

# A God-Given Opportunity to Declare that Jesus Lives

Acts 25:1-27

*Halifax: 11 August 2013*

## **Introduction:**

Last week in our sermon series through Acts, we studied chapter 24, which ended with Paul left as a prisoner in the governor's palace at Caesarea.

- He had been left there for two years by Felix, the Roman governor of the province of Judea, because Felix could not make up his mind about what to do with Paul.
  - Paul had been brought there by Claudius Lysias, the commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem.
    - He had arrested Paul when the Jews from Asia had stirred up a mob at the temple of angry Jews who tried to kill him without a trial.
  - The commander had rescued Paul, and after investigation, could not discover what Paul had done to so infuriate the Jewish leaders...
    - The real cause was that Paul had been preaching that Jesus of Nazareth was Lord and Saviour,
      - and what especially infuriated the Jews was Paul's claim that Jesus was calling the Gentiles to enter God's kingdom of righteousness without first requiring them to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses!
      - Paul was teaching that these Gentiles could be saved by nothing more than moral repentance and faith in Jesus Christ!
      - The commander could not ascertain this because the Jews were accusing Paul of all sorts of other things that he had not even done...
  - But whatever the cause of their anger against Paul,
    - as soon as the commander learned of a vow that forty men had taken that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul,
      - and also having learned that Paul was a Roman citizen,
      - He transported Paul under heavy guard by night to Caesarea to move him to a safer environment and that he might stand trial before the governor of the province who resided there—Governor Felix.
  - Felix was in bit of a bind.
    - Upon examination, he knew that Paul was innocent, but also knew that releasing him would greatly infuriate the Jews...
      - And he already had terrible relations with them...
      - But he also knew that condemning Paul, who was a Roman citizen, would not bode well with his Roman superiors...
        - Paul would probably appeal, and he did not even have any legitimate charges to bring against him.
      - So Felix simply put the matter off and kept Paul in confinement—for two years!
        - He also had an ulterior motive—he hoped that Paul would give him a bribe for his release, but no bribe was forthcoming!
      - Instead, Paul preached the gospel to Felix and his wife Drusilla whenever he had opportunity.
        - Upon hearing the gospel, Felix was very fearful—

- but true to his character, instead of repenting and turning to Christ, he put the matter off and suppressed his conviction until it cooled off.
- You will remember that I spoke to you about the danger of doing that.
  - Each time you do, you make your heart harder than it was before.
    - Your heart is like iron that is hardened each time it is heated with conviction if you don't repent.
  - I have been in the ministry long enough to have seen this process of hardening in many who have had the privilege of hearing the gospel, but who have not repented.
    - If the Holy Spirit convicts you of your need of Christ, it is very foolish for you to resist Him.

But as for Paul, there he was, in custody for two years in the governor's palace.

- He made the most of the opportunities he had, to be sure, as we saw last week,
  - but now a new governor, Festus, has been appointed.
  - Felix was removed because of the terrible job he had done as governor, and Festus was appointed to replace him.
    - We don't know much about Festus because he was only governor for two years and then apparently died in office as a relatively young man,
      - but from what we can learn of him from Acts and from the historian Josephus, he was a much better governor than Felix.
- But of course Luke is not primarily concerned with giving us information about Festus except as it pertains to the advance of the kingdom of God...
  - And what we have in Acts 25, which we shall look at today, is Paul's interaction with this new governor as a left-over prisoner of Felix.
  - And what Luke presents to us here for our edification and encouragement, is the way the Lord worked powerfully to bring about another marvellous opportunity for Paul to testify that Jesus lives!
    - Paul was told at the time of his conversion that he would be able to testify before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel,
      - and here we see that most wonderfully fulfilled.

Listen now as I read to you from Acts 25.

- This is the very word of God which He has given to us for our encouragement and edification.

