

What is the World Coming To?

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[0 : 00] Let me read from Acts 25. Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, asking as a favor against Paul, that he summon him to Jerusalem, because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.

Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea, and that he himself intended to go there shortly. So he said, let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.

After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove.

Paul argued in his defense, neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense. But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem, and there be tried on these charges before me?

But Paul said, I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.

[1 : 39] But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, To Caesar you have appealed, to Caesar you shall go.

All right, friends. Well, if you've got an outline open in front of you, you'll see I want to begin with a question that does seem particularly apt this week. What is the world coming to?

Now, if you're an international student here with us, maybe you haven't heard this expression before, it's an English idiom. What is the world coming to? It's the kind of question people ask when they don't really want an answer.

It's a rhetorical question. It's the kind of thing people say when they're just so shocked or disgusted by recent events, they can't believe what's happening. In a way, it's a lament.

I never thought I'd see the day things would get so bad. How can people be so rude, so stupid, so evil, things just seem to be getting worse and worse.

[2 : 51] So, the news this week of Charlie Kirk's assassination in the US. An outspoken Christian, a political activist, shot dead while he was trying to debate with people and share his ideas.

What is the world coming to? But there's plenty more. You know, I was thinking about the rise of neo-Nazis in Australia this week. We fought the Nazis less than 100 years ago, but apparently there are more and more neo-Nazis spreading hatred across our country.

How could it all have gone so wrong? And of course, there is chaos in Europe again at the moment, Russia and Ukraine. In the Middle East, things always seem to be volatile.

And it's the kind of thing where you just want to throw up your hands, give up and cry about it. What is the world coming to? But of course, as Christians, we actually have a wonderful, clear answer to this question, don't we?

Because, brothers and sisters, we know where the world is going. We know what the world is coming to. Unlike, say, what the Hindus think, right?

[3 : 57] We don't believe history is just cyclical, going round and round and round. History is going in a direction. Time is linear. Or again, unlike our atheistic friends, the Bible tells us that history is purposeful, that God has a plan and a purpose for us and for all creation to bring us to a goal.

And that goal is to put Jesus on the throne over the world. God's great goal is to establish the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ so that Jesus can reign uncontested over all the universe forever and ever.

Jesus' enemies will all be swept away, excluded from his kingdom, punished for their rebellion against him. But for his chosen people, bought by his blood, forgiven for our sins, of course, because we were all once rebels too, but pardoned for our sins, anyone who embraces Jesus' kingship will get to enjoy the eternal home of perfect peace and love in his kingdom.

Now, in the Bible, the news of Jesus' kingship or the news of the kingdom of God is called the gospel. Some of you will remember the Mission-Minded Conference last year.

What is a gospel? A gospel is a piece of momentous good news. And the momentous good news in the Bible is that Jesus is Lord or Jesus is king or Jesus reigns.

[5 : 26] Which is to say that even though in one sense we're waiting for the kingdom to come, in another sense it already has begun. Jesus has already begun to reign.

He is reigning in heaven now. At present, because his kingdom is in heaven, it is hidden from our view. But one day, his kingdom will be established on earth and all the other kingdoms will come to an end.

So, the gospel is the momentous good news that Jesus reigns. Which brings us to the book of Acts. Because essentially what the book of Acts is all about is the spread of this message. The spread of the news that Jesus is reigning in heaven.

He's been appointed at God's right hand. So, I have two aims this morning. First, I just want to try and recap the book of Acts. For those who have forgotten it, or for those who are new, as we embark on a new series, we're almost at the very end of the book.

Aren't we? And, even that reading from chapter 25 might have seemed a little bit weird and out of place if you don't know the rest of the story. So, if you're unfamiliar with the book of Acts, it will help, I think, just to give you a kind of quick whirlwind tour of the whole book to get you up to speed.

