

“BEFORE GOVERNORS AND KINGS”

Acts 24:1-25:27, Acts 26:1-32

August 23 & 24, 2025

“Have you ever noticed the pock-marks, or dimples, covering the surface of a golf ball?

They make the ball look imperfect. So, what's their purpose?

“An aeronautical engineer who designs golf balls says that a perfectly smooth ball would travel only 130 yards off the tee. But the same ball with the right kind of dimples will fly twice that far. These apparent ‘flaws’ minimize the ball's air resistance and allow it to travel much further.

“Most of us can quickly name the physical characteristics we wish we had been born without. It's difficult to imagine that these ‘imperfections’ are there for a purpose and are part of God's master design. Yet, when the psalmist wrote of God's creative marvel in the womb, he said to the Lord, ‘*You formed my inward parts*’ (Psalm 139:13 [NKJV]) and ‘*Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed*’ (v. 16). Then he said, ‘*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*’ (v. 14).”<sup>1</sup>

God made us like we are on purpose, and He has allowed us to get into the situations we're in on purpose, so that we can use our unique features and situations to bring him honor and glory. It may not seem right or feel right at times, but God is able to work all things to His glory (Romans 8:28). No matter how we look, no matter what situation we might become involved in, God can use our unique conditions to bring about faith in others who are around us. If we stay open to God's leading in our lives, even the most difficult and disappointing situation can become a great opportunity for helping another person find faith in Jesus Christ.

That brings us to Paul's situation in the Book of Acts. He was threatened by the Jews, attacked in the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, attacked by the Sanhedrin, and even had a

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<sup>1</sup> (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002] pg. 93-94)

conspiracy planned against him to kill him. Yet, God interceded in each situation to use Paul in a way that opened up the avenue of sharing the Gospel with others. He had been taken to Caesarea by Roman troops and stood before Governor Felix, confronted by his Jewish accusers, and had given his defense, disproving all of the accusations the Jewish lawyer and leaders had given. But he remained in custody by the Romans in Herod's Palace, awaiting a decision by Governor Felix. With each encounter, who knows how many people he had the chance to share Jesus with?

Paul had the chance to give his testimony once more before the leaders of the Temple in defense to what the lawyer, Tertullus had presented to Felix in an attempt to sway him to condemn Paul. But Paul's testimony gave ample evidence to not only contradict the charges, but explained what he had been doing in Jerusalem at the time when he was attacked by the Jews and then the Sanhedrin. It not only put the leaders of the Temple to shame, but it exposed their lies and proved their going against the Commandments of God - "*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor*" (Exodus 20:16). In reality it was them that should have been put on trial for what they had done and the false accusations they had made. But it was Paul who was in the hot seat, and he did well in defending himself.

So, having heard his case, Governor Felix waited on giving a verdict for Paul's case for two years (Acts 24:27), waiting for the commander, Lysias, to go from Jerusalem to Caesarea. However, he used that time to listen to Paul "*as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and [kept saying], 'That's enough for now. You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you'*" (24:24-25).

For those two years, Paul was kept in Herod's Palace under guard, waiting for Felix to

give judgment to his case. And all that time, God used Paul to influence Felix and his wife, Drusilla, in their faith in Jesus Christ. God used Paul to begin the conversion of the Roman Empire, one guard, one centurion, one governor at a time.

How can God use your faults, your situation, or your condition to share the truth of Jesus with those around you? Maybe the doctor you have to go to see, needs to hear about Jesus; can you share your faith with him? Maybe the lawyer you're working with has not yet come to know Jesus - how do you share Jesus with that person? Maybe your obnoxious neighbor needs the love of Jesus shown to her; what can you do to show her that Jesus' loves her? How can you use every situation to touch the life of one person right next to you?

One week ago, a few of us went to the Warbirds and Classics Over the Midwest, a remote control airplane event in Fond du Lac. Having gotten acquainted with a few of the pilots at the event, Warren Caravue and I had the chance to pray for one of the men's sons who is in stage 4 colon cancer. What a privilege to touch the heart of this man from Phoenix, Arizona. We shared a common interest (RC airplanes), and we had the chance to lift up this man, his family and friends, and his son to the Lord for healing, guidance, protection and encouragement. Was it by chance that God used us to touch the life of this man? Maybe, but I believed that God orchestrated the appointment by using us right where we were to lift up a brother in his faith.

Though Felix brought Paul before him often, "*hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe*" (24:26), Paul continued to use each opportunity to share Jesus with him. But as a new governor, Porcius Festus, came into the office to replace Felix, Paul's case was heard by many more people as Festus tried to figure out what Paul had done, and why he was in Herod's Palace.

And then King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice, came to visit and wish Festus well as he started governing Judea. This gave Festus a chance to get input from others as to what he might

do with Paul, and what he might write to the Emperor to explain why he had Paul sent to him.

King Agrippa was acquainted with the Christian faith, so he was curious to hear about the whole situation.

So the very next day, Governor Festus welcomed King Agrippa and Bernice into the audience room, along “*with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city*” (Acts 25:23). Seems the whole royalty of the city of Caesarea turned out to listen to Paul.

