



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

UNSTOPPABLE: God's Work in the World

A Life of Integrity – Acts 24
Tim Badal | March 3, 2019



We're coming to the end of our series we've entitled "Unstoppable." In these last chapters in Acts, we're chronicling the final days of the Apostle Paul. He has spent many years establishing and strengthening churches that would eventually have huge opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ, which would massively change people's lives in the first century.

Now Paul was entering Jerusalem, having been compelled by the Spirit to go there. He brought gifts he had collected from the Gentile churches to help the needs of the Jerusalem church due to a famine in that region. But upon his arrival, nothing went the way he had hoped it would. Rather, a mob sought to kill him, which caused the Romans to arrest him and put him through a series of trials.

The first trial was before the religious leaders of the Sanhedrin. When that didn't produce the desired results, he was taken to the higher Roman court, which is what we'll be reading about today in Acts 24. The Roman governor Felix was given the task of reviewing the reports and deciding if Paul was innocent or guilty and what his future would be.

These court cases will take us through the next couple chapters, and eventually Paul will make his way to Rome. Jesus Himself told Paul, when he was in jail in Jerusalem, that he would definitely stand on trial before kings and rulers and that he should not be afraid. As we'll see, Paul did indeed stand boldly before Felix. He demonstrated to us what it means to live with integrity, able to stand before his accusers with confidence. Integrity sometimes stands confident in its innocence, but it also allows us to humbly confess our sins when that's what we need to do. Integrity also seeks to make things right if we have wronged someone. But when we're falsely accused, integrity stands tall—which is what Paul demonstrated for us in today's passage.

Well, winter is almost over—amen? For the Badal family, winter involves basketball, with all three sons playing. Over the last three months, our family has seen a lot of basketball—some good, some not so good. You would think that with all the games Amanda and I have had to watch that we might never want to go to any other games if our kids weren't playing. But the best basketball game I saw this year in person wasn't one of our sons' games—much as I enjoy watching them play. It was the championship game of a local Christmas tournament here in the area—the Plano Christmas Classic. The Peoria Notre Dame team was pitted against the Ottawa team. Both were state-ranked teams and it was a clash of the titans. It was worth the five or six dollars I spent to get in there.

The stadium was packed, the crowd was raucous. It was an electrifying evening and the game did not disappoint. These teams both played to the best of their abilities. Each of the athletes was phenomenal. There were slam-dunks. There were blocked shots. There were impressive steals and dribbling exhibitions. These teams were two of the best in the state, just as the press had said. But as great as the teams were, there was one player who stood tall among all the rest—and that's quite a statement, because

every one of the players in that game deserved to be there. They had practiced and played hard. But there was one player from Peoria Notre Dame, a junior, who stood out from the rest.

In the second half, he was double and triple-teamed, but despite that opposition, he still was able to pull down more than 30 points, along with ten assists and six rebounds. It was quite the exhibition. He was crowned the MVP of the tournament. My two younger sons were with me and they were blown away as he dunked one of his baskets. They said, "Wow, he has amazing abilities. I wish I could be like him. I wish God gave me that ability to jump and shoot." That was fine, because I want these young boys to grow up to be wonderful athletes. But an older man behind us was listening to our conversation. He said to us, "You're selling him short." My boys turned around, wondering why he said that. He went on, "You're not giving him all the credit he deserves. Yes, he's gifted; yes, he has amazing abilities. But I'm his neighbor and I'm going to share something with you. Every night he's out shooting baskets—in rain, in snow, in wind, hot days, bad days. No matter what hour of the night, he has a goal. Before he goes inside to finish his day, he takes 100 shots in the driveway. If you don't believe it, I've counted them. I'm amazed at this young man. If he's had a practice or game that night, he'll have to drive from Plano to Peoria. So it might be 11:30 before he goes outside, but he's still going to be shooting. It's what he does."

That was a great lesson for my boys—and for their dad—and I think there's a lesson for all of us. When we look at the Apostle Paul, it's easy to think, "Wow, what gifts and abilities. God, if I had Paul's ability, personality and boldness, then I would share my faith. If You had gifted me with the great gifts You gave Paul, I could change the world for Christ." But God is saying through Luke, "You're selling this guy short." Yeah, he had gifts and abilities, but when nobody was watching, Paul was building himself to be the man of God he was called to be." Like our basketball player from Peoria, Paul was doing things when a lot of us thought he was just living off his gifts and abilities.

