



## **Christians on Trial – Part 4**

### **Fear, Faith, & Reason**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

58. That is our crime index for our humble town here, 58, which is not a great number, but it's not a horrible number considering that we live in California. We have a crime index of 58 means that we are safer than 58% of the rest of the cities in all of America. 58. So, you know, you'd love to be 99 and it would really stink to be one, right? That's what I mean. So 58 is not so bad. And yet when it comes to things like violent crime, if you think about California, I mean, we're not Oakland, thankfully. But if you want to consider violent crime in our state, you have, no matter where you live, just on average, a one in 200 chance of being the victim of a violent crime. But if you live in our town, right? There are still 50,000 people here. You have only a one in just about a thousand chance of being a victim of crime, of some kind of violent crime. Now, if you choose all the rest of the kinds of crimes you could be a victim of you could be targeted and the stats there are you got about a 1 in 100 chance of actually having some kind of crime being foisted against you. So, that's why people, even though that seems high, for a state like ours that's not bad. And that's why a lot of people move to places like this. Because it's a relatively safe place to live. You won't be targeted, at least not as often as you would in other places.

And that's good. But when it comes to you being a Christian, the moment you became a follower of Christ, if in fact you are one, is the moment that you were targeted and you've become a target of gangs of criminals and thugs. And I mean that because there is a whole set of spiritual enemies the Bible says that instantly become your enemy and they come after you. And they're not only criminals, moral criminals and thugs, they certainly are that, but they are also murderers. Here's how Jesus put it in John 8:44 he said, Satan, who is our enemy, our adversary, the devil, he's the one who slanders us, "He is a murderer," and been a murderer, "from the beginning," and certainly he has. That is his goal. And as Peter said in First Peter 5, "He is prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." And the context is Christians. Christians, they're in his crosshairs and he is seeking to devour them. And then he goes on to talk about how Christians all over the world are being targeted. And so we need to understand that as a Christian, you stand with Christ, you are going to be targeted by spiritual enemies. And as weird as that sounds, it all fleshes itself out in the everyday things of life. As Paul said to Timothy, that Satan will hold people captive to do his will in our lives. And it's not just people, although when it comes down to all the things that Satan does we can put it in a variety of categories. "We really are wrestling not against flesh and blood," Ephesians 6 says, "but against spiritual forces of evil."

This is the problem that we face and all of us need to wake up to that because Jesus constantly reminded us about it. And if we're not aware of it we're in big trouble by interpreting everything without any reference to what's going on in the spiritual realm. Now, this may lead you to a lot of wacky theology, and a lot of people may get completely excited about trying to discern and interpret what's going on in the spiritual realm. But you don't have to somehow delve into something that we can't see or touch or perceive because the reality effects of the enemy's workings against us are everywhere. And Paul was experiencing this in Acts 25

when he was arrested on trumped up charges, phony charges. He was kept in prison because of the political manipulation of the governor. He had a whole bunch of people who wanted to kill him. And as we saw last time when the governor, Felix, had him under his charge, he was just left in prison, even though he had visitor rights. And so Festus comes on the scene, and when Festus comes on the scene as the new governor, we find that the clock has gone forward two whole years. And that's where we pick up the story as we see Satan really being the one driving this behind all the opposition to the Apostle Paul was the enemy and we need to be aware of that not only in his life but in ours. Even if you're not on trial for being a Christian, there's a lot of things because you are a Christian that Satan would like to oppose you in.

So I want to look at this text starting in verse 1. We'll cover in Acts 25 all the way to verse 12 this morning as we think about how all of this applies to your life and mine. Let me read it for you from the English Standard Version. Remember, we have a new governor in town. His name is Festus and he is on this throne in Caesarea. He comes as dispatched from Rome to take over the role that Felix had who wasn't doing so well. They called Felix back, recalled him to Rome, and "Festus been there only three days when he arrived in the province and he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea." So he barely drops off his bags, unpacks, and he goes to Jerusalem. Jerusalem, of course, is the headquarters of the whole Jewish nation. And he is in this Roman port, Caesarea Maritime, where he has Paul in prison, he inherited this prisoner. But when he goes to Jerusalem, "The chief priests," verse 2, "and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul." Which is remarkable when you think this has been two years and you think maybe some of the opposition and hostility toward Paul has quelled, but it hasn't. "They urged him," that is the governor, Festus, "asking as a favor against Paul that Festus summon him to Jerusalem." So they're saying, okay, you've come here. Would you please send for Paul and bring him? Why? "Because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way." And we saw that earlier. I mean, two years earlier, they were trying to kill him. There was a group of people who made a vow to not even eat until they killed Paul. Two years later that same kind of opposition, the hostility, the vitriol, all the violence planned against Paul was still on the table two years later. I mean, the guy is no longer been traveling and going to synagogues and doing any of the things they hated, and yet they hated him. They wanted to kill him, murder him.

Verse 4, "Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. 'So,' he said, 'let the men of authority among you come down with me, and if there's anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.' After he stayed among them, not more than 8 or 10 days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. And when he arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him that they could not prove." And Paul is going to step up and defend himself. "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?' And Paul said, 'I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews have done no wrong, as you yourselves know very well. If then I'm a wrongdoer or have



committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there's nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar." Verse 12, "Then Festus, when he conferred with his counsel, answered, 'To Caesar you've appealed; to Caesar you shall go.'" This is a pivotal time in a pivotal scene where Paul is publicly being called on the carpet by Festus, with his accusers again around him. None of the accusations, Luke takes time to even list here because they're all without basis. And Paul says, listen, don't release me. I appeal to Caesar, Paul says, and I would be killed. He even knows that if he's just let out of this particular point because he understands the opposition against him.

