

The Trial Part 2

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Date: 20 May 2012

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[0 : 0 0] I want to do tonight is just go back through this passage and pick out from it some very significant and I hope important Lessons for us. It's a great narrative. It's a great story It would be a great drama to have done down at the front of the church if we could be a make it's we make a great film The these accounts because there's so much kind of intrigue and personal characteristics And just a development of this great story, but we do also remind ourselves that there's a lot of Christ-like similarities here Jesus stood before the authorities of his day and was declared innocent and that's important for us It's important that even the world couldn't find anything against Jesus as our Savior and it's also important here because Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles as the gospel goes out to the whole world and

He is examined again and again and again say this is real. Is this gospel real? Are the people in Edinburgh in the 21st century? Are they gonna be wise to believe this gospel?

Or is it just fake? Is it made up? Is it just crazy? And again and again we find him innocent Defending this Messiah from the Old Testament who comes in the person of Jesus as the one who will be the Savior Not just of the Jewish nation, but of the Gentiles also So we've got this great timeline that's happening in these I didn't read it all It's a really long reading because we finished on chapter 24 last time but in 25 we find him in trial before Felix now Felix is the Governor who followed from on from Festus sorry Festus is who followed on from Felix member Paul was put in prison for two years after Felix had interviewed him and then Festus becomes the governor and he appears before Him and he defends himself there same old accusations They appeals to Rome And Festus allows that to happen and then we have

King Agrippa visiting and Paul in the passage we read gives his third defense in front of King Agrippa so there's there's different characters that Paul is Standing before Paul we know we know his character I'm not gonna spend time on his character and Festus not much is said about him But he seems to be a reasonable character. He listened to what Paul had to say He gave him a hearing he acquiesced with his appeal to Caesar And as he waits for that he is visited by King Agrippa King Agrippa who was a Jewish leader. You remember when Jesus was born There was a Jewish leader a kind of in a sense a puppet leader over The Jewish people was Herod the Great, which I'll say a little bit more about him in a minute but this is King Agrippa Herod Agrippa the second he's called okay, and he was head of just a small northern province of jury

He was a ruler but modern day Lebanon Wasn't very powerful, but one thing that was important about him was he had the care of the temple in Jerusalem And that made him important to the Jewish people. He was responsible for the care of the temple and He was immoral history Would quite categorically say that he was in an incestuous relationship with the his sister Bernice who's mentioned here in the chapter So there's the characters But what's the claim That Paul is making in this is very very interesting and very important for us in Chapter 25 and I want you to follow with me through these some of these verses 25 and verse 19 Festus is speaking to the King Agrippa and telling him about Paul and interestingly he says look instead of some points

[4 : 29] Instead they have some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus Whom Paul claimed was alive That's it. That's what the world looks at when they see the gospel. It's a dead man named Jesus who they claim Is alive Paul claims that he's alive That's the one thing that Festus takes from the defense that Paul gives He's speaking about this dead man who he claims to be alive. It's crazy then chapter 26 and verse 8 When Paul is making his defense and he's looking out to the Jews who are also there and they said why should any of you consider it?

incredible that God raises the dead So he goes back to this theme about God raising the dead About this core truth he's getting across in all of his defenses against these various leaders who are trying to expose his teaching and then on in verse 23 of that same chapter you read I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen that the Christ would suffer and as The first to rise from the dead would proclaim light to his own people into the Gentiles The light of the gospel is proclaimed by a risen Savior by Jesus Christ and Paul is Is nailing this home in all the discussions in all the defense in all the opportunities?

He has to speak he is focusing on the centrality of Jesus Christ Risen from the dead and that remains hugely significant and important in our understanding of the faith of the gospel and our Defense of the gospel this evening are so many people There's so many people I'm sure that we Interact with in our day-to-day living who would say the same kind of thing as Festus said to King Agrippa you know he's He's defending about this guy who is a dead man named Jesus that he's claiming to be raised from the dead Isn't that how so many people see it they think that Jesus is this dead man Jesus dead he's irrelevant. He's gone and you know that's absolutely right. Isn't it if Jesus is dead. He's completely irrelevant Completely irrelevant 40 years after you're gone and after I'm gone nobody will remember us

Nobody remembers people a couple of generations after they're gone apart from maybe Wikipedia Or something else like that. They'll have your name down there, but no one really remembers about you Don't remember who you are. We think we're important and we think the world revolves around us But we'll be in the grave a few years and no one will remember us once our family are gone Our children and our grandchildren How many of you know about your great-grandfather or great-grandmother?

