

A Pawn Makes a Castle Tremble

Acts 24:22-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 6/21/2009

Introduction

I once played a very good chess player and was quite pleased with myself because I was apparently doing well after about ten moves. Play by play my confidence was building, and I was beginning to think that I was a better player than I had originally thought. Little did I realize that he was simply being polite and not instantly killing me. He allowed me to think that I was putting pressure on him, and then he led me into a beautifully constructed trap. And I fell for it. But I love chess because no two games are the same and there is never an end to learning more. And the person who can see several moves ahead is often able to control the table.

Well, God can not only see several moves ahead, he controls the entire chess game from beginning to end, while allow man's freedom to choose, to fight, to strategize, and to think that he is in control. That's why I'm using the chess game analogy. While it's not a perfect analogy (because God always controls far more than what a chess player would – and He upholds even the chess player with the word of His power), nevertheless it illustrates the free agency of man, yet the control of God. And that's exactly what I see happening to Felix in this section. He thinks he has the whole game completely sewn up. It's in his pocket. He's going to gain further power in Israel and more money from Paul. Let me very quickly give the key chess moves that Felix is hoping to make.

I. Key Chess Moves that Felix was hoping to use

A. Chess move 1 – keep Paul as a pawn¹ (v. 22a)

Move one is keeping Paul as a pawn. You will remember that the commander in Jerusalem, Lysias, had sent Paul to Felix for protection and for Felix to judge. The case was so straightforward that Felix could have heard the evidence and decided in favor of Paul right away. Verse 22 says that Felix knows all about Christianity. He knows that it is not a threat. He said, **“But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings...”** I'm sure this

¹ “a person subject to the will of another; a tool; a hostage.”

ticks off the Jewish leaders. They want to bring Paul back to Jerusalem with them. But like an idiot, Tertullus goes too far and accuses Paul of a Roman crime that enables Felix to retain jurisdiction. They have travelled a long way, and they want Paul back in their jurisdiction. In fact, they were probably hoping to take Paul back with them that day. But Felix, who is always looking for ways to consolidate power with the Jews and to make more money, sees dollar signs. He's not about to decide either for or against Paul. He's going to use Paul as a pawn. If Ananias wants Paul that bad, Paul is going to be a good bargaining chip. So this is a clever chess move.

B. Chess move 2 - gain time by boxing in the Jewish leaders (v. 22b)

Point B - to legally do that, he has to have a good reason for not making a decision – even if it is Roman jurisdiction. So verse 22 goes on to give Felix' reason: “**and said, ‘When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case.’**” Actually, the letter Lysias sent in chapter 23 gives all the information that Felix needs. It made clear that Paul is innocent, and gives sufficient information for Paul to have been released right away. However, Felix doesn't want to frontally offend these Jewish leaders, and he wants these Jewish leaders boxed in by court protocol so that he can procrastinate. He says he needs more information. That stalls for a bit. And he needs it from Lysias. That stalls for a lot of time because there could be any number of reasons why Lysias can't make the trip right away. So that's his play number 2. Felix controls the board, and there isn't anything the Jews can do but retreat at this point.

C. Chess move 3 – open up a door for Paul to feel safe (v. 23)

Chess move 3 is to get Paul to feel safe. If Paul thinks that Felix is favorable to him, and yet is not releasing him, hopefully Paul will get the hint that all he needs to do is pay a bribe. It's illegal for Felix to ask for a bribe directly, but he puts Paul into a position where it appears that Felix is quite willing to let him go. We see this in verse 23 – “**So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any friends to provide for or visit him.**” That is so generous that there is obviously something going on here.

D. Chess move 4 – get money from Paul (v. 26)

Chess move 4 is given in verse 26. “**Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul that he might release him.** [Ahhh! There's the something going on. Continuing:] **Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.**” He must have wondered at the end

of two years if Paul is a bit dense in the head. Felix is being friendly. He's giving every opportunity for Paul to offer money. But you see, Paul apparently doesn't believe in bribery. Which by the way is a good argument against Gary North's position. There are two things that will destroy a country's court system – failing to uphold truth (whether you think of that as contract law, testimony of witnesses, perjury, the integrity of the constitution, or any other form of truth) and the second thing is bribery (which will absolutely corrupt a court system and keep it from justice). Falsehood and bribery have kept many a nation from having America's success. But from secular histories we know that Felix was addicted to lies and bribery just like he was to lust. By the way, there are several indications in this book that Paul came from a very wealthy family. This verse is one of those indications. Felix wouldn't be holding out like this for two years unless he thinks there's a juicy reward in it for him