Well, I'm trying to make the case, as the Bible would make consistently, that the problem in the Garden wasn't just a fancy tree that looked like maybe Adam and Eve should take a bite. But there was an enemy out there scheming to try and get between God and people, and there was a lot going on in the strategy there to separate God and people. And the Bible's very clear that when Jesus calls him a murderer, that the real intent of the enemy is to get the creatures to no longer worship and obey the creator. And he's doing that successfully and has done that successfully for millennia. And so we're here and a long line of people who are opposed by the enemy with the name of a slanderer and an adversary. That's what the word Satan means, both in Hebrew and in Greek. Satan means an adversary who is against us, and we need to know we have one, and that he's prowling around looking to do something in your life. And it may not be a legal trial that you're facing but you need to start becoming aware of it because the best defense is first beginning to realize what's behind all this. Paul isn't scratching his head. He understands. He said elsewhere to the Corinthians we're not outwitted by the enemy. We know his schemes, we understand how he works, and he works as he writes in the book of Ephesians to try and get involved in people's lives to oppose us one way or another. And it's not just people's lives. It can actually be through a lot of things: the economy, the culture, your health. There are many things that the enemy can do. As Paul said, even his chronic illness was a messenger of Satan. Or that woman there in Luke 13 who was bent over, had the orthopedic problem and it said she was bound by Satan for 18 years.

So there's a lot going on even though it may all be measurable under a microscope that goes on in this world that behind it all the Bible would have us clue into the fact that we've really got an enemy. We've got an enemy with a gang of henchmen we call demons in the Bible that are out to do you harm, not just for the sake of sadistic pleasure, but because there's an agenda and a goal. But let's just start with that simple reality. The reason they're still breathing threats against Paul and wanting to actually commit murder as these "moral" Jews is because Satan is behind it and he's a murderer from the beginning. He comes only to "kill and steal and destroy" and we need to be aware of that. So number one, if you're taking notes, let's just remember this whole attack against Paul is a reminder that he has spiritual enemies and we have enemies. Number one, "Remember We Have Enemies." And you need to walk into this building, if I were to come up to you and say do you have any enemies, you would probably say, no, I don't think I have any, or maybe I got a real dispute with my neighbor, or I got a problem with a coworker or whatever you might have, but most of you say, no, I don't think I have any enemies. And yet you do. You have enemies. And no matter what an investigator comes in whether it's a set of slashed tires on your car in the parking lot at work, or whether



it's a homicide, they always ask, did he have any enemies? Right? And I just want you to start with the reality that the things in your life are not divorced from the reality that you have enemies.

If you have any doubt about that, go with me to Job Chapter 1. Let's just take a look at this very familiar passage and just understand how Satan is working. Let's build some sub-points here because you need to know what Satan's goal is. Not just to get you to an Ozzy Osborne concert or to wear a Metallica shirt. That's not Satan's goal for your life. There's something much bigger than that. It gets back to the Garden in Genesis 3 and that is he is against the truth. As a matter of fact, once you get to Job 1, can you go to John Chapter 8? So we're going to go to two passages at once like a lizard. Just put your eye on one passage and another eye on the other. And we're going to look at John Chapter 8 first. That was a weird sentence. John 8:44. That's the passage that I quoted as Jesus is being opposed and they're lying about Jesus. And he says this before we look at Job 1, he says, "You are of your father the devil." That's pretty harsh. "Your will," what you want, "is to do your father's desire," right? You're trying to take me presenting myself as the Christ and you're trying to deny that. Now, "He was a murderer from the beginning." He's trying to do harm to human beings, "he does not stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him." This is what he traffics in. But he tries to get people who've heard the truth from God, whether it's about how the church should be organized, about how we should function in marriage, about how life should work in society, or whether or not Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He is all about maligning the truth. If God says, don't eat from this tree because if you do it'll be injurious to your relationship with me. And that day you eat of the fruit, you shall surely die. Satan wants to step in to do you harm by getting you to believe what's not true, right?

Jesus says, "When he lies," look at the middle of verse 44, "he speaks out of his own character," this is what he's all about, "for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me." Because why? Because you're there, you're captive to the liar, and the liar wants to do you damage. You've got to be freed from believing the lies. I am sitting here "telling you the truth, you don't believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin?" Why would you not believe the Messiah? He comes in sinless and you're not believing. "If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. And the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." You're not connected rightly with God. And so we need to know that the reality of Satan getting involved in your life is to try and get you to not believe the truth in whatever arena, whatever area, whatever subject, whatever subcategory, he does not want you to affirm what is true.

Now. Job Chapter 1. Remember what happens here in this scenario. Job, here's this guy he's presented to us at the beginning of the book as a righteous and holy guy, but dropped down to verse 6. We have this big board meeting going on where the Ben Elohim, "the sons of God come in," they present themselves to God. These are the angelic class, representatives, top-ranking officers, if you will. "And they all present themselves before," the creator of all things, "the Lord, and Satan." There's our word. He's an adversary. He's one who comes against us. It says he's there "among them. And the Lord said to Satan, 'From where have you come?' And Satan answered, 'From going to and fro on the earth,'" like Peter said, like a roaring lion.

He's prowling around and he says, "'walking up and down on it.' And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job?'" I often say this, you know, I just hope that God doesn't start bragging about our church or you or me. But that's what happened. So all of a sudden now Job is in the crosshairs. "'There's none like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?' Then Satan answered the Lord, 'Does Job fear God for no reason?'" And you'd think the answer to that would be, well, he fears God because you're worthy of that fear because you're righteous and holy and transcendent, omnipotent and omnipresent. You're a great and mighty majestic God. Of course, he fears you for the right reasons. That would, I mean, be the good answer. But Satan's going no, the reason he does is, "You put a hedge around him," verse 10, "and his house and all that he has on every side." Look at you, you're dumping blessings in his lap. "'You bless the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.'"

Now if Job doesn't have all the blessings that he has does God cease from being praiseworthy? And the answer is no. God is a praiseworthy God. He's holy and majestic. He's holy and worthy to be praised. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." Now if he doesn't hand out a bunch of gifts to you is he still worthy to be praised? Of course he is. And so Satan is saying, no, that's not why Job worships God. And so if you take that all away he'll call you a bad God. He'll curse you. "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.' So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord," which is the reason when I say you have enemies, you think, well, where are they? Right? They're not doing much in my life. Well, if they're not doing much in your life it's because God has put a leash on those enemies and is not allowed whatever he hasn't allowed. But I'll bet there's a few of them nipping at your life in some area because he's let the leash out. And in that providence of God, he's allowed them to go after you for some reason. And God has a reason for letting the leash out in Job's life. And so here all of a sudden, Satan starts to go after him. And you know all it goes on from verses 13 to 19, all the bad stuff starts happening. We start with his resources and his money, all of his possessions, they all get stolen. All of his stuff starts to collapse and then his children die. This is awful. The death of his children, this is satanic.