Acts 25:1-27: Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, <sup>3</sup> asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while *they* lay in ambush along the road to kill him. <sup>4</sup> But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going *there* shortly. <sup>5</sup> “Therefore,” he said, “let those who have authority among you go down with *me* and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him.” <sup>6</sup> And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded

Paul to be brought. <sup>7</sup> When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, <sup>8</sup> while he answered for himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.” <sup>9</sup> But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?” <sup>10</sup> So Paul said, “I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. <sup>11</sup> For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if

there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.”<sup>12</sup> Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!”<sup>13</sup> And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.<sup>14</sup> When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying: “There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix,<sup>15</sup> about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.<sup>16</sup> To them I answered, ‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.’<sup>17</sup> Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in.<sup>18</sup> When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed,<sup>19</sup> but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.<sup>20</sup> And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked

whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters.<sup>21</sup> But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar.”<sup>22</sup> Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he said, “you shall hear him.”<sup>23</sup> So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus’ command Paul was brought in.<sup>24</sup> And Festus said: “King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer.<sup>25</sup> But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him.<sup>26</sup> I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write.<sup>27</sup> For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”

May God bless the reading of His holy Word.

You can see in this passage that the Lord brought it about, through the working of His marvellous providence,

- that Paul might testify before King Agrippa and before all the dignitaries that were with him and that were in Caesarea.
- It is very encouraging to see how the Lord brings about such circumstances for the expansion of His kingdom.
  - As we turn now to look at the details, we need to ask God to stir us up that this might make us more zealous to pray for opportunities to testify of Christ and to make the most of those that come our way.
    - Seeing how God worked here ought to help us to look for Him to work among us in a similar way today.
    - So let’s look at the particulars:

**I. First, we see how the Lord foils that plots of His servant’s enemies that they may continue to testify of Him as long as He wants them to.**

- We see this in our text in the way He protects Paul from the schemes of the Jews.
- A. Some of you may say—but we have already seen this with Paul...why do we need to hear about it again?
- A.1. Actually, I hope that none of you would say that...
- because we need to understand that the Holy Spirit always has good reasons for what He includes in the Scriptures...
  - If we are serving the Lord, we need the encouragement that comes from seeing how Paul’s life was spared again and again.
  - The Lord’s people have been persecuted through all the ages...

- And these accounts remind them that no one can harm us unless it has been appointed by the Lord.
- We may face more persecution in our society in the days to come, and these accounts are needed to prepare us for that.
  - We need to see that our enemies' plots will fail them so long as the Lord wants us to live.

- A.2. If you object to hearing multiple deliverance accounts, it betrays a wrong attitude in your heart...
- I remember when I used to watch Batman as a child—and at the end of every show, Batman would be in a fix—
    - and every week I was eager to watch it to see how he would get out.
  - Think about it...we don't get weary of repetition when it is something that is important to us.
    - Does a hockey fan grow weary of watching his team win?
    - Does he say, "I have seen them win several times...why should I bother to watch another game?"
      - It's all just more of the same.
  - Something similar could be said about eating your favourite meal...
    - If you love steak, you don't say—"but we just had steak last week—why do we have to have it again?"
  - You know there is something wrong in your marriage if your spouse says,
    - Why do you want to spend the evening with me again—we just did that last week, do we have to do it again?
  - If you love the Lord and His kingdom, you will love to hear many accounts of how He delivers His people from the plots of their enemies.
    - Each time you do, it will encourage you and give you hope.

B. We have two more accounts here of Paul's deliverance from his Jewish adversaries.

B.1. The first comes about as a result of the mere preference of Festus.

- Take a look:

B.1.a. The Jews see in the appointment of Festus a golden opportunity to do away with Paul once and for all.

B.1.a.1) Festus, being the newly appointed inexperienced governor appears to be very earnest at his new post...

- After only three days, he makes a journey up to Jerusalem to make his acquaintance with the Jewish leaders there.
- This is very wise.
  - He knows that he needs to do all he can to have good relations with them lest he have the troubles that Felix had.

B.1.a.2) It is rather remarkable to see what the Jews spoke to him about.

- Even though two years has gone by, Paul the prisoner is still on their minds!
  - They immediately proceed to tell him about Paul and about how important it is to them to see him brought to justice.
- They saw this as their golden opportunity to exploit the situation...
  - Here was an inexperienced governor...

- And a governor who did not know the history about Paul and how they had attempted to ambush him in the past...
- And a governor who was eager to establish good relations with them!
  - Now, they could finally get Paul!

**B.1.a.3)** You can see what their ploy is in verse 2 & 3...

- **Acts 25:2-3: Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, [notice how it is referred to as a favour] that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.**
- Now of course they did not mention the ambush to Festus—that was just a secret they kept among themselves...

TRANS> The drama builds!

- Will they succeed in finally doing away with Paul?

B.1.b. But look at how their plans are once again foiled in God's providence...

B.1.b.1) Festus simply does not want to hang around Jerusalem to conduct the trial of a prisoner that is already in Caesarea.

- He has no idea why the Jews want him to bring Paul to Jerusalem when he is already in Caesarea,
  - and of course they cannot tell him what their real motive is...
  - so Festus simply asserts that as he is returning shortly, they can send up a delegation and he will conduct a hearing.

B.1.b.2) Such are the wonderful workings of God to preserve the life of His servant—the preference of a governor...

- Of course it may be that Festus was wise enough to know that they were up to something...
  - but one way or another, God uses this to preserve Paul.

B.2. The second narrow escape comes about by Paul invoking a legal privilege.

B.2.a. In this case, the Jews make their way up to Caesarea to accuse Paul, as Festus had proposed, making no delays...

- But once again they have no way to substantiate their charges against him—
- From the way they had spoken to him before about Paul,
  - Festus probably thought it would be a very simple matter for them to establish his guilt—but such was not the case at all...
    - This is a reminder that it is always important to hear both sides of the story—
      - as Proverbs 18:17 says:
        - **Pr 18:17: The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.**

TRANS> But in any event, the Jews are unable to verify their charges...

B.2.b. The plot thickens when Festus, seeing how unhappy the Jews are about this, decides that he will do them a favour after all...

- He knew how much they wanted to try Paul at Jerusalem—
  - and he sees that it has to do with religious matters pertaining their own law—so perhaps it is reasonable to have a trial there...

- so in verse 9 we read that:
  - **Acts 25:9: Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?”**

B.2.c. Paul, of course,

- knowing that the Jews had sought to ambush him before and would surely do it again...
  - utterly refuses to do any such thing.
- And what is wonderful about the whole thing is that the Roman law has a provision by which Paul has the right to refuse the governor’s proposal.
  - There seems to be a tone of rebuke in his reply:
    - **Acts 25:10-11: So Paul said, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.”**
  - You see how he points out that he is at the proper tribunal, and that it is obvious that he has done no wrong...
    - And how Festus surely knows that and ought not to have tried to send him to Jerusalem...
  - Interestingly though, he states that *if* he had done something that was worthy of death, he would gladly bear the penalty.
    - If I may digress for a moment—this is very important.
      - As believers, we are to recognize the civil magistrate as God’s ministers of justice.
      - Even though they are not always just, they have been appointed by God,
        - and if we have done wrongs that ought to be punished,
          - we should not refuse to accept our punishment.

B.2.d. Anyway, after consulting with his council, Festus concludes that the appeal must stand.

- It was clearly within the rights of a Roman citizen to have his case heard by Caesar if he felt that he was not getting justice in a lower court...so Paul invokes this right and it is sustained.

C. But see in all this the hand of the Lord!

C.1. These things happen—including the tight pinches—in order that we may see His hand of deliverance...

- It was He who brought it about that Festus refused to have the case at Jerusalem initially, all that Paul might be spared...
- And then when Festus proposed going to Jerusalem for a second hearing, it was again the Lord who had brought it about that Paul was a Roman citizen, and that there was a provision in Roman law for an appeal.

C.2. All this was God’s doing.

- We need to learn to see His hand in all of our affairs.
  - We need not ever despair—just as in an adventure story—we just wait to see how God will bring about the deliverance...

C.2.a. In Psalm 91, our Psalm of Focus, we see that God promises to preserve us always—

- that no evil shall befall us and that we will never even dash our foot against a stone.

C.2.b. Now you will say to me—yes, but Paul had spent two years in prison, and the fact is, he was eventually put to death.

- Yes he was, but all perfectly in God's time.
- There was no need for Paul to fear—only to trust.
  - Don't get me wrong—we are called to suffer many things as Paul did—but none that are not appointed by our heavenly Father.
  - And not only that, but we have to pray earnestly in our dangers...
    - prayer is real and dangers are real—
      - and that is partly how the deliverance is brought about...we cry out to God and He answers...
  - But there is no need for us ever to fret—
    - It is all in God's hands.
    - In one way or another, if we are in Christ, we will be delivered.

C.3. And the same is true of the church as a whole.

C.3.a. You need to pray for her and labour for her and fight for her, but you can know all the while that there is no danger of her demise...

- God will never let her be destroyed—she will always come out on top in the end.
- But because of the kind of God He is, He will often bring it about that it looks as if she is going to be destroyed—just as in a good movie!
- You might think it strange that God works this way, but get used to it—that is the way He works.

C.3.b. This is true even in the grand outflowing of history—the macro scale!

- When Jonah was cast into the sea, it looked like the end of him as an individual—but the fish saved him...that is on a small scale...
  - But in the big scheme of things, it looked like Israel was ended at the exile, when Jerusalem and the temple that God had guarded for so long were reduced to rubble...
    - but the saints knew that God was not through with her because His promise still stood.
    - Those who had faith rejoiced in the rubble and dust of the city because they knew that God would raise it up.

C.3.c. My brothers and sisters, I am encouraged by two things in the modern scheme of things...

- The church has been threatened for centuries by the enlightenment.
  - The secularists have tried to destroy the church by many arguments.
  - There was a time about 50 to 100 years ago when it looked like they had won on two fronts...
    - Rationalistic Philosophy had made many in the church bow to her reductionist demands...
    - And naturalistic evolutionary science had made many in the church bow to her acclaimed sure findings...
- But it is very encouraging to see how both rationalistic philosophy and naturalistic science are completely unravelling.
  - What had seemed so certain to the most brilliant of minds is now being more and more exposed as utterly foolish.

- All we have to do is trust the Lord and wait for our enemies to fail—yes, we are called to fight—but no matter how desperate the battle—the Lord will bring it all to completion.

TRANS> The Lord will always preserve His servants and His church, just as in Acts 25, He graciously preserved Paul that Paul might testify of Jesus again.

- Now I want to move on and look at the next thing the Lord does to bring it about that Paul might testify...

## II. Second, see how He marvellously brings focus on the real issue—the issue that mattered.

A. You can see in our text how the Jews tried to divert the issue.

A.1. They knew that Paul was preaching that Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified was alive...and that He was the Christ, the Lord and Saviour.

- They knew that Paul was preaching that he had seen Jesus and had been sent by Him to preach reconciliation through faith in Jesus to the Gentiles.
- They knew that this was the real issue, but they tried to divert it...
  - They had to come up with something that would stand up in court—and something that would discredit Paul before their fellow Jews who might have been disposed to hear the gospel.
    - If they could trash him, it would discredit his message.
    - You will remember that even some of the Jews who believed in Christ had been infected with rumors about Paul and were suspicious of him!
      - How careful we need to be about accepting rumors!

A.2. In verse 7 it says that they laid many serious complaints against Paul which they could not prove.

A.2.a. From Paul's response in verse 8, you can tell what these charges were...

- That he had transgressed the law of the Jews, which he had not;
- That he had defiled the temple (by bringing a Greek into the area that only Jews could enter) which he had not;
- That he had offended against Caesar—stirring up sedition and causing riots to disturb the Roman peace—but he had not done that either.

A.2.b. But the problem with these charges is that it diverts the issue.

- It kept people from seeing what the real message of Paul was that had so offended these wicked men.
- We have seen on several occasions how Paul went back to the real issue—the real matter that divides him from his opponents...
  - namely, that Paul believes that Jesus of Nazareth lives—being raised from the dead—and they deny it.

B. Interestingly, in Acts 25, Festus is the one who draws attention the real issue.

B.1. Festus is perplexed because, as he explains, he does not know what to put in his report to Caesar when he refers the case to him.

