

To Caesar You Will Go

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0 : 00] Acts 24, verse 27, and we're going to be reading the entire chapter, chapter 25.

! We're continuing the historical account of Paul's time in Palestine as now he's been arrested! and he's been put on trial, and we're going to see another trial today.

So Acts 24, verse 27. When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison. Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. They urgently requested Festus as a favor to them to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. Festus answered, Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man there if he has done anything wrong. After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove. Then Paul made his defense.

I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar. Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges? Paul answered, I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar. After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared, you have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar, you will go. A few days later, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus.

[2 : 41] Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. He said, there is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he may be condemned. I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and he has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges. When they came here with me, I did not delay the case but convene the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.

I was at a loss how to investigate such matters, so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar. Then Agrippa said to Festus, I would like to hear this man myself. He replied, tomorrow you will hear him. The next day, Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. Festus said, King Agrippa and all who are present with you, with us, you see this man. The whole Jewish community has petitioned me against him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the emperor, I decided to send him to Rome. But I have nothing definite to write to his majesty about him.

Therefore, I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation, I may have something to write. For I think it is unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him.

Have you ever been in situations where you felt like you were being used? It's not a good feeling to have, is it? Well, the apostle Paul was not just feeling like he had been used. He was being used, and that's clear in our text this morning. The Jews in Palestine were being ruled over by Roman governors, and one governor after another was using Paul to win the favor of the Jews who hated him. Some things never change. Politicians who curry the favor of their constituencies would do anything just to make those they rule over happy with them. And here we find it. Last week, we saw it was Governor Felix leaving Paul in prison for two years. Now, kids, two is a little number, but that's over 700 days.

[6 : 02] And he saw every one of those days tick by, one by one, in prison. Even though at the trial, it was revealed that there was no charge worthy of death or imprisonment, yet Felix kept Paul in prison to score points with the Jews.

And at the end of those two years, Governor Felix was removed. He was such a terrible governor that the emperor removed him and replaced him with Governor Festus. And this new Roman governor wants to start out his new rule with favorable ratings from the Jews. So he decides to leave Paul in prison.

Now, in the game of chess, pawns are rather expendable, aren't they? You're willing to lose a few pawns if it will gain you a greater advantage on the board. Well, from a human standpoint, Paul appears to be a mere pawn, expendable, just being moved about by the whims of godless politicians trying to please the Jews.

And Paul watches those two precious years of his life tick by one day after another inside his prison in Caesarea. And that's not how he would have chosen to spend those two years. He could feel terribly frustrated for having been falsely accused and been used as he was. And he could be frustrated for being kept from the thing that was at his heart, preaching Christ to sinners who needed to know him.

But Paul knew that in perfect wisdom, in perfect timing, the Lord was directing his steps, even into the prison at Caesarea. The Lord had destined him for Rome. Remember, a couple chapters earlier, the Lord stood by Paul and said to him, just as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also do in Rome. And from that point on, Paul is destined for Rome. And though all these trials and imprisonments were threatening and stood in front of him as obstacles to keep him from Rome, Paul has a promise from God. Where is that promise now? The devil might whisper in his ear in his prison cell. But God had spoken, and his word is true, and it will all happen, just as he said it would.

[8 : 41] It could be that some of you are in something of a prison. It's not the place you would choose to be. If you could just plan out your life, your present situation, would not have the look that it does now.

But God has you there. And the fact of the matter is, God has purposes that he's completing in your life. Good purposes, gracious purposes for the children of God. David knew it. He said, the Lord will fulfill his purpose for me. Whether that was running out in the wilderness as a hunted rabbit with Saul and his army chasing him, or sitting on his throne. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me.

And it's true for David. It was true for Paul. And it's true for every child of God. I trust we can suck in something of the encouragement of it as we see Paul in the midst of his trial.

We're going to see some more obstacles that threaten to keep Paul from Rome, but we will see God overruling everything to get him there in his own time.

Now it's a favorable thing for a desirable thing for any new ruler to get to know the people that he is ruling over. And so three days into his reign, Governor Festus makes a trip from Caesarea down to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish leaders.

[10 : 03] Now we don't know what kind of a transition team Festus had for his new rule of the region, but we do know he was very keen to win the favor of the Jews early on.

And they know it too. They know he's seeking their favor. He had already left Paul in prison. That was his first act as he came into his administration.

He decided to leave Paul in prison to please the Jews. So they know that. But rather than satisfy the Jews, it only whet their appetite and further emboldened them to ask for more.