And then in verse 20, we get to see whether he passes the test or not. "Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and," he didn't curse God, he credits to God and ascribes to God the glory that's due his name, that he "worships God." That's amazing. Right? We think, wow, you're mourning. You're grieving. That's this ancient Near Eastern sign, tearing your robe, shaving your head. You are now showing that you're in mourning. Yeah, he is in mourning but he still worships. He still says God is great. And he said, when it comes to the gifts, I'm not focused on the gifts. I'm focused on the giver. And I didn't have anything coming into the world. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed," not cursed, "blessed be the name of the Lord." And here's the commentary, verse 22, "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." Because if God takes away all of his gifts in your life, he's not wrong to do it. So here is Satan losing in the first inning at least, where Job says, God is still good even though I don't have these good things. God gave, God has the right to take away. He took



away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. That is Job passing the test that he still believes the truth about who God is even though Satan has attacked him.

Satan wants to attack you in some way, through some means, to get you to deny the truth in whatever area it might be. And he's constantly at work to get you to say, "Did God really say that? Did God REALLY say that? Is that really what God wants you to believe?" He's constantly at work at that and he'll use pain, he'll use sickness, he'll use financial collapse, he'll use marital problems, he'll use whatever it takes, including legal action against you to get you to say God isn't good. But Paul, we see in all of this he's doing exactly what Job is doing. He has no freedom. I guess he gets visitors, but he's been in jail for two years on charges that they cannot prove. And we trust that, like Job, he continues every day like we would hope that he would be worshiping the Lord, blessing God, saying God is good. We have to affirm the truth. Please know where the battle is. The battle is in your brain for what you affirm to be true about God and about what he does.

One more passage in the Old Testament. Go to Zechariah. Go to the book of Matthew then turn back a few books if you're in an old Gutenberg Bible. Zechariah. Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Matthew. So go to Matthew, turn back two books, Zechariah. In Zechariah Chapter 3, we have a particular subset of what Satan is trying to get at in your mind. And so whatever it is that it might be that he's getting you to doubt about God's goodness, about God's faithfulness, about whatever, there are lots of things we can talk about. It could be down to how the church is run, right? Getting you to doubt what God has said and how he structured it, the limits he's put on certain things, roles in marriage, whatever, Satan's trying to get you to not affirm what is true. Okay? There's a subset that's very important. It's almost like at the bullseye of what Satan would love to do. Like Paul, he's incurring charges that could not be proved. False accusations. One of Satan's names is that he is the false accuser. "He accuses," as it says in Revelation 12, "the brothers day and night before God." He's accusing us. Okay. Here's a passage in Zechariah Chapter 3 starting in verse 1, where we see this whole thing going down, and again we have the title for the enemy of God, Satan, was the accuser accusing a man named Joshua. This is in about 400 to 450 B.C. This is not 1450 B.C. So that was the Joshua that we knew of with Moses. This is a thousand years later. This Joshua is the high priest. He's not hanging out with Moses. He's hanging out with Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah after the reassembling of the land in Israel.

Pick it up in verse 1. Here's what it says in Zechariah Chapter 3 verse 1, "Then he showed me," this angelic vision he had, "Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord." Now the angel of the Lord here in this particular passage just the way this all plays out, may be in fact the pre-incarnate Christ, the ultimate messenger, you know, he is the Word, "The Word who became flesh and dwelt among us," John Chapter 1 verse 14. Maybe this is in fact Christ himself. Perhaps it is just with the profundity of what's going on in this passage. Let's read it. "The high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan was also standing here at his right hand to accuse him," because that's what Satan does. He loves to accuse. "And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you.'" Now this is interesting. "The Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you.'" This is the grammatical syntactical construction of a sentence that makes me think this probably is the pre-incarnate Christ, right? The Lord is speaking,



saying, "The Lord rebuke you." He's not saying I rebuke you, but the Lord rebuke you. This is the Son, I assume, saying to the Father, the Lord, the Father rebuke you, "O Satan!" O accuser. "The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" Who's saying that? I believe this is the angel of the Lord, the messenger of the Lord, perhaps the pre-incarnate Christ. "Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

Now here we go. I got Satan accusing Joshua of all kinds of things I can only assume. And here is the angel of the Lord now saying, isn't Joshua just a burning, smoldering stick that's been pulled out of the fire? I'm thinking right now, if you're coming to my aid as my advocate, I want you to say nice things about me. Not saying that I'm a burning stick, but that's what he says. Do you know why the angel of the Lord here says that Joshua, by the way, who is the high priest of all the Levitical leaders? He's the godly high priest. He's the top of the priestly chain. He's the most godly man representing the law of Moses to the people and representing the people before God, and sacrifices and praying and interceding. And he's the holy guy in this post-exilic reassembling of the nation. This is the top-ranking spiritual guy in Israel. And here the angel of the Lord says, you know, you're accusing this man of all kinds of stuff. I just want to tell you, he's a smoldering stick pulled out of the fire. Why does he say that? Because it's true, right? Because it's true. Every hero on the Bible, feet of clay, every godly person you know, feet of clay. Do you know what we are? We're sinners. That's the reality. Of course he's a burning stick being pulled out of the fire, a brand out of the fire. Why? Because we all are, right? The whole point of salvation is "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a," pretty good guy like me. Is that how that song goes? No. "A wretch," right? "A brand plucked from the fire." Even the best among us. A brand plucked from the fire. Sinners. Wow. Now where are you going to go now, Satan? Right? You're right, he's a sinner. He's bad. You're right. He falls short of the glory of God. You're right.