[6 : 43] And that is going to take most of our time. But then, secondly, eventually, we'll make it to chapter 25 and we'll just have a brief look at this particular passage together to see how the story continues.

Okay, does that make sense? So, that's where we're going. So, let's just begin by answering some of those basic who, when, where, what kinds of questions about the book of Acts. Number one, who? It was written by a bloke named Luke.

He was a medical doctor, a physician in the first century, and a friend and traveling companion of the Apostle Paul's. The Bible doesn't say this, but church tradition suggests that he was a Gentile from the church in Syrian Antioch.

Okay, from Antioch in Syria. One of the first centers of Christianity where, where in fact, people were, first started getting called Christians. Now, Luke wrote two books in the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

And they're a duology, right? They're a series. Luke's Gospel is Volume 1, the Book of Acts is Volume 2, and they're basically a long, consecutive story. Next, when?

[7 : 53] Well, we don't know exactly when because Luke doesn't date his work, but we're probably talking about sometime in the early 60s AD, right? Something like 63 or 64 AD.

Hopefully, you can see on the timeline behind me. If Luke's Gospel covers the period between Jesus' birth and his death and resurrection, that goes from 0 to 33 AD. And then, the Book of Acts roughly covers the 30 years after that.

And because Luke doesn't mention anything like the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70, or he doesn't mention Paul's execution or the persecution that happened under Nero between 64 and 67 AD, scholars tend to think that he must have written Acts before those major events, right?

close to the end of where he finishes his narrative. Thirdly, where? Well, the history in the Book of Acts is set in the Mediterranean.

Basically, Luke covers events that happen in Judea, which is the region surrounding Jerusalem, and then in modern-day Turkey, Greece, and Italy. So, Rome, Ephesus, Athens, these are all the important places.

[9 : 05] Paul travelled all around the Mediterranean. At times, Luke travelled with him, so he gets included in his own story. At points in the Book of Acts, he starts talking about we and us rather than just they and them.

And of course, you can still visit all of these places today and walk around all the excavations, etc. So, we're not talking about fairy stories or myths or legends or something like that. We're talking about things that actually happened in history right here in this world and how the news about them spread.

Which brings us then to the why question. Why did Luke write the Book of Acts? And for this, I think it's worth taking Luke's Gospel and Acts together, both of Luke's books.

Because Luke summarises his purpose with two words. One at the beginning of his first book and one at the end of his second book.

Right? Does that make sense? So, the two words are certainty and boldness. Certainty and boldness. I've got Luke chapter 1 up on the screen, I think. So, Luke chapter 1 verses 1 to 4.

[10:12] You can turn there in your Bibles if you like. But Luke says, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

You see, that's certainty. And the question is, can we have certainty about who Jesus was or is, where he taught, what he taught, what he did, where he is now, etc.?

And how do you know if what you believe about Jesus is the truth? Or if perhaps you've been misled or you've just got the wrong end of the stick?

Of course, even today, there are lots of opinions and speculations about Jesus. I was chatting to a lovely Muslim lady just recently. She was convinced, like all good Muslims are, I suppose, that Jesus was just a prophet and nothing more.

And that he certainly never died on a cross. Because that's what the Quran teaches. Now, we had a very friendly, you know, but robust back and forth about it for a little while.

[11:40] And I asked her, why should I trust Muhammad, a man who lived 600 years after Jesus? Why should I trust him over the eyewitness testimonies written down in the Bible?

In places like Luke's gospel or in John's gospel. John was an eyewitness. She said, because Muhammad was told by an angel what really happened.

Judas' face was miraculously changed to look like the face of Jesus so that the Romans accidentally crucified Judas thinking they were crucifying Jesus.

I said, I don't believe that. What's the evidence? You know, where's the proof? See, we Christians want certainty, don't we? We want facts and truth to base our faith on, not special pleading.

Because, of course, what she's saying, I mean, when you think about the argument, what she's saying is that the eyewitnesses would have thought that it was Jesus being crucified. In a sense, she is confirming Luke's work.