Unless you're a genealogist you probably don't know that much and even if we do we don't know them We know about them maybe facts about them He's gone He's dead. He's gone Jesus dead. He's irrelevant But we have this amazing claim that Paul makes again and again That he is alive That he's not alive He is alive that he's not dead Christ is different The gospel is different. We trust in Jesus Christ who is this dead man living You go back to 24 and verse 21 in these different incarnations of of paul's defense and in verse 21 He says unless it's this one thing I shouted that I stood in their presence It's concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today

[8 : 37] So again and again we find that the core message and the core reality that jee that paul is speaking about Is the resurrection of jesus and that is at the core of our faith If you lose sight of the resurrection and if I lose sight of the resurrection, we're going to hugely struggle But as paul argues with the jewish people who themselves knew and understood better Why should any of us consider it incredible that god raises the dead?

That's the god that we have and that's the god that we believe is behind The salvation in which we put our trust it's the uniqueness of jesus christ And the resurrection focuses on that doesn't it? Is there anybody else?

That makes that claim is there anybody else that we can go to and say oh here's someone that's resurrected from the dead Here's a savior that we can trust the resurrection focuses on his person doesn't it?

It focuses on his humanity Because he was a human being who died it focuses on his claims Because he said shortly before he went up to Defend himself before pilot that he would Die and on the third day be raised again It focuses on his death and the importance of his death and why he was dying And then the redemption that lies behind it it focuses on his life That he is the author of life And he is the one to whom we come to for life As people today That makes him unique Resurrection core of the resurrection keep that core resurrection In your understanding of the gospel and let's say a little bit more about that later on In terms of testimony But you can see the ongoing relevance of that. Can you see the ongoing relevance of that because Paul

When he's defending the gospel he brings his own testimony into it and what's his own testimony? What's Paul's testimony? I Met this Jesus I met him the risen savior that is you see that Paul isn't standing in front of these people With a dead man's teaching that's not what he has His testimony is that I have met this risen savior and I'm in a living spiritual relationship with him And we somehow need to get over to people that our Christianity is not A dead man's teaching that we're following We're not following the teaching of a guru from 2000 years ago Let's scrap that whole idea and let's move away and I'm going to come into an aside here as well An important aside that we are not simply sharing a moral

[11 : 44] Structure of living in a moralistic set of beliefs. I kind of mentioned that very briefly this morning Our Christian apologetics. It cannot be based on simply moral living and I know it's important. Don't get me wrong. I know it's significant And I know that every time you open the papers just now it's about gay marriage And every time you open anything to do with the church is about what the church thinks about this whole concept of gay marriage now, I'm not going to go into that this evening, but What I would like to just highlight today and for ourselves this evening is we need to remember that somehow In our apologetic of the Christian faith We need to bring Christ into the discussion because at the moment the door is closed to that people see simply Christianity being anti-gay and Moralistic Okay, that's at the sea that the door is closed to discussion

The world thinks that the church believes that heterosexual purity is the road to heaven That's how you become a believer or that's how you get to heaven as long as you're moralistic and pure heterosexual Somehow and I'm not saying the discussion can't be had and mustn't be had and must be had at some levels But somewhere along the line we need to get the truth across That the redemption the world needs is the redemption that we've received and needed to Do that we are sinners saved by grace together and if we're going to Lay forward the law In the hope that that will turn people to Christ the law of God We need to do it in the context of the law giver They need to see someone who is worth obeying and following

It can't it's we're not getting beyond the law with people when we simply use moralistic arguments We need somehow To point them towards an encounter with Jesus Christ the redeemer who loves the lost and who seeks as we saw this morning the wandering sheep and looks out for them People will never see the need to repent outside of grace Yes, and people simply think we are moralistic pointing our Fingers down at everybody else the problem with humanity is not their sexuality It is the sentence of death that they are under Which includes every part of our lives God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son Yes, we need to get the truth over but we need not to leave the gospel behind when we do it

Jesus is God Jesus is alive and Paul in a Sexually rampant lame Twisted society in which he lived did not preach moralism He preached Christ primarily He sometimes preached moralism in the context of Christ But his core message was the resurrection Was that Jesus is alive Jesus is king He is the lamb on the throne But there is the wrath of the lamb also And the recognition that we stand before One who sees into our hearts and souls So we have the claim of Jesus this claim of Paul here very strongly given Being the resurrection Again and again the resurrection and I think that's very important for us. It's the core of the gospel It's very interesting in the new testament in a secular society Paul preached the resurrection

Maybe we need to preach the resurrection more Because it brings people Whether they believe it or not at least face to face With the fact that we believe in a living god not a dead one And then also can I just briefly mention the dialogue itself between in the section that we read really the dialogue in chapter 26 between king Agrippa and Paul We didn't read verse 23 of the previous chapter But that is when king Agrippa came into the the room Where he was going to meet with Paul. You see Agrippa said to Fesses I would like to hear this man. He'd like to hear about Paul And so Fesses said well tomorrow you'll hear him and then we're told the next day Agrippa and Bernice came That's his sister his lover Same person with great pomp And entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and leading men of the city

[17:06] So you've got this this great dramatic picture. He comes in with great Paul king Agrippa. He's so important He's governor of us insignificant little part of the jury but he comes in with great pomp and great ceremony and he comes in to listen to Paul and You know you might have thought because Paul's brought in as well Paul would be afraid here Really afraid, you know, because you know who king Agrippa is It's a great grandson of as we mentioned Herod the Great Who killed all the infants to try and get rid of Jesus His brutal vicious character He is the grandson of Herod Antipas Who beheaded John And he's the son of Agrippa the first Who slew John James Jesus brother with a sword So we might have thought Paul comes into the presence of this man and his lover who come in with great pomp

See they're coming in this door great pomp come down the front And they're so significant and then Paul's there At the command of festives very understated Paul was brought in that's all that said And so Paul scuttles in this door And he comes great pomp and ceremony these important people here and then we Paul comes in He comes in here. You think you'd be afraid but there's a great quote from a book in the Apocrypha that speaks about around this time and this is according to tradition Paul he was only a little fellow an unprepossessing in appearance balding Nothing wrong with that with beetle brows hook nose And bandy legs. He's getting less like me all the time yet full of grace Wearing neither crown nor gown But only handcuffs. I'm not sure about handcuffs. It seems a bit of modern reality. Maybe there was old-fashioned handcuffs Handcuffs and perhaps a plain prisoner's tunic. He nevertheless dominated the court with his quiet christlike dignity and confidence

So you've got a great picture developing, haven't you between the pomp and ceremony of King Agrippa and Paul who comes in and you know Why is Paul bold this ugly hook nose balding little man?

Because he's met with the king of kings. That's why He's already been in the company of the king of kings and he has the perspective that says i'm not afraid of caesar I'm not afraid of agrippa. I'm not afraid of festus or felix or anyone I'm here defending The gospel and god has appointed me to be The apostle to the Gentiles and so he gives his testimony and with this I close And we read about his testimony. It's a great testimony. It's really and we have different accounts of Paul's testimony But he reminds us that Paul was obsessed in his unbelief. That's what he was. He was obsessed in my obsession against him in verse 11 I even went to foreign cities to persecute them Paul was driven. He was obsessed with unbelief He was resisting as he goes on to say when

He meets with jesus and jesus says why do you kick against the goads? He was resisting the proddings Of god and had resisted because the god was the wooden sharp stick that not the shepherd But the cattleman used to prod the cattle in the right direction And he was resisting god's proddings in different ways and going his own way Because jesus christ and the message of jesus to paul was a challenge It was a challenge to his independence and a challenge to his pride and to his self-righteousness Maybe that's like that for you this evening Or for me even as christians We're resisting the proddings of god in our lives Because he challenges our independence and our pride And our willingness. I want to go my own way It's a challenge to us and we're not listening

[21 : 46] We can become obsessed and unbelief although paul here was obviously not a believer at that point So he was obsessed with unbelief and then what's the focus of his testimony? I met with christ Versus 12 to 18 what we did about noon no king as I was on the road I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun and so on you know this Damascus road experience so very well don't you?