Well, here's where he's going to go next. "Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed in filthy garments." Garments, we see this throughout the Bible representing our deeds and how we act. And here he is, filthy garments. And this is how he's pictured. Maybe that's why the angel of the Lord accurately says he's just a stick, a smoldering stick being pulled from the fire, filthy clothes. "And the angel said to those who were," before him, "standing before him, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' And he said, 'Behold, I've taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you in pure vestments.' And I will say, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothe you with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by." I even think that line is profound. Speaking of the fact that how in the world is iniquity removed from anyone. It's not by the blood of bulls and goats, right? It's by what is yet to be incarnate, the incarnate Son of God, taking on human flesh, having righteous deeds to impute to us, a righteousness that Joshua does not have, an alien righteousness, as Luther used to say, that is put and accredited and imputed to us and our sins removed from us like filthy garments, and they are thrown into this washing machine of the cross that takes our sins away, the blood of the lamb removing our sins, who takes away the sins of people from all over the world. Think about that picture.

Here is Joshua and he's being accused of being a sinner and the angel of the Lord, I think the pre-incarnate Christ says what? Yeah, he's a sinner. But look at him now. Right? Checkmate.



What are you going to do now? Right? You're right, he is a sinner in and of himself. You can accuse him all day long just like it says in Revelation 12. The Satan, the dragon, "the accuser of the brethren ... he's accusing them before God all day long, day and night." Here's one of the things that Satan would love to get you to doubt: your forgiveness in Christ. The alien righteousness of Jesus imputed to you that you before God are absolutely 100% "qualified to share in the inheritance with the saints in light," that you are forgiven. And that's why we have all these religions trying to give you a ladder of good works to climb it so that you can be acceptable before God. That's what they're trying to do. And everyone likes to buy it because Satan is really good at saying, well, you got to be better before God can accept you. What needs to happen is you need to have your sins removed and a clean turban put on your head and clean vestments put on you. That's what you need. How do you get that? By this thing that happens on the cross, by the adoption that takes place where God makes "him who knew no sin," to be sin for us, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." And that happens by faith at the moment of your trust in Christ. And when God has made this reality you are completely forgiven.

There are people in this room that Satan is having his way with because you are a Christian but you sit there day after day thinking, "Well, I'm just a sinner. I'm terrible. And I don't even know." You doubt the transaction that "If you confess your sins that he is faithful and righteous" because this is all about him, "to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness." Some say, "Really, though? You didn't see what I did this week." I understand that. We come and confess, we repent, and then God makes us clean. Satan is an accuser and he would love to get you to doubt not only the truth of the Bible but the core truth of the Bible that you are qualified as a redeemed person to have fellowship with the living God. That's a key. He's all about that. We've got an enemy and he's out there. And though we read passages like the one I'm going to make you read in your small groups, Psalm 59, we don't have time to look at it, but in that passage it talks about David on the run from Saul's men, and he talks about he's surrounded by enemies and they're breathing out threats, and they have words like swords and they're like dogs and howling around and they're prowling. All that goes on in that passage and you read that and go, wow, must really stink to be David on the run from Saul's army. You're on the run right now from the enemy. You need to understand that you're surrounded by enemies. And the spiritual enemies want to get you to no longer affirm the truth of the Bible down to how the church is structured. Think about that. How God has said that you're clean and you're justified and you've got to know what the goal of the enemy is, right? You have an enemy. He wants you to not believe God. We have to believe God. That's the goal.

Paul, I guess if he would just deny the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, maybe they'd all go easy on him. Maybe the people who want to kill him wouldn't want to kill him. But they do want to kill him. And he's got a response in verses 8 through 11. Back to our passage now, Acts 25. Now, I want to look at that in a minute, but let me just take a moment before we get to his response to where this ends up. It ends up with a non-Christian pagan governor who just got off a ship not long ago, a month previous, from Rome, who's saying after he confers with his attorneys, you know what? You appeal to Caesar. I'm going to send you to Caesar. That's where you're going to go. You're going to go to Rome. That is the conclusion of Paul





sitting in a prison for two years in Caesarea. That's where this ends in this particular jurisdiction of Festus, before he goes before King Agrippa. We have this decision here of a leader who wants to now ship him off to Rome. You've got to go back in your mind to Acts 23 verse 11, when Jesus showed up to Paul and said, you've testified about me to those in Jerusalem, you're going to have to testify about me to those in Rome. And he makes it clear in Chapter 27 you're going to testify before Caesar himself.

Now, how can an itinerant traveling missionary talking about Jesus of Nazareth from the hick town of Nazareth, how in the world is Paul who's ostracized from the Jews and the Pharisees, how's he going to get a hearing with the top leader in Rome to talk to him about theology? Well, it's not going to happen unless something like this happens. And so God takes all of this satanic opposition and rolls it all up into doing something that he wanted to happen at the very beginning in Acts Chapter 1. "Let the gospel go from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth." How about the power center of Rome? The magnum opus of Paul writing about salvation is sent to Rome. He cares about Rome. He wants to get to Rome. And here we have an all-expenses trip paid to get to Rome from the Roman officials. God is working out his plan. And you know what? Paul proves to me again and again. And I know what's going on here, the reason he is not focused on complaining. Last week we looked at the patience he needed. The reason he was able to wait well is because he trusted God and God's plan for his life. We talked about that a lot, but let me just say it one more time. Number two on your outline, you need to "Trust in God and His Plans." He's got a plan for your life and he wants you to trust him, which is the antithesis of what it means to be afraid. And if you're sitting in prison for two years and you have the accusers show up who are still as vehement to kill you as they were two years earlier, I think you might be afraid. That's a natural response.

Just for me to say you have enemies. You've moved into a very spiritually dangerous place not by moving in zip code, but by moving from not following Christ to now I'm a follower of Christ. You've just put yourself in the crosshairs of gangs of spiritual, moral criminals and thugs. They're murderers. And I just told you all that. The natural response, well, that's scary. That's really scary. No, no, no, here's the antidote to that. Trust God. Right? And his plan for you. The paradigm is everywhere in the Bible, right? Think about this one, John 14:1 through 3, "Let not your hearts be troubled." Do not be afraid. Let our hearts not be troubled. Why? You need to trust in God and trust also in me. "Believe in God; believe also in me." And then he speaks there after an interval sentence, he says, you just need to know, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I'm going to come again and receive you unto myself that where I am you may be also." You got to believe me. "If it weren't so, I would have told you so." I know how this is going to end. And what you need to do is to trust me that I'm going to get you there. Now, Paul had a few waypoints on his map and he knew he was going to make it before Caesar in Rome. And here we see God doing exactly that. This is often said it's like God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick. And we look at our lives and it looks really messed up. And left turn here and right turn there and set back there, lost that job, I didn't know I was going to have to move there, I didn't know this would happen, I didn't think that would fall apart. We have all this stuff happen, including your health and your finances, your relationships at work, whatever. And you think, wow, it's a mess. It's not a mess. It's not a mess.