[12:52] She's saying that that is exactly what an investigation into the eyewitnesses would have uncovered. But, contrary to the eyewitness evidence, we should believe Muhammad and his private revelation from an angel.

Now, I find that very unconvincing, don't you? And very suspect. Seems like an extremely flimsy argument. I have to say, as usual, in these kinds of conversations, I went away very thankful that the Bible doesn't encourage us to be gullible or naive, to be irrational, or to just trust people blindly. We are not supposed to believe every self-proclaimed prophet or warlord who comes along claiming to have received a vision from God. someone want to help our brother with a cup of water? Something? Okay. All right. See, in the Bible, we are encouraged to look at the evidence for ourselves and think carefully about it.

In Luke's gospel, he has very carefully collected the evidence from eyewitnesses so that we can weigh it up and know with certainty the truth about the real Jesus and what really happened to him.

[14:13] So that's the first thing, certainty. But secondly, Luke is writing to give us boldness.

What's interesting is that the word for boldness in the original Greek never comes up in the gospel of Luke, in Luke volume one.

But then in the book of Acts, it starts coming up all the time. It's peppered throughout the books, 12 times in all, including several of the kind of really key moments. In other words, there's a shift from volume one to volume two.

Luke's gospel volume one is about certainty. The book of Acts is about boldness. And of course, the two things go hand in hand, don't they? Or at least they ought to.

Growing certainty about Jesus ought to bring growing boldness to speak about him. To put it another way, Luke wants us to get the facts straight first.

You know, who really was Jesus? Why did he come? Where is he? And what's he doing now? Let's get the facts straight first. And then let's get the message out there. The risen, that Jesus is the risen king.

[15:22] Certainty needs to be accompanied with boldness. And in addition, Luke has been at pains to show us in the book of Acts that the message of the risen king Jesus cannot be stopped.

Now you might remember that that's our kids' church summary that Dave and the other leaders taught our kids. I can't remember the actions you're supposed to do, things like this, the YMCA or something.

But it's a good, it's a really good summary. The book of Acts is about how the message of the risen king Jesus cannot be stopped. But just to take that one step further, the point of showing us that the gospel cannot be stopped is to give us boldness.

Right? You see, if we know with certainty what the message is, the truth about Jesus, and if we know that ultimately the spread of this message cannot be stopped, the truth will prevail, then we'll be able to preach the message with boldness, won't we?

And that's Luke's ultimate aim. So in the very last verse of the book of Acts, Luke says that Paul lived in Rome. He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus, the king, with all boldness and without hindrance.

[16:48] Now, Luke ends with that because he wants Paul to be our example. As Paul traveled around the Mediterranean, he didn't just go it alone. No, he recruited fellow workers like Luke to preach the gospel alongside him and after him with boldness and confidence to be open.

Boldness means to be open, to be public, to be unashamed, unembarrassed, to be loud, right? Loud and proud about the kingdom of Jesus. Not in an obnoxious way, obviously, but in an excited and confident way.

You know, why would you keep quiet about this momentous good news? It's like the birth of a child or the end of a war or we got engaged. You know, it's news to sing about, to shout about.

It's something to share spontaneously. Have you heard the great news? It's not something to be coy or cowardly about. Of course, we will face opposition when we share the gospel.

We'll see more of that in our passage when we get to it. But that has been a constant feature in the book of Acts, hasn't it? Not everyone, even though this news is good news, not everyone is going to see it that way.

[18:02] Not everyone is going to welcome Jesus' new kingdom. But we mustn't let that dampen our confidence. In fact, that is all the more reason why we must be bold.

You remember in Acts chapter 4, after a bout of persecution, Peter and John were arrested by the Sanhedrin and the believers all pray together. And in verse 29, they pray, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.

And Luke tells us, when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God, that's the gospel, with boldness.