And so now as the governor has paid them a visit there in Jerusalem, they're going to tell him how he can win their favor. You've got this prisoner down there at Caesarea named Paul.

And we found him guilty of these charges, X, Y, and Z. And we just want to have you transfer his case to Jerusalem that we might try him here.

[11 : 06] And the Bible says they urgently requested this favor. They were after this. Now, unbeknownst to Festus, the governor, this was all part of a Jewish plot to ambush Paul and to kill him as he's being transported down to Jerusalem.

It's the same old plot that was used two years earlier. You remember it by the Jews when 40 of their men swore an oath to never eat or drink again until Paul was dead.

Well, we can only assume that they broke their vow and were eating well again. But it's that same old plot that's revived now by these Jews, hoping that the new governor will not take such precautions as the old governor did in transporting him.

You remember 470 soldiers transported him. They're hoping that he'll just be escorted down with one or two, that they might kill him.

So Governor Festus knows nothing about this plot. And even though he wants to grant a favor to the Jews, we know that, he denies their request. Now, isn't that interesting?

[12 : 19] He denies their request simply for practical reasons. Perhaps he wasn't wanting to be busied with a trial while he's visiting Jerusalem. He's just come into his administration and he's making this visit.

He's only here for a few days and then he's going back. And he says, besides, I'm going back soon. If you've got charges against the man Paul's there, come with me and I'll hear your accusations back in Caesarea.

And so without realizing it, Governor Festus frustrates the plot, the Jewish plot on the life of God's servant, Paul. Quite unconsciously, he performs the good purpose of God of protecting his servant. He thinks he's just making best use of his time. He thinks he's just ordering his schedule in a proper way. But in fact, he's sparing Paul's life. He is further working out God's plan to get him to Rome and to not end up dead along the highway from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

This is another powerful example of God's providence. And we're going to see this all the way to the end of the book. God's providence on the stormy sea, in the trials and the decisions that rulers are making.

[13 : 38] God's providence is simply God governing all his creatures in all their actions all the time. And so we see here that God is governing governors, isn't he?

God is ruling over rulers. And he is so directing them that their decisions fulfill his plan to get Paul to Rome.

Indeed, the Bible says that the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. And he directs it like a water course wherever he will to accomplish his will. And here is Governor Festus.

And he is being directed and governed by a higher governor to protect Paul, even though he doesn't know Paul's life is in jeopardy. And that's just a reminder that most often God works out his plan in quite unspectacular ways.

In fact, if Luke had not told us that there was a plot on Paul's life, we wouldn't know that. Oh, you mean that decision to not try Paul in Jerusalem, but just to try him where he's at in such?

[14 : 44] That saved his life? We wouldn't have known that. And I wonder how many other works of God's providence in our own lives we don't know. Because we don't have an inspired Luke to write and who knows what God is doing in the secret ordering of things concerning us.

But he is doing it. And sometimes little decisions have huge consequences. Here it is, just a little decision of where he should be tried, Caesarea or Jerusalem.

No big deal. Oh, but the life of Paul was decided on that decision. The reading material of a sleepless king of Persia.

One night he can't sleep. And it's the reading material that saves the whole Jewish nation. Such a little thing. What a king reads when he has insomnia.

And it saves the whole Jewish nation from extinction. So that a Messiah might be born of the tribe of Judah, of the line of David that might come and die for our sins and take us to heaven.

[15 : 52] Little decisions. Huge consequences. So it was here in the life of Governor Festus. Maybe it was a little matter that led to the meeting of your future spouse.

Perhaps your paths crossed in some way and you end up marrying each other. God is the God of providence. The way that he brought someone with the gospel to you so that you're saved.

Your eternal destiny has changed. Why? Because of someone that God put in your path. He is a God of providence. And it's a wonderful thing for his people to rest in that.

Here's our security. Our God rules all things. And he rules them for our good. Well, the Jews' hatred of Paul hadn't worn off by two years in prison for him.

They still want him dead. And so they follow Governor Festus back up some 62 miles, I believe it is, up to Caesarea. And they brought their accusations against Paul. The next day, they're in court.

[16:57] And they're hoping that Festus will condemn him to death. And verse 7 says, they stood around him. Can you see him? There's Paul. And they're surrounding him.

And they brought their serious accusations against him. Later on in the chapter, we find out that they were shouting that he ought not to live any longer. This was an emotional ordeal.

And Paul's in the midst of this shouting company of Jewish leaders saying he's not fit to live. But just as before, their charges, though they were serious, were improvable.