Here's what the Bible says. And it's been said by every godly person who understands that God has a good plan that he's working out. It says that "Surely goodness and mercy are going to chase me down all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." You're not going to heaven to live on a cloud. You're going to come back when he receives you unto himself and he's going to make his dwelling place among men here on earth. And we're going to have a perfect reality, and you're going to dwell in the house of the Lord which will be on the new Earth forever. He's going to get every Christian there through the path, whether it's cancer or divorce or bankruptcy or whatever it is, he's going to get you there working out his plan even though the things that are being thrown at you are satanic. Just like Paul said, this thorn "in the flesh is a messenger of Satan sent to buffet my body." He says, I've got a chronic illness, that's Satan. You see that? In all the bad things in this world, Satan is active. God has let the leash out and now he's let Satan touch my body. But even in that, we immediately see within the immediate context God was using that, God had a plan for that. God had a plan to kind of mitigate the fact that Paul could have a runaway ego and get prideful. It certainly put a muffler on him and it kept him where he needed to be in terms of humility. And God got his will done. It's almost like Romans 8:28 is true. It's almost like that, right? "That God works all things together for good, for those who," love God and, "are called according to his purpose." Either you believe that or you don't. And if you believe it, even though you're being attacked, whether it's lawsuits or whatever it is, you've got to know as you're faithful to the Lord to walk with him, he is working out his good plan in you, and you need to say I'm not going to fear.

Turn to this passage, First Samuel, this is important. First Samuel Chapter 17. And by the way, before you start telling me these are Christological passages about the greater Son of David, I know all that. I know that, I know that. But when David kills Goliath there is a kind of boldness here and a courage to see something the way we ought to see it. And on the authority of First Corinthians Chapter 10, I will say there's a moral lesson for us to learn in this text. I understand the Christological overtones, I get it. I can preach Christ from the Old Testament just like you. I can do that. But I understand in this passage there's something about Christian character that we need to learn. I don't mean to be defensive with all that, but let's look at it. That just saved me a couple of emails, I'm sure. (audience laughing) All right. First Samuel 17. You noticed I didn't laugh along with you when you laughed at that. Look at verse 4, "There came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span." And if you're really not quick at calculating that in your mind and the app on your phone doesn't translate that for you, let me just translate that. That's about nine-plus feet. About nine feet and perhaps nine inches. Okay. A lot of people try to roll this down because I've never seen a nine-foot-tall guy and that seems just freakishly large. It doesn't seem right. Right? But if you really read the rest of this about his armor you're kind of stuck with the fact that that armor fits a nine-foot-tall guy. This is a nine-foot pushing ten-foot-tall guy. And he's not just like we found a really freakishly large guy in our group. We're just going to send him out there and scare all you guys. He's a champion, and that means that he is an experienced killer. He's a warrior. He's a soldier and he's giant, right? That's what's going on here.



Well, you know what happens. David shows up bringing supplies to his brothers. He's just a shepherd boy. But he gets here, he hears what's going on, and he listens to the Philistines mocking God. His zeal for the Lord, he is absolutely, completely just astonished that no one's doing anything about this, because the Philistines are calling out send your best guy over from Israel and fight him in this valley. So there's a standoff and David is sitting there getting angry with indignant anger because here's someone slandering God. That's called lies. There's a lie. This is satanic. And he goes it's got to stop. Drop down to verse 32. Just remember, this is a ruddy little young shepherd boy. "David says to Saul," Saul is wearing the crown. He's in some special tent with soldiers sitting outside of it, away from the front line. But he's there in the battle. He's the top ranking military official and the shepherd boy says to the top-ranking military official, "Let no man's heart fail because of this guy," this big guy. "Your servant will go and fight this Philistine." That is, I mean, gumption man. Wow. You're going to do what? Saul has been at a standoff and he's got no one who is willing to fight. The hearts are, quote unquote, melting before the Philistine. And you're walking in with that kind of boldness? Crazy.

So what does Saul say? Which is what we would say. What are you talking about? "You're not able to go up against this Philistine to fight him, verse 33, you're just a teenager, "you're just a youth and this man has been a man of war from his youth." Come on. You can't do this. "And David said to Saul, 'Your servant,'" speaking of himself, "used to keep sheep for my father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and I struck him and delivered him out of its mouth. And if he rose against me, I caught him by his beard and I struck him and killed him. Your servant, David, has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.' And David said, 'The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.'" I just think, here is this lie. Here's this liar, here's this blasphemer. And David, with great courage, looks at the battles and troubles that God has got him through in the past and says, you know what? This problem, this enemy of the people of God, this defier and one who's mocking the armies of the living God, I'll lean into this. And talk about lean into it drop down to where this starts in verse 48, "When the Philistine arose," verse 48, "and came and drew to meet David," David took three steps back and counted his rocks. No, David did what? Verse 48. "He ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine." I just love that. Talk about a guy who is bold and zealous for what's true and what's right and what's real. Because you know, you don't blaspheme God because that is not right. That's not true. The true and living God should be worshiped. You should "Ascribe to the Lord the glory that's due his name." And you're mocking him and defying him. And David sees this and he leans into it.

