**Acts Sermon VI**

**Paul Speaks Before Kings**

Background:

Remember Acts 20 Paul speaks to the Ephesian Elders.

Acts 20:22 An now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me: my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

I can relate as Jan and I go to Merced.

Additionally: Acts 21:10-14 It is clear what is happening, but like Jesus, Paul must go to Jerusalem, where he will be arrested.

Remember—Paul’s plan was to speak before kings, and to go to Rome. The best plan he could come up with is to go to Jerusalem, where he would be arrested, and then he would appeal to Caesar, so he could go to Rome and even speak before the rulers of the empire.

**CH 21 On to Jerusalem**

There is irony because Luke: Jesus going from Jerusalem

Acts: Jesus, in the form of the church, goes out from Jerusalem. Acts 1:8 You will be my witnesses to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to all the world.

But here, near the end of his mission, Paul is returning to Jerusalem.

A very quick summary of Acts 21, 22.

Paul arrives in Jerusalem, bringing money for the Jerusalem churches from across Asia, Macedonia and Achaia (Greece).

To do this, he plans on entering the temple grounds.

But there are many Jewish Christians who are zealous for the law. They are not so happy that Paul is bringing Gentiles into the church.

So, Paul makes a special vow of purity and goes through a series of ritual cleansing with four Jewish men to shave their heads, etc.

Like Paul said in 1 Cor 9. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews.

But as Paul enters the temple area, he is falsely accused of bringing Gentiles into the court of (Jewish) men at the temple.

A riot ensues, Paul is arrested and falsely accused of teaching Jews to stop obeying the Law of Moses.

In Acts 22, Paul defends himself (remember the last sermon when he recalls Ananias had told him, “And now, what are you waiting for, get up and be baptized, and wash your sins away.”

At the end of his defense, Paul tells them that God told him to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

A second riot starts!!!

Paul put in prison for his own safety.

Paul defends himself before the Sanhedrin. He starts a riot by saying “I am on trial because of the hope of the resurrection.

This starts a huge argument between the Pharisees and the Saducees.

Acts 23:11

Then the Jews (not Christian Jews) plot to murder Paul, so he is sent to Caesarea for his own safety to stand trial.

**Acts 24 Paul preaches to Felix—to a pagan ruler.**

Paul before Felix, Festus and Herod Agrippa—two governors and a king—reminds of Matthew 10:17-20 “they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

As you read this account, imagine one day you, too will have your moment to share the gospel—maybe not to a king, but to someone really important.

Maybe it will be a principal or a town council or a CEO, or the popular person from your graduating class or a pro football player…

First, Paul speaks before Felix. (I can’t help thinking of Felix the Cat)

**Context**: Marcus Antonius Felix was the Roman procurator of the Judaea Province from 52-60 AD. Felix’s cruelty and licentiousness, coupled with his accessibility to bribes, led to a great increase of crime in Judaea. Tacitus on Felix: he “indulged in every kind of barbarity and lust.”

Acts 24:1-9 Ananias behind all this. The lawyer Tertullus makes his case.

What a hypocrite!!! He gives totally insincere sucking-up sycophantic praises to Felix. “We just want to help you and make your job easier” Liar!!!

Jesus said to be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves. Let us never be like this guy.

His charges are a mixture of

a. lies tried to desecrate the temple

b. half-truths stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world and

c. truths made to look worse than they really were. The “ringleader of this sect”

note the word sect had very negative connotations to the Romans as an unauthorized, rebellious and seditious religious group.

Now Christianity is being called a sect of the Nazarene. The word “sect” is the Greek word *haerisis*, translated into English would be heresy. What is the Jews basic argument? That Paul is teaching a heresy that is not allowed under Jewish and therefore Roman law.

This is how we will be treated by the likes of Tertullus.

But we are more interested in Paul’s defense.

Acts 24:10-21 Paul’s defense before Felix.

Q: What would you say if you had the opportunity to share and defend your faith before the governor of Judea?

Notice how different his defense is from that of Tertullus. His is a model of our sharing our faith with blatant non-believers, even in the face of persecution from hypocritical religious people.

a. His is respectful and thankful but does not give insincere praise.

b. He refutes the false charges by simply relating the facts, but not in an inflammatory style. He avoids all temptation to cut down Tertullus and Ananias, but prefers to let the truth speak for itself.

c. Where the charges are half-truths, he gives a more accurate description. (v. 14 I follow a way, not a sect, for example)

d. Where the charges are true, he comes fully clean. There was nothing they could charge him with that he did not fully reveal himself. v. 21.

A great Christian model. 2 Cor 7:11 Readiness to see justice done.

