

Readings

Scripture

¹And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul. ²And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, ³in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. ⁴But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. ⁵For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. ⁸By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him."

⁹The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

¹⁰And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. ¹¹You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, ¹²and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. ¹³Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. ¹⁴But 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, ¹⁵having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. ¹⁶So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. ¹⁷Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. ¹⁸While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— ¹⁹they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. ²⁰Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'"

²²But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." ²³Then 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.

²⁴After 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. ²⁵And 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." ²⁶At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. ²⁷When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

- Acts 24 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

Prisoner of the Lord
Acts 24

The Acts of the Apostles
Stephen Baldwin

God is sovereignly, unceasingly advancing his missionary purpose in the world.

How do we see this in Acts 24?

He is sovereignly advancing his missionary purpose...

In the unfolding, difficult circumstances of our lives. (Acts 24:1-21)

In enabling us to respond in faith and humility. (Acts 24:10-16, 18-21)

In creating contexts for us to engage in gospel conversations. (Acts 24:22-27)

Reflection Questions

- Looking at Acts 23:11 and observing how Paul arrived in Caesarea, how secure do you think Paul was in being exactly where Jesus wanted him to be?
- What did Jesus' encouragement and the circumstances of his arrest and imprisonment do for Paul's outlook and attitude?
- Have you ever been in a place where you "knew" that your circumstances, however difficult, were exactly where God wanted you to be?
- What did that awareness do in your outlook and attitude?
- Do you think that it is possible to have Paul's confidence and rest in God's sovereign purposes in your life, even without Paul's experience of Jesus coming alongside him and speaking to him? Why?
- What would help you become more confident in God's working out of his purposes and his advancement of the gospel?
- When engaged in the gospel conversations in which you are involved, what would happen to your confidence if you knew that the sovereign work of God is behind them?