Some of you've been diagnosed with cancer, some of you have chronic illnesses, some of you are going through divorce, some of you are being sued. I'm just telling you this, right? Whatever Satan's throwing at you right now, know that Satan's on a leash, you need to lean into that. Because whatever God has done to get you through the past, he's going to get you through this. One way or another, even if it's like Paul, as we said last time in Second Timothy Chapter 4, even if it means your head is going to be lopped off and this is going to end your life, the Bible says, "He will bring you safely into his kingdom." You're going to live in the



house of the Lord forever. You can "walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil because he's with you." You don't fear because you trust God and God draws near. That's why I'm taking you to that great psalm in your small groups, Psalm 59, to remember that God is a God who's got your enemies in his crosshairs. And right now it seems like they're winning. But you've got to remember what that old hymn that I've already quoted, John Newton wrote in 1779. "Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come: 'Tis grace," not because you're some big warrior but, "his grace has brought me safe thus far," I have killed the lion in the bear, "and his grace will lead me home." Whatever the last battle is that you have to fight. I love this next verse. It's not sung very often, but listen. "The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures; he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures." God is going to get you through whatever Satan's throwing at you right now. You need to trust in God and his plans. That means there's no fear.

Paul, speaking of what he does here, which is very wise in verses 8 through 11. Go back to our passage in Acts 25. He's going to give a defense and he gives a wise defense. He gives a wise defense that understands something about it would be good for me to ask to appeal to Caesar, because if I don't, I know how hostile these Jews are. They might kill me the minute I pack up my stuff and get my personals back and I walk out of this prison in Caesarea, I might get killed. Not only that, I know that God says you're going to ultimately get me to Rome. Well, this will be an all-expenses paid trip to Rome. I can go to Rome if Festus just tells me I can. So he's going to end up with a request to appeal to Caesar. And not only that, he argues, in essence, the totality of his innocence and then he states his own integrity. Look at verse 8, "Neither against the law of the Jews," because they were concerned he was teaching something that was not biblical and he's saying everything in the Bible, just like we saw in Luke 24 in our Daily Bible Reading, Jesus was speaking about the truth of him being the Messiah from the law and the prophets and the Psalms. He was saying exactly what the Bible says, and Paul's doing the same thing. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. Secondly, I didn't do anything "against the temple." They said I brought a Gentile into the court of the Jews. I didn't. And from the very beginning this was a misunderstanding and we saw that. And Paul defended himself and tried to exonerate himself from the beginning. But he said I didn't do it. No one can say it. They've trumped up charges against me. And lastly, they're saying I'm a troublemaker, stirring up trouble before Rome. Hey, "I haven't done anything against Caesar." I haven't been a bad citizen. I paid my taxes. I've done what I should. I've committed no offense here. I'm innocent.

And then look at what he says in verse 11, "If I'm a wrongdoer," whatever you can bring up, if I've done something wrong, I'll pay the penalty, whatever that is, right? I am a man here of integrity standing up for the truth. I haven't done wrong. False charges. Listen, just send me to Caesar. That's a pretty wise response all things considered. If we had time we could look at every facet of what's going on in this whole movement of history early in the Church. And you can see this is exactly what God wanted to have happen. And it was a very wise thing and Paul was clued into this. You know whatever Satan throws at you, whether it's, you know, the Philistine that you've got that Satan has sent or a thorn in the flesh, or like Luke says, you're battling some issue where Satan is ultimately behind this, just know the sovereignty of God, you can trust him in his plan, you know it's going to end right. But in the meantime, when you



deal with every stage of the battle that you're facing, you need wisdom and you got to get more of it. Number three, "Get More Wisdom." I don't know how much wisdom you think you have. If I said, how wise are you? I don't know how you quantify that, but you need more of it. This is the key. Do you want to define it? I know there are a lot of biblical definitions, a lot of Sunday school definitions, a lot of pastoral definitions. Here's my definition of wisdom. Are you ready? It's knowing what to do and what to say. I need to know what to do and what to say. And then it's how do I do it and how do I say it? And then when do I do it? And when do I say? That's wisdom. I need I need to know what to do. I need to know what to say. I need to know how to do it. I need to know how to say it, and I need to know when to do it and when to say it. That to me is the essence of wisdom. I know there are shorter definitions, like, you know, it's the skill of living life. It's the application of biblical truth, lots of definitions. But that to me when I think about what is wisdom, is understanding what to do next, what should I do? And Paul is putting wisdom into action here.

Six things real quick. If you want wisdom, you got to have these six things. Jot this down. Proverbs Chapter 4, great passage, verses 5 through 7. Here's the first thing you need. What you need is you need to "Want It." You got to start with wanting it. Let me just quote a little bit of this for you. Proverbs Chapter 4 verse 5. It says, "Get wisdom ... don't turn away from the words of wisdom. Don't forsake her," wisdom's personified here, "she will keep you; love her and she will guard you." I love this, verse 7, "The beginning of wisdom is this; Get wisdom." This is great, right? What's the smartest thing you can do? Right? Let's use the right word. What's the wisest thing you can do is get more wisdom. That's the wise thing to do. I know you think if you say, what's the beginning of wisdom? Oh, fear of the Lord. And that's repeated often in the Bible. But even before we get to the details of how to rearrange your thinking in light of theism, of God, you need to want to be wise. You need to want wisdom. And then he goes on to say, oh man, if you get that, you should, "Prize her highly and she will exalt you; she will honor you, if you embrace her. She will place," a garland, "a graceful garland on your head; she will bestow a beautiful crown on you." It is good for you to have wisdom. You need more wisdom. Whatever Satan throws at you, you need wisdom.

So, number one, you need to "Want It." Number two, we just read this in our Daily Bible Reading, First Kings Chapter 3, "You Got to Ask For It." You got to ask God for it. You need to say to God, God, I want wisdom. We've had seven days since we last met here in this room. I don't know how many times in the last seven days, you had 168 hours, how many times did you say to God, I want wisdom? It's a humble thing to ask. Remember when Solomon did ask for it? He said, I'm just a youth. David's done this. He's experienced. I just need wisdom to know how to shepherd these people. The best thing about that passage, by the way, every time I read that passage as I did in the Daily Bible Reading this week, here's what I thought. I just settled in on this beautiful savory phrase. Here it is. "And the thing that Solomon asked pleased the Lord." That's so good. "It pleased the Lord that Solomon asked for this," I think is the translation of the English Standard Version. Please the Lord. I know this, I can make you right now please the Lord, as we started out last week's sermon. Right? Just ask for more wisdom. You got to want it. You got to ask for it.