E. Chess move 5 – sacrifice Paul when convenient (v. 27)

Chess move 5 is for Felix to sacrifice Paul to the Jews when it is convenient. And I'm convinced that he might have sacrificed Paul in some way even if he had gotten money out of Paul. He wants to get everything he can out of this opportunity. Verse 27 says, “**But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.**” The key phrase is, “wanting to do the Jews a favor.” Paul was Felix's insurance policy, and here it looks like it has paid off. We know from secular history that Felix got into major trouble with Rome for his brutal killing of a crowd of Jews. Rome recalls him to answer for his crimes. And Felix tells the Jewish leaders that if they will testify on his behalf that they can have Paul. But he's not going to give him over until they testify. I think that's what's going on behind the scenes. There is evidence in the next two chapters that Felix got Festus and Agrippa, his brother-in-law to sign onto this deal.

So you can see that Felix is a pretty good strategist. It's true that he's corrupt, selfish, arrogant, cruel, lustful, and unfit to be a governor. But he knows how to play a good chess game. Even when something unexpected like his recall happens, he always has some trump cards up his sleeve.

Jonathan was mentioning to me on Thursday night that we shouldn't be surprised at the success of the humanists in America – they've been setting up the chessboard for over 100 years. They are playing with a long-term strategy. They are playing for keeps. We Christians on the other hand have ignored what they are doing; have retreated, and unfortunately are not

playing for keeps. We should not be surprised at the power that the humanists are wielding. So that's the first side of the chessboard.

II. Key Chess Moves used by God

A. Make sure that Felix realizes that Paul is not a danger (v. 22a)

But let's go back over the material to see how God is the master chess player on the other side of that board, and how God was in control of this game at every stage of the game. He was deliberately allowing Felix to have confidence. In verse 22 we see that God had been at work in Felix's life long before Paul came on the scene. **"But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the way, he adjourned the proceedings..."** How did Felix, a Roman, have more accurate knowledge of the way? If it was accurate knowledge, Felix would know that Paul was not guilty of the crimes that Tertullus accuses him of. We already know why Felix doesn't let Paul go, but how did he get this accurate knowledge of Christianity so that he himself is not intimidated? That's a mystery. Everyone else seemed to be confused.

We are not told explicitly. It may have been because of his spies. But I believe God had been preparing Felix by placing Christians in his extended family. Let me share why I believe this, and why God has been setting up the board with Felix in mind many years before. In verse 24 we find that the wife of Felix is Drusilla. And how they got together is a fascinating story in its own right. She was another king's wife who ran away to marry Felix. But his marriage explains why he is a friend of King Agrippa. Felix is married to Agrippa's sister. You see, Agrippa married his own sister, and Agrippa, Bernice, and Drusilla are from the same family. Drusilla is the youngest sister of Agrippa and Bernice in chapter 25:13. That verse says, **"And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus."** So this means that King Agrippa is a brother-in-law of Felix. Well, King Agrippa's dad killed James in Acts 12, and was miraculously killed by God himself. That must have had an impression upon Agrippa. His uncle, Herod Antipas, had beheaded John the Baptist and interrogated Jesus. But more to the point, there were already members of the Herodian family who were becoming Christians during the time of Jesus. For example, Luke 8:3 lists **"Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward"** as being one of the followers of Jesus who supported Jesus and the twelve out of her riches. And Acts 13:1 speaks of Manaen, a godly prophet within the church, who had also been brought up with Herod the tetrarch. This means that Manaen was a foster brother to Herod. The Herod referred to is Herod Antipas, the

youngest son of Herod the Great. So there were definitely Christians within the Herodian family, and other contacts that could have been made. God apparently wanted Felix to find out about these things so that he would not fear Paul or consider Paul a threat. Felix apparently has no interest in Christianity. All that needs to be in play is that Felix not fear Paul. So God has been setting up the board in a way that will give Felix a false confidence.

I find that encouraging. Just because the world federalists are confident of their plans does not mean they are winning. If you take your cues of when to be discouraged from how confident the humanists presently are, you will be discouraged for a long time. Just realize that God is at work in setting up the chessboard.