So that's why Luke wrote the book of Acts in one word, to inspire boldness in us. So it's something that we can pray for ourselves and for each other, isn't it?

And finally, the how. By which I mean, let's just dive into the structure of the book a little more, how did Luke organize his material to achieve his purpose? We've already seen the careful thought he put into beginning with certainty and ending with boldness, but there's more to it than that.

[19:22] So in chapter 1, verse 8, Luke lays out his plan for the book, or rather, Jesus lays out his plan for the spread of the gospel. He says to his apostles, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

Now, witnesses is another key word in the book. A witness is someone who testifies to the truth in the face of opposition. Okay? A witness is someone who testifies to the truth in the face of opposition.

Like a law court, you know, in a court of law, you might call an eyewitness, or you might call an expert witness, right? Because witnessing is not just about seeing things, it's not just about eyewitnesses, it's about testifying to the truth, perhaps because you've seen it, or perhaps because you're an expert, perhaps because you heard something, you could be an earwitness. It's about testifying to the truth when the facts are disputed, when there is a contest or conflict, that's when you need reliable witnesses. You don't need witnesses on things that everybody agrees on. So here, Jesus is commissioning his apostles to be his witnesses, taking his contested message to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

[20 : 46] In other words, he's expecting them to face opposition. Not everyone's going to accept his claim to be king. They're going to have to prove it as they go back to saying what they saw, what they heard from him, and so on.

They go back to Luke's gospel volume one, as it were, so that they can confirm with certainty the truth of this royal proclamation. And Jesus is going to equip his apostles with the Holy Spirit so that they can continue to speak boldly, despite people trying to silence and sideline them and scare them.

Now Luke then tracks the progress of the gospel for us through these major steps, these major sort of stages in the rest of the book.

So first he's going to show us how the gospel filled Jerusalem, and then how it spread out into Judea and Samaria, the surrounding regions that make up the old nation of Israel.

And then eventually how it began making its way to the ends of the earth. And actually Luke breaks it down even further. Across the book he has seven smaller panels, each marked by concluding progress reports.

[21 : 58] So in chapter 2 verse 47 he says, And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Then in chapter 6 verse 7 he says, And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

And in chapter 9 verse 31 he says, So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it multiplied.

Now you see how it's working? Now these progress reports keep reminding us of the bigger picture so that we don't get lost in the details. Luke wants us to see that the big plan is working, that the gospel is unstoppable, no matter what the obstacles are that are in its way.

And each time Luke gives one of these progress reports he sort of tweaks it or adjusts it a little bit to highlight different things that are particularly relevant to that section, to that panel. Priests getting converted in Jerusalem for instance.

Now we won't go through all of them but obviously we're up to the very last panel this morning. We're into chapter 25 now. So Luke is reaching his climax, he's bringing his argument home here which means we're going to change gears now and start to zoom in on our particular passage for today.

[23 : 24] This last panel begins in chapter 19 verse 21. Right? Chapter 19 verse 21. I don't know if I put that up on the screen for you. No I did.

Now after these events Paul resolved in the spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem saying after I have been there I must also see Rome.

Now again we won't get bogged down into the details but just notice that right from the outset for this last panel Paul's big plan was first to get home to Jerusalem and then to head to Rome.

As we'll see that's exactly what happens in this panel except that it's a rather bumpy ride along the way. At first Paul had to deal with a riot in Ephesus and he faced a very similar riot in Jerusalem. one a pagan temple one supposed to be a temple to Yahweh but in fact very similar to the pagan temple. One of the key pieces of vocabulary in this last panel of Acts is the word apologia or defense.

[24 : 30] it comes up eight times again having not come up before at all previously in the book so the shift in vocab is very distinctive.

Paul keeps getting into these sticky situations where he has to give a defense of himself and his ministry and he has to defend the Christian message.

I think in general by the way that's how apologetics kind of works. It's not that the disciples head out from Jerusalem with apologetics. They head out with the gospel but then when the gospel faces contest and conflict then they defend it.