Number three, you've got to "Expect It." If you don't expect it, according to James Chapter 1 verses 5 and 6, then you should not expect that you'll get any wisdom from God. You have to expect that God is going to give it to you. Do you know that passage? "If anyone of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously to all without reproach ... but ask without doubting." Because anyone who doubts... you go to God and say, God, I need wisdom. If you doubt that he's going to give it to you, if you doubt that he's generous with it then you're like the wind tossed around. It's like you are just weak. You need to go to God knowing you're going to the source of all wisdom. Ask him for wisdom because if you don't believe that he'll give it to you, if you're not expecting him to respond... Some of you sit here right now and you think, "I'm not wise. I'm not wise. I know some wise people, they're so godly, so wise. I could never be wise." Stop it! Want it, ask for it and expect it. Okay?

What are the means now? Number four, "Study Your Bible." Study your Bible. Psalm 19 verses 7 and 8. Listen to this. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." How do you get wise? You open up your Bible and you study it every single day. Let me just again compliment you guys as a church. This church, I preach in a lot of places, a lot of venues, a lot of different places around the year and I'll tell you what, the one thing I like about this church, is there is something that it's almost an intangible at first about the fact that you guys know your Bibles. And you know your Bibles in part, not to pat myself on the back, but one of the values of our church is that we're always reading the Bible through from cover to cover every single year. And maybe you've been at the church for six years. If you've been in the church for six years, maybe it takes a year for you to get the pressure to finally break through on you. And you're like, finally, okay, I'll do it. So if you've been in our church for six years and you've just been relatively faithful to do what we've said, then you've read through the Bible five times. I go to a lot of places to speak and there are Christians there and I'll bet half of them haven't read through the Bible a single time, and it eventually shows in certain ways. I just want you to know it's one of the safeguards against you being a fool is to know your Bible from cover to cover. A lot of people go and spend time in the Word but they take their 19 favorite verses and just read them over and over again. Kind of the inspiration for the day. They might as well just have a motivational business poster on the wall. You need to study your Bible, you need to read your Bible, you need to have the whole of your Bible in your heart. If you started with us back 18 years ago, we've been doing it the whole time. You've read through the Bible 18 times with us, and I think that's so important. You got to get in the Word. It makes wise the simple. I love the next line. "The commandment of the Lord," in verse 8, "is pure, it enlightens the eyes." You will be wiser if you get your brain in the book.

This one you're not going to like. First Chronicles 12. First Chronicles 12. Number five. I'm telling you, some of you won't like this. David has to have his wise men around him. Well, there are a particular group of wise men in the tribe of Issachar and they're described this way in First Chronicles 12:32. "The men of Issachar, who had an understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." See that's what wisdom is, knowing what to do. And here they knew what to do and one of the reasons they knew what to do is because they understood the times. Even Ahasuerus, the Persian king in the first chapter of Esther, has his people around him, his wise men, and they're described this way "who understood the times." I mean, I put it this way. You need to "Understand the News." And I know you don't like that,



some of you say, "It's so negative. It's so negative. It's awful, the world is awful." I understand that but you need to understand what's going on. You can't understand what's going on in the university campuses unless you know... Why are our young people supporting Hamas? I mean, let's just think this through. Does that make any sense? Well, of course it makes sense if you understand something of the trends of what's going on here in this generation. And to know what you should do you need to understand what's been happening. And what's been happening is not found in the pages of the Bible. It's seen through the lens of the Bible but it's understanding what's going on in our world. I mean, at the very least, listen to our friend Doctor Mohler who every morning tries to give you a briefing. It for nothing else take 25 minutes every morning to be able to see the world's events through the lens of Scripture, and at least know. I mean, you'll know something about neo-Marxism, right? You'll know something about why you have a DEI department in your business, if you understand what's going on. Satan is working out his plan in the things that are happening in our world and we need a study of something of that, to note the strategies and the schemes of the enemy, which Paul said to the Corinthians he wasn't ignorant of. And I think you're going to have to at least be tuned in with what's going on in our world, to some extent you need to.

Sixthly, Proverbs 13 verses 20 and 21. "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm." Then it says, "Disaster pursues sinners." Do you want to hang out with sinners? Do you know what's right behind them, just clawing at their heels? Disaster, right? "But the righteous are rewarded with good." See wisdom it rewards us, it crowns us. There's good in wise people. There's something that God does in protecting us and defending us. And it's a garland on our head. Well, what we need to realize is that comes by having a companion, a set of companions, who are wise. And you need to draw near to people who are wise, right? Have less Friday nights out with your coworkers if they're not wise, right? More time in your small group if assuming they're wise. And if you're so wise that no one is wise enough to hang out with we got a bookstore over here. At least go find someone who knows more than you and read a book because you'll sit there and you'll be wise. You'll be a companion of the wise as you sit in your reading chair and encounter people who know so. That bookstore is not there just to decorate the other side of our lobby. Go in there today and buy a book and then take that book and you will spend hours, a few hours, depending how long it takes you, how thick your book is, spent to be... You'll walk with wise and the Bible says you become wise. We curate those titles just to keep, you know, all the junk out. So go and spend time with wise.

So what did I say? You got to want it. You got to value it. You got to want it. You got to ask for it. You got to expect it. You got to study the Bible. You got to study the news. You got to befriend the wise. And Paul I'm sure was doing all these things because he taught all these things in his epistles, and therefore he's able to respond in such a wise way that he plays right into the hand of God's plan for his life. And here Rome decides through the governor of Judea to actually grant him passage to go to Rome, to actually have an audience with the Emperor. Amazing wisdom.

I walked through my garage the week of Easter it happened to be and I noticed my socks got wet. Now I look down which I should have done before I walked through the garage and I

realized my garage was, like, wet. And, it wasn't raining and there was a huge puddle in my garage. And homeowners that's never fun, right? It's like why? I said immediately to everybody, I texted my, you know, people have been over, my kids have been over. "Hey, did anyone spill something in the garage? Please say yes. Please say yes." No. Nobody had. All right. Now, I need you to picture my garage. You come out the door, you know, the hallway into the garage and if you have the garage doors they open this way. Okay? Here's my garage. I start looking for where is this water coming from. Hoping it wasn't bubbling up from the slab. And I kind of traced the corners and finally moved some things around and get behind all the, you know, the vacuum and the stuff I got. And I get behind my tool bench and sure enough there's a pipe on the right wall of my garage that pokes through, and I know what's on the other side. There's a spigot. There's a spigot there by the trash cans on the right side. And I look behind and sure enough, there's this little fountain just joyfully spraying off the top of the pipe. So being a somewhat experienced homeowner, I know what to do. I'm going to go to the shut-off valve. I'm going to start with that. Right? See if I can call a plumber or somebody. It is 9:30 on the week of Easter of all times and I'm going there to shut-off the valve.

