

The Verdict

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[0 : 0 0] So if you were in a Bible quiz and you were asked which author wrote most of the New Testament, what would your answer be? I wonder. I think most people would probably guess Paul if they weren't sure of the answer, and most people would be wrong. If they said that, the correct answer is Luke, as you probably realize. Luke was the person who wrote the most. His two volumes, Luke and Acts, are the two longest books of the New Testament. And in his early volume, Luke's Gospel, chapter 21, Luke records Jesus giving a warning to his followers and speaking prophetically to them with this, they, your opponents, will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them.

But then he says, with as great as shoulds, make up your mind not to worry beforehand what you're going to say to them, for I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. Here in Acts 24 that we read just there, it's about 30 years after Jesus said that to his followers. And we find Paul in just exactly such a situation as Jesus had envisaged there. Having returned to Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey, he was soon imprisoned, well arrested and then imprisoned, and appeared before the Sanhedrin. He was preserved from an assassination plot by the intervention of the Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, and he was transferred to Caesarea under the care there of the governor Felix. Now Felix was, is not a noble or a nice character.

He had been a slave who had been granted freedom at some point in the past and Roman citizenship. He was corrupt and he was despised by the people that he ruled over, being referred to by one ancient historian as a tyrant. He used his position of power to serve himself rather than anybody else. He stole his wife, Drusilla, who was reputed to be a stunningly beautiful and youthful woman. He just stole her from some other man that was her husband. That was the kind of man that he was. And two years later, when Felix was recalled to Rome, Emperor Nero basically did an Alan Sugar on him. Called him in and said, Felix, you're fired. And the thing is, if Nero thought that Felix was bad, then he must have been really, really bad.

Because Nero was far from being a paragon of virtue. And so with Paul having arrived at Caesarea, the high priest back in Jerusalem, hires himself a lawyer named Tertullus. And he appears five days later in Caesarea to present the case, to prosecute the case against Paul. Having failed to get rid of Paul by underhand dealings, because these supposedly highly religious men were involved in the corrupt assassination plot to take Paul out on his way to Caesarea. And they were involved in all of that. And having failed in that plan, they now attempted to get rid of Paul through Roman justice. So the case convenes.

Felix is the judge. Tertullus acts for the Sanhedrin. And Paul is the defendant. He doesn't have a lawyer. He just has to represent himself. And Luke records this proceeding just exactly how we would expect a legal proceeding to go. So first in verses 1 to 9, there is the case for the prosecution.

[4 : 0 0] Then in 10 to 21, there is Paul's defense. And then finally, verses 22 to 27, time for a verdict. And that's the title I'm giving this message tonight. Time for a verdict.

So it's Tertullus the lawyer who kicks off with the case for the prosecution. The Sanhedrin have been getting nowhere by themselves up to now. So they hire themselves this lawyer. And I'm sure that didn't come cheap. It doesn't come cheap today. I'm sure it wouldn't have come cheap in the ancient world either. There they are. And Tertullus gets up on his feet, begins by flattering the governor with what can only be called false platitudes really, in what one of the commentators calls almost nauseating flattery. Tertullus commends Felix for his peace, for his foresight, for his reforms, and for just his general brilliance as a governor. Which is absolute nonsense in light of what we've sketched in already about his character and his rule. But mercifully, this sycophantic display doesn't go on for too long. And Tertullus presents the case for the prosecution. He makes three accusations against Paul. First, that he is a troublemaker who stirs up riots. That's in verse 5.

Second, also in verse 5, that he is the ringleader of the so-called Nazarene sect. And third, in verse 6, that he is a temple desecrator. And it might not be immediately obvious to the present-day reader, but these were pretty serious charges that Paul was facing in his historical context. The first one about being a troublemaker stirring up riots. Well, Rome saw order and peace throughout her empire as being absolutely essential to a civilized and a peaceful society. And so they ruthlessly crushed any kind of trouble that came to their attention. The second thing was about being the ringleader of the so-called Nazarene sect. Well, it was illegal under Roman law to introduce a new religion that didn't have state approval. And the third charge was about temple desecration. Well, the Romans gave the Jews considerable authority in how to run their own affairs within the temple precinct. So the charges were pretty serious that were brought against Paul. And as verse 10 says, the other Jews present joined in with the accusations, supporting Tertullus' case and putting pressure on Felix. So the charges are serious. They're also nonsense. They're also not true. They're pretty well untrue in their entirety.

