



41 | ACTS 24

WAITING ON GOD

We are to wait on God, because he promises to make all things beautiful in his time. Wait on him, and he will bring his perfect will to pass!

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Call to Worship

The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. ²⁰ Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! ²¹ Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! ²² Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!. —Psalm 103:19-22

Songs

Lord I Need You
Even So Come
Have Thine Own Way
Higher Ground
Good, Good Father

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

Introduction

The **Chinese bamboo tree** is one of the most remarkable plants on earth. Once the gardener plants the seed, he will see nothing but a single shoot coming out of the bulb — for **five full years!** That tiny shoot, however, must **have daily food and water.** During all the time the gardener is caring for the plant, the exterior shoot will grow less than an inch.

At the end of five years, however, the **Chinese bamboo will perform an incredible feat.** It will grow an amazing **ninety feet tall in only ninety days!** Now ask yourself this: When did the tree actually grow? During the first five years, or during those last ninety days?

The answer lies in the unseen part of the tree, **the underground root system.** During the first five years, the fibrous root structure spreads deep and wide in the earth, preparing to support the incredible heights the tree will eventually reach.¹

An oak or a mushroom? It's been said that when God wants to grow mushrooms, he can do it overnight, but when he wants to grow a mighty oak, it takes a lot of time, years and years. What do we want to be, a mushroom or an oak? If we want to be an oak, it is well worth the wait.

Paul is willing to go through the long haul for the gospel. He spent **1 year and a half** in **Corinth** (18:11-12) and over **3 years in Ephesus** (20:31). Now for the **last 7 years of his life**, most of his time is going to be spent in incarceration. His **jewelry** will be the shackles on his hands and feet.

Like the bamboo tree, Paul doesn't see much growth in his jail ministry at first, but he faithfully gives the gospel as he presents his case as an incarcerated man, even though no formal charges have been filed against him.

In Paul's younger years, when Paul and Silas had found themselves in a Philippian jail, they began singing, and God sent **an earthquake to release them.** **No such earthquake** was given with Paul incarcerated in Caesarea. Instead, God wanted him to give a good testimony to all around him. Paul might have been tempted to give up, but he knew the goodness of God, and the result of waiting on the Most High. He never disappoints!

Key thought: It's vital to never give up, and never faint in your circumstances. We are to wait on God, because he promises to make all things beautiful in his time. Wait on him, and he will bring his perfect will to pass!

What do you do when you are waiting? Waiting is hard! And do you know what makes it harder? **Distractions!**

¹ James H. Wandersee, Joel J. Mintzes, and Joseph D. Novak, *Assessing Science Understanding A Human Constructivist View* (San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press, 2005), 145.

1. DISTRACTIONS IN WAITING OF GOD (24:1-9)

We are so excited to see God work, but God has us waiting! And when we are waiting Satan loves to send **distractions to get your eyes off God**. Distractions from your walk with God come in many forms, but normally they are an attack on you from the enemy in various forms.

FLATTERY

There are those in our lives that live for themselves. They “do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, **but their own belly**, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive” (Rom 16:18). Flattery is a **form of lying** that uses flattering falsehoods to **manipulate** and get their way.

The Jews confronted Paul and brought **a lawyer**, or more of a **professional speaker**, Tertullus to flatter and lie and to Governor Felix.

Acts 24:1-4 | And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul. ²And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: “Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, ³in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. ⁴But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly.”

While we are waiting on God, we will have to **endure the enemy’s attack**. Sometimes it is so smooth and **subtle**, it’s hard to recognize. The enemy will manipulate to try to get our attention off the Lord. **Tertullus** was evidently a **Hellenistic Jew competent in both Jewish and Roman law**. Tertullus uses flattery to gain favor with Governor Felix in order to hurt Paul. God tells us that the flatterer will be exposed by God.