And so all Paul has to do is to deny the charges one by one. And that's what he does. I've done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or their temple or against Caesar. They claim I'm stirring up riots and insurrection in the Roman Empire.

And he just denies each one flat out. Now, of course, this is just a brief summary of what happened. It took longer than what we're reading. But this was the essence of it.

[17:59] Same charges. Same defense. And Festus sees that there's no evidence here to convict Paul on the charges against him. And yet, he still wants to do the Jews a favor.

You see, their lobbying down in Jerusalem had paid off. And he's now wanting to do them a favor. And since they wanted the home court advantage to have Paul tried in Jerusalem, he now agrees to that.

Okay, I can give the Jews something. So, Festus says to Paul, Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?

Well, Paul would hear nothing of it, would he? Now, we don't know that Paul knew anything about the fresh plot on his life. God had revealed that to him the first time, hadn't he?

And he knew that there was this group of 40 waiting to kill him as he was transported. We have nothing of that this time. But he can remember. His memory is not so bad that he can't remember the plot two years ago.

[19:07] And he can just think that, well, the last time I left Jerusalem, there was a plot to kill me on the way here to Caesarea. What if the same Jews who are now hating me will carry out such a plot?

Or he knows at least enough of their hatred. And he can figure that if Festus will not release me in his home court here in Caesarea, what chances would I have of him releasing me down there in Jerusalem, where the Jews have such influence and might convince him to condemn me?

So Paul looks Festus right in the eye and he says, This court of Caesar's, where I now am, is where I belong. I've done nothing wrong. I've done nothing wrong to the Jews as you yourself know very well.

That's a powerful line, isn't it, in a court of law, saying to the judge, I've done nothing wrong as you yourself know very well.

It's evident now. It's clear to all. There's no reason to go to Jerusalem and be tried. And don't think that I'm trying to get away with anything. If I'm guilty of death, I'm willing to die.

[20:14] But if the Jews' charges against me are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar. Well, here's Paul using his Roman citizenship again.

He's used it several times in the book of Acts to the prophet of the gospel. And he's using it again. Only Roman citizens had the right of appeal to Caesar himself.

If they weren't satisfied that the lower courts were going to give them justice, they could appeal to the highest court of the land, the very court of Caesar, where Caesar dwelt in Rome, the emperor. Caesar is just another title for the emperor. And Paul appeals his case to the emperor. Now, the particular emperor who was on the throne at this time was Nero. And to us who know about Nero's gruesome persecution of Christians, we might read this and think, boy, Paul, aren't you jumping out of the frying pan into the fire to choose to go to Nero's court?

But history says that the first five years of Nero's reign was something of a glamour age, of a golden age for the Roman Empire, that he ruled with wisdom and kindness and goodness and made many positive reforms in the country.

[21:38] And so this is still within that time frame. And there was not the turning that came later where Nero turned on the Christians and cast blame upon them and the great intense persecution that followed.

Paul is actually thinking he's got a better chance of getting justice from the high court of the Romans in Rome under the emperor than in any of these lesser courts where the Jews are constantly influencing the judgment.

Well, Festus huddles with his council, all right? He's appealed to Caesar. He huddles with his council and he announces his decision. You've applied to Caesar.

To Caesar you will go. Now again, how little this pagan governor realizes that in his decision he is perfectly fulfilling the will of Jesus to get Paul to testify about him in Rome in the same way he had done in Jerusalem.

So once again, God spares Paul's life and works out his perfect plan to get him to Rome. It wasn't the way Paul had planned to get to Rome. You know how Paul had planned to get to Rome?

[22 : 52] On a fourth missionary journey. I'm going to head out and I'm going to Rome this time.

Well, he's not going to arrive in Rome as a missionary on this fourth missionary journey. He's going to arrive as a prisoner and yet he will do exactly what Jesus had planned for him and testify about the Lord Jesus there in Rome as he had done in Jerusalem.

God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. And you can trust God in all the twists and turns of your life, in all the prisons and the places where you would not choose to be, to trust that he is doing his perfect plan with me, that the Lord will fulfill his purpose for me.

So no doubt Festus is a bit relieved to have this uncomfortable business off of his back. He had already demonstrated to the Jews his willingness to transport the trial back to Jerusalem, to grant them the favor, and yet he wouldn't have to even do that.

The whole thing was just taken off of his lap by Paul's appeal to Rome. And yet before he could entirely wash his hands of Paul, he has one problem remaining.