Whatever connection there may be with anything that is true is so tenuous as to make it just falsehood all the way through. But Paul must make his defense nevertheless. There is no QC available to him.

He just has to get up there on his feet and defend himself. But there was that promise from Jesus recorded in Luke's gospel that words and wisdom would be given in just such a situation as Paul was facing here in Acts 24. Incidentally, just in the passing, Jesus' promise from Luke 21 about not worrying beforehand about what to say is one of these verses that's very often taken entirely out of its context and used frankly ridiculously. I've often or sometimes heard it used to suggest that if you're a preacher, you shouldn't really prepare sermons, you know, because the Bible says, Jesus says, don't worry beforehand about what you're going to say. Just pitch up and the words and the wisdom will be given to you and nobody will be able to refute what you say. Well, I hope you can see how that is taking a text, yanking it out of its context and making it say something that it doesn't say at all. Because what Jesus says there is very clearly about the context of a legal proceeding where you're having to defend yourself and as an assurance that he will be with you through such a situation. He's not talking about the preaching of the word where a man ought not to dare to enter a pulpit without considerable preparation under his belt already for handling the word of God and the things of God.

[8 : 26] So that's just a little contextual aside. But we come on secondly now to see how Paul gets up to make his defense. The case for the prosecution has been delivered. Paul now gets up and is going to make his defense. He immediately points out there isn't a shred of evidence for anything that has been thrown at him. For a start, he says, verse 11, he only arrived in Jerusalem 12 days ago and he's now by this time being at Caesarea for five days and he's implying how much trouble, how many riots do you think you can start in such a short period of time. Furthermore, he did not, as he says in verse 12, start arguments.

He did not stir up crowds in the temple, not at the synagogue, nor anywhere else. In verse 13, he says, there's just no evidence for any of this. And as we think of all that he had been accused of, rioting, he's accused of rioting. Well, Paul had been in the middle of several riots by this time in his missionary career around the eastern Mediterranean. But the reality is that he was the victim of all of these riots. And at the end of these riots, he was generally left lying on the floor in a heap, bleeding, sometimes so bad that his colleagues thought he was dead.

Desecrating the temple? Well, he certainly didn't do that. Indeed, as Acts 21 shows, Paul went out of his way to avoid offending Jewish Christians by voluntarily undertaking a purification ritual.

But of course, Paul's accusers were not interested in the facts or in truth or in reality. It was simply a guilty verdict that they were after. I wonder if Paul was familiar with Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. What does Jesus say to do? Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven. It's very counter-cultural. Maybe it's counter-intuitive to be able to rejoice in that kind of a situation. The truth is only a person who is convinced that his or her life is given him by God for God will be able to make any sense of that. Only a person who is convicted that his life is of no worth to him or her other than to serve God's purpose, to praise God's name, to build God's kingdom, will be able to really make any sense out of all of that. If you're the kind of person who just comes to church by habit or for reasons of outward respectability or mere tradition, then you won't really get what Jesus is talking about and what Paul is experiencing here. But if you are a genuine

Christ follower, as I hope you are, one who, like Paul, is always eager to testify to the gospel and to the Lord, then you will understand how it could be that a person who is being persecuted can be called blessed. It doesn't always feel like a blessing to be persecuted. But we've got to learn not to so much trust our circumstances as to trust our Lord in our circumstances so that when circumstances are telling us we're not blessed, we're cursed. If we're suffering on behalf of Christ, then we can remember what scripture says. But I think it should give us cause for serious reflection that the early Christians in the early church counted it a privilege, counted it an honor to suffer for the sake of the name of Jesus, while we consider even the smallest trifling suffering to be an outrage. Well, for Paul, having denied these charges against him, he is not finished. In fact, he's just getting started. And from verse 14, he speaks of his faith in Christ. And what we see from Paul here is what you always see from Paul in the book of Acts when he makes his legal defenses, which is this, that he is less interested in defending himself and more interested in advancing the gospel. You know how there's that saying about the best form of defense is attack. And that's something that Paul would believe in. In all of these legal proceedings, he is less interested in defending himself and more interested in advancing the gospel.