B. Make sure that Lysias doesn't dismiss the case (chapters 22-23)

The second move of God was to make sure that Lysias did not dismiss the case prematurely in chapter 23. Lysias had the authority to decide in favor of Paul if he had wanted to, but there were three things that kept him from doing so: 1) the politics of Jerusalem made it dangerous for him to dismiss Paul, 2) the safety of Paul made it dangerous, 3) and the mandate that Lysias keep peace made it awkward to do so. He was in a tight position. Lysias is motivated to pass on this hot potato. Lysias also had two choices of who to pass this case on to. If he had chosen to send Paul to Ummidius Quadratus, the legate of Syria-Cilicia (which would be the most logical choice), Paul would now be a free man. But for whatever reason, Lysias moves Paul to exactly where he needs to be – Caesarea, where the corrupt governor Felix resides.

C. Make sure that distance between Lysias and Felix will give plenty of time (v. 22b)

But look at point C. The third thing that God ensures will be in place is plenty of distance between Lysias and Felix. It will be very inconvenient for Lysias to travel to Caesarea since he is in charge of Jerusalem. So when Felix says, “**When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case,**” he is apparently not planning for Lysias to come down. He is just stalling for time. But that works out well for God's plans because God wants Paul witnessing in Caesarea for two years.

D. Let Paul have maximum liberty in prison (v. 23)

Of course, God is working all of these things together for *Paul's* good as well, so verse 23 says, “**So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends**

to provide for or visit him.” This is amazing. Paul has access to anyone who needs to see him. Paul can send for elders to be mentored or for anyone to talk to. He can disciple, teach, write, and continue to care for his churches by remote control. Yes, he is in prison and in chains (unlike in Rome when he will have his own rented house). But these guys can’t stay all night, so God is also giving Paul a needed rest.

E. Powerfully bring the gospel to the governor’s staff, military, and associates (vv. 24-25)

1. This “pawn” is not just a threat to the governor, but to his wife (v. 24)

But if you read verses 24-25 you will see that Paul is able to bring the gospel to the governor’s staff, military and associates. **“After some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’”** This pawn actually preached so powerfully that he made his captor tremble, as the King James words it. He trembled.

As God moves the pawn into place, it proves to be more powerful than the castle. Not only is Felix trembling, but this gospel has also been preached to his wife, Drusilla. We are not told of the outcome of some of these things, but there are hints in Paul’s epistles that his time here has been very productive. The Praetorian Guard and even some of Caesar’s household were converted. They no doubt came here on vacation to this fabulous resort. Felix was Nero’s best friend.

2. Paul’s reasoning on righteousness brings Felix fear (v. 25a)

Paul’s reasoning on righteousness must have made Felix realize what a sinner he was. Anyone who has studied much about Felix knows that he was a crooked man. Suddenly Felix realizes that he is not simply dealing with a pawn, he is dealing with God Himself, and with God’s standards of righteousness. God brings conviction over his own lack of righteousness. You know, you may feel powerless in dealing with certain people, and in ourselves we are. We cannot change anyone’s heart. But when you bring the Word of God into a conversation, that word is **“living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”** (Heb. 4:12). That’s why I have constantly harped

on the fact that conservatism is not the answer to the political problems in America, or the economic problems, or the moral problems. If we don't insert God's Word, your opinion has no power. But even if you are a measly pawn, if you are a pawn in God's hands, using God's Word, that word can make a governor tremble. We've got to get the Word of God back into the public sphere.

3. Paul's reasoning on self-control brings Felix fear (v. 25b)

Paul's reasoning on self-control must have been incredibly convicting. Felix had showed no self-control in eating, drinking, womanizing, covetousness, climbing the social ladder, or other areas where he constantly wanted more, more, more. Suddenly this scrawny preacher is making him tremble. He's trembling over this discussion of self-control, not because Paul is dangerous, but because he realizes that God is dangerous. Felix is momentarily realizing who is in control of this game – it's God.

4. Paul's reasoning on judgment to come brings Felix fear (v. 25c)

And Paul's reasoning on hell and judgment day may have been the last touch that made Felix not want to think about this any more. Sinners don't like to think of every action they have ever committed being judged by a wrathful God. And yet these three powerful weapons are almost completely absent from the church of Jesus Christ. The church doesn't want to reason about righteousness because they don't like the law themselves. Across America's churches you don't see preaching on the law of God. IN evangelism, the law is 99% absent. They don't want to reason about self-control because they lack self-control themselves. They don't want to reason about the judgment to come because many evangelicals are embarrassed by the doctrine of hell, even if they happen to believe it. It's a shame. We can see here that these three old fashioned tools are powerful.