Proverbs 29:5 | A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

God will vindicate us when we are attacked by the wicked one through manipulation and flattery. When you are waiting on God, keep the focus of your heart on the Lord, and he will give you perfect peace even in the midst of distracting attacks.

Isaiah 26:3 | You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Be ready while you are waiting to keep your focus on God, and **don’t be distracted by the enemy**.

FALSEHOODS

Another way the devil distracts us is through falsehoods and slander. Tertullus accused Paul of being guilty of **two capital crimes**.

Acts 24:5-8 | For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a **ringleader** of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to **profane the temple**, but we seized him. ⁸By

examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.”

The first capital crime charged against Paul are that he was a **rioter** who threatened the Pax Romana (Roman peace). Starting riots was a capital offense, and Felix had executed others charged with the same crime. The second capital and that he “**tried to profane the temple**” by bringing a Gentile into the inner court of the temple.²

Satan will at time have people lie about you and **slander you**. Leave your reputation with the Lord. He knows, and that’s all that matters. We need to die to **our reputations** and walk in our integrity. There will always be haters when you are a faithful Christian witness.

But notice as well, Paul has a **death sentence hanging over his head! Paul’s life is in danger** because of these slanders, yet he is **trusting in God**. No human being has power over our life or death. Our steps are ordered and established by the Lord!

FALSE WITNESSES

Many false witnesses came forward against Paul, likely most of them **Sadducees**, since the Pharisees defended Paul in previous proceedings.

Acts 24:9 | The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

Don’t be afraid of accusations. The Christian life is one of full surrender. Paul had constant accusations thrown at him. In following Christ, we must first and foremost surrender our reputation.

Proverbs 29:25 | The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.

Jesus said when we follow him, people will accuse us and say “**all manner of evil against us falsely**” (Mt 5:11-12). In response, we are to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for Christ.

Don’t be distracted by the enemy’s attack when you are waiting on God. When you are faithfully waiting on God, you can **expect satanic attack!**

2. HELPS FOR WAITING ON GOD (24:10-21)

No one likes to wait. But **we wait in traffic, in holding patterns, in grocery stores, for parking lots, for the doctor, for a spouse, for a baby, for retirement**, and most importantly, for Jesus to return!

What is the purpose of waiting in God’s plan? Waiting is not just something we have to do while we get what we want. **Waiting is the process of becoming what God wants us to be.** What God does in us while we wait is as important as what it is we are waiting for. Waiting, biblical waiting, is not a passive waiting around, but a sure expectation that God is making us what we ought to be. Since Paul was being accused of two capital crimes, let’s consider **what he was guilty of**. He was guilty of

² Baker, “Acts,” in *Evangelical Commentary*, 918.

cheerfulness, of **integrity**, of **faith**, and of **generosity**. Other than that, he was blameless!

You may be **powerless to change** any of your **circumstances**, which is most often the case, but **you can change your attitude**. Look at Paul's attitudes. This is the secret to growing in Christ while you are waiting.

AN ATTITUDE OF CHEERFULNESS

Paul's missionary activity has been halted, but he is actually cheerful, and not bitter, to make his defense. He knows God is in control.

Acts 24:10 | And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I **cheerfully** make my defense."

Paul would later write: "**Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say rejoice**" (Phil 4:4). Paul lived that.

As a human being, I don't like to wait, but instead I want to **fix things immediately**. Are you a fixer? Do you **have plan A, B, C, D**, etc.? Well, the Lord's ways are higher than our ways, can I get a witness?

We want to fix our problems, our relationships, our conflicts, our career, and our church. Fixing and controlling situations and people is like trying to expedite the rising of the sun. From time to time I have to be reminded that **I am not God, and therefore I am not in control**. But I can trust the one who is in control. Paul trusted in God's perfect plan. He knew God is the one who has **total sovereignty and majesty and control** of all events. This is why Paul could have an attitude of cheerfulness.

