

Sunday, August 9, 2026

Providence and Opposition

Acts 23-24

- Do you ever look back over the years, and see how God worked through a number of seemingly random events—and see how He worked all of that together to get you to where you are now?
- You see, I look back over my years in ministry and I just so happened to be on staff as a part time youth pastor at a portable church in Shelby NC that went through a church merger with a more traditional established church that was struggling
- And after that merger, my pastors at the time (unbeknownst to me), just happened to come to Hickory, NC to a pastors gathering at East Hickory Church and were asked to do a presentation on that merger
- Then Rachel and I just so happened to feel a call towards church planting—thought we would be going to Pennsylvania, but just so happened to come to Hickory NC
- Then after a couple of years, we just happened to get opposition from the City of Hickory because they wanted us out of the rec center we were in
 - Rachel and I went away, turned off my phone for a week and prayed—but felt no answers or voices from heaven
- Then I just happened to go to a pastors gathering the day after we got back from our trip—just happened to park right next to another pastor, who just happened to be getting out of his car at the same time, and just happened to be wearing a Philadelphia Eagles shirt
- His church just so happened to be the same church that my pastors had been at 8 years ago doing a presentation on the church merger, and he had just happened to be thinking and

praying through what a merger could look like here

- And it just so happened that the church was struggling at the time, praying and fasting for the Lord to do something when we met
- And we came together to form the church that we see today—in which as of next week we will have baptized 30 people since that merger and have see God move in incredible ways
- You see, my brothers and sisters, that is what we refer to as the **Providence of God: God working through natural events in order to accomplish His will and His way**
 - Now God does not always work through natural events, sometimes He works supernaturally and supersedes the natural events
 - But many times He works through the natural responses of a broken world and sinful humanity and weaves His purposes through them

- That's why Paul tells us in the book of Romans: ***"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."***

-Romans 8:28 (ESV)

- I looked up what "All things" means in the original language and it means "All things"
- It's the good, the bad, the ugly, and everything in between
- And we have seen God work supernaturally in many ways throughout the book of Acts—but in Paul's case in the later chapters of this book, we see God working providentially to accomplish His will and His way
- We saw in chapters 20-21 — Paul felt adamant about going to Jerusalem— even when all of the people who loved him most begged him not to go, he still went
- Then he met up with James and the brothers at the Jerusalem church, he tells them all about what God had been doing among the gentiles

on his missionary journeys—and they all praise God for everything that He had been doing.

- Then James tells Paul that a lot of people are misunderstanding his message and his ministry, so he encourages Paul to go to the Temple and go through the purification rituals to put the Jewish people at ease.
- Well, while he is at the temple going through the purification rituals, it just so happened that some of the Jews from Asia (most likely from Ephesus) who had tried to kill Paul before—just happened to be in the temple that the same time and just happened to recognize him
 - They stir up the crowd, and this mob starts beating Paul to death
 - But the Roman Tribune just happens to get there in time to save Paul before they kill him
 - Paul gives his full testimony to all of the people to try and give them a clear understanding of what he’s all about—but they still want him dead

- And the Roman Tribune can’t figure out what all of the fuss is about

- At first he assumes that Paul must be the Egyptian that had tried to lead a revolt with 4000 assassins—because that would make sense to him as to why there was such an uproar
 - But it turns out that he’s just a preacher, so what’s the big deal?
 - So he figures that there must be more to the story and they are about to beat a confession out of Paul until they realize that he’s a Roman citizen so they can’t do that
- Then at the end of chapter 22 in verse 30: ***“But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them. And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience***

up to this day.” And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God's high priest?” And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’” Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.” And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection,

nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?” And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks. The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.” -Acts 22:30-23:11 (ESV)

- Verse 11 here is the key passage for us this morning where we gain our 3 points for today, and they are:
 - God's Purpose is Greater than the Opposition

- God's Presence is Evident in the Midst of Opposition
- God uses Opposition to Create Opportunities
- So for our first point today: **GOD'S PURPOSE IS GREATER THAN THE OPPOSITION**
 - The main opposition we see Paul facing here is the Sanhedrin—which Luke refers to as the council
 - This is the same Sanhedrin that opposed Jesus, manipulated the judicial process to get Him hung on the cross—but God just used that to pave the way for eternal salvation
 - This is the same group that opposed the apostles, arrested and beat Peter and John, started the persecution of the church and killed Stephen—but God just used that to make the message of Jesus spread like wild fire across the known world
- The opposition can never stop the purposes of God
- David said in Psalm 138, ***“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You preserve my life; You stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand delivers me. The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever” -Psalm 138:7-8 (ESV)***
 - You would think that this council would learn their lesson, but here we see them opposing the purposes of God once again
- If you're not familiar with the Sanhedrin, this was a group that served as a supreme court and senate all in one for the Jewish people
 - And it was comprised of two major factions of Jewish people
 - Like we have democrats and republicans, they had Pharisees and Sadducees
 - The Sadducees were the wealthy 1%-ers that oversaw the Temple production
 - The Pharisees were the experts in the law and teachers of the people

