

Three Trials

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Date: 13 December 2015

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Warm welcome to church this morning. It's good to see all of you and it's good to see some returning friends rather than visitors.

And if there are visitors here with us as well this morning, it's good to see you and it's a warm welcome to each one. Tea and coffee will be served at the end of the service and all are welcome to join for that.

But the evening service will be at 6 and this evening will be conducted by Mr. Donnie McLeod of the Faith Mission. And he'll take the service only.

I intimated last Sunday that I thought there might be an after church fellowship, but there won't be an after church fellowship. There will just be the service and Donnie will conduct that, share a word and speak about the work of the Faith Mission.

There will be the opportunity to give to the work of the Faith Mission at the end of the service as well. There will be a retiring offering. So if you feel so moved, please bring something for that.

[1 : 0 4] In relation to this evening as well, if I could just read out this funeral notice, which I've taken from the Church of Scotland site. Worship in relation to the death of Mr. Roderick A. Martin, 3 Scadaby, will be held on Sunday evening, that's this evening, in the Church of Scotland at 9pm.

And the funeral service of the late Mr. Roderick A. Martin will be held on Monday 14th December at 11am at the Tarbert Church of Scotland. So that's notice of that funeral.

And we will keep the family in our prayers at this time. The youth fellowship will meet at half past 7 this evening. It's the kind of Christmas get-together.

And that's at the McKellar's house, has been the tradition over the while. Transport will be available from the Tourist Information Car Park. And in the course of the week, there's various things as usual.

Ladies Bible study on Monday. Prayer meeting here on Wednesday. First Fruit Fellowship Church of Scotland Hall on Tuesday. And the Road to Recovery group will actually begin this Tuesday at 8pm in the Community Centre.

[2 : 1 5] We've been praying in advance of that for the last 4 or 5 weeks. 6 weeks probably. And we're going to begin the Road to Recovery group on Tuesday at 8pm in the Centre at the Crest Room at the back.

Joint Sunday School party with the Church of Scotland is to be held on Saturday, 19th December from 1.30 to 4 in Siree Scott School. And the nations who are begging for that will be gratefully received.

The service is next Lord's Day, 20th December. 11am will be the Christmas family service. So it will be a shorter service. And the children, apart from the very young ones, will be in with us for the duration.

And 6pm will be the normal service. And both these services will, God willing, be conducted by myself. And there will be a Community Carol service in the Community Centre at 9pm on Sunday 20th.

That's next Sunday. 9pm. Is that the right time? It's normally 8pm. I'm reading out what I've got here, but my memory seems to be 8pm.

[3 : 29] Okay, let's clarify that for the evening. And I know there are posters about, but I've got a question mark over the 9pm that's here. Last thing is just to say thank you to everybody who helped with the Christmas Fundy yesterday.

We had about 40 or so children who came. And it was a good day. And the Gospel message was shared. The message of Christmas was shared with the children in various weird and wonderful ways.

So pray that that work will be blessed. And thank you for all who contributed and helped out in any way. These, I think, are all the information. So we'll begin our service and we'll sing to God's praise from the Psalms.

Psalm 65. Psalm 65. And we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 4 of the Psalm.

Praise we, it's really in Zion, Lord. To thee thou's praise shall be. O thou that hear art of prayer. All flesh shall come to thee. And we sing down to the end of verse 4.

[4 : 32] To God's praise. We stand to sing. This wish for thee is Zion, Lord.

To thee thou's praise shall be. O thou that hear the art of prayer.

O thou that hear the art of prayer. All flesh shall come to thee.

Iniquities I must confess. Prevail against me due.

But thou hast for thee. Transgressions. But thou hast for thee.

[5 : 45] Transgressions. Then birds thou wish shall come.

Blessed is the man who thou hast used. And his shall close to thee.

That he within thy courts. O Lord. That he within thy courts.

O Lord. May shitha dwell and be. We surely shall be satisfied.

With thy covenant grace. And with the goodness of thy house.

[6 : 59] And with the goodness of thy house. In all thy holy grace.

Let's unite. Let's unite. Let's unite. Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's. Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Our heavenly father.