It's what report should I send to the emperor explaining the case of this prisoner, Paul? Why are we sending him to you? It was the same problem that the commanding officer, Lysias, who first arrested Paul and saved him from the Jews killing him, the problem he had.

[24 : 30] When I send him up to Governor Felix, what shall I say? And he wrote a letter and he said, you know what, I found it. He wasn't guilty of anything deserving death or imprisonment. It was just something about their own religion.

And so it's similar here. He's got a problem. I've got to send a letter with this prisoner so Nero will know why we're sending him to him to be tried.

And so while Festus was pondering this dilemma, he received a visit from the Jewish king Agrippa. Agrippa, who's appointed by Rome to rule over the area just beside Festus to the northeast.

And so King Agrippa is one who had become a Jew and he had political rule over that region and over the temple. He was given the right to actually choose who would be the high priest and to rule over the temple in Jerusalem.

He was very familiar with the Jewish ways and scriptures, though that does not mean that he obeyed them, for he was living in an incestuous relationship with his own sister, Bernice.

[25 : 39] Both of them, the children of King Herod, the one who had done the Jews a favor and chopped James' head off and planned to do the same by chopping Peter's head off to do the Jews a favor.

You get the kind of circumstances in which Christianity was just cutting its teeth in the first century? They could very much feel like pawns in the hands of a powerful man.

Well, Agrippa and Bernice had come to congratulate Festus on his new governorship. And what do kings and governors talk about when they're sitting around? Well, we've got this case.

You see, this is on his heart. I've got this problem. We're going to send a guy up to Rome to be tried by Nero and I don't have the foggiest.

Why are we sending him? I don't understand the charges. It's just, it's not making sense. And so he considers King Agrippa to be something of an expert on Jewish matters and he hopes that he can help him write the letter to send with Paul to Rome.

[26 : 52] So he recounts the particulars of the case that the Jews wanted this guy dead. He's not guilty of any of these crimes. Their charges have to do with some points of dispute over their religion and about a dead man named Jesus whom Paul claimed is alive.

And that, brothers and sisters, is the world's view of your Savior. He is a dead man named Jesus who some of these crazy Christians claim is alive.

The living Savior dismissed as a dead man. Oh, if you know otherwise, your eyes were blessed.

Not flesh and blood that has taught you this, but my Father in heaven. This is truth revealed by God the Spirit. What a privilege to know that our Savior is not dead, but is risen and is living.

And his blood has been spilled. The sacrifice is over and he is now pleading our case before that court in heaven. He's mine.

[28 : 01] She's mine. I spilled my blood for her. Our whole hopes rest upon what? The living Savior who now lives. And because he lives, he is able to save completely all who come unto God through him because he always lives to make intercession for him.

Well, here he is. Talked about as a dead man who Paul claims is alive. Well, King Agrippa's curiosity is aroused. I'd like to hear this man myself.

You'll hear him tomorrow. Well, the next day, it's interesting how Luke describes it. He could have just said the court was held the next day. The hearing was held the next day, but he doesn't, does he?

He talks about a parade of pomp and circumstance. As Agrippa and Bernice entered with the high-ranking officers, the leading men of the city, Governor Festus, it was all quite a big deal. A big to-do about nothing, as we say. And he got all the hype, and there it is. And then they march. And then Paul is called.

[29 : 10] What a contrast as Luke paints this scene. All these VIPs strutting in like peacocks, so full of themselves, the movers and shakers, the very important people of the land.

And there before them, a plain, little, handcuffed Jew named Paul. Ordinary man. Not much to look at. But how different was Heaven's view looking down on that scene that day.

That little man, a child of God, bought with the precious blood of Jesus, a royal son of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

An heir of the world to come. One who would rule and reign with Christ forever and ever. And as for these VIPs, these pompous pagan rulers, our God brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

No sooner are they planted. No sooner are they sown. No sooner do they take root in the ground. Then he blows on them and they wither in a whirlwind, sweeps them away like chaff. That's these pompous rulers.

[30 : 23] And yet that's not how they look to the eyes of the flesh. And yet, even already, the tables have changed here on earth.

The name of Paul is known and loved the world over today. But as for Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice, for the most part, they're forgotten.

And maybe the one reason they are, remember, is that they happen to meet a guy named Paul. God says that the first will be last and the last will be first.

That's not to say anything about their eternal destiny. Where are they now? You see, unbelieving rulers will awaken the resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt while the lowly believer Paul awakens to everlasting life.

A day is coming when victors' wreaths and monarchs' gems will blend in common dust. All this pomp will be like the dust. But the righteous will shine like stars forever in their heavenly Father's kingdom.

