

"When The Time Comes"

Acts 24-26
June 16, 2019

Preparation - 9AM Organic Chemistry

We can talk about preparation in a number of ways

"Today we are going to talk about preparing ourselves to share the life-giving truth of God's love: the gospel."

GCs - Spiritual Growth

Intimacy with God | Communion with Church | Influence with those outside the church

We will focus on the latter today because this is what Paul is up to, and we can learn from his example

*(-PNT) - not through created for good works
You may not think you are worth much, but God only disagrees -> made for and with a purpose
↓
Value it as NOT, but AT-RISK*

Dichotomy of Witness

Purchasing forgiveness, orchestrating redemption

God's Work - SALVATION FIRST. Then...

Matthew 10:16-20 - "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

Persecution context, but this happens in other circumstances as well

God's Spirit is living inside us and if we avail ourselves, he can and will speak when we have nothing to say.

Our Work

1 Peter 3:13-16a - Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience... THIS IS A ~~RESPONSIBILITY~~

We don't just say we have hope in Christ, we explain why

Not a seminary lecture, but know the story - today tools will be provided

Last Week

Paul before Roman tribune and Jewish Council -> Riot - *FALLS IN ON ITSELF*
Paul visited by God and encouraged, "witness in Rome"
Religious elites plotted to kill Paul -> Paul's nephew heard, told Paul and tribune
Paul heavily escorted to Caesarea, awaiting trial before the governor Felix

WOVEN INTO THE MADNESS
Grace covering all of this
Grace in all of our moments

Summary

PAUL LIVING INTO HIS PURPOSE - ARE WE PREPARING OURSELVES + LIVING INTO OURS?

Paul will be tried again and again in chapters 24-26

We will see, through these interactions, in what manner he has prepared himself to glorify God.

Preparation is about getting ourselves in order - we are fearful when we are not in order

Preparation in terms of

Conscience/Courage/Content/Conviction

1 TOOLS OR SKILLS

NOT GOD REPLACEMENTS

2 ALL CONSIDERED, AS WE WILL SEE

PAUL PREPARED IN TERMS OF CONSCIENCE

MWDctnry – sense or awareness of moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good.

Acts 24:1-13

Ananias, Jewish elders and a spokesperson Tertullus came to Caesarea to speak to Felix the governor

Tetrullus speaks and others confirm that Paul has been nothing but trouble

Stirring riots, profaning temple, etc.

Felix gives Paul the chance to speak and again claims innocence, makes an interesting point...

Acts 24:14-16 – But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

1. I worship the God of our Fathers
2. I believe everything in the Law/Prophets
3. I hope in God
4. I believe in resurrection of just and unjust

df → Clear conscience → NOT JIMINY CRICKET, BUT HOLY SPIRIT WORKS WITH OUR CONSCIENCE.

Dep. by God

1. Intimacy with God is strong – aware of forgiveness, identity secure.
2. Love of others is evident and conduct is pure.

→ IN TERMS OF WHAT GOD HAS CALLED ME TO, I HAVE DONE WHAT I CAN."

Application

How clean is your conscience? - AS FAR AS BEST/WEST? NO CONDEMNATION? WASHED CLEAN?

What needs to be taken back to the cross? - YOU ARE ALREADY FORGIVEN.

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT YOU NEED, BUT PRAYER, SCRIPTURE, + COMMUNITY HELP. → (TRANSPARENT SELF!)

① SOME OF US NEED TO LISTEN TO THE SMALL STILL VOICE + REPENT
- GRACE ABOUNDS

② SOME OF US NEED TO STOP WORRYING + LET IT GO
- GOD IS STILL ON HIS THRONE TOMORROW.

It is impossible to surrender life to God if you feel he is still holding sin over you.
... otherwise carrying love...

Acts 24:22-23

Felix postpones sentence until Claudius Lysias arrives

Acts 24:24-27

Paul earns audience with Felix and wife Drusilla

Shares the gospel with them during frequent visits

Felix expected money from Paul as a bribe; Paul left in prison to appeal to Jews

2 years in prison, Felix is released from authority, Porcius Festus places in power.

PAUL PREPARED IN TERMS OF COURAGE

Acts 25:1-7

Festus becomes governor, goes to Jerusalem

Reasons with Jewish elites, who still are plotting to murder Paul

Festus returns to Caesarea with elites

Paul tried yet again

Acts 25:8-12 – Paul argued in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.” But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?” But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

Paul: “If I’m guilty, kill me.” | “If I’m innocent, no one can accuse me.” → COURAGE

It is nearly impossible to stop a man, woman, or child whose conscience and faith are strong.

Conscience – blameless – what a feeling! – No matter what happens, I am innocent.

Faith – live is Christ, die is gain. → What’s the worst that can happen?

Application
→ we cling to God’s promises – not so we get smart, but because truly believing them changes our life.
→ DRAVES CLOSER TO JESUS, MORE COURAGEOUS, in spite of mess-ups

Where does your courage come from?

ABILITY?

HISTORY?

REMINDER: COURAGE IS NOT LACK OF FEAR, BUT RESOLVE IN THE FACE OF FEAR. (CHRIST’S FEAR)
HOWEVER
ASSURANCE OF CONSCIENCE + FAITH HELP US IN TIMES OF FEAR

As we step into what he has called us to us his workmanship, there will be fear. BUT

(1) He is with us.

(2) Joy ON THE OTHER SIDE OF SURRENDER

Intention is to send

Send him to Rome, his right as a citizen to request emperor → Avoid corruption AND get to where God sending him.