Thank you. For this day. We thank you for the words. that we have sung together the words which were penned by the psalmist but inspired by your Holy Spirit we thank you that this is the word of God and Lord we thank you that we can trust and we can lean upon the word of God your word is eternal your word is absolutely trustworthy and so we pray that you would tune our hearts that we would be responsive to your word and that we would be responsive to that invitation that is extended to us to come in worship we thank you that you are the God who is the hearer of prayer as we have sung we thank you that you are the God who calls us to come to yourself and yet Lord with the psalmist we know that we must confess our iniquities as we come we cannot come on our own strength we cannot come without the touch of Christ without the cleansing of his blood and so as we think back over the days even since we last met we pray Father that you would cleanse us from our sin as we confess it before you and Lord that you would deceive us in Christ we pray that you would purge away our transgressions as we confess them to you and put our faith in Jesus and Lord as we come into your presence again on your day giving you thanks for the fact that this is the day that we remember that our saviour is a risen saviour we pray Lord that you would meet with us we pray that you would bless us and we pray that we would be able to sing as we go from here of the fact that our souls have been satisfied by your abundant grace we thank you afresh for the amazing grace of Jesus we thank you that when we deserve punishment for our sin because of his shed blood we are able to receive forgiveness and find blessing and find intimacy in your presence we thank you for the riches that are ours in Christ for the peace of God that passes all understanding for that direction that you give to us as we acknowledge you for the assurance of sin forgiven for the promise and the experience of one who is with us through every day and every step of the journey that you have mapped out for us in time and we thank you Lord for the great riches of the prospect that we have of eternity with you if we are those who are trusting in Christ so enable us we pray to put our faith in Jesus to keep our faith in Jesus we thank you that he is the one who rejoices with those who rejoice he is the one who wept with those who wept and we pray Lord today for those who are grieving as we think of the family of Roderick Martin we pray that you would comfort them that you would strengthen them that you would draw very near to them in that way that they have the assurance that you are God and that you are close we ask Lord that you would uphold them and sustain them over these next couple of days

especially and then in all the days after so be with those Father who grieve for loved ones lost in past days and for loved ones that have been lost in past years and every time they meet for funeral services these wounds are opened back up Lord comfort those who grieve and Lord be with those who are rejoicing also as we think of new babies in the community as Lord we give you thanks for the children who are here and the children who are over visiting the stable today remembering the Christmas story we thank you Lord that you rejoice with those who rejoice and we ask Father that all that was shared of the Christmas story yesterday we pray that we would be blessed in the hearts of these young ones we thank you that the message is a message of good news good tidings of great joy for all the people for young and for old and we pray that over this Christmas season that sense of joy may be felt deep within each of us we pray that you would continue with us now

Lord that you would bless our worship together and that you would lead us by your spirit and we pray this in Jesus name Amen boys and girls would you like to come forward please boys and girls it's good to see you today one or two of you sitting down here as well and it's good to see you as well we're missing a lot of our wee ones today where are they at the stables who's been at the stables before what happens there is some of us don't know tell us tell us grace they do the story of Mary and Joseph and what else can things happen tell us a wee bit more just so we get a picture we see a horse and a donkey the horse of the Christmas story and the donkey no donkey either actually but anyway it's good to it's good to remember and see the Christmas story tell me some of the things that you like about Christmas

[14 : 04] Caitlin presents it's a very honest answer your grandma's laughing very much don't laugh that much it better be a good one Emma pardon say that again extending time with the family that's a good one as well what other things you like about Christmas I like turkey Angus Alec likes Brussels sprouts laughing talking of the presents do you know what you would like for Christmas has anybody written one of these letters yet saying what you would really quite like to have for Christmas and if you have do you really want to tell us what you've asked for I don't believe none of you have asked for anything Caitlin pardon a real horse laughing just as well you've got a grandpa in Lusk and Tyre laughing uh-huh any other presents nobody else nobody's asked for anything no what about over here anyone put any

Christmas lists together no oh you're all very unselfish people let me tell you about when I was a wee boy often these stories start like this don't they and I remember one Christmas and it was a bit disappointing have you ever asked for a present and got something actually that you didn't want very much don't tell us if you have but there was one Christmas Christmas and I asked for what it was it was a Walkman can anybody heard of a Walkman yeah yeah all the old all the mature people have heard of a Walkman do you know what a Walkman is a Walkman is like the very old fashioned version of this thing here an iPod thank you for giving a wee shot of it give it back to you in two weeks it's a very old fashioned version of that have you ever heard of a cassette tape you heard of a cassette tape put your hand up what you have some of you haven't even heard of that a cassette tape is about that size and you'd put it into a tape recorder a Walkman was a really fancy thing it was very easy to carry it was about the size of well actually the one I was asking for was about the size of this