- And groups from both sides were represented in the Sanhedrin—and they had many theological differences, but they agreed on the Authority of the Mosaic Law, the importance of the Temple, and preserving the Jewish faith and identity during the Roman occupation

- Now, Paul used to be one of them. He hadn't made it to the Sanhedrin, but he was on track to be in the position that Ananias was in

- If anyone had the potential to be the high priest it was Paul. Paul had told the Philippians: ***"...I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish***

law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done." -***Philippians 3:4-7 (NLT)***

- Paul had gone through all of the Pharisaical schooling and training, learned under Gamaliel, the best teacher around—he had been in school with most if not all of the guys who were currently sitting on that council

- This is why Paul was the only one that referred to them as “brothers”
- Whenever Peter and John were before them in chapter 4, they address them more formally as “Rulers of the people, and elders”
- But Paul was a peer, he technically still was one of them—but he just had a greater ministerial calling than sitting on a corrupt board lead by Ananias

- Ananias was not a good guy
 - He became the high priest whenever Paul was on his first missionary journey in 47 AD
 - He served as the Jewish high priest until the first Jewish revolt in 67 AD, but was not killed by the Romans, he was actually killed by his own people
 - He was hated by the Jews—Josephus said that he would take the tithes that were supposed to go to the other priests in the temple and keep them for himself
 - He would bribe Roman soldiers and officials and the rich Jews to keep him in power
 - He was even investigated for his role in a number of violent feuds that had broken out over the years
- And Paul probably knew him from back in the day, and knew that he was a snake even back then—and let's him have it
- Ananias orders him to be smacked in the mouth and Paul says: ***“God is going to strike***

you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” -Acts 23:3 (ESV)

- I don't know if you're like me, but when I first read this I'm like “Yeaaaa, get 'im Paul!”
- It's actually very reminiscent of when Jesus called out the Pharisees in Matthew 23 when He said: ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.” -Matthew 23:27 (ESV)***
- Paul essentially is calling Ananias a hypocrite, which he totally is! But yet, Paul was still in the wrong for what he said and how he handled himself. And Paul still had the humility to apologize
 - You see, Paul didn't know that Ananias had become the high priest—he had been out of the loop in Jerusalem for a long time

- And in the NLT he says, ***“I’m sorry, brothers. I didn’t realize he was the high priest,” Paul replied, “for the Scriptures say, ‘You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.’” -Acts 23:5 (NLT)***
 - God’s Word, that all of the Sanhedrin would have recognized, says in Exodus 22 that “You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”
 - And Paul instantly knew that he was in the wrong, and took accountability
 - And you could say, “Well Jesus said it! Why can’t Paul!”
 - Cuz Paul aint Jesus! Jesus was the ultimate authority
 - And Paul apologized, not because he was wrong about the man, but because he was going against what God’s word said—and it says so much about his character that he was able to take that immediate accountability
- But—he still knew how to drive a little wedge into their hypocrisy and divide them in a way that didn’t go against God’s word
- And he’s so brilliant here, because he knows what the hot topics are and he knows how to get them riled up against each other
 - So Paul speaks up and says “I’m a Pharisee! I come from a long line of Pharisees! And the only reason I’m on trial is because I believe in the hope of the resurrection of the dead!”
 - Now he knew how much of a hot topic issue this was—because the Sadducees didn’t believe in life after death, the Pharisees did—and this had been a huge point of contention for years
 - So this would have been like if Paul were on trial today with a group of ultra conservatives and a group of hyper liberals, and he said, “Look, I’m only on trial because I think men shouldn’t be in women’s sports” —and then he would just let the fire go from there!