A WALK OF INTEGRITY

Another thing Paul is guilty of—a walk of integrity. Paul not only believed in the **sovereignty** of God, but also the **holiness** of God, so much so that he **trembled** before the living God. This motivated him to live in **integrity**. Paul is cheerful in making his defense because he is walking with a blameless life and a **clean conscience**.

Acts 24:11-13 | "You can verify that it is not more than **twelve days** since I went up to worship in Jerusalem,¹² and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city.¹³ Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me."

Paul didn't have to "go over his story" and rehearse some falsehood because he lived in the light. **He always told the truth**. Paul is able to retrace his steps in the last twelve days since he'd come to Jerusalem. He could account for everything he had done, and his story hadn't changed, because **Paul was a man of integrity**. He **wasn't guilty of defiling the temple or stirring up any crowds**. They had no proof because Paul was there. He could walk in his own integrity.

In our nation—and in the church—there has been a falling away, a breakdown, and a **compromise in integrity**. **It starts in the home with you and with me**. We have to be the same people in private as we are in public. All too often we find a **moral laxity in our private lives**, and it ought not to be. You don't have to be afraid of anything if

you have your integrity. Your life on Sunday should line up at home, with your friends, and with your family.

Proverbs 10:9 | He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known.

Are you hiding something in your life? God sees. “Be sure **your sin will find you out**” (Num 32:23). When you walk in your integrity you have nothing to hide. When your conscience is not clean, **you are alarmed and worried you will get caught.** You always have to be changing your story. Someone said, “The test of your character is what it takes to stop you.” But “**the wicked run when no man pursues**” because they are constantly hiding something (Pro 28:1). Nothing could stop Paul, not even threats of torture or prison. He was a man who walked in his integrity.

Integrity means the absence of duplicity and is the opposite of putting on a mask. If you are a person of integrity, your life is consistent. You cannot have integrity without inviting a lot of accountability. This means other people know your heart and the details of your life. Integrity demands financial accountability, personal reliability, and **private purity.**

Integrity does not mean perfection, but it does mean confession. Are you regularly confessing your sins to God and others? You cannot be a lone ranger Christian and have integrity. That would be impossible. **Drag your sins out into the sunlight** and learn to hate them instead of hiding them. Paul had learned that lesson well, and he could walk in integrity. **Integrity demands great courage.** The words of Louis Adamic seem fitting.

There is a certain blend of courage, integrity, character and principle which has no satisfactory dictionary name but has been called different things at different times in different countries. Our American name for it is “guts.”³

You want to shock the world? Start here. Demonstrate the guts to do what’s right when no one is looking. It takes real guts to stand strong with integrity in a culture weakened. Integrity is essential in the church, in the marketplace, and especially in the home. When you walk in integrity, **you leave it as a legacy for your children to follow.**

Proverbs 20:7 | The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children who follow them.

Don’t shortcut your morality and integrity while you are waiting. Don’t shortcut the process of Christ being formed in you. Paul patiently waited on the Lord while incarcerated.

A LIFE OF FAITH

Paul is guilty of having a life of faith that is **in harmony with the law and the prophets.** They charged him of being sectarian, but he was a man of faith. He affirms that faith in Jesus Christ is in full accordance with the Old Testament Scriptures and that he had the **same hope of resurrection** as his accusers.

³ Louis Adamic, *A Study in Courage*, as quoted by John Bartlett in *Familiar Quotations*, 13th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1956), 981.

Acts 24:14-16 | “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I **worship the God of our fathers**, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. ¹⁶ So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.”

Although the Jewish leaders denounced Christianity as a dangerous sect, Paul emphatically declared, “I do serve the God of our fathers” which was the historic title for expressing **the one true faith** (Gen 48:15; Exo 3:15; Deut. 26:7; 1 Chr 12:17; 29:18; 2 Chr 20:6; Ezra 7:27; Dan 2:23; Acts 3:13; 5:30). To be a Christian, Paul insisted, was to worship the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁴ This was Paul’s consistent testimony in the New Testament. Consider what he says about the Christian faith. **Christianity is true fulfilled Judaism**, the fulfillment of the Old Testament worship.