Bible you could sort of put it under your arm walk around with this Walkman and the tape would be playing and you could listen to music you could only listen to the one tape not a thousand songs like you have here but I really wanted a Sony Walkman really wanted it and I dropped a few hints about the Sony morning do you know what I got that's what I got I got a pair of bobbin socks and I needed the bobbin socks thank you I needed the socks but just didn't really want them very much they're not very exciting and so I was a bit disappointed and I kind of took the present and kind of went thanks very much that's lovely and I just put it away just before my folks seemed like very cruel parents

I'll tell you actually what happened it was one of these things where I'd wanted something at the end of November and my folks said well you're going to have it for your Christmas so I took it for my Christmas hoping that they'd have forgotten by the end of December so I got the socks and when I looked so disappointed they said well you got your real present at the end of November just in case you're wondering if I was being too cruelly treated but I got socks needed them didn't really want them very much not very exciting what do what do we remember at Christmas time who is the greatest gift that was ever given to people begon Jesus he's the greatest gift that was ever given God the father giving us his son Jesus Jesus leaving the wonder of heaven so beautiful and so perfect to come to the mess of this earth knowing that he was coming not to have an easy life but to go to a cross and yet he came because he loved us and he came to be the greatest gift that was ever given and yet the sad thing is not everybody wanted God's gift says in

John chapter 1 in verse 11 he came to his own people and even they rejected him Jesus came to his own people and even they rejected him he ever felt rejected he ever been in the playground and people are saying I don't want to play with you have you ever been the only one that never got invited to a party or a fun thing and you feel rejected it feels sad doesn't it Jesus the one who made the whole universe and who made us and who loves us he came to save us to his own people and even they rejected him and today still there's people who want lots of amazing things at Christmas but they say oh don't talk to me about Jesus I don't want to hear anything about Jesus and they reject him and it's still so sad and it makes Jesus sad but it's so sad because without him we can't have our sins taken away we can't be saved we can't go to heaven so let's not be like people who reject Jesus but let's say to

[20 : 52] Jesus please come into my life and fill me and be the friend that stays close to me all the time let's not reject Jesus at Christmas let's pray our heavenly father we thank you again for the amazing gift of love that you gave to us in sending Jesus your son lord Jesus we thank you that you were willing to come from heaven to this broken world to go to a cross to pay for our sin and we thank you for the Holy Spirit thank you that even now if we understand these things he is the one who is working he is the one who is showing these things to us and lord as we are shown this gift of Jesus we pray that none of us here would reject him but that we would all say come lord Jesus into my life wash away my sin fill me with your spirit and never leave me hear our prayers in

Jesus name we pray amen thank you boys and girls for listening we are going to sing now and we are going to sing a carol mission praise 503 the little town of Bethlehem how still we see you live and then verse 3 how silently how silently the wondrous gift is given so God imparts to human hearts he gives to human hearts the blessings of his heaven if you hear them you know I need to pray for them good to see Joan back with us today as well welcome back Joan after a long time away certainly yourself and you are both an answer to pray over past months so it's good to see you I didn't see you until just just now we're going to read God's word together and we read from Acts chapter 24 Acts chapter 24 as we continue this account of

Paul all the news going through for the cause of Christ we left him last time having been transferred to Caesarea under Roman guard and he's brought to this trial before Felix and so we read from verse 1 five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus and they brought their charges against Paul before the government when Paul was called in Tertullus presented his case before Felix we have enjoyed a long period of peace under you and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation everywhere and in every way most excellent Felix we acknowledge this with profound gratitude but in order not to weary you further I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly we have found this man to be a troublemaker stirring up riots among the

Jews all over the world he's a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple so we seized him by examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about these charges we are bringing against him the Jews joined in the accusation asserting that these things were true when the governor motioned for him to speak Paul replied I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation so I gladly make my defense you can easily verify that no more than 12 days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship my accusers did not find me arguing with anyone in the temple or stirring up a tribe in the sin of gods or anywhere else in the city and they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me however I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the way which they call a sect and I have the same hope in God as these men that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked so I strive always to keep my conscience clear before

God and man after an absence of several years I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this there was no crowd with me nor was I involved in any disturbance but there are some Jews from the province of Asia who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me or these who are here should state what crime they have found in me when I stood before the Samhedrin unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence it is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today in Felix who was well acquainted with the way adjourned the proceedings when Lysias the commander comes he said I will decide your case he ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to who was a