- Then they start yelling and screaming at each other—all of the sudden the Pharisees now completely flip, say that he's innocent because angels, (which the Sadducees didn't believe in either) could have spoken to him
- Then they start punching each other like its an old fashioned bar fight—Paul's just standing there with a smug smile on his face watching the chaos
- And Claudiu Lysias, who was the Roman Tribune is now looking at this whole crazy scene and says to himself, “Well this group is a bunch of nuts, and we can't take them seriously”
- So they get Paul out of there and again, verse 11 says: ***“The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.” -Acts 23:11 (ESV)***
- That was God's next purpose for Paul, to get him to Rome. This was the purpose for the

entire book of Acts, to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth—and Rome was the ultimate way to do that

- And no opposition would stop Paul from being able to fulfill God's purpose—but even so, the opposition can be heavy, and that is why we need Him as Paul did in this moment
- **GOD'S PRESENCE IS EVIDENT IN THE MIDST OF OPPOSITION**
 - You see, the providence of God does not keep opposition away from us, but within the opposition He allows us to better understand His presence
 - It is in times of distress that we actually can feel His presence the most, if we are open
 - Psalm 34 says that He is near to the broken hearted, He saves those who are crushed in spirit
 - Psalm 56 says that He counts our sorrows, and stores our tears

- In the midst of opposition and hardship— we can really understand how close He is and how much He cares
- And this is what so many people do not understand about Christianity, because they would say if God is so close and cares so much— why would He allow opposition at all??
 - But opposition, hardship, and tragedy exist because we live in a broken world corrupted by sin
 - And God could eradicate sin, but that would mean He would have to eradicate humanity
 - And there will be come a day where there will be a new heaven and a new earth and sin and death and sorrow will be no more, but He is giving as many people opportunity to come to Him before that time comes
- And in the meantime— He doesn't promise to keep us from hardship and opposition, but He promises to be with us and near to us the entire time to sustain us
- Most famously, David says in Psalm 23 ***“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me” -Psalm 23:4 (ESV)***
 - He doesn't say, even though You keep me from the valley of the shadow of death—he says, even though I walk through it—I don't have to fear because You are with me
- This is actually the 4th time that we see the Lord supernaturally speaking to Paul in the book of Acts
- And each time that the Lord supernaturally speaks to him, has been in the midst of opposition
 - The first time came in Acts chapter 9, on the road to Damascus when Paul himself was actually the opposition
 - The 2nd time was in Acts 16, when the Spirit was opposition, not allowing them to go into Asia, but then God calls him to go to Macedonia

- The 3rd time was in chapter 18 when he was being opposed by the Corinthians and the Lord speaks to him and tells him “Do not be afraid... and do not be silent, for I am with you”
- Now we see the 4th time here as he is in prison and on trial, the Lord tells him to take courage, because His purpose is greater than the opposition
- And he would need this closeness and encouragement from the Lord because there are many that want to take his life
- In the coming verses we see that there is a group of more than 40 guys who had taken an oath that they won’t eat or drink anything until Paul is dead
- And they come up with a plan to get the Romans to bring Paul out into the open so they can kill him
- And verse 16 says: **“Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went**

and entered the barracks and told Paul.”

-Acts 23:16 (ESV)

- Were you like me when you first read this and said, “Wait, Paul has a sister?!”
- Since when?? Paul never said a thing about his family
- And it just so happened that his nephew, who was probably going through the pharisaical schooling like Paul did before Paul disgraced his family by following Jesus —just happened to hear about the assassination plan against his uncle Paul
- And he goes and tells his uncle, Paul gets the centurion to take his nephew to the Tribune who is going to protect him
- Now, this is interesting—because if you think about it, Peter had been put in this same jail before
- And when Peter was in this jail in Jerusalem and the church was praying fervently—God sent an angel to bust Peter out of jail

- But now Paul is sitting in the same exact jail, with assassination plots going on—where’s his angel to bust him out??
 - But you see, God supernaturally opened the gates for Peter
 - But God providentially kept the gates closed for Paul—why? Because Paul had a different purpose
- God was going to use that jail, use that assassination plot, use Paul’s nephew, to use that Roman official, to get Paul to Rome
- So now the Tribune is going to send Paul to his next step in carrying out that purpose—and that is getting him out of Jerusalem from all those trying to kill him, and getting him to Caesarea
- Verse 23 says: ***“Then he called two of the centurions and said, “Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. Also***

provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor.” -Acts 23:23-24 (ESV)

- It’s crazy that Paul travels with a security detail here of 470 Roman soldiers
- And Claudius Lysias, the Tribune, sends a letter to the governor, that essentially says, *“We found this guy being beaten to death by the Jews, but we saved him and found out that he was a Roman Citizen. I can’t see anything that he is being accused of being worthy of death or imprisonment, and when we found out there was a plot to take his life we sent him to you, and told the accusers if they want him, they have to make their case before you.”*
- So now Paul is being sent to the Judean Governor
- Verse 33 says: ***“When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he***

learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.” And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium.” -Acts 23:33-35 (ESV)