Romans 2:29 | But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

Galatians 3:29 | If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Philippians 3:3 | We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

Galatians 3:8 | The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

The faith is Christ extends to the beginning. It is the **faith of Abraham!** What a life of faith Paul had. He promoted the faith of our father Abraham!

A HEART OF GENEROSITY

What was Paul guilty of? A heart of generosity. He had come to his home to bring **alms**—a **love offering for the churches of Jerusalem** and to present offerings at the temple, the sponsoring of the four men with the Nazarite vow, which he did.

Acts 24:17-21 | “Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to **present offerings**. ¹⁸ While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— ¹⁹ they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. ²⁰ Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹ other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: ‘It is with respect to the **resurrection of the dead** that I am on trial before you this day.’”

From Paul’s own account of his activities in his letters (1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8–9; Rom 15:25–33) we know that on this visit to Jerusalem **Paul had brought with him a substantial sum of money as a love offering collected from his churches** “for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:26). It was a gift from the Gentile

⁴ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol. 2, 307.

Christians to their Jewish brothers, a material gift as a sign of gratitude for the spiritual blessing of the gospel which ultimately stemmed from the church at Jerusalem. ⁵

Paul had **not defiled the temple** but was fully purified. He also **did not start any tumult**. He had done nothing worthy of death but was **guilty of generosity** and love for his own people, having risked his life for the offering and alms for the churches. He was generous.

Paul also was “guilty” of **pleading his case for the resurrection** and final before the Sanhedrin, which many of the Pharisees already believed. Here Paul placed himself, in contrast to the skeptical Sadducees, firmly within **mainstream Jewish theology**.⁶ He wanted them to believe in the resurrection of Christ as well. He wanted them to all partake in Christ’s free gift of salvation.

Dear saints, look at Paul’s heart of generosity. Paul was not guilty of death, but he was “guilty” of **cheerfulness**, of **integrity**, of **faith**, and of **generosity**. Other than that, he was blameless! These attitudes were the **great helps that sustained Paul** in his **incarceration and many trials**.

3. OPPORTUNITIES WHILE WAITING ON GOD (24:22-26)

ILLUSTRATION: Waiting is hard. Have you ever gotten behind someone on the highway that was going way below the speed limit? **I heard of one lady who was going 22 mph in a 45**. The officer pulled this lady over. Approaching the car, he notices that there are **five older ladies**, two in the front seat and three in the back, **wide eyed and pale as ghosts**. She insisted she was doing exactly the speed limit, 22 miles an hour. The officer, trying to contain a chuckle, **explains to her that “22” was the route number**, not the speed limit. A bit embarrassed, the woman grinned and thanked the officer for pointing out her error.

“But before I let you go, Ma’am,” the officer said, “I have to ask, **is everyone in this car okay?** These women seem awfully shaken and they haven’t muttered a single peep this whole time.”

The lady replied, “Oh, they’ll be all right in a minute officer. **We just got off Route 119.**”

Yes, waiting can be hard, but listen, when we are waiting on God, he gives us so many opportunities to grow and expand his kingdom. A lot of times when we are waiting on the next thing, we miss the most important thing that God wants to accomplish. **God gives us opportunities for the most important things.**

AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY GOD

One of the most important things you can do while you are waiting is enjoy God. He wants to draw you closer. Paul’s heart was settled that whatever the verdict of his case, he was innocent of the charges.

Acts 24:22 | But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.”

⁵ Marshall, *Acts*, 398–399.

⁶ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol. 2, 307.

Felix says, “**Paul, you’ll have to wait until another day!**” But waiting for the Christian means walking another day with God. To us waiting is wasting. But to God waiting is him working!

Felix did indeed understand some of the facts of Christianity, then called “the Way” since Jesus said he is “the way” to the Father (Jn 14:6). **His knowledge likely came from his young wife Drusilla who was granddaughter of King Agrippa II.** She was even at a young age a great sinner but seems to have been drawn with curiosity to learn about Jesus. **She had a deep curiosity.**

Paul didn’t have his hope in any man, and that included Felix. He didn’t have to trust Felix or even the **Roman Commander Lysias** who had been so kind and loyal to him. No, the great apostle Paul trusted God in God alone. He was waiting on what God wanted him to do. Felix was a unpredictable and fickle human governor. Paul wasn’t concerned with the opinions of men and monarchs, but of the one true Monarch of heaven. Paul was not waiting on what Felix or even Lysias, Roman general who had been so loyal to Paul. Human opinions can be manipulated and change. But God never changes. So Paul waited for the Lord’s commands and verdicts.

Paul trusted and enjoyed God while he waited because he knew God was working. Circumstances are constantly changing, but we need to be founded on the one who is immovable. G. Campbell Morgan was a London preacher of a hundred years ago. His words are helpful. He tells us what it means to wait.

The concept of "waiting" in Hebrew means "to entrench." God works for him who entrenches himself in him. The idea of waiting on God is that of digging ourselves in to God. When circumstances are chaotic, when it is impossible to understand outcomes, that is the hour we are to wait on God. God is certain, everything else crumbles.... Waiting on God is not laziness. Waiting on God is the ability to do nothing until the command is given.⁷

Are you ready “entrench yourself in God” when all is crumbling? Morgan went on to say that waiting on God has the idea of “entrenching ourselves into God” and not moving until he moves. Are you willing to entrench yourself into God, and not move until he moves? Waiting on God then is a full surrender to him, no matter what the circumstances. The Psalmist said it this way:

Psalm 46:10 | Be still and know that I am God.

That’s the best statement of waiting on God that can be given. That’s what Paul was committed to. Your situation may seem out of control. Don’t do anything rash. Be under God’s control. Be still and know that he is God; he is good; he is gentle; he’ll make all of this beautiful in his time. It’s ok. Trust him! Surrender fully to him. **Andrew Murray** goes even further in his description of a life that is waiting on God.

Waiting becomes then the only way to the experience of a full salvation, the only way, truly, to know God as the God of our salvation. All the difficulties that are brought forward as keeping us back from full salvation, have their cause in this

⁷ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Westminster Pulpit: The Preaching of G. Campbell Morgan, Volume 9*, “Waiting for God” (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012), 320.

one thing: the defective knowledge and practice of waiting upon God and surrendering to him entirely.⁸

We can enjoy God in the waiting, because in our waiting God is working great and mighty things!

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EDIFY SAINTS

We don't start out wanting to wait. Our natural response to waiting is often anger or doubt. Fortunately, God is gracious and merciful, understanding of our tendencies. But we can't let those feelings of uncertainty carry us. We will miss what God wants us to do in the waiting. What did Paul do while he was waiting? He edified the saints! Governor Felix gave Paul a little freedom, and he used it to edify his brothers in Christ.

Acts 24:23 | Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

Paul's friends would come in and bring him a meal and probably a scroll of one of the **Old Testament prophets** or the law of Moses, and they would look for Christ in all of Scripture.

Sometimes in your hardest times, you are the most fruitful. It doesn't seem like it, but it's true. When we are hurting, we are often more prone to call out to God. It is then when God has humbled us that we are most useful.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 | Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

Don't waste your pain and sorrow. Find comfort in the Scriptures and edify the saints. This was Paul's practice.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EVANGELIZE SINNERS

I can just imagine Paul having Bible study after Bible study with the saints, and there was always a Roman soldier shackled to Paul's arm. So the Roman guard, one by one, was able to hear the way of Christ. But Paul was also called upon by the governor himself to converse about Jesus.

His Audience

Felix arrives at the prison with his wife Drusilla. Felix was the governor of Palestine and his wife, a daughter of Herod Agrippa I, had a very bad reputation as a great sinner. Drusilla, being Jewish, it seems is curious about Paul's message of grace and faith, and so they hear the great apostle give a clear gospel presentation.

Acts 24:24 | After some days Felix came with his wife **Drusilla, who was Jewish**, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Andrew Murray, *Waiting on God* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1894), 18.

There is a note in one of the early texts (the Harclean Syriac and a Bohairic manuscript) that Drusilla was the one who instigated the meeting and who likely was the one who gave Felix “a rather accurate knowledge of the Way” (24:22). The Western text, adds to verse 24 that **Drusilla “asked to see Paul and hear him speak”** and that Felix consequently summoned Paul “**wishing to satisfy her.**”⁹ At any rate, it seems that **Drusilla was we might call a “seeker.”**

Paul spoke to them about “faith in Christ.” Regardless of their status, there is no difference with God. Great and small, rich and poor will appear before him. The only way to know God is stop trusting in this world for success and comfort, and repent and trust in God through Jesus Christ. Only by believing in him can we receive his gift of eternal life.

His Message

Paul did not hold back from preaching a message of repentant faith. Paul was a holiness preacher. Grace never means that we deviate from God’s holiness. God doesn’t lower the standard, and neither did Paul.

Acts 24:25 | And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.”

This is shorthand for the entire gospel. “**Righteousness**” is the same word as “**justification**,” or what it means to be saved, which undoubtedly includes the death and resurrection of Jesus. Christ took our robe of sin and gave us his robe of righteousness.

“Self-control” refers to **holiness in the Christian life**. We are called to repent and live a life controlled by the Spirit.

“The coming judgment” is referring to **the second coming**, when Jesus will judge the living and the dead. Here Paul warn Felix of judgment for those who refuse, but also with hope for those who believe.¹⁰

Governor Felix was alarmed by Paul’s gospel. Paul had preached a Christ-centered, pertinent message to Governor Felix. The conviction of the Holy Spirit was so strong that Felix trembled with alarm. We might say he was right at the door of salvation. He was right in front of the narrow gate, but he decided to wait until another day to go through.

He said, “Now, Paul, go your way for a time. When I have a convenient season, then I’m going to call for you.” That is, “Paul, I know you’re right. I’m under conviction. I do need this Christ that you speak about. But I’m not going to do it now. I’m going to wait for a better time.” And so the devil trapped him. And so today, as far as we know, Governor is in hell.

How dangerous it is to put off the conviction of the Holy Spirit. As those who believe in the sovereign election of God, we can sometimes be tempted to brush moments like this aside, but Jesus didn’t do such a horrible thing. We do believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation, but that does not dismiss God’s love for sinners. When **he saw that the people of Jerusalem were to reject his salvation, he wept over it.**

Luke 19:41 | When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.

⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, 489.

¹⁰ Hamilton, *John-Acts*, 552.

Are you one who takes the state of sinners around you lightly? Can you look on the state of your loved ones, your neighbors and your nation, and simply move on? Paul couldn't. Jesus didn't. We must take every opportunity to bring the Holy Spirit's conviction on sinners.

Romans 10:14 | How are they to hear without someone preaching?

We must press not only tell sinners about God's love, but we must call them to repentance, as Jesus did. They cannot understand the weight of Jesus' sacrifice until they know the eternal weight of their own sin, that is dragging them down to the depths of hell for all eternity. Let us be sure to preach a true gospel message, one of justification, holiness, and the judgment to come!

His Pattern

Acts 24:26 | At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him.

Despite the governor's wrong motives and lust for money, **Paul was able to freely preach and "speak about faith in Christ Jesus"** (24:23). As Jesus promised, Paul would give the gospel to kings and governors and high officials.