5. Felix is on the defensive (v. 25d)

So Felix, the master chess player, is on the run. In verse 25 he wants to postpone thinking about salvation for a while. That's not a very clever move. You are just postponing the inevitable. Just because you don't think about negative outcomes does not mean they won't happen.

And it's fascinating to see government officials of today feeling pressures, and rather than dealing with them honestly, postponing the inevitable. God is calling this nation to repent, and we are seeing a nation already under the first stages of judgment, and those judgments are only

going to keep heating up in the coming years. But what is the response of the people? – The response is to postpone thinking about economic judgment; to postpone thinking about the implications of our policies on immigration, international polices, disastrous centralized planning, etc., etc. America is acting just like Felix.

6. Felix's fear keeps him from hurting Paul

But one good thing that came out of these verses is that Felix's fears played into making Felix more reasonable with Paul than he needed to be. God was looking out for Paul.

F. Using Felix's covetousness (v. 26a) to prolong the preaching to the staff (v. 26b) and others (vv. 23,27)

We looked at Felix's instincts to continue to play chess for the advantage of his flesh in verse 26. He may have thought that he had the last laugh. But this covetousness was precisely what was needed to make sure that Paul stayed Romeward bound.

G. Using Felix's troubles with Rome to keep Paul Romeward bound (v. 27)

Even that last move of Felix's in verse 27 is going to be frustrated. Felix wants Paul to be bound so that he can continue to use Paul as a pawn to get his way with the Jewish authorities. You've got to remember that Felix is still King Agrippa's brother-in-law, and Felix still owns a lot of what is happening in that country. He wants Paul right where he is so that he can gain alliances with Jewish powerbrokers. But God has the last word. When they try to hand Paul over to the Jews in chapter 26, Paul appeals to Rome, and there is nothing they can do about it. They probably are mystified that Paul would be willing to go before Nero. That's not a move most people would want to do. That's almost a sure death sentence. Nero is crazy. They were not anticipating that chess move. At every point God shows that He is the master chess player who is controlling the board.

And I want to apply that to our current situation in the United States of America. There are some rather clever chess moves that are being made by the Bilderbergers, the Trilateral Commission, those who profit from the Federal Reserve, and other World Federalists. Over the last few weeks I have been standing in amazement at how years of planning are suddenly being implemented with incredible speed. We've known for years that these guys have been setting up the chessboard with a triple fork. It doesn't matter what we do, we are going to be losing chess pieces. It looks like we are

being forced into a corner, and our troops are licking their wounds. But I have to remind myself that we are pawns in God's hands, and God is allowing the church to be judged, but is at the same time (according to Romans 1) judging the nation. That's what Romans 1 describes as a speedy hurtling into iniquity once God gives us up to a depraved mind. This is God's chess game moving His kingdom claims forward. But I believe that these are redemptive judgments. Redemptive judgments are judgments used to bring a nation back to God. In other words, this is for our good.

III. The confidence of Paul as God's "pawn."

A. *Paul knows God will care for him (v. 23)*

And I want to end with what our attitudes should be in the midst of all this. We need to have the confidence of Paul. We need to praise God that we are pawns in His hand. When our purpose is up, we have a glorious place in heaven. We are not just ditched to the side. We enter our reward. But in the meantime, everything we do can be part of the establishing of His kingdom on earth.

This passage speaks of five things that could make Paul confident in God's chess moves. First, Paul knows that God will care for him. He's promised to do so. We can see this in the amazing liberty Felix gives Paul in verse 23 – **"So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him."** In this passage God provides for Paul emotionally, socially, financially, and even in terms of ministry God gives Paul free reign. In fact, you could say that his two-year missions stay in Caesarea had all expenses paid for by Felix. It's wonderful. It's a resort. God is letting Paul know that He loves him and can provide for all of his needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The same is true of you. Matthew 6:8 says, **"For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him"** We don't need to worry that God has forgotten about our financial needs or our other needs. He does want us to pray to Him concerning those needs; He does want us to be responsible; but He encourages our hearts by telling us how much he cares for us. Paul told the Philippians, **"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** If he wrote that during this stay, that is a testimony that comes out of real life. Peter said, **"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."** Be sure of it. Don't allow the circumstances in America to fill your heart with fear. Be confident in

every move God is making of you, as His chess piece. You're part of a glorious plan. God will take care of you. He values every chess piece.