[31 : 39] John Newton put it this way, Fading is the worldling's pleasure. All is boasted pomp and show. It's fading. But solid joys and lasting treasures, none but Zion's people know.

And that was Paul. So Governor Festus announces the purpose of the investigation. You all see this man, the whole Jewish community, wants him dead.

I found he'd done nothing deserving of death, but because he's appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him. But here's my dilemma. I have nothing definite to write to his majesty about him.

Therefore, I'm wanting you all to hear him, and especially you, King Agrippa, who knows a lot about the Jewish religion, so that you may help me with something to write because I think it's unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him.

How perceptive. No wonder these guys were made governors. They're sharp, aren't they? It's really not reasonable to send on a prisoner without charges. Could it be that the reason you can't come up with any charges is that the man is innocent?

[32 : 41] Could that possibly be the reason for your problems? Well, we're going to have to wait until next week to see this hearing, to hear Paul make his defense for the third time.

We'll see his testimony being given for the third time in the book of Acts. There's lessons. Why the repetition of this testimony? This will be the fullest account of his testimony.

We'll hear things in chapter 26 we never heard in chapter 9 or heard in the earlier trial. Things that will help us get the full picture.

We're going to especially see the role of the resurrection in his defense. But I want to simply direct your attention to what happens at the end of this trial. And I take you to chapter 26 and verses 30 to the end.

This is after everything's been said. The king rose and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them, they left the room and while talking with one another, they said, this man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.

[33 : 52] And Agrippa said to Festus, this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. This is part of the reason why Luke is writing this letter of the Acts to Theophilus.

to demonstrate that the Christian religion does not war against faithfulness to Caesar. They are not troublemakers. And look, your own governors and kings have weighed in on that over and over and over again.

And so it becomes a letter of confirmation to the Christian religion. But here we see that all of these trials come to the same conclusion.

conclusion that there is no reality to the charges made against him. Could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

Well now, again, that looks like just too bad for Paul. He shouldn't have, but God's plan, remember, was to get Paul to Rome. And he will do it through this appeal of a Roman citizen standing before the high court of the emperor.

[35 : 05] God's working out his sovereign plan. There are three prophecies that are fulfilled in Paul's life. And I just need to be quick, but three prophecies of Jesus.

The first one came from Luke 21 when the Lord and his disciples were there at the temple and some of his disciples started to say, wow, have you seen, look at these stones, these massive, beautiful stones of the temple.

And remember, Jesus said, not one of them will be left upon another. And they say, when, Lord? When will this happen? And Jesus starts to tell them, tell them, there'll be wars, great earthquakes, famines, pestilence, fearful events, great signs from heaven, but before all this, they 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 and this will result in your being witnesses to them, but make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves for I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

And these 20-year-old words of Jesus are now being fulfilled in the Apostle Paul who is being arrested and imprisoned and put on court in trials before kings and governors and in the midst of it, he is testifying, he is giving a witness for Jesus Christ.

[36 : 26] What a fulfillment of these words of our Savior. And we see something of the Savior's heart here, don't we? for this upper class of sinners, the ruling, privileged class of society who due to their lifestyle may be some of the less likely of people to go and hear a gospel presentation.

So what does Jesus do? He takes the gospel presenter to them in the person of a prisoner in one of their jails. And what a heart for sinners. No, there's no favor of the wealthy and the rich and the powerful over the poor.

All must hear, but neither are they to be excluded. Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. And Jesus wants his gospel to be announced to those high rollers of society. And notice he does it by sending some of his best witnesses to them. But through great suffering, they come through prisons.

and that tells us that the Lord Jesus is willing to have his sheep abused for a while in order that the wolves might hear the gospel. He's willing to have the weak improperly treated, falsely accused, in order that those who are abusing their power might hear about the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

[37 : 58] Do you know that those upper people in society, the rulers, the shakers, the movers, the rich, the famous, do you know that they too have sinned?

Do you know too that they need a savior or they will perish in hell forever? Jesus wants the gospel to go to them. What a demonstration of his heart. Bring the gospel.

And he sends Paul the prisoner. He's willing to have Paul suffer in order to bring him there. But we shouldn't be surprised. That's what Jesus said would happen back in Luke 21. And it's what, it's the same pattern of Jesus himself who was willing to take the Calvary road in order to win our salvation. The way of suffering. This is the way our master met. The way that our master went, must not the servant tread it still? Or must Jesus bear the cross alone? And all the world go free.