You see, the life of a champion is more than gifts and abilities. It involves hard work, tenacity and perseverance. As we'll see, Paul was doing things with his Christian life that you and I can also do. For many of us, the difference we can make in our lives regarding our gifts and abilities is really negligible. In other words, maybe you're not as gifted as the next person, but what really matters is that you're working at being the type of person God wants you to be.

In Acts 24:16, Paul explained how he took great pains to have a good conscience before God and man. That's integrity and Paul wanted to be a person of integrity. It wasn't his gifts or abilities that got him where he was; it was his effort to always do the right thing at the right time and in the right place, no matter the circumstances or how he felt.

We can think it was his gifts, but Luke is telling us that would be selling Paul short. It was his hard work to live a life of integrity that allowed his gifts and abilities to be seen by others. This morning, we'll look at the work we have to do and I'm the chief of those who need to work on this. We all need to live lives of integrity. No amount of gifting or abilities will take the place of hard work and our decision to apply ourselves toward that goal.

We talk about integrity, but let's be sure we understand what it is. We say we want to see it in those around us. But what is it? Integrity comes from the word that speaks of wholeness. In other words, there are no divisions or shadows. A person of integrity lives rightly, not divided in the sense that they're one person in one circumstance and another person in a different circumstance. Another definition is that integrity is choosing courage over comfort. It's choosing what is right over what is fun, fast or easy. It's choosing to practice our values rather than simply professing them.

In this sense, many of us are lacking as people of integrity. I struggle with it. Far too often I choose the comfortable way, not the courageous. Far too often I choose what is fun, fast or easy, instead of what is right. Instead of practicing my values, I can talk a big game, but not let my actions live them out. Our world is light on integrity. But Paul says we need to take great pains so this life of integrity can be seen not only by God, but also by others.

There are three main characters in today's story. First, there was Paul. Luke will paint him in a way that shows he was a man of integrity. He's our model and represents our goal. We need to imitate Paul as Paul imitates Christ. Then we'll read about a man named Tertullus, a Roman lawyer who has zero integrity. We'll see how that lack of integrity is lived out. Finally, we'll see how Felix the governor also lacked integrity. That allows Luke to set up a comparison.

We live in a world where we're called to live like Paul amidst people like Tertullus and Felix. My main point today is that a life of integrity is seen in the way we talk and how we walk.

Integrity is found in the way we talk.

Let's look at our text now in Acts 24:

¹ And 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. ² And 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, ³ in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. ⁴ But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. ⁵ For 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. ⁶ He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. ⁸ By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him." ⁹ The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

Paul has been taken north from Jerusalem to Caesarea by some 470 armed guards. Caesarea was the "county seat," if you will, of Judea—its provincial center. We know that because the city was named after Caesar, which meant that Rome had established it as the regional headquarters. It held the courthouse and was the bastion of the highest Roman officials and military.

In Caesarea, Paul was brought before the provincial governor named Felix. But before we look at him, we need to see that the Jews saw an opportunity to finish what they had started in Jerusalem. There Paul had stood before the Sanhedrin, and in the process of their interrogation, a mob scene broke out which caused the Romans to step in and take charge of the situation. This kept Paul from being held by the Jewish authorities for crimes he didn't commit. When they knew Paul had been taken to Caesarea, the Jews had followed him there. When his case was brought before Felix, the Jewish leaders brought someone who spoke "Roman." That is, they wanted someone to represent them who understood the Roman culture to curry favor with Governor Felix. So they chose an orator named Tertullus.

We know very little about this man, but here's what we do know. The name Tertullus literally means "a lying imposter." I don't know why a mother in her right mind would look at a baby and call him a lying imposter. But what many believe is that he had gained that name because of his skill as a lawyer. We don't have to go very far into the generalities of lawyers to know what our culture thinks, but I also want to remind you that within every general category are good and godly people. We're thankful for good Christian men and women who serve as lawyers. But this man appears to be the sort who is quick to do whatever he needs to do to make a case go his way. So instead of getting to the fact, his whole "argument" is that Felix should figure out the details of Paul's situation by hearing him make his case. That's not a very good prosecutor. Bring in the defendant, let him talk, and from his words we're going to hear that we're right.

We need to shun flattery.