B. Paul is bold in talking about his faith (v. 24)

The second area of confidence was Paul's boldness in talking about his faith. Paul was not always that way, as can be seen by references in his prison epistles where he asks his friends to pray for him that he would be bold. Think about it this way - when the governor and his wife came to visit you, would you be able to do what Paul does in verse 24? **“And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.”** Paul took advantage of every opportunity to speak to people about the faith. If you don't have a similar boldness you might want to do a spiritual check up. It may be that you are not yet ready to face the difficulties that America may dish out.

C. Paul does not fear applying Scripture pointedly (v. 25)

And let's read once more Paul's pointed application of the Word in verse 25. It's one thing to talk about Scripture in generalities, but Paul is applying it where it hurts – the very areas where Felix was weak. He is willing to disagree with Felix. **“Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’”**

Paul had asked the Ephesians to pray for him to be able to do exactly this: **“that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak”** (6:19-20) If Paul needs to pray for boldness, we do to. But what kind of chess game are you playing? Are you letting the humanists walk all over you? Are you in retreat because of fear? In chess, often the best defense is an aggressive offence.

And what Paul did here was such a great example for other Jewish Christians who visited, that it gave them boldness too. Many of them had gone into a defensive mode; others had criticized Paul for preaching to and associating with Gentiles. But listen to what Paul says about them in Philippians 1:

Philippians 1:12 ¶ But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, Philippians 1:13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard,

And the literal Greek there is the Praetorian Guard – the guard mentioned in Acts 23:35

and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

Philippians 1:14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

In Israel, just prior to this, fear had gripped the church. They were afraid of the Jews and the Romans. Paul's boldness was catching. Others were recognizing that if God is for us, who can be against us? And they were striving to make a difference. Paul's enthusiastic boldness was infectious.

Verse 15:

Philippians 1:15 ¶ Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife [and we saw examples of that in Jerusalem], and some also from goodwill:

Philippians 1:16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

Philippians 1:17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

All of this fits a Palestinian context much better than a Roman context two years later. It was the Palestinian Christians who were nervous about Paul. Anyway, verse 18:

Philippians 1:18 What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

He was not satisfied with conservatism being preached. He wanted the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every area of life. Verse 19 goes on:

Philippians 1:19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

He knows he will be delivered because Jesus had promised Paul in chapter 23 that Paul still had to be a witness in Rome. Pray that we would have the same boldness.

D. Paul feels no need to manipulate the situation (v. 26)

A fourth area that Paul is confident in is that he doesn't have to help God out by cheating. In verse 26 Felix obviously wants a bribe. This was a common way of getting justice in the ancient world – buying it. But Paul feels no need to manipulate the situation. He can only be a prisoner as long as God wants him to be. He can only die when it is God's will for him to die. Until that time Paul is invincible. So Paul is freed up to focus on glorifying God.

E. Paul knows he is Romeward bound (23:11)

Besides, Paul knows that he is Romeward bound. In Acts 23:11 Jesus had stood beside Paul and told him, “**Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at**

Rome.” God’s purposes cannot be thwarted. They can’t be thwarted in your life either. So why worry? Worrying has never changed a thing. Be responsible, yes, but worry, no.

Conclusion

But I want to end by looking behind the scenes at a far more deadly chess game. It’s the chess game between Satan and God. Jesus told the Pharisees “**You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do**” (John 8:44). Felix was a pawn in Satan’s hand. And if you have not put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are a pawn in Satan’s hand. You may have the illusion of liberty like the Pharisees did, but you are not a possessor of such liberty.

In the parable of the seed that was sown in various fields Jesus told us about Satan’s strategies to keep us from being saved and/or from being transformed by God’s Word. Let me read Christ’s explanation of that parable:

Mark 4:13 ¶ And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”

Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

Mark 4:15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

Satan the chess player knows how to get you to not think about God’s claims upon your life. He snatches the word out of your heart through daydreaming, through procrastination, through skepticism, through planning out your coming week, and in many other ways. Jesus describes the next strategy of Satan:

Mark 4:16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

Mark 4:17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.

If you don’t dig your roots deeply into Jesus Christ, you will fall away when tribulation or persecution comes. It takes time in devotions, prayer, and meditation to dig your roots deep in Christ. But Satan will bring all kinds of fun things into your life to divert you – things that will hinder that root formation.