[13 : 04] I wonder if you were on trial for some crime. I hope you never have such an experience. But if you were on trial for some crime and you hired a lawyer and you're sitting in court and you hear your lawyer say this, Your Honor, I propose to spend a few moments defending my client against the charges that have been filed against him or her. And then for the bulk of my time today, I want to tell you about his or her religious beliefs. I wonder what you would think if you heard your lawyer speak like that. You might be tempted to do an Alan Sugar on your own lawyer as well and replace him with somebody else. But this is exactly what Paul does here. It's exactly what he does as he defends himself. He doesn't really defend himself. He advances the name of Christ. He forgets the name of Paul and proclaims the name of Christ. Three gospel issues are brought to Felix's attention in Paul's speech here. Starting in verse 14 with his open acknowledgement of his commitment to Christ. So he openly, publicly acknowledges without any hint of embarrassment or hesitation, his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. I admit, he says, verse 14, that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the way. I believe everything that agrees with the law and that is written in the prophets. So Paul admits to being a follower of the way. The way being a term used in the early church to describe the Christians and Christianity.

So Paul admits to that and insists that being a follower of the way, as they were calling it then, is entirely consistent with the law and the prophets and with the God of our fathers.

Now we see, if we had time to look back into chapter 23, we would see him make that same point to the Sanhedrin. He's saying that the man Jesus is the Christ of Scripture. The man Jesus is the Messiah who is promised in the Scriptures. That's to say, Jesus came as the fulfillment of all of God's promises to Israel and through Israel to humanity. It therefore follows that to be a Christian, to be a follower of the way, as they were saying back then, is actually not to go against the ways of the Jewish fathers or is not to go against the Hebrew Scriptures. It is to worship the same God, the God of our fathers, as Paul says.

It is to believe the same Scriptures, verse 14. And that public acknowledgement of Jesus, while under grave pressure, stands as a challenge to believers in every era, including ours. A challenge about the extent of our commitment to Christ, to the honor of his name, to the cause of his kingdom. Isaac Watts wrote in one of his hymns, I'm not ashamed to own my Lord or to defend his cause. The trouble is, it's easier to sing than it is to publicly confess Christ, isn't it? And the challenge for us is to be so committed to the Lord Jesus and be prepared to testify to the Lord Jesus, even when doing so will potentially put us in the firing line. As you must know, is increasingly the case in these days in which we live, where if you publicly profess an allegiance to Christ, then it could have ramifications in different areas of your life. But Paul publicly acknowledges his commitment to Jesus. The second gospel issue that he brings before Felix, this is now verse 15, is his hope in the resurrection of the dead. His hope in the resurrection of the dead. I have the same hope in God as these men, he says, that there will be a resurrection, a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. A resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

And that's the doctrine that had split the Sanhedrin in the previous hearing and led to Paul's transfers to Caesarea and to this present trial. And Paul refers to the resurrection again in verse 21.

[17 : 48] It is central, of course, to our faith that every person who ever lived in all of history will be raised after death to face God and to give an account of their life. So Acts 17, 31, God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. Furthermore, he has given proof of all of this by raising that man from the dead. Or similarly, Hebrews 9, 27, man is destined to die and then the judgment. Again and again and again in scripture, a link is made between Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of all. The latter will happen because of the former. For the believer, that is the greatest joy, isn't it? To be assured that this present life with all of the struggles and the adversity and the trials and tribulations and good stuff as well, of course, but all of the difficulties and adversities and so on. That is not all that there is. There is a glorious future that is promised by the grace of God for all those who belong to him. That's what sustains us, isn't it? In these times of testing and trial and adversity, that these things are not the end of the story, that there is this glory promised to us in the future, in the life that is to come. So for the believer, that is a tremendous joy to know of the resurrection. For the unbeliever, for the unbeliever, though, it's a warning. It's a warning and we're going to develop that thought through the case of Governor Felix in a minute. But this is the great hope that the believer has, a sure and certain hope. Let me emphasize that, it is a sure and certain hope.

For the Pharisees there, who were before Paul in the proceeding, they had a hope of some kind. It was a vague, uncertain, pretty flimsy, general hope that there was something, there was some kind of future resurrection. But for Paul, it was a very definite, specific, particular, sure and certain hope. Nothing flimsy, nothing speculative about it at all. It is a hope fixed on Jesus' promises. It is a hope guaranteed by Jesus' own resurrection, which has already happened.