That's when apologia kind of comes to the fore. Anyway, so in Jerusalem he's about to get lynched by a mob of angry Jews. He ends up getting rescued or arrested by the Romans.

Now the Roman tribune in Jerusalem is a man named Claudius Lysias. Having rescued Paul from the mob he still doesn't really know why Paul has made everyone so angry with him.

[25 : 38] So he gets the Jews together again he puts Paul in the middle of them sounds extremely wise and he sort of just sits back and watches what happens.

So in chapter 23 verse 10 we read and when the dissension became violent surprise surprise the tribune afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

The following night the Lord stood by him and said take courage for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem so you must testify also in Rome.

So here we see that it's not just Paul's plan to go to Rome but that's where Jesus wants him to go to and that word testify in the Greek that's just the same word as witness earlier it's the verbal form of the word witness that we talked about earlier.

Jesus wants his apostles to be testifiers or witnesses to speak up and tell the truth in the face of opposition and he wants Paul to do that in Rome.

[26 : 47] Now the next day the Jews come up with a plan to assassinate Paul 40 Jewish zealots bind themselves with an oath not to eat or drink anything until they've killed Paul.

But thankfully Claudius Lysias the Roman Tribune hears about this so he sent Paul off by night to stand trial before Felix the governor in Caesarea.

Now Felix was a very corrupt wicked man so even though he was willing to hear Paul's case he wasn't really interested in justice and truth.

Luke tells us in chapter 24 verse 26 that he used to send for Paul often hoping that Paul might try to bribe him. And then when two years had elapsed Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus and desiring to do the Jews a favor Felix left Paul in prison.

So now we've reached chapter 25 Paul is in prison in Caesarea Festus is the new governor. We're talking about 59 AD because we know roughly when Festus took over from Felix and again you can still go and visit Caesarea today.

[28 : 09] It was the capital city of the Roman province of Judea at the time and in fact is there a photo Simon? I don't know. No?

I don't know. A photo of Caesarea might pop off at some point it doesn't matter but you can still go and see it and I've been there. Okay.

So. Oh yeah. There you go. And yeah see that one on the bottom left there actually that sign that you probably can't read in the photo but you know that sign says that in that circle is literally where Paul stood before Festus.

So that's what we're talking about. They have the palace and they know the layout of the palace and so and so it was there. Okay. Now are you still with me? We're up to point number three on your outline and I want to talk about three things basically that this scene teaches us.

So I just want to work through them briefly. So the first thing is about our expectations. Christian witnesses should expect to suffer and be maligned.

[29 : 24] Right? So Paul is on trial here in Caesarea. The Jews are trying to kill him. And just think about this. In chapter 24 verse 27, two years go by.

Right? So we can read it in two seconds. But in Paul's life, two years go by. So all of that stuff in chapters 23 and 24, the riot in Jerusalem, the assassination attempt, the trial before Felix, that was all two years ago by the time we reach chapter 25 verse 1.

But the Jews are still fuming. Right? They're still out for blood. Presumably some of them are very skinny by now. But the first thing that they do when Festus becomes the governor, right?

He's been the governor for three days and they don't want to talk about the economy. Right?

They're not asking about infrastructure or education, could you fix our aqueduct or whatever. You see verse 2?

They want to talk about Paul. And they're still hatching a plan to try and kill him. Three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. The chief priests and

the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul.

[30 : 37] And they urged him, asking as a favor against Paul, that he summon him to Jerusalem because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. Talk about holding a grudge.

I suspect with the change of the governor, the Jews probably thought that this was an opportune moment to take advantage of the naivety of the new governor.

Perhaps to offer him an expedient way to make friends and influence people in his new posting. But of course, whatever the particulars of the situation, Luke's larger point is that faithful Christian witnesses should expect to face suffering, and opposition, to be slandered and maligned.