The third strategy Satan uses is given in the next verses:

Mark 4:18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word,

Mark 4:19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Do you have the cares of the world on your shoulders? Are you worrying about what's going to happen to America? Jesus said that's one of Satan's strategies – to load people with the cares of the world. Are you allowing the deceitfulness of riches to give you a false sense of security? Are they so driving your time that you are drawn away from Christ? What about the constant desire for new things? These are all Satan's chess moves to keep you from being transformed by the Word of God.

But Christ finally ends with the last group of people.

Mark 4:20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

According to that parable there are many Christians who think they are Christians but really are not. They are still pawns in Satan's hand. Satan is playing chess for your soul.

I have been in correspondence with an Anglican priest by the name of Rev. Martin Dale. In his previous church in New Haven, England there was a painting on one of the old Norman pillars of a chess game between Satan and a man. The position of the man looks pretty hopeless, and the look of glee on Satan's face looks pretty creepy. It's obvious that Satan thinks he has this man's soul in checkmate. Apparently there is one move, and only one that can save this man. The pastor sent me the moves that will ensure that the man is not in checkmate.

Well, in the same way there is one move and only one that will keep your soul out of hell. It is belief in Jesus Christ for your salvation. Satan knows that if he can get you to procrastinate that move like Felix did, you may never again be able to play it. There is no indication that Felix later came to Christ. There comes a point at which the opportunity for salvation is past and Satan has the game secure. It's the point of no return. It's game over. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "**Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**" If you have never put your trust in Jesus Christ, do not put it off for one more minute. Instead, pray with me a prayer entrusting yourself to be God's chess piece, on His board, and with heaven as your destiny. Let's pray.

Father God, You are the sovereign Lord of history. And into Your hands we commit our bodies and spirits. We do not want to be chess pieces belonging to Satan. We once again put our trust in Jesus Christ, Your Son,

whom You have sent to be our redemption. We do not trust in our own manipulations of the board. We do not trust in finances, relationships, or other backup plans. We put our trust in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Please, take our lives and use them for your glory. We cast our sins upon Jesus, and in place receive His righteousness. And every day we want to trust our security in this exchange, which You call justification. And we thank you for Your promise that having given us Your Son, You will also freely give us all things. Thank You that we do not need to worry about the future, but instead can have the confidence of Joshua and Caleb to take on the challenges that confront us in America, and to take every square inch of America back for King Jesus. We commit ourselves to being Your foot soldiers. We commit ourselves to no longer being embarrassed about bringing Jesus into the public arena. We commit ourselves to no longer being embarrassed about your calls to righteousness, or Your demands for self-control, or Your guarantee of judgment to come. We are your chess pieces; use us as You please. We want to use Your solutions rather than humanistic ones. And we affirm our belief that if You are for us, who can be against us? Thank You for your provision, and thank You for Your complete control of the chessboard. In Jesus name, Amen.

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Acts 24:22-27

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 6/21/2009

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 - E. Chess move 5 – sacrifice Paul when convenient (v. 27)

- II. Key Chess Moves used by God
 - A. Make sure that Felix realizes that Paul is not a danger (v. 22a)
 - B. Make sure that Lysias doesn't dismiss the case (chapters 22-23)
 - C. Make sure that distance between Lysias and Felix will give plenty of time (v. 22b)
 - D. Let Paul have maximum liberty in prison (v. 23)
 - E. Powerfully bring the gospel to the governor's staff, military, and associates (vv. 24-25)
 1. This "pawn" is not just a threat to the governor, but to his wife (v. 24)
 2. Paul's reasoning on righteousness brings Felix fear (v. 25a)
 3. Paul's reasoning on self-control brings Felix fear (v. 25b)
 4. Paul's reasoning on judgment to come brings Felix fear (v. 25c)
 5. Felix is on the defensive (v. 25d)
 6. Felix's fear keeps him from hurting Paul
 - F. Using Felix's covetousness (v. 26a) to prolong the preaching to the staff (v. 26b) and others (vv. 23,27)
 - G. Using Felix's troubles with Rome to keep Paul Romeward bound (v. 27)

- III. The confidence of Paul as God's "pawn."
 - A. Paul knows God will care for him (v. 23)
 - B. Paul is bold in talking about his faith (v. 24)
 - C. Paul does not fear applying Scripture pointedly (v. 25)
 - D. Paul feels no need to manipulate the situation (v. 26)
 - E. Paul knows he is Romeward bound (23:11)

Conclusion