- He explains this in verse 25-27:
  - **Acts 25:25-27: “But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”**
- It is a rather embarrassing situation because Paul really should have been acquitted by now—there are no substantive charges against him.
  - So Festus is not sure what to do.



- But happily for him, King Agrippa who has jurisdiction over a neighbouring region has come to welcome Festus to his new office.
  - Incidentally, this is King Agrippa the second, the great grandson of Herod the Great and the son of King Herod Agrippa the first (the one who was eaten by worms).
    - Bernice is his sister, and there were rumors that he lived in an incestuous relationship with her.
  - King Agrippa has a lot of interest in Jerusalem because he had been given the authority by Caesar to appoint the high priest at Jerusalem.
    - He does not have any official jurisdiction over Paul in this case,
      - but Festus wishes simply to consult with him about the problem of what to write to Caesar about Paul.
      - Agrippa is an expert in all things Jewish, so he is just the man that is needed to help sort out the matter.

TRANS> But even though Festus is perplexed,

B.2. He perceives what the real issue was that had divided Paul from the Jewish authorities...

- He explains this in verse 18-19:
  - **Acts 25:18-19: When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.**
  - He is dead right!
    - The whole issue is about **a certain Jesus who died and whom Paul affirms to be alive!**
    - That is what this is all about!

C. Brothers and sisters, this is, in fact, the issue that divides the human race!

- Is Jesus alive or not? Is He risen and reigning as Lord and Saviour, or not?

C.1. If you *truly* believe that He is, then your whole life revolves around Him.

- Because you believe that He alone is God's way of salvation, sent from heaven.
  - You believe that He came into the world and died for our transgressions—
    - and that He rose again on the third day because God the Father accepted His offering for our justification.
  - You believe that sin is a very serious matter and cannot be atoned for by anyone but the once crucified now reigning Lord Jesus.
  - You believe that He is the judge of the living and the dead and that He will come again in glory to render His judgement.
    - And as we saw last week, because you believe that, you strive always to maintain a conscience without offence before Him.
- Because He is risen and reigning, you joyfully bow to Him as Lord.
  - You delight to do His will because He has given you His Spirit and is at work in you by the same power that raised Him from the dead.
  - You look at the world in an entirely different way than those who do not believe that He who died is now alive.
- Everyone else has no real hope—no lasting hope...
  - They have no real way to deal with their sin and their guilt...
  - They have no future.

- C.2. Do you see what a difference this makes?
- C.2.a. It is what divides one philosopher from another and one biologist from another...
- It is what divides you from a loved one who does not believe—from a son or a daughter—from a parent or a sibling...
  - You are not living your life for the same things—you have an entirely different purpose and a different hope.
- C.2.b. And this is also what makes the difference in your daily walk, even as a believer...
- When you are mindful that Jesus lives, you are very different than you are on those days when you are not mindful of this...
    - when you live independently of Him instead of walking in communion with Him...
    - You treat your spouse differently and your children differently...
    - You do your work differently and you rejoice in different things.
- C.3. Now it is a marvellous thing when the Lord, in His providence, brings such issues to the forefront...
- If you speak to people about Christ very often, I am sure you know what a blessing it is when people raise the right issues...
    - When the jailor approaches you and says, “What must I do to be saved?”
  - Or when someone says,
    - So why did Jesus die on the cross?
    - Or, how can a person know that his sins are forgiven?

TRANS> In such cases, the Lord has graciously brought the principle issue to the forefront!

- He is preparing an opportunity for you to testify of Him!
- Consider what we have seen so far in Paul’s case—what has been done to prepare for him to testify...
  - First, that He marvellously preserved him to be His witness...
  - Second, that He has brought the principal issue to the forefront—that Paul is preaching that Jesus who died is alive!

### **III. And now finally, I want you to consider how the Lord brings people together to hear the gospel.**

A. Paul has a tremendous opportunity dropped right into his lap!

- A.1. Look at how events are unfolded in our text to give Paul an opportunity to testify of the Lord...
- First, that Festus is perplexed about what to write and wants help...
  - Second, that he sees what the dividing issue is—that Paul believes that a certain Jesus who died is alive...
  - Third, that Agrippa, the expert on Jewish matters, shows up, just at the right time.
  - Fourth, that Agrippa is gripped by Festus’ declaration about Jesus and the resurrection and very much wants to hear more—from Paul.
  - Fifth, that Paul is summoned, not this time to defend himself, but to explain about this matter about Jesus who died and whom he affirms to be alive!
    - This is not a trial you see—Agrippa had no jurisdiction at Caesarea, and besides, Paul has already appealed and is going to Rome.
    - This is an inquiry—a quest for information...

- It is a golden opportunity because Paul is being asked to explain about Jesus and His resurrection—and why he believes it!

TRANS> And not only did the Lord bring all these circumstances together...

A.2. The Lord also brought a whole crowd of people together—important people—to hear the gospel!

- Look at verse 23:
  - **Acts 25:23: So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp,**
    - That means that they had a procession—with decorated horses, men in uniforms, flags and shining swords...
      - And there they were, arrayed in the purple robes of royalty with the gold circlet of the crown on their brows...
      - And there was Festus with the red robe of a governor...
        - And there were also others—the verse continues...
    - **when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.**
      - There were five commanders—who commanded the five auxiliary cohorts stationed at Caesarea...
      - And the prominent men of the city—the who's who of the city were all there...
        - And they were there for one purpose—one amazing purpose...
        - All these important people were there to hear Paul explain what he believed and preached that was so offensive to the Jews—that a certain Jesus who died was alive!
  - What an amazing opportunity!
    - Do you suppose that Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was there?
      - He lived at Caesarea—and he would have served under one of the commanders that was present on this occasion...
      - What about Philip the Evangelist and his four daughters—do you suppose he was able to attend this event?
        - He was a prominent man in the city—probably one who regularly had visited Paul while he was confined there.
      - You can hardly imagine how excited these believers at Caesarea must have been about all this!
        - Perhaps they spent the night in prayer for their dear brother Paul and for the conversion of the officials in their city!
    - Just think, Paul had been shut in the governor's house for two years as a prisoner—
      - Many had seen his manner of life and many had spoken to him...
        - But now he is brought forward to testify of his hope before the whole city!
        - And after this, he is going to Rome to testify to Nero!

TRANS> I tell you—it can look so dark to us but then the Lord does things like this!

- Paul had no crown, no robe, and no procession—only a prisoner's chains...
  - But he is the one who is remembered in history because he is the one who testified of Jesus who died and is alive!

- His hearers had no idea that this doctrine that they were hearing would spread into the whole world and be a blessing to many.
  - But it did because the Lord was in it.
- B. If you are a believer, it thrills your heart whenever there is an occasion for the news that Jesus who died is alive is able to be proclaimed!
- B.1. Let this account of what happened to Paul here encourage you that the Lord is at work in the world...
- Pray that He will open up opportunities like this!
    - For evangelists and pastors!
    - For missionaries and teachers!
  - And yes, for you—with that uncle or that parent or that sibling of yours that does not know the Lord.
    - Pray that God will open up opportunities for His word to go forth!
- B.2. God is faithful and He will open up a thousand ways for us to testify!
- Be ready, be prayerful, be eager and do not be discouraged!
    - We will be given opportunities in the great ebb and flow of history—as well as in individual conversations.
    - Our Lord is making His gospel known and He will use each one of you as He sees fit!
      - Entrust the matter to Him and you will see Him work.

**Conclusion:** But tell me,

- Are **you** thrilled to know that Jesus who died is alive?
  - Is this the thing that makes your life tick?
  - Are you thrilled to be a part of the church that makes Him known and does it thrill your soul whenever opportunities to proclaim the good news arise?
- I hope so—it is a matter of eternal life and eternal death.
  - If you do not understand the significance of the fact that Jesus who died is alive, please talk to me or to one of the elders about it after the service.
    - He died to pay the penalty of His peoples' sins,
      - And He was raised from the dead because His payment was accepted.
      - Come to Him and you too will be saved.