You know, people often think that the Christian hope in the resurrection to eternal life is just wishful thinking. It's just speculative. It's just denying reality. It's just wishing for something better. When in fact it is something that is promised in the Bible, that promise being confirmed and proved, God says, by his raising of Jesus Christ from the dead. It's not blind faith to believe in the resurrection.

That's what people out there outside these walls think. It's not blind faith to believe in the resurrection. It is reasoned and reasonable. A reasoned and reasonable response to historical facts that are recorded and revealed in the pages of the Bible and especially the New Testament.

It's not blind faith. In fact, faith says, I once was blind, but now I see. So this is the great hope that Paul has. You know how we sometimes describe a person who has been enduring an illness for some time as being a shadow of his former self. Well, we can say this, that for me as a Christian, because of the resurrection, I am right now at present only a shadow of my future self. That is the great hope that we can all have within us if we belong to Christ. Whatever we may be, just now we are just a mere shadow of what we, by God's grace and power, are going one day to be.

[22 : 06] And so this I can confidently say because of the Christian hope in the resurrection of the dead. But the Christian life is not only about life after death. The Christian life is not only about that future hope that we have. There is a life to live here and now. And so the third thing that Paul says to Felix, it's in verse 16, is that he has a present duty to God to keep a clear conscience.

I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. And so in light of these first two points about Paul's commitment to Christ and his hope in the resurrection, he is using his life to serve his savior and in this way to prepare himself for the life that is to come. As Jesus would put it, Paul uses the present life to store up treasure in heaven, not merely on earth. And for those who truly are Christ followers, there is a knock-on effect in our lives, isn't there? The New Testament insists on that. A person who decides to follow Jesus, who decides to put their faith in him, turn their life over to him, embrace him as their savior who forgives them for their sins, and also as their Lord, who then has mastery over their lives with his gracious rule. A person such as that who claims to follow, who is following Christ, like Paul, goes the way of Christ. A person who claims to be a follower of Christ, but does not then follow that through in a life of Christian devotion, love, obedience, service to the

Lord. Well, that Christian's faith is having a credibility crisis. Because somebody shouldn't need to tell you that they're a believer in Christ. It should be writ large across their life as they live day by day in obedience to the commands of Christ and love for the Savior, the way that they speak, the way that they have attitudes, the way that they relate to others, the way that they love. All of these things should be testifying to the reality of Christ in their lives here and now. So Paul says, I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. What does that mean exactly? To have a clear conscience. You know that witty writer Mark Twain wrote that a clear conscience is a sure sign of a bad memory. It's quite a good saying. Quite wry, I'm sure. A clear conscience is a sure sign of a bad memory. Well, but it's not sinless perfection that we're talking about when Paul says, I strive to keep a clear conscience. It's not sinless perfection. It's simply a godly lifestyle. A lifestyle that honors Christ. A lifestyle that trusts in Christ for forgiveness and for justification and that then lives for Christ in daily life.

Albeit imperfectly. Albeit that there are mistakes along the way. Albeit that we yield to temptation and give in to sin. But as I was saying the other night, that is no longer the theme song of our lives.

We're talking about this in the man's the other night. It's the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. If you're a Christian, I imagine it as being on the trains. You're on the Jesus train and it's going this way. And if you're following Christ, you're on that way. You're on the right train.

[25 : 50] You're going Jesus' way. And if you're on that train and you're going that way and you yield to some temptation, what are you doing? It's a bit like you've turned around in the corridor and you're going back this way on the train. You're getting nowhere doing that. You're still going the right way actually because you belong to Jesus because you're a Christian. And walking back the way down that corridor is just silly. You need to repent and go with the flow. Go with the direction that the train is going in. Or maybe you're going the other way, which is the wicked train or the Satan train.

And if you're on that train, you're very definitely bound for the wrong destination altogether. And here's the thing. If you're on the Satan train, if you're on the wicked train, no offense to the people on this side of the church, it just had to be one of the size. If you're on the wicked train, then here's the thing. However much good you try to do, what is that accomplishing? You're turning around, you're coming back up the corridor of the wicked train, but you're still going that way. Because all your works and all your good deeds can never make up for going the wrong way and being on the wrong train. The only thing you can do is get off that train at the next station and get on the right train and get going that way. And the point I'm trying to make is that we don't claim we can live a sinlessly perfect life. The point is to be going Jesus' way. And when we are going Jesus' way, provision is there for our sin. Provision is there for our mistakes. And our repentance proves that we belong to Christ. Our true repentance proves that we acknowledge his law is good and right and that we are desiring to go his way, albeit that we're not perfect.