Here’s how it turned out. This is Acts 26:1-32. (READ Acts 26:1-32)

Paul used every situation to share his faith in Jesus Christ with those around him. On the steps of the Roman barracks, in the midst of an angry group of church leaders, and in the audience of the military and city leaders, Paul spoke boldly about the need for Jesus to be in the lives of those listening. He told how he was changed by his encounter with Jesus, and he desired everyone around him to find that same hope he received.

So how does that happen for us? How can we share the hope of Jesus with those around us? I invite you to listen to a few examples of how other Christians have given their witness.

“A few nights following Payne Stewart's second PGA Open victory (less than six months before he died), friends gathered to pay tribute to the champ. The focal point of the party was a big-screen replay of the final-day TV coverage. Seeing the tape for the first time, Payne watched images of himself sinking the winning putt and moments later giving credit to God.

“At the party, Stewart's pastor, J. B. Collingsworth, noticed Payne walking away trying to hide the tears welling up in his eyes. When he faced his pastor, the tears began to flow.

“Collingsworth recalls, ‘I put my arm around him and said, “Payne, I just want you to know I appreciate what God's doing with your heart.” He looked at me as hard as he could, tears now streaming down his face. He said, “J. B., I'm not going to be a Bible-thumper. I'm not

going to stand up on some stump. But I want everybody to know--it's Jesus.””<sup>2</sup> Using his victory at the PGA gave Payne Steward the chance to let everyone know who the most important person in his life was - the Lord Jesus. He didn't need to use words. He just used his situation to proclaim Jesus as His Lord and Savior.

Then, there's this account from Greg Huffer, of Lebanon, Indiana. He says, “While in seminary in Chicago's suburbs, I discovered that a Promise Keepers' convention was coming to Soldier Field. A group of us took a commuter train downtown, then caught a cab to the stadium.

“We were running late, but still hoped to get a good seat. I'm sure our driver, a man who spoke little English, felt intimidated as the six of us piled into his taxi, jabbering loudly. Traffic was heavy and got worse near the stadium. We slowed to a crawl. We weren't going to get that good seat after all.

“A couple of us started talking about hopping from the cab and running the rest of the way to the stadium. It sounded good to most of us, but Michael spoke against the plan. He was more concerned about the cabby. If we got out at that point, the driver would be stuck in traffic without being able to refill his taxi. He'd be losing money.

“After Michael spoke with us, he turned his attention to our foreign driver. Michael shared about the conference we were going to, and then he shared the good news of Jesus Christ.

“I don't know if the man was affected by the message, but I do know Michael's concern provided a base of credibility for sharing the gospel that the rest of us overlooked.”<sup>3</sup>

If we are open to God's leading, we can use whatever situation we find ourselves in to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Every situation that catches us off guard, or seems awkward, can turn into a great chance to proclaim the message of God's love for us through

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<sup>2</sup> (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003] pg. 37)

<sup>3</sup> (Ibid., pg. 284-285)

Jesus. But we have to be prepared to see the situation as God's divine appointment for us to share with others of the wonderful things that God has done to bring us back into a relationship with Him.

Finally, there's this account. "In his autobiography, Johnny Cash tells the story of his older brother Jack, who was only 14 when he died. Jack worked at the high school agriculture shop, where he had a job cutting oak trees into fence posts. The money he earned helped support their family, which was struggling to survive by working in the cotton fields of rural Arkansas. A terrible accident occurred one day. A table saw severely cut Jack, resulting in his death a few days later.

But "sometime before his death, Jack had announced to his family and the community that he intended to be a preacher. Everyone agreed he would make a fine preacher, for his strong Christian character was already well known.

"Johnny Cash looked up to his older brother, and Jack's example influenced him to the day he died. Cash wrote, 'Jack isn't really gone, anyway, any more than anyone is. For one thing, his influence on me was profound. When we were kids, he tried to turn me from the way of death to the way of life, to steer me toward the light, and since he died his words and his example have been like signposts for me. The most important question in many of the conundrums and crises of my life has been, "Which is Jack's way? Which direction would he have taken?" I haven't always gone that way, of course, but at least I've known where it was.'"<sup>4</sup>

We can never dictate how a person will respond as we share Jesus with them. They may come to follow the Lord Jesus, or they may not. But the important thing is that we need to tell them so that they at least hear of God's love through Jesus Christ, and have the chance to

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<sup>4</sup> (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, pg. 276)

respond to Him. There are so many people who have not yet come to know about Jesus, and God may be putting us, with all of our imperfections and faults, right in their path so that they might have the chance to come to know Jesus.

As God's servants, and followers of Jesus Christ, we have the responsibility of taking the Good News of Jesus to those around us. The question is, "Will we take those opportunities that God puts in our journey to share the hope that we have in Jesus?"

I pray that you learn to use every situation and every condition in your life to be a bold witness for Jesus Christ. Who knows, we might also be brought before governors and kings at some point. But no matter what we have to face, let be used for the Glory of God, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Let's pray.

Father, we are Your servants. Thank You for providing the situations and the conditions in our lives where we can use our unique flaws to tell others about Jesus. This world is searching so hard for something to put their trust and faith in that it reliable and sure. Help us to be able to share our own stories of how Jesus touched our lives so that we might help others come to know You, too. Give us Your courage to live for You every day, we pray this in Jesus' Great and Powerful Name. AMEN.