42 : 28] I think that's Billy Graham. This is our of decision. His chance for a new beginning. A chance to be forgiven. A chance to be invited into God's family.

And God's inviting him through the voice of Paul. Does a grippa repent? He gets so very close church. That's why I call this a tragedy.

And what you see, what does he do? He deflects. Right? A little sarcasm here in this. I think the Gospels has gotten a little too personal.

A grippa wanted to hang on to the life that he had. The luxury, the sin, the power, the notoriety. He loved the life he had.

And so he deflects. Paul, in short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian? Well, that doesn't even phase Paul. And he's like, you know what?

[43 : 31] Whether today, whether tomorrow, yes. I want you to know the goodness of Jesus. That he is an incredible Savior. That he wants to...

He came to die to serve to forgive you. You could be clean. You could know life without guilt. Even despite the life that you have lived up until this point. Jesus will just wipe the board clean.

And we see a grippa's response, essentially when it says, then the King rose. He was done. He was done.

It ends the hearing. There's no indication that a grippa trusts in Christ. As far as we can tell, a grippa, the governor Festus, his sister Bernice, and she's something.

She ended up leaving her brother for a general, Titus, that actually burned down Jerusalem. And that kind of being cozy with him. And we see that it appears that their lives end in unbelief of the Gospel.

[44 : 40] Yeah. This appears to be a tragedy. And yet, what I wonder, and I don't want to read too much into this, because I don't know that it's there, but I find it at least encouraging that at the end in verses 31 and 32, there's just momentary interaction about what just occurred.

Because it says, and when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, this man is doing nothing to deserve imprisonment. And a grippa said to Festus, this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

So maybe nothing came of that. I don't know. But we're sort of left wondering. What occurred?

What occurred in those men's and their hearts in the days that followed as they reflected on this event? Or what about all that listened?

And this is kind of thrilling to think that when we meet the Lord, when we are in eternity, if we will meet maybe a military leader, somebody who is present in that room who heard the Gospel, we don't know.

[45 : 57] And we're just sort of left with this unresolved story here. We don't know. It appears tragic, but we don't know. And I guess what I take comfort from that church is this, that as ambassadors, what are we called to do?

To throw the seed. Sow the seed. Plant seeds. Be relentless in that. Who grows a seed?

God. That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3. I planted a polished water. God caused the growth. God caused faith to be rooted in that individual.

And we should take comfort there. We need to be part of a team of gardeners. There's our job description. In this life, on top of whatever we do to earn a wage and you know, et cetera, et cetera, ultimately we're ambassadors.

And I love that there's a little bit of like unresolvedness at the end here because it may have been years later when some present on that day, when they believed.

[47 : 16] And we'll find out one day. We don't know. And I guess that's why I appreciate C.S. Lewis when he had a reader, a young reader who was distraught over Susan not making it into Narnia.

And Lewis then writes a letter to this young reader and he explains to him that Susan was written out of the story not because, listen what he writes, I have no hope of Susan's ever getting into Aslan's country.

Which is just a metaphor for heaven. Being present with God. And I think that's a good thing to write, but because I have a feeling that the story of her journey would be longer and more like a grown-up novel than I wanted to write.

And I think there's encouragement there. I think there's encouragement for parents, maybe of children that have walked away from the faith. You don't know the journey, but you need to continue to be relentless in representing Christ in their life, praying for them.

You just have to have that heart for people in general. We don't know. We don't know their status before the Lord. So be relentless. Be reminded they're not the enemy. I know it's easy to think of people as the enemy, they're not.

[48 : 43] I appreciate the pastor Scott because he has struggled with this and he now looks at unbelievers. He shared this with me. I think I can share that with you. He says, you know what Jay, I look at the unbelievers around and I have to think of them as POWs.

And as I recognize that they are prisoners of war, I have greater compassion. They're not the enemy. And as we share, let's share about how God has personally been so good to us.

Amen. Father, thank you for this record of these individuals. That Paul had a chance to share the gospel with.

And the Lord is remarkable to me that he was incarcerated. He was in chains. And Lord, those chains actually were the vehicle that you used to allow him to share.

And so Lord, thank you for whatever circumstances, events are present in our lives. Lord, I pray that we would have eyes to see how we might plant a seed today in the life of another.

[49 : 58] Of someone that doesn't know you. Perhaps to share how good the Lord has been to us. To talk about how we were thankful before them of that which he has given us.

Perhaps it's just the beauty of the creation around. It's something that he's given all of us to appreciate and enjoy. Lord, thank you that in Paul's life you were relentless.

And so in turn he was able to be that towards others. And Lord, that's true of each one of us that are here today that are presently in Christ. And Lord, I pray that if there's anyone that has never bowed their knee to you that today they would surrender.

And they say, Jesus, if you really did die for me willing to forgive me for everything, I want that.

Would you be my Savior as undeserving as I am? Lord, I pray that it would be true for someone here this morning.

[51 : 04] And it's just a simple prayer. Lord, I'm a sinner and you are a great Savior. Forgive me. And if you pray that, share that with somebody.

We can get you in some discipleship. Come alongside and we can encourage you. Lord, thank you for the church. Thank you that we get to serve and minister to one another. And I pray that we would be an encouragement to someone before we scatter to our afternoons.

Jesus, we love you. It's in your name we pray. Amen.