Well, verse 17, in fact, shows something of Paul's faith-induced actions. We're thinking here about this need for him to keep a clear conscience, to live faithfully for Christ, albeit imperfectly, here and now. And so he shows there that he was bringing gifts to Jerusalem for the poor and presenting offerings. This was the true reason for his being in Jerusalem. He wasn't there to start riots or to stir up trouble. He was there to alleviate the suffering of the poor. He was ceremonially queen, as he points out in verse 18. And so was in no way setting out to offend or upset anyone. And he instigated no disturbances. And with that, Paul's speech is made. His defense, although, as we've been saying, it's not much of a legal defense. It's more an advancement of the cause of Christ before the authority. But his speech is finished. Felix adjourns proceedings until the commander arrives. And so, finally tonight, verses 22 to 27, it's time for a verdict.

The time has come for a decision. There's a story I quite like about the, it's a legal kind of story. It's the height of a political corruption trial. The prosecuting lawyer attacks a witness. He says, isn't it, not physically, but just verbally, isn't it true, he says to this witness, isn't it true that you accepted 50,000 pounds to compromise this case? The witness sits in the witness box staring out the window, doesn't even acknowledge the question. The lawyer repeats it. Isn't it true that you accepted 50,000 pounds to compromise this case? The guy still sits there staring out the window up there, whereupon the judge in the case leans over to the guy and says, sir, you must answer that question. And then the witness says to the judge, well, I'm sorry, your honor, I thought he was speaking to you. Well, that is precisely the kind of judge that Felix turns out to be. You won't be surprised to hear that. He's not interested in justice. He's just interested in personal gain. It's decision time. It's time for a verdict in this case, but no verdict is given. No decision is made. No decision about Paul.

No decision is made about him. Felix declared at the close of proceedings that he would make a decision. Once the commander, Claudius Lysias, arrived, but he failed to be true to his word. And Luke makes it clear he was keeping Paul imprisoned there at Caesarea, hoping that a bribe would be forthcoming as Paul was there. Felix, well, I think Felix really is intrigued by Paul. He is interested in Paul and his message. Verse 22 informs us he was well acquainted with the way, with the Christian faith.

[30 : 29] And Felix, he hears Paul speak frequently, but nevertheless, he was corrupt. And money evidently spoke louder than Paul in Felix's mind. And two years later, and you know, you read the New Testament, you read the Bible and it says two years later, you think two years later. That's, please skim over that just in a few words. That's 40, how many is that? 24 months for Paul. Long time, just passed over in a couple of words. Two years later, when Felix is removed from office, he's still there. Paul is still imprisoned there. So Felix fails to make a decision about Paul, but more important than his failure to decide in the situation with Paul is Felix's inability to make the right decision concerning Christ. He failed to make a decision about Paul and he failed to make a decision about the Christ whom Paul had presented to him in these proceedings. He hears Paul speak about faith in Christ, verse 24, and about the impact that such faith makes in the life of a believer. In verse 25, we see that Paul speaks to Felix about righteousness, about self-control, and about the life to come.

But Felix gets scared. He says, right, that's enough for just now. I'll let you know when it's convenient for me to hear you again. I'll let you know when it's convenient for me. And of course, this message did make Felix feel uncomfortable because it contradicted his lifestyle. Paul, as we said, was talking about righteousness and he was talking about self-control to Felix, the man who had stolen another man's wife, who has always acted in self-interest to safeguard his own position and his own power, the man who is well known for abusing power and for his corruption and cruelty. It's not convenient now, says Felix. It's not convenient for me to make a decision about Jesus.

I think Felix had rightfully recognized that to make a decision, to make a commitment concerning Christ is a serious thing. I think he had rightly perceived that because to truly follow Christ does have an impact on your lifestyle. Some lifestyle choices are simply not compatible with being a Christian.