[26 : 12] Jew ex he sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus as Paul discoursed on righteousness self-control and the judgment to come Felix was afraid and said that's enough for her you may leave when I find it convenient I will send for you at the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe so he sent for him frequently and talked to him in two years had passed Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus but because Felix wanted to grant a favour 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 priest some Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul they urgently requested Festus as a favour to have favour to them 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 in order 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 are these charges Paul answered I am now standing before Caesar's court but I ought to be tried if I have done anything 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 I confer to this council he declared you appeal to

Caesar to Caesar you will go a few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus since they were spending many days there Festus discussed Paul's case with the king he said there is a man here who feels 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 be condemned I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he has faced his accusers and has had opportunity to defend himself against their charges when they came here with me I did not delay the case but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in when his accusers got up 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 in these charges when Paul made his appeal to be held over for the emperor's decision I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar then Agrippa said to Thestas 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 leading men of the city at the command of Thestas Paul was brought in Thestas said King Agrippa and all who are present with us you see this man the whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea shouting that he ought not to live any longer I found he had 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 his majesty about 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 and Agrippa said to Paul you have permission to speak for yourself so Paul motioned with his hand and began his defence King Agrippa I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defence against all the accusations of the Jews and especially so because you the Jews all know that I have lived ever since I was a child they have known me for a long time and can testify if they are willing that according to the strictest secular religion I lived as a Pharisee and now it is because of my hope and what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today this is the promise our tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve

[31 : 35] God day and night they'll kill but it's because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth and that is just what I did in Jerusalem on the authority of the chief priest I put many of the saints in prison and when they were put to death I cast my vote against them many a time I went to the synagogue to another to have them punished and I tried to force them to blaspheme and my obsession against them I even went to foreign cities to persecute them one of my journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority of the commission of the chief priest about me no king I was on the road I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun blazing around me and my companions we fell to the ground and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic Saul Saul why do you persecute me it is hard for you to kick the

Lord replied now get up and stand on your feet I have appeared to you to point to you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified in faith in me so then I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven first to those in Damascus then to those in Jerusalem and all Judea and to the Gentiles also I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds that is why the she has seized me the temple courts have tried to kill me but I have had God's help to this very day and so I stand here and testify to small and greater like I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen that the

Christ would suffer and as first to rise from the dead would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles at this point Festus interrupted Paul's defence you're out your mind Paul he shouted your great alarming is driving you insane I'm not insane most excellent Festus Paul replied what I am saying is true and reasonable the king is familiar with all these things and I can speak freely to him I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice because it was not done in a corner King Agrippa do you believe the prophets I know you do then Agrippa said to Paul do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian Paul replied short time or long I pray God not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am except for these chains the king rose and with them 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 Agrippa said to Festus this man could have been set free if he had not appealed procedure Amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us Father Carithan is going to lead us in prayer and tove it to the one two ever into the birth as as well as others origines.

Our ummm why alguien muz Patel climb, climb pile he live and Gottes yes in indignantly.

[37 : 00] ot the body Jones we know we're left on we were he I can now receive you a loader.

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consequir And then I answered you the last question of your ot' plan, to use yourepl η.

Be Studio 5 Would have to happy with people, let them you would?

- [41 : 19] As a man who was schooled and cared for, let them who could get Ordnung. They would have to unforgive them they would not want to. It would have to have a special care.
- Amen. We continue to turn the free church.
- [44 : 01] We continue to turn the free church. We continue to turn the free church.
- We continue to turn the free church. We continue to turn the free church.
- We continue to turn the free church. We continue to turn the free church.
- We continue to turn the free church. We continue to turn the free church.
- We continue to turn the free church.
- [45 : 25] We continue to turn the free church. We continue to turn the free church.
- And we saw that Paul was being transferred.
- He was being transferred from Jerusalem, where his life was consistently in great danger. And where he was just, with the help of the Romans, managing to negotiate his way out of the city when there was a plot to take his life.
- We find Paul at the end of the week. He was being transferred to Caesarea. He's heavily guarded by a detachment of 200 Roman soldiers. They leave under the cover of darkness.
- Such was the threat to Paul's life. And he's taken into the custody of the Roman governor, Felix. And that takes us to the first of these three trials.
- [46 : 52] The trial before Felix. And we see that in the whole chapter of Acts chapter 24. And in this trial, Paul very much is the underdog.
- We have the prosecution. We have the defense. On the prosecution side, we have Tertullus, who is mentioned here. This eloquent, this very professional barrister.
- We have the high priest, who is supposed to be God's man in that place at that time. We have his entourage of elders. So there's this learned, formidable bunch on the side of the prosecution.
- They're bringing serious charges against Paul. They're accusing him, verse 5, of being an insurrectionist, of being a revolutionary. They're accusing him, verse 6, of being a temple desecrated.
- So there's this formidable bunch on the prosecution with their serious charges. That's in the one corner. And in the other corner, just Paul. Just Paul.
- [47 : 58] Try and visualize it. You know, the imbalance of the scene. All the power brokers of the day on the one side.
- And the best lawyer that money could buy. And in the other corner, there's just little Paul. One of the commentators, quoting, I think it's Tacitus or Josephus.
- I can't remember which historian. He tells us that Paul, and I quote here, according to tradition, was only a little fellow. And prepossessing an appearance.
- Bald, with beedle brows, a hoot nose, and bandy legs. That's the historical picture of Paul.
- I managed to stop something to come out there before it came out. He's not unlike many people that we could think of across the islands.