Well, the shut-off valve, you're picturing my garage, right? On the left wall there's this pipe that traverses the whole ceiling of the garage. It pokes out the other side on the left side of the garage and there's a spigot there. And you know what's attached to that spigot? A shut-off valve and a pressure regulator. Right? Homeowners, you know what that's all about. So I'm thinking to myself I've lived in this house for like 17 years now. Okay? I never really thought much about it but I thought a little bit about it. And when I shut that pressure regulator off, which I've had to do a few times for repairs or whatever, I shut that off and I run back to the little toy fountain that's flooding my garage. And I look at that little water spray and I think, oh, here's what I'm expecting. I'm expecting the fountain to go down and away. That's what I expect. And I wait and I wait and I wait with my socks getting wet, I wait. And it doesn't happen. And I said, well, I know what to do. I'll go outside by the trash cans and I'll turn the spigot on and I'll drain the pressure in the line, because it does have to go up and over and down. And so, I don't know, there's a lot of pressure in this apparently. So I go by the trash cans and I turn that on. And for the first time in a long, long time, I said, man, that's a lot of pressure coming out of that thing. It's like a fire hose. And I waited and I waited and I waited and now I'm starting to flood the whole side of the house and I'm like, wow, there's no possible way that's right. And so all this time I've lived in this house, I thought, the water goes from the left to the right because I thought the main came into the left spigot and goes around and just so happens someone put a spigot in by the trash cans before I bought the house.

Guess what? It doesn't go from left to right. It goes from right to left. So I look at this as I'm sitting here flooding my trash can area. Well, where's the shut-off valve over here? Because if this is where the main comes in... Is anyone following this story, this home disaster? I'm thinking I got to be able to shut that off. There's no shut-off valve. So I kind of like in my alter ego I think I'm MacGyver, you know, in my mind. I have two full-sized toolboxes, right? And so I start digging through my tools thinking I got to fix this. I can't shut the pressure off. So I got to fix this, right? I got to be able to call a plumber and fix it. So I go in, I start looking at stuff that might work and I'm trying to think in my mind. I'm seeing all these charts in my mind. And so I





grab a couple of things and a little hose clamp and this and that, and I go and I start to work on it, and just about when I'm there to get my knees wet to get behind my tool chest or my workbench to start trying to somehow put the Band-Aid on this, I thought to myself as I was just about to kneel down maybe I should consult wisdom on this.

So there is wisdom for homeowners. It's found at YouTube.com. (audience laughing) So I pulled my phone out. I didn't open my Bible app. I opened my YouTube app and I typed in "pinhole leak." Right? Like how to temporarily fix a pinhole leak. So I looked at this and how I was going to do it was not only that it wasn't quite right, it was that I was doing it with a completely wrong perspective because I was sure I knew what I was going to do. I was going to get down with what I had planned to put there on that pipe, and I was going to cinch that puppy down tight. And this guy on YouTube went on there and said, "So make sure you don't cinch known tight. But what you need to remember is if it's got a pinhole leak, it's already compromised. You do that, you'll collapse the whole thing and it'll go, you know, you will ruin the pipe." And I thought I couldn't shut the pressure off. This guy thinks I'm doing it with the water off. I don't have the water off. If I collapse this thing I've got a hydrant now flooding my entire neighborhood. That's what I'm thinking. So I said, thank you God for YouTube and it said here's what you should do if you want to do it right. And I had to go to the store. So, I run into the store real quick, go to Home Depot, come back and I get just the right thing, a gasket, cut it the right way. Get the right kind of hose clamp and put it on there. And I was very careful so I didn't collapse the pipe. And I got a Band-Aid on it until we can get a plumber over there. When I got the plumber over there, I said, hey, man, this is the inlet. The plumber agreed, "Yeah, no kidding." I said, where's the shut-off valve? I said, I don't care what it costs put a shut-off valve on this thing. And so now at least I have a shut-off valve. I said, replace this pipe. And so several hundred dollars later, my garage is not flooding. But no, don't clap because it was painful, like a couple of days before Good Friday service. It was just awful.

But here's what I was thankful for. By God's grace I was able to take a situation that was a trial and not turn it into a complete disaster by not stopping to consult wisdom. Paul wisely responds. Because here's the thing, there are a lot of holes poked in your life and I guarantee you Satan is involved in more of them than you think. He's out there to cause trouble in your life. He would love to see your life in several ways collapse. They don't have to collapse. You need to trust God. You need not be afraid. You need to be levelheaded. You need to consult wisdom and you make sure you do this the way God expects us to. Very carefully, methodically, without fear, trusting him. God can get you through whatever it is, right? Because one day God is going to fix everything about this detritus home that we live in, this corrupted place called Earth. God's going to fix it and create a new one for us. Until then, walk through the valley of the shadow of death without fear, right? Because this whole thing for us ends well, no fear.

Let's pray. God, we want wisdom. We want more of it. You tell us to ask with faith, believing. Please make us a wiser congregation, wiser individuals. We know that Satan would love to have us deny the truth in a variety of areas. Most importantly, perhaps, is us doubting the work of Christ to make us your children, to make us righteous. So let us never doubt that, "You are faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."



We know we're forgiven, accepted, loved children of God in Christ. Now there's a lot that we can do to manage all the challenges, all the fiery darts that the enemy throws at us. We can trust you without fear. We can be wise men and women shining in this culture as people who see your good hand of protection and guidance upon us. We've gotten through a lot of trouble in the past, God, whatever the biggest trial is that we might face next, let us trust you that you'll get us home safely.

In Jesus name. Amen