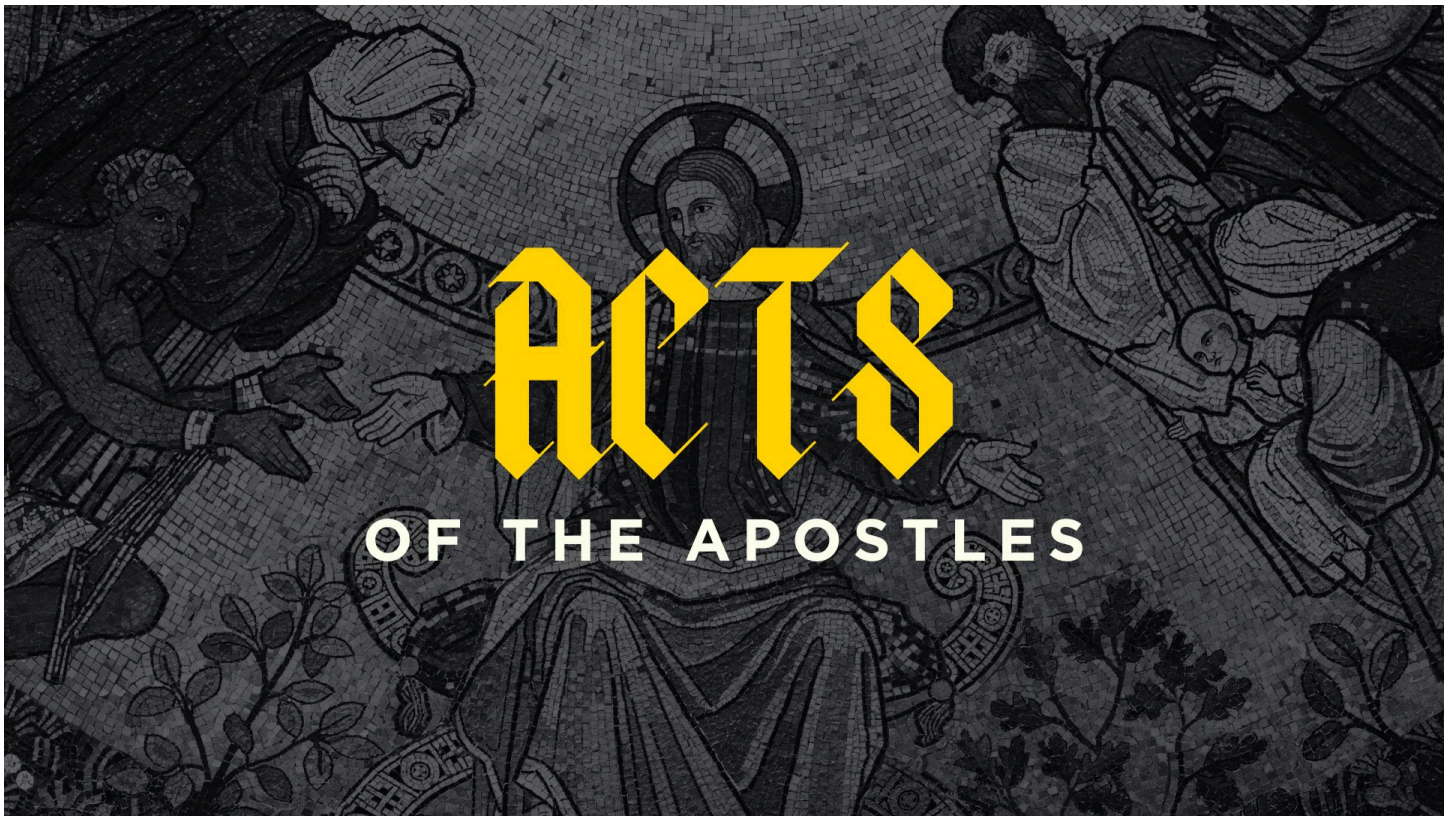




August 24, Acts Series

Acts 24: Tomorrow

Acts 24:22–27 (ESV) 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.” 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. 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. 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.” 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. 27 When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

In Acts 24, Paul has been transferred to Caesarea with charges levied against him. There are three:

- **Paul is a plague** (vs 5) The word *loimós* means pestilence. Paul is a pest!
- **Paul is an insurrectionist.** A creator of dissension. They call him the ringleader, or the instigator of the conflict. (vs 5)
- **Paul is a desecrator of the temple.** Rome would not care about this, but Tertullus (in vs 7 that’s missing in some versions) points to the violence that ensued as a result. Rome was interested in that.

Paul's defense is brilliant.

- He tells the truth. He tells it cheerfully! (vs 10)
- He says, *I didn't dispute with anyone, or stir up a crowd. I was not the pest they claim me to be. And they can't prove otherwise.* (vs 12-13)
- (vs 14) Paul tells that he loves Israel just like them. That he worships the same God of their fathers. That he believes everything written in the law and the prophets (OT). That he shares the same hope they hold: a resurrection. (vs 15)
- It's why he's now on trial. (vs 21)
- Paul has shifted the debate. The charge is insurrection. Paul changes the debate to theology.
- Rome couldn't give two beans about some theological squabble some Jews are having in their temple.

Paul wins the day. Felix, the governor, is impressed.

- vs 22: Felix says he'll rule later.
- vs 23: He keeps Paul in custody, but gives him great liberty. None of Paul's friends are prevented from helping him.
- vs 24: Felix *and his wife* frequently send for Paul. Felix likes him that much.
- Felix is the very first slave in the history of the Roman empire to become the governor of a Roman province.
- We can tell here that he's not swayed by flattery or manipulated by the Jewish high authorities.
- We also learn here that he had encountered followers of Jesus before. He knew more about Christianity than the Jews supposed.
- He's married to Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. She was brought up Jewish.
- Paul is a Jew who follows this man named Jesus, so Felix brings his wife with Jewish roots along for the show. They think it will be an entertaining encounter.

Luke says Paul talks to them about **faith in Jesus**.

- Specifically, he says Paul focused on **righteousness, self control, and coming judgement**.
- Paul quickly went from preaching to meddling.
- Paul says what needs to be said, come what may.
- The gospel, by its very nature, is offensive.
- Paul knew that Jesus would change their lives. Put Jesus in the right place...and everything else finds its proper place.
- But see what putting faith in Jesus means...

Putting faith in Jesus is to admit that you're not good enough.

- Paul talked to them about **righteousness**. He told them about God's holiness and about his requirements for every living person.
- Paul would have expressed "*There is no one righteous, not even one.*" (Romans 3:21)
- Nothing less than the death of the very Son of God on the cross, can overcome our failing.
- The cross stands as the greatest monument ever to our wickedness.
- You're not good enough. You're unrighteous. And the only way out of your wickedness is the very death of God's son. That's the message of righteousness.
- How's that sit with you today? It's understandable if that offends you a bit.

Putting faith in Jesus is to admit that you can't be in control.

- The word is **Egkratia**: It's made up of two words: "**Krat**" = power, strength, dominion, lordship; and then "**ego**" = self. It's **power or lordship over yourself**.
- That's what self control is. To have power over yourself.
- **Self control is something every Christian is called to**. But how many of us would say, *yep...I've got self control?*
- The secret to self control is that something bigger has to come in and do the directing.
- Jesus comes in, and becomes the supreme love of your life. And incredible changes happen. Self control happens.
- To have self control means that I first have to give up control. *Make Jesus as Lord? Let him call the shots?*
- *Eh...I don't know...you mean I can't decide for myself anymore? I don't get to call the shots in my own life? It's a little offensive to rob me of that.*

Putting faith in Jesus means admitting you can't save yourself.

- Paul talked to them about, is **the judgment to come**.
- God is just. No one with sin will escape his divine accountability for the way they've lived.
- Paul writes in Romans 3, that *the whole world is accountable to God* (3:19). And that nothing that anyone does...not a thousand or even a million good deeds stacked up on top of each other will be enough to make a person right with God. "*By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight...*" (3:20)
- But God gives you a gift. A gift made possible by Jesus. *The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:23)
- Here's how it works: "*we are justified by God's grace as a gift, through the redemption made possible by Jesus whom God put on the cross for us.*" (Romans 3:23-25)
- The work of Jesus on the cross "*makes God both **just** and the justifier for those who have faith in Jesus.*" (Romans 3:26)
- When you couldn't possibly save yourself, God saves you through Jesus.
- Notice the word "just." It's the same word in 1 John 1:7. *9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and **just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- Don't skip over the word just. He is **just** to forgive us.
- At the cross, with his blood, Jesus paid the bill. And we get to walk out of the courtroom of God, free.

- And for God to exact another payment when one has already been made would be **unjust**.
- God is not unjust, he's just. He accepts Christ's blood as payment in full for our sin, and does not stop us at the door and ask us for more. He's just.
- There's an offense that can happen when someone else pays, right? Because of my poverty someone else had to come in and pay for me? Oh...that's humbling. That's humiliating. I could even take offense to someone else paying my bill.
- But the bill will come. Judgment will come. And you can't pay. Nothing you do will ever be enough. Only Jesus can pay the bill.

With great boldness Paul spoke about faith in Christ to Felix and his wife Drusilla. He reasoned with them, likely at length, about righteousness, about self control, about the judgement to come. And how did these two respond to the greatest gift that has ever been offered in the world?

- vs 25: **Felix was alarmed.**
- Felix knew to his core that because of what he now knew, a choice had to be made.
- He refused to make it.
- He says, *Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity, I will summon you.*
- Paul had offered them the gift of God's grace. And when he held it in front of them, they said, *Later.*
- Felix's soul died in this moment.
- Two tragedies are present here that are possible for every one of us: 1) The tragedy of never trembling. Never recognizing your sin before a holy God in this life. 2) The tragedy of ignoring the trembling when it happens.
- Felix is a classic example of the perils of procrastination. He and his wife missed the opportunity to come alive and live forever.
- For two years they kept saying to Paul...to Jesus...*Not now, later.* And at the end of that time, Felix is deposed and transferred. He left Caesarea stripped of his political power. He was banished to Gaul by the Emperor.
- If only he had said, "Yes" to Jesus.
- But in indecision, he lost his position, and he lost any meaning or hope in this life.

He was going to be all that a mortal should be

Tomorrow

No one would be better than he

Tomorrow

Each morning he stacked up the letters he would write

Tomorrow

It was too bad indeed he was too busy to see his friend, but he promised to do it

Tomorrow

The greatest of workers this man would have been

Tomorrow

The world would have known him had he ever seen

Tomorrow

*But the fact is he died and faded from view,
and all that was left when living was through
Was a mountain of things he intended to do
Tomorrow.*

*Father God, we will pass through this world but once. So if there's any kindness we can show,
any good thing we can do, let us do it today. Let us not defer it, or neglect it, for we will not
pass this way again. Whatever it is he asks, we say YES to our Lord Jesus today. Amen.*