[48 : 58] But as you think about this scene, it must have looked like Paul had absolutely no hope. It must have looked as if he was doomed in that court.

And it reminded me of a story that David Robertson told at the conference last Friday night, I think it was. He was talking about some debate or other that he'd been invited to speak at.

And a BBC presenter met him as he was coming in and being ushered into the panel. And as he met David, he was very apologetic. And he says, you know, the panel, I'm afraid, is not too balanced.

There's these three notable atheists plus you. And that's it. There's no balance here. There's just three aggressive atheists.

And you're on your own. And David smiled at him, he says, and he says, I'm not on my own. He looked at him and he said, oh, you're not on your own. I'm not on my own.

[50 : 02] He had a smile on his face. And I can just imagine Paul in the scene with a smile on his face, knowing that he was not on his own.

Knowing that there may be the best oil he could buy in all the powerful hoi polloi of the day that God was with him. And because God was with him, he was able to open his mouth in that scene, knowing that as God had promised, God would fill his mouth.

And so Paul was able to make his defense, knowing that supposing the whole world was against him, Sam 2 style, didn't matter.

As long as he knew that God was with him and God was for him. That's the first try. We're moving at high speed today. Two points in that location as we look into that one.

The first point is just take the comfort from it of knowing if we are Christians, we're never alone. It's one of our members that I go and visit and she's not been able to come out for a while.

[51 : 15] But when I visit her, she always says to me without fail, I'm not on my own here. Now I've never gone into the house and there's been somebody there.

We shall always say, I know I'm not alone. And she's right because God has promised that he will never leave us. And he will never forsake us. He will be with us in the home.

He will be with us in the workplace. He will be with us if we have occasion to be in the courtroom as Paul was. He will be with us to the end of time. And if we are in Christ, we will end you with him for all eternity.

So there's the comfort looking at this trial of knowing we're never alone. There's also the challenge within this of how we use our tongues. Just note the contrast in the trial between the smooth, buttery, deceitful words of Tertullus, the lawyer.

As he piles compliment after compliment on Felix. He was a despicable character. And we'll mention that in a second.

[52 : 30] There's this over the top flattery that's just sickening as we listen to Tertullus. And then when Paul goes up and gives his response in verse 10.

It's such a contrast. Just look at it again. Verse 2. Paul was called in to Tertullus present this case before Felix. We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you.

They hadn't. It was chaos. And your foresight. He didn't have foresight. Felix was described as having the position of a king but the mind of a slave.

He had no foresight. He never thought. We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you. And foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. No good reforms. Everywhere and in every way.

Most excellent Felix. We acknowledge this profound gratitude. But in order not to weary you further. I would address that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.

- [53 : 30] And then he goes on. And then Paul. Paul is respectful as he always is. But in verse 10. He doesn't go over the top. Paul when he is motioned to speak. He says.
- I know that for a number of years. You have been a judge. Over this nation. In fact. And so I gladly. Make my defense. We are to be careful how we speak in literatures.
- Because we are always representing Christ. And so we are to speak the truth. Without flattery. Without manipulation. With sincerity. With sincerity.
- One commentator. Peter Williams says. It was not for nothing. That Jesus laid enormous stress upon the responsibility attaching to the words we speak. For by your words you will be justified.
- And by your words you will be condemned. Matthew 12.37 The failure to guard what we say. Can so often cause tension and friction in personal relationships. Destroy a person's good character through malicious gossip.
- [54 : 34] Entice others into wrongdoing. Or create disunity in a church fellowship. James was certainly right. Therefore to devote almost a whole chapter in his letter to the use of the tongue.
- And the power of words. The word is. So that's the first try. Take the comfort of knowing God is with us always. And take the challenge of watching how we use our tongues.
- To cut a longer story short. As we read. Paul's innocence. Is obvious to Felix. But Felix knows it wouldn't be politic to free Paul. It would annoy the Jews.
- It would make his job very difficult in the area. And so verse 22. He adjourns the case. Making the excuse that he would need to seek the counsel of Lysias. The commander. And he leaves Paul in prison.
- Verse 27. When two years had passed. Felix was succeeded by Corsius Festus. But because Felix wanted to grant a favour to the Jews. He left Paul in prison. It's the first trial.
- [55 : 37] Move on to the second trial. That's the trial before Festus. We see it in verses 1 to 12 of Acts 25.
- Festus is the new man in power. Three days after arriving in the province. Verse 1. He goes up to Jerusalem to meet the Jews. And top of the agenda of the Jews. As usual.
- Is Paul. And Paul's extinction. We find them working on yet another plot. To kill Paul. So they're hoping that Paul is going to be transferred to Jerusalem.
- For this trial that they want to impose upon him. And their plan was. Before he ever got to trial. En route. In transit. Assassination. But Festus gets in the way of their plot.
- And rather than sending Paul to Jerusalem. He calls the Jewish rabble to come to Caesarea. And as we look at it. There's much less similar about the last case. Serious charges are brought.
- [56 : 37] No evidence is brought. Paul pleads not guilty. The case should be dismissed. But Festus knows. Like Felix knew. To just dismiss the case.
- And release Paul. Would antagonize the Jews. And so he says to Paul. Are you willing to go to Jerusalem? Paul says. Not a chance. Am I going to Jerusalem?
- Verse 11. No one has the right. To hand me over to them. The Jews. I appeal to Caesar. That was the right of the Roman citizen. And so verse 12.
- After Festus confers. With his council. He declares. You appeal to Caesar. To Caesar you will go. But before he does. There's Agrippa. To contend with.
- And then in verse 13 to verse 22. Of verse chapter 25. There's this conversation. That leads up to the next trial. It's kind of a trial. It's more of an investigation.

- [57 : 33] And we see the third trial. Of the investigation. The trial before Agrippa. In Acts 25. And verse 23.
- Down at the end of the portion. That we read. In chapter 26. And just noting a few facts from it. There's more of this. Sickening over the top.
- Pomp and ceremony. That plagued these courtrooms. King Agrippa and Bernice. Obviously wanted it. And Agrippa and Bernice. Were acquainted with the Old Testament scriptures.
- They were acquainted with the Jewish customs. They'll know of Saul the Pharisee. They'll know something of his reputation. In days gone by. So what does Paul see. When he's standing there.
- And he's called to give us defense. In front of Agrippa. Well Paul sees. As he saw before. An opportunity. An opportunity. And not an opportunity. To clear his name.
- [58 : 31] He knows. Actually already. His name is pretty clear. Because twice. He's been declared innocent. Although he's still in prison. Paul sees an opportunity. To give his testimony.
- To give a testimony. That bears witness. To Jesus. And so at the end of. This hearing. Despite Paul's.
- Innocence being clear. He's still in prison. But he is. Born witness. To Christ. And the work of Christ. In his life.
- And having. Studied this twice. We're not going to. Study Paul's testimony. Again. Today. But Paul sees this opportunity. In the trial. To speak of Jesus.
- And so he takes it. The end of the trial. It's very clear. Verse 31. As they deliver it. They say. This man. Is not doing anything. That deserves death.
- [59 : 27] Or imprisonment. This man. Could have been set free. If he had not. Appealed. To Caesar. Three trials. There's a huge.
- Amount of trauma. In any kind of situation. Like this. Where you're brought. Before kings. And power brokers. The church. And the focus.
- Is on you. And you're being asked. To give your defense. How did Paul endure it? And with such cheerfulness. Well he endured it. Because. God was with him.
- And he endured it. With such cheerfulness. And purpose. Because. He knew. This is what he was called to do. Remember the master's role.
- Of that first time. Acts chapter 9. The Lord said. To Ananias. In verse 15. Go. This man. Paul. Is my chosen instrument.
- [60 : 26] For what? To carry my name. Where? Before the Gentiles. Before the Gentiles. And their kings.
- And before the people. Of Israel. What was happening. In these trials. The Apostle Paul. Was carrying the name of Jesus.
- Before Gentiles. And their kings. And before the people. Of Israel. Application. Two passing applications.
- First. Have confidence. In God's word. When God says. He will do something. He does it. And these trials. Are a demonstration.
- Of the fact. That he does it. Paul could stand there. In that courtroom. On that day. With half a smile. On his face. Knowing.
- [61 : 24] Well Lord. You said it. And here I am. And then open my mouth. Please fill it. Please fill it. Other passing application. Here.
- It's just to note. The purpose. That Paul had. In life. In each day. Really. Will we find. Anyone. In history.