No, there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me and there was a cross for Paul and it was to be falsely accused and locked up in prison and shuffled here and there to be used as a pawn in order that the likes of a Felix and a Festus and a Agrippa and a Bernice and all the Cordians and important people of the land might hear about Jesus.

[39 : 22] What a picture of our Savior. The second prophecy of Christ came during the conversion of Paul in Acts chapter 9 the words that Jesus spoke to Ananias who baptized Paul.

This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel and I will show him how much he will suffer for my name.

Again, what's the message? Paul is the chosen instrument and I'm going to take him to bear witness of me before my people Israel the Gentiles and their kings. And that's what's happening, isn't it?

That's what we're seeing unfolding in, you know, fulfillment of the promise. And it will involve suffering. I will show him how much he must suffer to bring the gospel to these kings will involve suffering.

And yet, that is the way the master went. Should not the servant tread it still? Don't be so quick to one out of your jails, your two-year prison times of jail, the time that you're in places where you wouldn't like these situations to continue.

[40 : 35] Look around. God may have people in there, somewhere where you are at, in that setting that he wants to bring the gospel to, the least likely of people. But such is his heart that he will send his servants into these hard places to suffer that they might hear the gospel.

The third prophecy of Christ came back in chapter 23 and verse 11 when Jesus stood by Paul and said, Just as you've testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome.

Well, that's, that's now being worked out. You see, God is using Festus and Felix and the Jews and prison and, and all these trials and accusations, false accusations.

He's bringing it to the point, I appeal to Caesar. Well, then to Caesar you will go. To Rome you will go. And so the governor Festus is fulfilling the high king of heaven's will.

You see, there is, there is one in heaven whose hand is determining every move on the chess table. Even that which involves the suffering of his servant, the bearing witness to Christ in all these various places and eventually in Rome, the very citadel of the Roman Empire, the capital.

[41 : 59] King Jesus wants his gospel proclaimed there. There is another man whose life was interrupted by two years in prison. His name was Joseph. How'd he get to prison?

False accusation. Oh. Well, then that was surely a tragedy, wasn't it? That he had to spend two of the best years of a young man's life in a jail.

Well, actually, no, because, you see, prison was just the stepping stone to getting him to Pharaoh's court because it would be in prison that some of Pharaoh's butler and baker would be put and it would be through that connection that eventually Paul would step from the prison right into Pharaoh's court and become second in the land only to Pharaoh.

Oh, so prison can become a stepping stone to God's plan to do much good to many people. There was another man, servant of the Lord, in gloomy circumstances, locked up in a rat-infested prison in Burma.

His name was Adoniram Judson. He had left his home and gone to Burma to bring the saving gospel of Christ to these poor people who knew nothing of him. I just received a letter from Alan Beardmore, a missionary down in Australia.

[43 : 20] He just finished a biography on Judson and he said he killed 250 bats one night in his house. He didn't go for luxury.

He went because he was burdened for the lost eternal condition of these Burmese people and he suffered and then he was falsely accused as being an enemy of the state and thrown into some stinking hot rat-infested prison and he was able to write to his wife from that prison, my future is as bright as the promises of God.

Well, dear Christian, wherever you're at, your future is as bright as the promises. It doesn't matter what it is that seems to have you boxed in at present.

Your future rests upon the words of your God who says, I will fulfill my purpose for you. I will work everything together for your good. You who love me and are the called according to my purpose. I will get glory through your life and witness wherever I put you. So go on trusting him. Don't let Satan rob you of those sweet promises that are yours in Christ Jesus.

[44 : 32] Let's sing of one of them. Number 79 as we close. Though troubles assail us and dangers a fright, though foes should all fail. Oh, Father, how blessed we are to live in a world where Jesus reigns, where every ruler is in his hands.

Indeed, the whole world is in his hands and his purposes are ripening fast and he's going to return to judge the living and the dead and in that day he will stand with us and by us, we who have trusted in his blood.

We will be seen to be righteous, whiter than the driven snow, cleansed by the blood and righteousness of Jesus and by the spirit of our God.

Thank you for such a hope for the life to come. Thank you for such a hope right in the midst of where we are today, January the 15th. Thank you that your promises are true.

Thank you that you have taken us who should have been your enemies forever and you've made us friends through the Lord Jesus.

[45 : 43] Now send us into this world and strengthen us and open our eyes and help us to see people where we are who need you and to tell them what we have found in Jesus for your eternal praise for the salvation of sinners and for our joy and heaven's joy at one sinner that repents.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.