But you know it's very interesting And I'd never noticed it before Until I was reading it this time in verse 10 he says And that is just what I did in Jerusalem He was going to oppose the name of jesus and on the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison and when they were put to death I cast my vote against him he had gone To Damascus on the authority of the chief priests and here we're told He meets someone with a far greater authority before him and he recognizes who that is hey the commission And the authority that he went to Damascus with the chief priests You have the commission to kill And then he meets jesus the king of kings His authority with the commission to bring life To go to the Gentiles and bring life to them

Isn't that great? that jesus superseded The command of death that he was going out with to bring life And it's a message that is he has been given to give to the Gentiles to scotland to america to europe to the whole world to go beyond that little nation of Israel and to go beyond that as the the apostle who would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles Message to all and he is absolutely unashamed As he goes forward with this message absolutely bold and courageous But I have to stand he says in verse 22 by I've had God's help to this very day And so I stand here and testify to small and to great alike Before a gripper Festus Felix

Whoever it is he is recognizing that he is bringing Jesus Christ to people And that is hugely significant As we get the courage Our courage comes From Jesus Christ to share the gospel message And I hope we can do that with the resurrection at the core of what we say to people Or we we have come to know a risen living Savior Please don't ever give people the impression That we simply believe a moral set of rules from a long time ago Some wise old guru who lived and gave us a few directions on how to live That's not the gospel Is that what you believe?

We have a living relationship with the risen Savior The resurrection is core To what we are And what's the response Of a gripper here Verse 24 Little balding who knows Paul You're out of your mind Paul You're out of your mind Your great learning Is driving you insane Such a big brain that had gone bald Just pushing his head out He's intelligent and brainy Like all balding people But he was making him mad Mad, you're insane You'll never persuade me He says Do you think in such a short time you can persuade me to become a...

[26 : 01] You'll not do it Paul You'll not persuade me in such a short time I think that mirrors a lot of similar responses today When we tell them about a risen Savior When we tell them about Jesus Christ People will say well they may not say about our intelligence I don't know But they will probably say you're mad Isn't that the response of many people?

You're just mad And do you really think you can persuade me to become a Christian? Do you think you can do it? If people said that to you You'll never persuade me to become a Christian You'll never find me going into church You'll never persuade me to do that How does Paul respond?

When the first place is reasonable He just says no I'm not insane I'm doing nothing to think It really could make you think I'm insane I'm normal It's true he says What I'm saying is true And reasonable It's well grounded It is reasonable It's worked through It is what the Old Testament was prophesying This coming of Jesus And I have met with them on the road And those around me have had their lives changed By this Jesus It's absolutely reasonable And as a sinner Or as one facing death This is a reasonable salvation Because it speaks about someone who's paid the price For my sins And who's raised from the dead so that I can know life You might not like it But it is reasonable It is reason that something that can be worked through And so he defends That he's not mad And we should do the same

We should know and have a hope For what we believe We're not just We're not stupid And we shouldn't come across as being stupid And being Thoughtless in our faith It's just a nice feeling I like to believe in God And I'll go to heaven It's not very farion And floating about on wings It is reasonable our faith And we should be confident of defending it But then he also says Short time or long I pray God That not only you But all who are listening to me today May become what I am except the chains He says, I can't persuade you But I'm committing you to God Because it's God who can do it And that's a great response That we can share with people It's really frustrating sometimes People will say You'll never persuade me then What do we say then?

Well, we can say this Well, I'll pray that God will Intervene in your life I commit you to prayer Not many people Many people find their defences broken They might not say anything But it's a powerful thing to say That you will pray for someone And Paul knew that this great apostle To the Gentiles didn't convert people himself He didn't persuade people Persuasion is important But he didn't do it It was God working through him And as we talk about People becoming Christians this month And pray about that We're not just praying that God will do it We have no part to play We will talk about the reasonable Reality of our faith We'll talk about the resurrection in Jesus But we will also commit them to prayer And to the living God And I hope we can learn Some lessons from Paul For our own Christian lives And for the great courage and boldness that he had As he Defended the faith

[29 : 53] And he was the our apostle The apostle to the Gentiles May God bless what we've done this evening And we'll always be able to play it