We should expect irrational hatred, long-lasting hostility. We should expect to be unjustly accused of wickedness, especially, I may say, by the rich and powerful.

See who's involved here? Luke says, the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews. The word means that the preeminent men. Likewise, down in verse 5, Festus talks about the men of authority, or literally the powers.

[31 : 56] The powers. The power brokers, the heavy weights. In general, those who are rich and powerful in this world are most likely to be offended by the gospel.

We should be careful if we are rich or powerful, significant in our workplaces or wherever it may be looked up to in society. But we should also be cautious around those who are.

In general, those who are rich and powerful in this world are most likely to be offended by the gospel because the gospel relativizes their power. The gospel proclaims a more preeminent man.

The gospel proclaims a new regime where they will not call the shots. And so very often the gospel is met with vitriol and fury by the rich and powerful.

Likewise, the religious. Again, just think about who's involved here in this opposition to the gospel.

Does it surprise you that it's the chief priests or the religious leaders of Israel?

[33 : 02] Maybe you think, surely these are the very people you might expect to be allies of the gospel. Men of learning, steeped in the scriptures, they read their Bibles, they memorized the Pentateuch.

But in fact, very often, it's the very opposite that tends to happen. Religious people are often the worst enemies of the gospel. This is no less true today than it was 2,000 years ago.

And not only in terms of the opposition that Christians face from Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists or so on, but the opposition that true gospel-hearted Christians face from phony Christians, the goats, within their own churches and denominations.

I think about the Church of England, the Anglican Church across the world, all the Presbyterians, how false teaching has taken hold in so many places.

churches, and evangelical Christians in these denominations have been forced out of their churches and off their properties, slandered, maligned by the liberal churches and liberal bishops and so on, in their own denominations.

[34 : 23] So friends, let's not be naive. We should expect to suffer. But secondly, Luke wants to teach us something about our apostle, namely, that our apostle, the apostle Paul, was not a troublemaker or a lawbreaker.

He was a man of integrity and worthy of our respect and admiration. Again, sometimes when brothers and sisters get attacked, we have a tendency to believe the bad press.

And sometimes I hear people talk as if a bad reputation is all the proof you need to condemn someone as guilty.

You know, the logic is something like he's got a bad reputation, there's no smoke without a fire, as if an allegation proves that someone is guilty. But of course that's not the case.

And Luke wants us to know that even though Paul was constantly facing allegations, one after another. And people were accusing him of all manner of things.

[35 : 31] Luke wants us to know that Paul was not to blame for any of it. So in verse 5, Festus told the Jews, let the men of authority among you go down with me and if there is anything wrong about the man, literally anything out of place, right?

There's a hair out of place. Not a problem in my case, but anyway. Sorry, that just came to me. Literally anything out of place. Is there anything wrong with this bloke?

Let them bring charges against him. But then in verse 7, when Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him, that they could not prove.

Paul argued in his defense, neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I committed any offense. Paul and Luke doesn't really give any details on the specific charges that were laid against Paul in this chapter, because he's done that previously.

And I imagine that over the years, you know, the couple of years intervening, they've become vaguer and vaguer anyway, since the riot. But again, the point is not so much about the particulars, but about the principle of the thing.

[36 : 43] Luke wants us to know that our apostle, and I'm specifically speaking as a Gentile here, our apostle, the one the Lord Jesus set apart for us, he was a man of integrity.

He was not a troublemaker or a lawbreaker, he was in trouble a lot, but not because of anything he'd done wrong. We can trust him, and the message he brought us about the Lord Jesus.

We should listen and honor him. We can belong to God's family, just like he said, on exactly the same basis as our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Now, of course, Paul's integrity is in stark contrast to how everyone around him is behaving. In particular, you might have noticed the number of times Luke talks about favors in this passage. Everyone's getting a favor. And actually, if you just go back to chapter 24, while Paul was refusing to give Felix a bribe, in chapter 24, verse 27, Luke tells us, when two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

[37 : 57] So there are favors throughout this passage. Two years later, in verse three, the Jews are asking Festus for another favor, as a favor. They want Paul to summon to Jerusalem so they can kill him.