- And here’s our 3rd point for today: **GOD USES OPPOSITION TO CREATE OPPORTUNITY**
- Because of all of the opposition that Paul has faced, he is now going to get the opportunity to testify before the most powerful man in Judea—the man who holds the office that was once held by Pontius Pilot
- His name was Felix—and he has an interesting story
 - Felix was at one point a slave, *but just so happened* to have a brother who was very respected in certain circles of Roman officials
 - Felix was freed from his slavery by Caesar himself and his brother used his connections

to get him a job that nobody else wanted to touch

- The Governor of Judea—no one wanted that job, the Jews were always causing riots and trouble, and everyone knew what Pilot went through during that whole Jesus debacle so it was the last governor job that anyone wanted
- But what did Felix have to lose? He took the job and he didn’t hold back
 - One Roman historian said that Felix was a master of brutality and lust—“he exercised the power of a king with the spirit of a slave”
- Felix had been married 3 times, and his third wife, who we’ll see is named Drusilla
 - Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I
 - Her grandfather was the Herod who ordered all of the male babies to be slaughtered at the time of Jesus’ birth

- Her great uncle was the Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded
- But she was known for her great beauty, and she was married off at the age of 16 but when Felix saw her, he convinced her to leave her husband and come be his wife instead
- This is who Paul is being sent to—but we will see that it is God’s providence that allowed this governing couple to be the ones in that position during the trial of Paul
- Chapter 24 begins by saying: ***“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.” -Acts 24:1 (ESV)***
- So now, the Sanhedrin is pulling out all of the stops. They probably realized that they made fools of themselves when they fought each other in front of the Roman Tribune
- So now they hire the best lawyer that they can get. They get the Johnny Cochran of prosecutors and have him do the talking in front of Felix—and 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. But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 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. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him.” -Acts 24:2-8 (ESV)***
- Then all the jews get pumped up and think that they have the trial in the bag...but then Felix

nods at Paul to speak, who had no lawyer, no representation, but to Paul, that's no problem

- ***“Paul replied: ‘Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, 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. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. 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. Now after several years I came to***

bring alms to my nation and to present offerings. While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia— they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 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.’” -Acts 24:10-19 (ESV)

- ...and then they all started fighting each other.”
- Paul lets them all know, they have no proof, they're contradictory in every way, and he's done nothing wrong!
- And next we see the providence of God at work: verse 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.” 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.”

-Acts 24:22-23 (ESV)

- You see, Felix knew all about Jesus. He knew all that Pilot went through
- He knows all about the resurrection claims and about the spread of Christianity
 - He unlike other gentile officials understands the difference between Christianity and Judaism
 - And remember, he used to be a slave—so more than likely he had encountered Christians (or the Way) during his time as a slave
 - And he had seen how much differently Christians treated slaves than the rest of

society. No one other than Christians ever would have treated him with dignity and respect or saw him as an equal

- He knows first hand that Christians are not trouble makers, they are peacemakers
- And Paul gets the opportunity to share more with him

- “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.” -Acts 24:24 (ESV)

- You know, Felix was probably very curious
- He was someone who had nothing, and got everything—and now he’s looking at Paul, who was someone that had everything, but saw it as nothing
- Remember in Philippians 3 he said: ***“I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the***

infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with Him.” -Philippians 3:7-9 (NLT)

- The Passion that Paul has for Jesus and his faith has to make Felix very curious, along with his Jewish wife who wants to know more about this movement that her ancestors had tried to squash
- And as Paul had the opportunity to talk about faith in Jesus with Felix—Felix had every opportunity to respond in faith to Jesus
- ***“And as [Paul] 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.” At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by***

Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.” -Acts 24:25-27 (ESV)

- Felix couldn't get past his own greed. He kept hoping that Paul would bribe him so that he could get more for himself
 - And why do you think he was wanting to do the Jews a favor? Because those Jews were the Sadducees who were the wealthiest Jews
- It is actually rather sad, because I can't imagine many people who had as much exposure to such a clear gospel message and conversation with the most brilliant apologist to ever live—and still not come to faith
- And he experience great conviction—when Luke says that he was “alarmed” that's a pretty weak translation because the word in the original language that he was “thrown into fear” or he “trembled”