And what was true of Felix in the first century is certainly true of many people today in the 21st century who may find themselves unwilling to give up some aspect of their life or lifestyle, unwilling to surrender that to the lordship of Christ. Could be the re-evaluating of a relationship, or it could be a re-ordering of priorities, or it could be the implications for one standing among one circle of family or friends or something like that. But actually it all really boils down to what Felix said here. It's not convenient just now. I've got other issues. I've got other things. I can't give these things up.

Recently, a person in Falkirk, where I live and work, told me that he had been in contact with a destitute man. This man came up to him and said, I have no house, no money, and no job. And this Christian man said to him, do you know what you need, my friend, more than anything else? You need Christ. You need to know Christ.

[34 : 31] You need to find yourself in him and then seek all the rest of the things that you need. Do you know what the man said in response to that? He said, no, no. No, no. That would be far too much for me to give up.

What do you think about that? What did I say? No house, no job, no money, and to give himself to Christ would be too much for him to give up.

You hear that and you don't know whether to laugh or cry, do you? But how deep is opposition to Christ and his gospel?

How easy it is to say it's not convenient for me either. Delaying a decision about Christ is dangerous.

Felix, I think Felix thought he had all the time in the world, all the time that he wanted, all the time at his disposal to continue to question Paul, to continue to discuss these things with him.

[35 : 36] But then one day he was replaced as governor. He was sent back to Rome. And there is nothing at all in the rest of Acts or the New Testament that suggests that Felix ever got around to making a decision about Jesus.

There's nothing to suggest that it ever did become convenient for him to encounter Christ. In all probability, Felix is in hell right now because it was inconvenient one day to decide to follow Christ.

Delaying a decision to follow Christ is dangerous because you do not know if there will be a further opportunity. Bible always puts great emphasis on the word today in these things. Today is the day of opportunity.

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Today, today is the day. Maybe you've heard of a Scottish preacher of the past, Horatius Bonner.

He was a 19th century Scottish preacher. And he did something very interesting once. Horatius Bonner asked 253 of his Christian friends what age they were when they were converted.

[37 : 06] What age they were when they gave their life to Christ and began living as a Christian. And what he found is very interesting. 253 friends. He asked that question. What age were you when you began to follow Christ?

Under 20 years of age, 54.5% of them. I'll just give you it in percentages. It would be lovely to be able to show you a graph because this would make quite an impact.

But we don't do that. Under 20 years of age, 54.5%. Between 20 and 30, 33.6%. Between 30 and 40, 8.7%.

Between 40 and 50, 1.6%. Between 50 and 60, 1.2%.

Between 60 and 70, 0.4%. That's one person. Over 70, 0. 0.

[38 : 08] The lesson is clear. The later you leave it to get right with God, the less likely it becomes that you will.

How many people feel that it is inconvenient? That now is not the time. I've got other stuff to do. Other priorities to have. And that, well, it's fairly probably unscientific research.

But nevertheless, there's a lesson there. There's a power in that. The longer you leave it, the later you leave it, the less likely it becomes that it ever will be convenient to get right with God through Christ.

Felix. For Felix, the problem wasn't really outright rejection of the gospel. It wasn't really open hostility towards Paul.

It was simply a passive failure to respond positively to the gospel. The good news is that nobody here need make the same mistake.

[39 : 15] Today, today is the day of opportunity. Today is the day to get right with God through faith in Christ. And today is the day to get real with God through commitment to Christ.

These, I think, are the two issues I want to impress upon you in closing in this message tonight. The need to get right with God and perhaps also the need to get real with God.

The need to get right with God. I'm thinking here of somebody who does not yet believe in God, has not yet trusted in Christ for all that he brings us in the way of forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God, justification before God, that right standing before him that we need.

I'm thinking of somebody who has yet to take that step of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Today is the day to get right with God.

And then there's a need to get real with God. And I'm thinking here more of somebody who has put their trust in Christ already, but then for some reason, could be any one of a number of things, has perhaps grown cold in that commitment, has had a loss of enthusiasm, has not gone forward in the way that they know they ought to, has perhaps fallen back in their level of commitment.

[40 : 43] Somebody who knows they need to get back on track, but somehow it's just never quite been convenient just yet. Well, in both of these cases, the longer you delay, the less likely it becomes that you'll act.

And in both these cases, the longer you delay, the harder it becomes to do the right thing. Today, it's just that little bit harder than yesterday.

Tomorrow, tomorrow it'll be just that little bit harder than today. The time for a verdict is now.

Let us pray.