Notice that Tertullus starts with flattery. As soon as he's given a chance to speak, he says, "*Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude.*" (Acts 24:2-3). Yuck! He's buttering up the governor with a classic use of flattery. It doesn't take much to figure out that he really doesn't have that much respect for Felix, nor does Felix deserve it.

- First, Felix has not brought the nation great peace. Remember, it took 470 soldiers to bring one prisoner from Jerusalem to Caesarea. If the place you are governing is seeing great peace, it would only take one soldier to take care of one person. There was no peace in Judea, something that's acknowledged by both Christian and secular historians.
- Next, Tertullus mentions reforms and prosperity that Felix has brought to the nation. Well, if that's the case, why is Paul bringing alms to the Christians in Jerusalem? Alms are for poor people. If there are poor people, then surely the prosperity he's claiming isn't real.
- Third, Tertullus says that in every way the people accepted Felix's rule with gratitude. Wait a minute. In last week's passage we saw a plot to kill Paul by the Jews, who believed the best time to do that was while he was in Roman custody. But in order to do that, they would probably have to kill the Roman guards who escorted Paul as well. That's not exactly a sign of accepting the rule of Rome with all gratitude.
- Finally, he calls him "most excellent Felix." Really? Nothing could be farther from the truth. We know from secular historians that Felix was born a slave. The reason he got his appointment as governor was that his brother befriended a young boy who eventually became Claudius Caesar. Through that connection, Felix was not only shown hospitality, but he was given freedom and provincial rule over Judea.

The Roman historian Tacitus tells us Felix governed in Judea from 52–60 A.D., about eight years, and he had “the power of a king but the mind of a slave.” Felix had a reputation for corruption, cruelty and lust. We’re told that his wife, Drusilla, whom we’ll learn about in a moment, was married to her first husband until the lusting Felix enticed her away from him, after which Felix took her as his third wife. She was first married when she was about 16, then at about 18 she was in her second marriage. So obviously Tertullus’ flattery of Felix was undeserved and probably nobody really believed it anyway, except perhaps Felix himself.

I see in Luke’s account an important lesson about flattery, which is the act of giving excessive compliments for the purpose of ingratiating oneself with the object of that flattery. The difference between flattery and a compliment is important. There’s nothing wrong with paying someone a compliment. Flattery hopes to gain approval or another sort of advantage from the person being flattered. Tertullus wanted something from Felix, so he was deliberately stroking his ego. Flattery is motivated by selfishness.

Every time the Bible speaks about flattery, it is never in a positive context. Someone has said flattery is “sweet-smelling lies used to manipulate another for personal gain.” There are two ways flattery is described in Proverbs. First, flattery is attached to lust, in the sense that an adulterer will use flattering words to gain what they want. Proverbs calls these words poisonous.

This is how it works: A guy or girl seeks to get farther with the other person for the sake of selfish pleasures. A young man might think, “I have sensual wants and this young lady is the avenue by which my desires can be gratified. But she’s not going to cooperate unless she has a reason.” So he tells her, “You’re the most beautiful girl in the world. You smell good, you’re funny and I’ve never liked anyone except you.” Is any of that true? Probably not, but he’s manipulating her for his own gain. If she falls prey to his flattery, she’ll offer herself as a result, then regret it afterwards.

That kind of flattery has no place in the life of a believer. Young people, when someone who is not married to you starts to flatter you, be quick to shut them down. Be confident enough in yourself to tell them, “You and I both know I’m not the most beautiful person in the world, so stop talking that way. You and I both know I’m not the funniest person in the world or the greatest girlfriend. We’re not going to play that game. Love me for who I am, not for what you can get from me.” As Christians, we should never use flattery for this kind of gain, and we need to be wise enough to recognize flattering words and not let them influence us.

Second, Proverbs speaks of flattery being used in the workplace, usually by an employee, to gain favor with the employer. A person might say, “You’re the best boss in the world. You’re so smart and I am so blessed to work here. Every day when I come to work, I thank the Lord I get to work for you.” But inside, that person is vomiting. He really thinks his boss is a jerk. “He’s an idiot. How did he get this job?” A person curries favor with the boss in order to receive a promotion, opportunity or raise. So she tells the boss what he wants to hear, all the while knowing that behind his back she can say anything she wants about him. When flattery is used, there’s something wrong with the flatterer. So we need to shun flattery.