Festus is initially reluctant, resistant to grant their request. But I think by the time you get to verse nine, he's sort of got the lay of the land a little bit more. He's become a little bit more politically savvy.

It didn't take long for him to start to realize that actually, this whole system of political expediency, I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine, that actually could be quite useful to him.

So in verse nine, Luke tells us, Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me? Now Paul sees through this straight away, and again, he shows off his integrity.

He wants justice. He wants to be treated fairly. He even says in verse 11, if I've done anything wrong, kill me. If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.

[39 : 05] In other words, he's saying I won't be asking for any favors. Christians do not believe in favoritism, because we believe in a king who loves justice, who will not wink the eye at wrongdoing, a king who will not accept bribes.

So Paul goes on, but if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. And actually the word for favor is sort of again, it's sort of tucked in there in the Greek.

No one can give me up as a favor. No one can gift me as a favor. I appeal to Caesar. In other words, I will not be handed around as a sort of diplomatic gift.

Paul was a man of integrity, so we can trust him. And of course that's really important for reading the rest of your Bibles. Romans 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. But that brings us to the third thing Luke wants to teach us. And of course the main thing Luke always wants to teach us is about the Lord Jesus and our Lord Jesus. And in this particular case, Luke wants to remind us that Jesus is unstoppable.

[40 : 15] The mission is not in jeopardy. Jesus is sovereign and directing his gospel mission to the ends of the earth. death. So that far from Paul's trial and imprisonment being a hindrance to the gospel, it actually ends up serving the cause of the gospel and assuring Paul's trip to Rome in probably the safest and most efficient manner.

Paul is actually going to end up heading to Rome under the protection of the Roman state. This is what Jesus wanted for Paul all along. What the Jewish leaders intended for evil, God intended for good.

The Lord Jesus is in the business of turning obstacles into opportunities. A prison sentence and a Roman trial is an opportunity for Paul to bear witness to Jesus and get a free ride to an even bigger audience.

So the message of the risen King Jesus really cannot be stopped. It will go to the ends of the earth. No matter how impossible, that might seem at times, no matter who tries to stand in its way.

Alright, so three things to remember before we pray. Remember, number one, that faithful Christians should expect to suffer. Remember, number two, that we can trust our apostle. [41 : 37] He was a man of integrity. And remember, number three, that Jesus is unstoppable. As he directs his global mission, he wants his gospel to go to the ends of the earth.

And he can even turn obstacles into opportunities. We began with the question, what is the world coming to? Well, the world is coming under the reign of King Jesus.

What is the case now in heaven will be so on earth as we pray. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The authority of heaven will not remain in there, remain in heaven, locked away as it were. God is going to manifest and impress his authority upon the whole world through his chosen king, the Lord Jesus.

So no matter who might try to stand in its way, whether you or me, whether the rich or powerful, one day Jesus is going to reign over all the earth.

[42 : 41] God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And right now the announcement of Jesus' kingship is spreading across the earth so that he can gather in new citizens into the kingdom.

The gospel inevitably always brings conflict wherever it goes. As people, both in churches and outside of churches, unfortunately, resist Jesus' rule, but it also makes converts.

The gospel creates conflict but also converts. converts. As people's eyes are opened and they come to understand how good it would be to have Jesus as their king and how good it will be to live in Jesus' kingdom forever.

May it be that we all see that this morning. Let's pray. Sovereign Lord, grant each of us at SLBC the courage to keep speaking your word with boldness until every person in St.

Lucia and surrounds hears the gospel of the Lord Jesus. And please add to our number daily those you have chosen to save. For we ask these things in Jesus' name.

[44 : 02] Amen.