

Series: "Finishing What was Started"

C.R. 5-12-24

"Dusty Promises"

Text: Acts 25

Intro: As we move further in the book of Acts we really see some of the same things on repeat. As we closed out Chapter 24 Paul is placed under arrest (a very soft one), and he has now been there for 2 years. Remember that Felix was known for putting off decisions, and Paul is yet another example of this.

There has also been a change in leadership. Felix has been given a new post and Festus takes his place. Chapter 25 is basically wrapped around Paul standing before Festus and facing the same thing he has been facing.

We will walk through this chapter and what is happening, but the theme for us today is centered around waiting on the Lord, and how we react from the sideline.

1) The Governor and the Plotters (v. 1-5)

- a. Festus very quickly starts dealing with matters and at the top of the list was what to do with Paul.
- b. He wants to have a decent relationship with the Jews, but they only have one thing STILL on their mind. Kill Paul.
- c. Amazing. Even after two years they still want him dead. There must be something about Jesus.
- d. They want him to bring Paul to them, but wisely he says no you will have to come down to us. (God sovereign control.)

2) The Governor and the Prisoner. (v. 6-12)

- a. Once again Paul is called out to stand trial.
- b. Again, he faces false accusations of which they have no proof.
- c. V. 8. Paul pleads innocent.
- d. V.9 Festus plays politician. Wanting to do the Jews a favor, he asks Paul if he was willing to go back to Jerusalem to stand trial.

- e. V.10. Paul simply say no. He states if I have done something wrong I am willing to die. But they can't prove anything.
- f. Paul appealed to Caesar he knew he had no shot at fairness in Jerusalem, and he knew that God had told him he was going to Rome.
- g. Rightly and wisely, Paul wanted to avoid martyrdom if he could. He wasn't afraid to face the lions, but he didn't want to put his head in a lion's mouth if he could avoid it.

3) The Governor and Agrippa. (v.13-27)

- a. Agrippa was known as an expert in Jewish customs and religious matters. Though he did not have jurisdiction over Paul in this case, his hearing of the matter would be helpful for Festus.
- b. Of this King Agrippa, his great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus as a baby; his grandfather had John the Baptist beheaded; his father had martyred the first apostle, James. Now Paul stood before the next in line of the Herods, Herod Agrippa.
- c. Bernice was Agrippa's sister. Secular history records rumors that their relationship was incestuous.
- d. Herod Agrippa II didn't rule over much territory, but he was of great influence because the emperor gave him the right to oversee the affairs of the temple in Jerusalem and the appointment of the high priest.
- e. (v.19) Festus problem. I don't have anything to charge him with, and it seems the only problem the Jews have with him is centered around the man named Jesus who Paul says is alive.
- f. It is amusing to think of the religious leaders protesting to Festus that Paul won't stop talking about the risen Jesus, and hoping that the governor would make Paul stop.
- g. Then Agrippa says " I want to hear him".
- h. V. 23-27 The stage is being set for Paul to stand before Agrippa. Only God.

Things had been silent for 2 years. We have no idea what Paul did during that time. It is a very quiet time. He is an innocent man sitting in prison waiting. He had been a man that started churches everywhere, a busy man active in the

work of the God he loves with heart, soul and mind and now he sits and waits. He has been sidelined.

Swindoll said that “any worthwhile spiritual journey must include discipline”. What was God up to with Paul during this time. Since God never wastes anything, He must have been doing something in the life of Paul. You can’t help but think that he was continuing to train Paul and to make him more like His Son.

Illustrate: In the early morning hours of October 4, 1980, a young nursing student was brutally murdered in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. Following the advice of well-meaning friends, Steve Linscott, a student at Emmaus Bible College, told police about a dream he’d had the night of the crime. Oak Park police later arrested him, interpreting his dream account as the roundabout confession of a psychopathic killer. Later a jury found Linscott guilty, and he was sentenced to forty years in prison. There was just one problem — Linscott was innocent! Only after time in prison and numerous legal appeals — a process that lasted twelve years — was Linscott free and vindicated!¹ Those years undoubtedly brought the most difficult challenges Linscott will ever face — separated from his wife and children for three and a half years except for brief visits, wondering if he had somehow brought all this on himself and why God had allowed it to happen, surviving prison violence. Those were tough years, and yet years of growth and a growing awareness of the goodness of God. In Linscott’s words: *I have come to realize that we cannot judge God’s purposes, nor where He places us, nor why He chooses one path for our lives as opposed to another. The Bible itself is replete with accounts of divine action (or inaction) that does not seem fair, that does not make sense except when viewed in light of God’s perfect plan. Thousands of Egyptian children were massacred while a baby named Moses was spared. Jacob was a liar and a thief, and yet it was he, not his faithful brother Esau, who received the blessing of their father Isaac and of God. On one level it makes no sense that God would allow His Son to die for the sins of humankind. But God has a plan — a perfect plan.*²

The Apostle Paul was not the first of God’s workers to be falsely accused. Joseph, one of very few Bible characters about whom the Bible has nothing negative to say, knew what it is to be betrayed, hated, and slandered. Sold into slavery by jealous brothers, accused of a crime he did not commit (in fact, no one did), imprisoned and even forgotten by a fellow prisoner he had helped, Joseph could have become bitter toward man and God. Instead, he kept a

heavenly focus (“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good,” Genesis 50:20). *Do you ever wonder if Joseph counted the passing days with slash marks on the wall of his prison cell? Or do you think he gave up worrying about how long he had been there? Do you think he gave up hoping the cupbearer would keep his promise? Joseph knew his interpretation had been correct, and he knew that every day the cupbearer stood in a position of power and influence. Maybe one day that man would remember his promise. But then again, maybe not. How long can a person cling to a dusty promise?3.*

As long as he hangs on to Jesus Christ for dear life, that’s how long. As Paul put it, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3).

Hughes, R. Kent. Acts: The Church Afire (Preaching the Word) . Crossway. Kindle Edition.

This morning the promise may be dusty but it is still a promise, and promise from God. Paul had his promise. You will go to Rome. I will complete in you what I intend to complete. You are in the preparation room for the next task, and sometimes that comes with difficulty.

Illustrate: It had to be hard for Paul to be lied about, and hated by the people that he had worked with and ate with and worshipped with. And the reason. Because he followed Jesus. He answered the call to Jesus. Not tradition, not customs, but Jesus. It was Paul’s choice on how to react to these things. Resist the discipline by fighting, ignore the lessons, or submit to His leading by trusting Him.