Paul spoke of flattery a couple times in Romans, but especially he addressed it in 1 Thessalonians 2:5. Regarding his ministry, he said, “For we never came with words of flattery. We didn’t come to manipulate you. We didn’t come to butter you up so we could get something out of you. We spoke the truth in love.”

Jesus spoke in front of a lot of people, but He never flattered them. He stood before Pontius Pilate, but he didn’t flatter him. He spoke the truth in love, and we need to as well. Integrity in speech will be devoid of flattery.

We need to stand firm.

To review our story, Paul spent seven days in Jerusalem, then for five days he’s been in the custody of the Romans in Judea. He was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, where he brought offerings from the Gentile churches to the Christians who were suffering in a famine. Then the Jews accused him of being against the Mosaic law, so they were skeptical about the gospel he was preaching. Paul told them he was loyal to the law and later he said he did everything according to the Scriptures, but the Jerusalem elders still told him to prove his loyalty to Judaism by joining four other men taking a Nazirite vow in the temple, even paying their way. So Paul purified himself and went to the temple for seven days, but it not only didn’t help, it actually seemed to make things worse. While he was in the temple, a rumor was started that he had brought Gentiles into the temple. So Paul was dragged out of the temple court by a mob who began to beat him, at which point the Romans stepped in. He was brought before the Sanhedrin, then before the Romans where he was accused of being a ringleader who was a blasphemmer and also responsible for inciting riots. They summed it up with one description: Paul was a plague.

I don’t know what bad things you were called this week, but I imagine very few of us have been called a plague. Tertullus’ accusations were then confirmed by the other Jews who were there in the Roman court. We need to understand that you and I will be accused of things in difficult circumstances. But what don’t we see Paul doing? He doesn’t swear or curse or get angry. He

doesn't lose his temper. He's never out of control. He doesn't become an emotional mess. This reminds us that when we too are falsely accused, we don't have to lose our minds in the process. We need to simply stand firm in the confidence that we are right before God and before men. Paul does not speak until he receives permission. How hard would that be to do? If you were accused of things you weren't guilty of, could you remain silent? Where do you think Paul learned that? Jesus said He placed Himself in the hands of the One Who judges correctly, so does Paul—and so should we. Paul knew he hadn't done anything wrong, so until he was given the opportunity to speak, he remained quiet and stood firm. Far too many of us lose the high ground in a situation where we're falsely accused because we get emotional, thus proving to the people that their false accusations have some merit.

We need to state the facts.

What does Paul do when he's given permission to speak? He states the facts. If you want to speak with integrity when you're given the opportunity, state the facts. Acts 24:10: *"And 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.'" There was no flattery here. No hyperbole. No exaggeration. Paul just began to state his case.*

¹¹ You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, ¹² and 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. ¹³ Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. ¹⁴ 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, ¹⁵ having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. ¹⁶ So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. ¹⁷ Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. ¹⁸ While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— ¹⁹ they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. ²⁰ Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹ other 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."

What are the facts? First, Paul had only been in Jerusalem for seven days. It seems kind of hard that in seven days he would be able to create a mob that would follow him that would result in a tumult in Jerusalem. That's not enough time to start a riot. Second, he told them he went up to the temple to purify himself and make offerings. That doesn't sound like a person who has a beef with the temple or wants to desecrate the temple. You don't come to worship and bring offerings to the temple if you're going to desecrate it. You might want to vandalize it, but Paul doesn't do anything like that. He enters into a faithful practice with others in the temple.

Finally, in response to being accused of being a ringleader of the Nazarene sect, Paul said he actually was part of the sect called The Way, a group that worshiped the God of their fathers and fully revered the Law and the patriarchs. They believed all the Jewish Scriptures, including what was written about the coming resurrection of the dead. Again, there was no innuendo, no hyperbole; he just responded with the truth. When we're accused, if we lose our minds and emotions, we lose the moral high ground.

I was once told as a young man never to get in a fight with a pig. That's a weird piece of advice. It's not that they thought I was actually going to fight a pig, but the principle was helpful. Essentially they were saying, "If you get in a fight with a pig, you're both going to get dirty and the pig will enjoy that."

There are people out there who love to get dirty. They love to pull others into the mud with them. When we allow ourselves to get into a fight with them, we're going to get dirty and it won't bother them at all. When someone comes to break up the fight, what will they find? Two dirty people. There are people in your workplace, or maybe even in your home or community, who love to pick fights and accuse you of things just to incite you to join them in the mud. You need to stay out of the mud. Do what Paul did: state the facts. Talking a good game can be easy for a believer.

Integrity is found in the way we walk.

Integrity not only is involved with how we talk, it's also part of how we walk. Paul demonstrated how we should shun flattery, stand firm and state the facts. But look again at Acts 24:16: *"So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man."*

Paul said something like this three times:

- In Acts 23:1 he said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."
- In 24:16 he added, "before God and man."
- Then in 25:8 he includes the fact that he has also not committed any offense against Caesar.

A clear conscience was important to Paul and it should be important to us. It's an important indication that we are living a life of integrity. Paul was saying that his life of integrity wasn't just lived before other humans, it was also how he lived before God.

A walk of integrity is a painstaking process.

To live a life of integrity can at times be painful. We see two words in verse 16 that stand out. First, there's the word "always." Our integrity isn't something we turn on and off based on our circumstances. It can't be something we have one day and not the next. Our integrity isn't something we have only when we feel like acting that way. Either we are a person of integrity or we are not. There's not a middle ground. We're to live it out in the good times and the bad. One thing I've learned is that integrity is really hard to develop and really easy to lose. We don't have to look very far to see godly people lose their integrity in a moment of passion or desire. It doesn't take much.

The second word to notice in verse 16 is "pains." Paul says, "*I always take pains...*" Other translations use the words "exercise" or "strive." One translation says, "I agonize to have a clear conscience." It's an active word, speaking of anguish and hard work. A life of integrity isn't easy. I wish it was.

I wish I could tell you that all my days as a pastor I've lived a life of integrity, but that's just not true. I'm not going to flatter myself to think that's the case, because it's not. Far too many times I've recognized sins I've done that have eroded my integrity. It's easy to say we're people of integrity, but if we're not walking out our talk, then our words don't mean anything. The life of integrity is a life of anguish and hard work.

How is a life of integrity made? It's made through the hundreds of daily decisions where we must choose between temptation and sin, or obedience and holiness. Do you want to know if you're living a life of integrity? Are you yielding to the temptations of this world or are you choosing to obey God? Paul said, "I can stand before God and man, then I can see that I've lived a life of integrity."

A walk of integrity is both private and public.

We might ask ourselves, "If I'm put on trial for integrity, what would the people around me say?" But that's only part of it. Paul told the people that he took pains to have a clear conscience first before God, which is vertical, then before man, which is horizontal. Our integrity also has two components: private integrity and public integrity. Private integrity is what we do before God. He sees and knows everything. Even though we can hide our thoughts and actions from one another, we can never hide them from Him.

Are you a person of integrity before God? No one else can answer that question for you. You see, we can fake integrity with everyone around. Sometimes we do this really well. But we need to ask God, "How do You see me? You know what I'm thinking. You know what I'm doing when no one else is around. You know what my heart's desires are. You know what I'm wishing for and pursuing. I can fool others, but Lord, You know everything." Paul said, "I have a clear conscience before God."

This is important to consider before we go to the Lord's Table. The Bible says when we come to communion, if we have not examined ourselves, we will stand in judgment before God. Wait a minute—what does that mean? To have a clear conscience before God does not mean we have to be perfect. If that were the case, I should be kicked out of the pulpit right now. I'm certainly not a perfect man.

But when we have done wrong before God—when we're convicted by the Holy Spirit or confronted by someone else and realize what we've done wrong—then our response should be to agree that it was sin and repent of it. We need to realize our sin brought mockery to the saving grace He gave us.

Then 1 John 1:9 tells us that when we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. When these things take place, that brings us to a place where our conscience is clean. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." God, in His infinite love and mercy is willing to forgive us when we fail Him and to give us a clear conscience before Him.

Do you have a clear conscience before God? Before you give the church answer, ask yourself if that was true this week in your private affairs? Second, how about your public walk, the life you live in front of other people? I need to ask myself, "Tim, how's your home life? How's your work life? How's your life as a student or in the community? Are you living above reproach before others?"

Again, this is an important question as we approach communion. We are told if we know that someone has something against us, we need to make it right before we share our gift at the altar. Some of us have issues and struggles we're holding against someone. We're essentially saying to God, "Well, I'm at odds with this person. I don't really like them or want to be in church with them—or in the same house as them—but I'm not really willing to make it right."