Jesus loves all the world. He loves the small and the great. He doesn't just love your little son or daughter; he also loves the presidents and the kings and the soldiers and the generals. He loves the lost religious people and the lost prostitutes and lost thugs. He loves the meth addict and the homosexual. He loves the one committing adultery on his wife and offers him salvation. He loves the schoolboy who is a straight A student but still needs Jesus. Jesus loves all mankind, and all mankind is corrupt. All mankind needs Jesus. Anyone who comes to Jesus will never be turned away. Even the most vile may come, and Jesus will save them. Paul was willing to preach the gospel to every creature, even if that meant he started a jailhouse ministry where there was no exit.

4. THE LEGACY OF WAITING ON GOD (24:27)

Friends, we find that Paul is to wait there on God under incarceration for two years there in Caesarea.

A TIME TO WAIT ON GOD

Not only do I not like waiting, but I want to speed up his process. I understand that the father of the modern missionary movement, William Carey, waited seven years before his first convert in India, as did Adoniram Judson in Burma. As a pastor, I want to speed up the growth process of my church and its ministries. We all want to speed up what God is doing. For Paul, it seemed like the Lord was slowing things down. He waited two years, **rotting away in chains there in Caesarea** until Felix was replaced by a new governor named Porcius Festus.

Acts 24:27a | When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus.

There is something beautiful about **waiting on God when we are completely helpless**. When God moves in those circumstances, he gets all the glory. We may not know during this lifetime all the fruit that Paul was given while waiting on God these two years. Surely only heaven will provide that record.

The key to waiting on God is to trust that God is doing what he promises he will do. He's predestined you to be conformed to the image of Christ. When you are waiting, you need to yield and surrender to Christ, trusting God's timing and God's heart. Don't worry so much about temporal things. It's all about eternity.

A PURPOSE FOR WAITING ON GOD

Felix had a purpose for Paul's waiting. He wanted to gain favor with the Jews. So he left him there to rot in chains for two years.

Acts 24:27b | And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

Felix had a self-centered purpose for leaving Paul incarcerated, but God had an entirely different purpose. God's purpose for every second of your life is to conform you to Christ (Rom 8:29), and it was no different with God's purpose for Paul. In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon reminds us that there is a time for everything under heaven. God has specific purposes for all things that happen in his children's lives. There are eternal purposes in our waiting times.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 | He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart.

Moses waited and worked for forty years as a shepherd before God called him to go and rescue his people from Egypt. Joseph was sold into slavery and falsely accused, sitting in a prison cell before God made him the Prince of Egypt. It was nearly 15 years between the time little David was anointed and when he became the king of Israel. The point is, God has a purpose for you waiting. Like that bamboo plant, God is preparing your root system so that when he uses you, you are humble and ready.

Conclusion

Those who study birds say these glorious, winged creatures have **three methods of flight**. Flapping is keeping their wings in constant motion, like a hummingbird, to counteract gravity. Flapping keeps them in the air, but it is a lot of work.

Second is gliding. Here the bird builds up enough speed, then coasts downward a while. It is much more graceful than flapping, but unfortunately it does not get the bird very far. Gravity sets in quickly. Gliding is nice, but it does not last.

The third way is soaring. Only a few birds, **such as eagles**, are capable of soaring. Eagles' wings are so strong that they are capable of catching rising currents of warm air — thermal winds that go straight up from the earth - and without moving a feather can soar up to great heights. Eagles have been clocked at up to 80 m.p.h. without flapping at all. They just soar on invisible columns of air.¹¹

As believers, we don't want to be flapping, trying to change our circumstances while we wait. We surely don't want to be gliding, hoping bad things will just go away. We want to be soaring, and that's what the Lord promises us as Christians.

¹¹ Michael L. Morrison, Amanda D. Rodewald, and Gary Voelker, *Ornithology: Foundation, Analysis, and Application* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 283.

Isaiah 40:31 | They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Dear saints, we have nothing to be afraid of. It's ok to wait. Let us soar to the highest heights as we wait on the Lord. When we are waiting on him is often when the Lord does his best work!