Who is more steady. And purposeful. About each day. Than the Apostle Paul. God called Him. To know him. And he devoted. His life.

To this. Relationship. With Christ. And God. Called him. To bear witness. To testify. To Jesus. That was the. Heavenly vision. That was shared.

With the Apostle Paul. And God. Equipped him. To do it. Day by day. Here's the question. Before we move on. How purposeful. Are our days.

[62 : 19] In this world. When we wake up. In the morning. And. It registers. With us. That we've been given. Another day. I feel.

With. Purpose. At our days. Everything. Apart. From God. Is meaningless. If we're apart. From God.

You're drained. Of any significant. Purpose. That when we know God. Every day. We are given. Is another. Opportunity. For us. To live.

For his glory. Whether it's. In the office. Or in the home. Or in the trauma. Of some difficult situation. Whatever we do.

We have to do. For his glory. Man's chief end. Glorify God. And enjoy him. Forever. Are we living. In obedience.

[63 : 15] To the heavenly vision. That we've been given. We've been given. There's three trials. Certainly. There is one gospel. Where. More than halfway through. We'll be.

Quick today. And. Just. To note. Within this point. The gospel. Is always. The place. That Paul returns to. The gospel. Is always.

The message. The thing. That Paul. Defaults to. You know. Some people. Are a bit like. A broken record. You speak to them. But you know. Before you ever.

Speak to them. Where the conversation. Is going to end up. Because they only ever. Want to speak about. One thing. Whether it's football. Or. Some pursuit. That they have. Some people.

Will. Endlessly. Talk about work. Other people. Will. Endlessly. The conversation. They'll always. Manage. To get it. Back.

[64 : 10] To the same place. And as you wave. Goodbye. They'll be telling you. The same thing. They've told you. A thousand times. Before. Whatever. You put it. Whether he is.

Free. Or chained. Whether he has. Got. A pulpit. Or a pen. Whether he's. In conversation. With. Caesar. Or a slave.

He will always. Default. To the one. Message. Which is. The gospel. Of Jesus. And so. When he is.

Given his. Defense. Before Felix. In Acts 24. He professes. Faith. In Christ. Verse 14. He says. I admit. That I worship.

The God. Of our fathers. As a follower. Of the way. The way. Was the term. They used. To speak. About people. Who believed. In Jesus.

[65 : 05] That. The reason. He's standing. There. Is because. Of his. Belief. In resurrection. Of Christ. And then.

When he is. Standing. Before. Festus. We don't. Get much. In the way. Of. Acts 25. But when. Festus.

Is in conversation. With Agrippa. And they're. Speaking. About. The second trial. Festus. Says. To Agrippa. Of his. So.

In the video. Of. As. In the últimos. In the. In the years. What are your. In the years. I expected. Instead. They had.

Some points. About. Of. A dispute. With them. About. About their. delivery. About. A dead man.

[66 : 00] Man. who you crucified he's alive and I met him and then when he's before Festus and Agrippa in verse 23 of 25 and onwards what does he do? He bears witness to Jesus he tells him about Jesus who died and who rose again and who met him on that Damascus road, he tells him about the Lord Jesus who look at verse 18 in particular what a sermon is in there in that testimony that he shares, he tells him about the Lord Jesus who opens blind eyes, Paul could speak about the blind eyes open he tells him about the Lord Jesus who takes us from darkness to light who gives us, saves us from the power of Satan to the power of God he tells him about Jesus who gives us forgiveness of sin and who promises an inheritance in heaven for all those who put their faith in Christ all packed in one verse now that's a testimony and let's bear that in mind when we're given the opportunity to give our testimony

Paul doesn't say very much about what he feels but he speaks so much about what God has done for him and what God can do for anyone three trials one gospel that Paul is always sharing and finally we have three responses we've actually got four responses but we only see three in the verses here the first response is Felix and Felix's response is fear why is Felix fearful when he's confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ he's fearful because he's full of guilt before God the reputation of Felix as I alluded to was that of an unwise corrupt cruel governor excessively forceful in the way that he executed his duties he was a thief he was disreputable the wife that he had