PAUL PREPARED IN TERMS OF CONTENT

Acts 25:13-27

King Agrippa and Bernice arrive at Caesarea, Festus discusses case with them
Jewish elites continue to accuse Paul, but only according to their laws/customs
"Innocent in our eyes" – Paul wants to go to Caesar to be tried.

King Agrippa and Bernice then preside over another trial

Festus provides yet another summary of the events:

Jewish elites want him dead, we find him innocent

Paul wants to go to Caesar, but we can't send him without charge → "We defer to your authority/expertise"

Acts 26:4-8 – "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?"

Paul points out similarities in theology – we both hope in God and believe in resurrection!

Acts 26:9-11 – Paul also persecuted Christians, zealous against Jesus.

Acts 26:12-18 – Conversion – the very Jesus he was persecuting spoke to him – "Why are you resisting me? Serve me."

Acts 26:19-23 – "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

Paul – "What am I doing that is so bad?"

Obedient to the vision from heaven – obedient to God!

Stating nothing different than what the prophets said would pass!

Acts 26:24-27 – And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind." But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

Paul continues to weave in tradition, turns gospel presentation to King Agrippa. – "I know you believe these things..." *SWINGING FOR FENCE!*

Paul had the opportunity not only to make his case of innocence, but to explain the glory of God.

Personal experience

Power of Scripture-based prophecy → *WOUND THESE TOGETHER BEAUTIFULLY*

In short, Paul was a man of the book

If we are to be ready when the moment comes, we too must know these truths
and be able to weave them into the lives of those who need it, which is everyone.

Application

Is this book in your bones?

COULD LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RIGHT

IT IS LIVING, AND A LIVING WORD IS MEANT TO FIND HOME IN OUR HEARTS.

WALKING AS HIS WORKMANSHIP MEANS BEING FAMILIAR WITH HIS PROMISES

PAUL PREPARED IN TERMS OF CONVICTION

Acts 26:28-29 – And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”

Agrippa – are you trying to get me to believe in Jesus?

Paul – I want everyone to believe in Jesus.

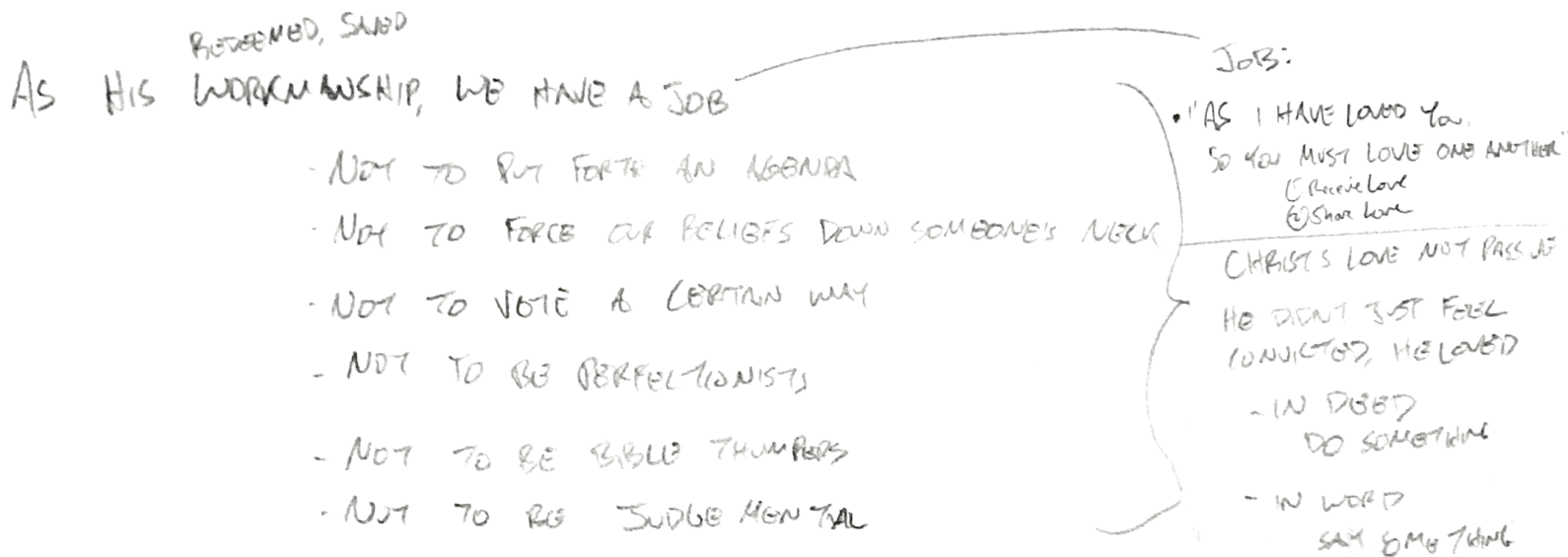
The man in chains was the freest man in the room.

Paul had conviction – he may be imprisoned and they may have power, but he has what truly matters – Christ in him.

He desires that all others share in this glory.

You may have much, you may have little, but do you have what really matters?

We can and should help, serve, love others, exhausting ourselves for their good... but do they have what really matters?



CONSCIENCE - FREED + FORGIVEN

COURAGE - LIVE CHRIST, DIE GAIN, EVERY HAIR NUMBERED

CONTENT - HERE ARE GOD'S WORDS TO DWELL ON, TO REVERE

CONVICTION - HERE IS GOD'S LOVE → MAY WE WALK IN WHAT HE HAS CALLED US TO

100 year perspective – our kingdoms will fade

Now, however, we have opportunities, by God's grace, to break Christ's light into darkness.

The question is... will the Lord find us prepared?

SET TABLE