You and I cannot have a clear conscience before God and men if we're not continually seeking to live in harmony with one another. Yes, we're going to offend each other. We're going to wrong one another. But God tells us that before we come to the altar, we need to go to that person and make things right. Don't speak words of flattery; speak words of truth. Are we living with a good conscience before God and man?

How did Paul do this? We see five different things he did that are important truths to remember.

A life of integrity affirms the totality of Scripture.

If we're going to live with integrity, we first must affirm the totality of Scripture. We see how Paul did this in Acts 24:14-15: *"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."*

It is valuable for us to remember that bad beliefs will always lead to bad behavior. Good beliefs will always lead you to good behavior. In the Badal home, we don't just address behavior; we try to address the heart and mind behind the behaviors. "What led you to act that way? What caused you to punch your brother? The punching is a problem, but it's a symptom of something greater in your heart. Let's try to understand what that is."

When I have wrong beliefs, they will always lead to wrong behavior. This is why Paul told them, "I believe what the Scripture says." But our problem is often what I heard one preacher describe as "dalmatian theology." We like this spot of Scripture, but not that spot. "Oh, I like this part of the Bible, but I'm not sure about that one. I'll read the red verses, but not the other verses. I'll read the New Testament but not the Old. God is happy in the New Testament, but He's mad in the Old Testament."

We pick and choose what we want. But Paul shows us that to live a life of integrity requires that we believe what God says in His Word. Do you believe all God has told us? Good beliefs will lead to good behavior. You and I will never live in obedience until we submit ourselves to the Word of God.

A life of integrity is attractive to others.

We see this in Acts 24:22-24, after the court session is over:

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

²³ Then 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. ²⁴ After 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.

Why in the world would a governor want to talk with a prisoner? Wardens don't like hanging out with prisoners. But Felix saw something in Paul that he found attractive. In a world devoid of integrity, when we live lives of integrity, even people who don't like our gospel will want to be around us. They'll find us interesting.

A life of integrity aims for God's standards, not our own.

In verse 25, Paul speaks to Felix and Drusilla, saying, *"And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment..."* We live a life of integrity, not so we win the favor of others. It's not to get the promotion at work. It's not so everybody at church will say, "What an awesome person he or she is." It isn't so we get the citizenship award at our school. The reason we live a life of integrity is that God has called us to live a life of self-control and righteousness, because judgment is coming. We choose integrity over our selfish desires because we realize that just as Paul is standing before a judge, one day we too will stand before Judge Christ Jesus and we will have to show Him the life we've lived. Every careless word and deed will be laid bare.

We need to get it out of our minds that because we're Christians, we're going to saunter into the Kingdom of God, thinking, "Hey, I'm good, you're good, we're all good." No, the Bible says every believer will stand before the bema seat of Christ. We will be judged for what we did in the body. That's why the Bible says at the end of all things, God will wipe away every tear. That judgment day will not be a fun day. Will it be a damning day? No, not for a believer. Jesus will wipe away the tears of our mistakes and struggles and falling into temptation. So why do we live in integrity now? It's so we can stand before God on that judgment day with as clear a conscience as possible. We need to aim for God's standards, not our own.

A life of integrity actively shares the faith.

For a Christian, a life of integrity is manifested in sharing the good news with others. If we truly believe what the Scriptures say—that apart from Christ people will be consigned to hell—then think about it this way. If we only speak casual words at work—about

sports or the weather or family business—but we never talk about their need for Christ, all we've shown them is flattery. They need the truth, not flattery. They need the hard truth that they are sinners in need of God's saving grace. If we postpone that, all we're doing is flattering them into an eternity in hell.

A life of integrity is only available through the gospel.

You and I will never ever have a clear conscience before God and man until we bow the knee and confess our sin and accept Jesus as our Savior by faith. Until then, you and I live at war with God and our fellow men. We need Jesus to make a way for this life of integrity to be birthed in us.

Paul shows us the way to God, but Jesus alone makes it possible. Are you living a life of integrity? Only you can answer that question. Only I can answer that question for myself. But when we do, we are able to stand before every man, woman and child, and before God Himself, announcing to the world not only that we're free, but that we have the confidence and boldness to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.com).