Brasilla that we're told about here he had stolen from the king of Amnesia and so when Paul has the chance to speak to Felix with great courage knowing that his neck is on the block here perhaps Paul verse 25 discourse on righteousness self-control and the judgment to come Felix was afraid and said that's enough for now you may leave when I find it convenient I'll send food and so he says that because of fear and so that's the first response we see of Felix there's fear and when we see our sin and realise that there is a judgement our first response should be fear if we are unprepared and we are sinners who are refusing to let God cheat us we should be fearful of that day that is a rational that is a sensible response but that fear of the bad news about our sin should cause us to repent of our sin and not say away with you with our message which is now it's making me feel uncomfortable that message that makes us feel so uncomfortable should cause us to repent and believe and receive forgiveness of sin in Christ as far as we know of Felix he never did when I find it convenient he says

I'll send food but there seems not to have been another time that was convenient enough for us to be told of his conversion as far as we know he missed the opportunity to get his life right with God through repentance and faith in Christ and so Felix goes down in his response as a history warrior second response here is that of Festus foolishness Festus is hearing Paul speak and as Paul speaks with Christ in the gospel Festus verse 24 interrupted Paul's defence he says you're out of your mind Paul you're great learning it's right you're insane many people still think that way many people still say that that our beliefs are incredulous there is no

God they say there is no gospel what is this nonsense you keep speaking to us about and these people are very often sophisticated and charming and interesting and intelligent but as far as spiritual things go they are unable and more importantly they are unwilling to comprehend they think with Festus all this stuff about God foolishness and yet the tragedy is that Festus was the fool in his response Psalm 14 verse 1 says the fool says in his heart there is no God Felix fear Festus foolishness Agrippa faltering Paul in the way that he addresses Agrippa remember this is the king is breathtakingly brave verse 27 of chapter 25

[72 : 14] Paul looks looking at Agrippa I saw it's chapter 26 and he says to King Agrippa do you believe the prophets I know you do then Agrippa says to Paul do you think within such a short time you can persuade me to become a Christian we don't know the tone of it but the message here within the response is King Agrippa comes close but he falls short he falters the King James version brings it out even more clearly King Agrippa says almost thou persuarest me to be a Christian almost persuaded but not he would not take that final step one commentator says there are many like them they believe they want to take it further but there is always something holding them back the seductions of the world what others might say are the personal costs almost persuaded but consistently not three responses all sad responses all responses that leave the soul lost unsafe so what then is the only saver the only appropriate response to the gospel of Jesus which faith not fear that drives us away from

God the fear that Agrippa not that Agrippa but Felix felt should have driven him away from sin and into the arms of a God who loves to forgive a response shouldn't be foolishness to mistrust the God who so loved us that he came from heaven to earth to save us that's foolishness our response should not be defaulted what is more important than the eternal destiny of your soul we need to respond with faith turn from sin and turn in faith to the saviour who loves us as he loved Paul who gave himself for us as he gave himself for Paul so that we could have life not dull dusty predictable mundane life but this fast and furious unpredictable unsafe exhilarating full abundant eternal life that Paul tells us about put your faith in

Jesus that's the message don't walk out the door until you put your faith in Jesus let's pray heavenly father as we think about these verses and the circumstances of it all we thank you that this is an account that happened in history we thank you that as we read these things we see these characters recorded in history and they all bear witness to the fact that what we are reading is true we thank you for the apostle Paul the one that you called into that relationship with you we thank you that he stands as one who shows us the depth of your grace we thank you that you would take hold of somebody who had sinned so heinously and forgive him and use him in such a powerful way for your glory and lord we pray that we would have the faith of the apostle

Paul that we would trust you with our souls that we would trust you with each day and lord that we would live for your glory lord may we not walk out this door today fearful saying maybe I'll come back in another convenient time but I didn't like that message we pray lord that we would not walk out this door falter saying maybe maybe another day but not today we pray that none of us would walk out this door doubting that you are god and that you love us and that you are calling us into salvation we pray that we would put our faith in the god who loved us and gave himself for us so that we would have life and that we would use the life that we have to bring glory to your name we pray this in Jesus name amen we sing for God's praise to conclude mission praise 683 sorry not mission praise hymn 683 and the words are also on the street 683 I hear thy welcome voice that calls me lord to thee for cleansing in the precious blood thy precious blood that flowed on calvary I am coming world coming now to thee wash me cleanse me in the blood that flowed on calvary and now in the grace of the lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the father and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with us all both now and forever amen