Isn’t it great that, as a Christian, we do not have to worry about being blackmailed because there is nothing hidden. When correctly charged with wrongdoing we simply say. Yes, and everyone already knows that.

e. He shows that what he is doing is fully in line with the Old Testament. What we are doing is biblical. Therefore the charge of heresy is totally false (v. 14-15)

f. The ACTUAL purpose of my coming was not to stir up trouble, but to help the poor of Jerusalem. v. 17

f. Most importantly, he shares the gospel with Felix! I follow a risen Lord (v. 21)

Acts 24:24-27 Always the politician (and hoping for a bribe, v 26), Felix refuses to give a decision.

He presumably has nothing but contempt for the suck-up Tertullus and Ananias but he has to be profoundly impressed with Paul’s sincerity, openness and honesty. People are not stupid.

Let us pray for such a moment

24:24-27 Paul shares the gospel with Felix.

v. 25 Will there ever be a “convenient time” to repent of our sins and put our faith in Jesus? We need to point this out to people. 2 Cor 6:2 “Now is the day of salvation.”

“Indecision is a decision.”

Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I (Acts12:1 who died in AD 44) and sister of Herod Agrippa II. She had married King Aziz of Emesa but Felix had recently seduced her from him.

Is it any surprise then that Felix would fear the teachings about righteousness and also was waiting for a bribe? In the end, Felix never released Paul even though he had concluded that Paul was innocent. Felix was more content with comfort, pleasure, power and appearance than righteousness.

**Acts Ch 25-26 Paul before Festus and Herod Agrippa**

Acts 25:9-12 A fateful moment. Paul appeals to Caesar. His 20+ year desire is about to be fulfilled (although not exactly the way he might have pictured it). He is going to Rome.

Would you be willing to go to prison in order to have the opportunity to share your faith in a foreign country?

Roman Festus to King Agrippa. I need to send him with a letter explaining the charges. Like Felix, he understands that Paul is completely innocent (except minor disputes about Jewish laws) You know all about the Jews. Help me out here!

Acts 26 A masterful defense of the Gospel, both to a religious person who knows the Bible and to a total pagan.

The scene:

Herod Agrippa is a client-king and the great grandson of Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus. When this event occurred he was in an incestuous relationship with his full sister Bernice. Imagine the gall to appear in public, judging Paul, when he was living this kind of lifestyle.

His “buddy” is Festus with whom he shares control of the Jews.

Acts 25:23 Agrippa enters in great pomp.

Paul, the greatest living man at the time, enters, probably in chains.

Acts 26:1 Does Paul really feel fortunate to stand before Agrippa? YES!!! He is sharing his faith with a king. It was all worth it!!!

Acts 26:2-32 (skip v. 12-18)

v. 4-5 Paul: My life has always been exemplary and above reproach, as my enemies are fully aware.

v. 6 I am on trial because I love God. (a good reason for a Christian to be in trouble)

v. 7-8 I am on trial because I believe in the resurrection, as promised by God.

v. 7, 22-23 I am on trial for observing faithfully the Old Testament.

v. 9-11 Like you, Agrippa, I was not predisposed to believe in Jesus—far from it!

v. 20 The real reason I am on trial is because I preach repentance. “That is why the Jews seized me.”

Note, Paul is putting Herod Agrippa in this position. Herod: I called you to repentance, and now you are trying to kill me rather than repent.

At the end of our interactions with people, at least we can have all the cards on the table. (unlike with Texas hold-em. Right, Joe?)

v. 24 Festus: You are crazy!!!! When people have no logical response they turn to insults.

v. 25-27 Paul: What I am saying is true, and it is reasonable. If you do not believe me, just ask Agrippa. He will tell you.

I love this. What we believe is true, and it is reasonable. We have nothing to be ashamed of. Jesus fulfilled prophecy. Jesus worked miracles, and Jesus was raised from the dead.

v. 27 Paul to Agrippa: Do you want to go to heaven? If you have read the prophets, surely you know that Jesus is the Messiah.

v. 28 Agrippa finally gets it. Paul is trying to convert me. Duhhh….

v. 29 A beautiful appeal. The prisoner says to the king, “I would not trade places with you for the world.”

Paul is going to Rome.

Hopefully, if you hold out the gospel to people, and if you live righteously for God, one day you will have your moment to speak before kings.

Get a picture in your mind right now. Who will it be? Your grandfather? Your boss? A politician? A famous coach? What will you say? Will you preach the gospel and call people to repentance that leads to salvation?

If so, here is what you should do:

1. Be humble and respectful, but do not use flattery.

2. Answer charges with facts, not anger or rhetoric.

3. Put the shoe on the other foot. Let’s talk about why we are really here. It is because I was doing the work of Jesus that we are here.

4. Preach the gospel and call for repentance.