- Felix had a visceral reaction to the truth that was being presented to him
- We've seen others have similar reactions and their response were "what must I do to be saved?!" but Felix's was—"go away, we'll talk again when I feel like it."
- Paul spoke with Felix about Righteousness—about an all Holy God, in which our sin had made us enemies of. But God sent His Son Jesus to pay the price for our sins by shedding His blood on the cross, and raising from the dead so that by believing in Him we can be made right with this All Holy, All Powerful, All Perfect Creator God.
- He also speaks to Felix about Self-Control—About how once we come to faith in Him, it changes how we live. We no longer live to gratify the flesh and our desires, but we die to ourselves and submit to His Lordship as we carry out a purpose far greater than ourselves
- And he explains that we have a limited time to make the decision to surrender to Him

because there is a Coming Judgement—Paul told the Thessalonians ***“when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.” -2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 (NKJV)***

- And you see, Paul did not share this to condemn! He shared this out of a sense of urgency! He even told the Romans that he would forfeit his own salvation if it meant that all of his other countrymen could be saved!
- He shared the hard truths of hell, judgment, and separation from God because He loved people and didn't want that for them!

- And even today when we as Christians are at times deemed as hateful because we share the truth of God's word—they don't understand that we do so from a place of love
 - We want them to know about the coming judgement, we want them to live according to God's standards, because we want them to be made right with God through Jesus so that they can be with us in Heaven
- But sadly, the most common response to the Gospel has always been the response that Felix had:
 - “Not right now—when it's convenient for me, I'll consider this again”
 - There are so many people, some may be in this room, who have heard the Gospel time and time and time again, but they keep putting it off.
 - They don't completely reject it, but they say, “Eh, not right now”
- I heard Pastor Skip Heitzig say, ***“Atheism has claimed it's thousands, but procrastination it's tens of thousands” -Skip Heitzig***
 - If you are here today, and you have had the Gospel presented to you time and time again and you've been putting it off...don't let another day, another minute, another second go by without accepting the gift of salvation that is offered through Jesus
 - Romans 6:23 says, ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” -Romans 6:23 (ESV)***
 - Jesus was bound so that you could go free—He died so that you could live—He rose from the grave so that you could rise up to Heaven when this life is over
- Imagine this: You're traveling in a foreign country. You're seeing the sights, and you come across a room that is unlocked and unguarded and there's a man outside encouraging you to go in.

- You go in and see that it's full of all of these nice treasures—And you see other people in there just freely taking whatever they want, so naturally you do the same
 - When you go back outside you hear some people claiming, “That’s the King’s treasury! Anyone who steals from Him will receive the death penalty!”
 - But other people don’t seem to mind, so you don’t either and go about your business
- But then as you try to leave the country, you get arrested at the airport for being in possession of these stolen items
 - You get sent to your trial, and the King Himself is sitting in the judgement seat
 - And the very man who encouraged you to go into the room is the one who is prosecuting you and accusing you of your crimes to the King
- And the accuser reminds the King of His reputation of being a Just and Righteous King—therefore a punishment must be sentenced.
 - The penalty for stealing from the King is death, and the punishment must be enacted if indeed the King is just
- The King agrees—there must be a punishment, and right before the gavel hits—the courtroom doors open up
 - The whole court turns and watches the Kings only Son walk down to the front
 - The Son says, “Father, it is right that a punishment must be enforced. But I’ll take the punishment for them.”
 - The King says, “Very well, Son” Slams the gavel and turns away
 - Then the bailiff comes and take off your handcuffs, and places them onto the Kings son—and He is led out of the courtroom to face His execution

- Then as you sit there stunned, you are told that you are free to go
- Still trying to wrap your head around what happened—you make your way out of the courthouse and you are presented with an invitation
- You look at it and it is from the King Himself, inviting you to the palace
 - Now here is where you have to make your decision—do you accept the invitation and go to the palace, or in your guilt, shame, or just complete ingratitude ignore it and go about your way
- But say you do accept the invitation: You are escorted to the Palace and warmly welcomed and you are seated at the Kings table with Him
 - You can barely look at Him because of what His Son went through on your behalf
- But He speaks to you lovingly and He says, “Look at Me child. Because My Son died for you, you will always have a home here. From

this moment on you will be My child. You have all of the privileges of a child of the King. But not only that, I have a job for you. I want you to go back out to where you came from, back to where you grew up back to where you got arrested...because My Son did not just die for you, but for everyone who has ever stolen from Me. Because of His status and Who He is—His death was enough to atone for anyone who has ever wronged Me. So I want you to go out and extend the same invitation to all of them that was extended to you. And when your assignment is completed you will live here in the Palace with Me forever.”

- It's not a perfect analogy—but it is in part what Jesus has done for you. And the question is: will you accept the invitation?
- Don't be a Felix—don't keep pushing it off
 - Today can be the Day— that you call upon the Name of the Lord
 - Today can be the Day—That you confess with your mouth that He is Lord

- Today can be the Day—that you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead