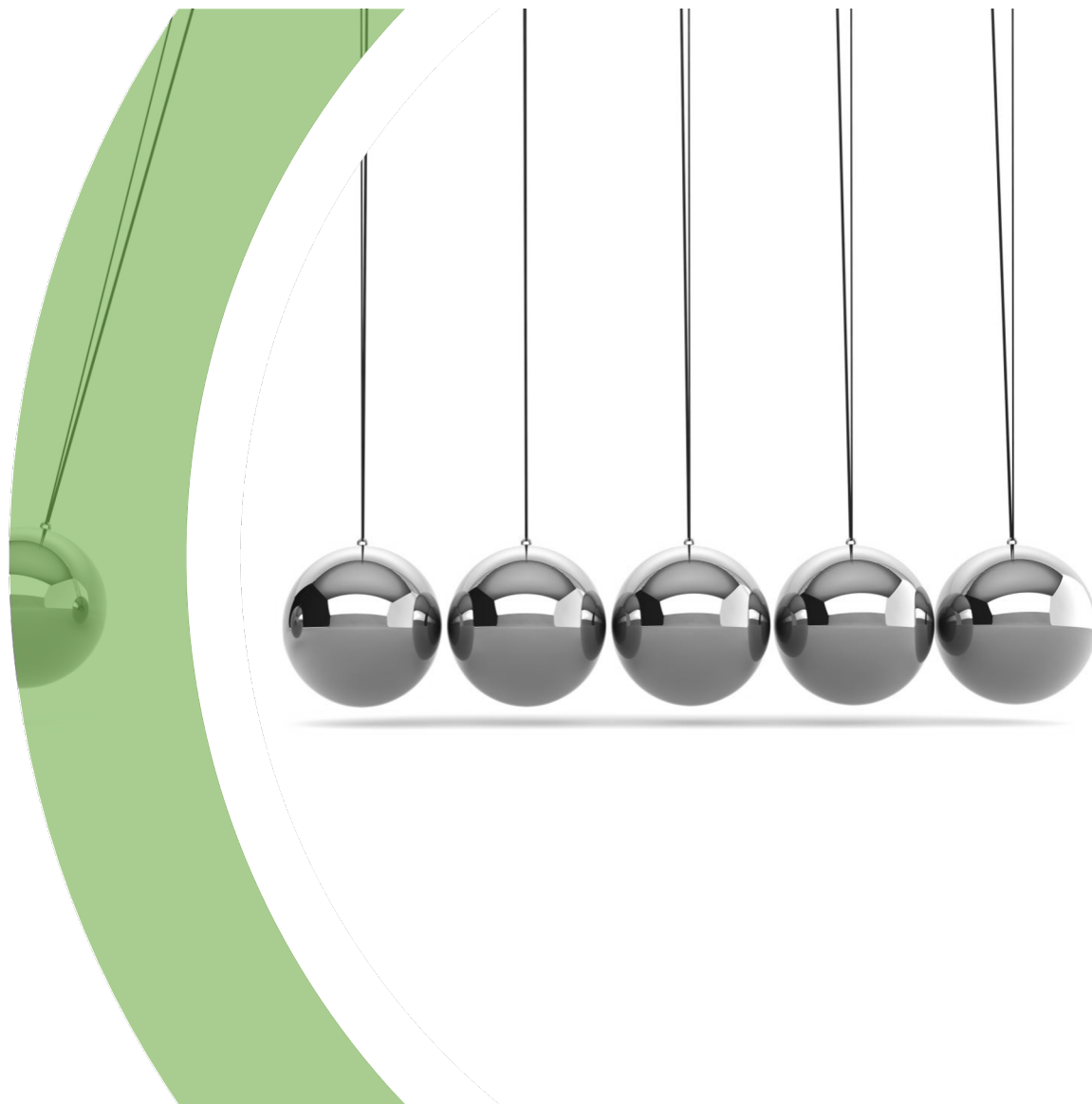




Stand Firm Part 2

Acts 25: 1-22





Quick Review: Background and Setting the Stage



- The apostle Paul is in prison in Caesarea. In Acts 24, Paul defended himself against false charges before Governor Felix. After 2 years, Paul remains in prison when Felix is succeeded by Festus. Paul sets the stage in Acts 24 for what we're looking at this month in Acts 25 in 3 key ways:
 - Paul identifies himself as a follower of "The Way".
 - He expresses hope in God that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.
 - Paul strives always to keep his conscience clear before God and man.



Our Series Theme: STAND FIRM!

As we look at Paul as a prisoner in Caesarea before Festus in Acts 25, we're also drawing on a passage in the letter to the Ephesians that Paul wrote while he was a prisoner, likely in Rome. To Stand Firm, We Put On The Full Armor of God:

Ephesians 6:10-18



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Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.



The Key Passage: Acts Chapter 25:1 – 22 (NIV)

Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, ² where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. ³ They requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. ⁴ Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. ⁵ Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there.”

⁶ After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. ⁷ When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them. ⁸ Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”



The Key Passage: Acts Chapter 25:1 – 22 (NIV) continued

⁹ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?”

¹⁰ Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”

¹² After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

¹³ A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. ¹⁴ Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul’s case with the king. He said: “There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. ¹⁵ When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.



The Key Passage: Acts Chapter 25:1 – 22 (NIV) continued

¹⁶ “I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. ¹⁷ When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in.

¹⁸ When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. ¹⁹ Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. ²⁰ I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. ²¹ But when Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor’s decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar.”

²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.”

He replied, “Tomorrow you will hear him.”



Jesus is Alive!

That's what Paul said, and Festus reported it to King Agrippa.

Jesus is alive!

The importance of Jesus's resurrection can't be overstated.

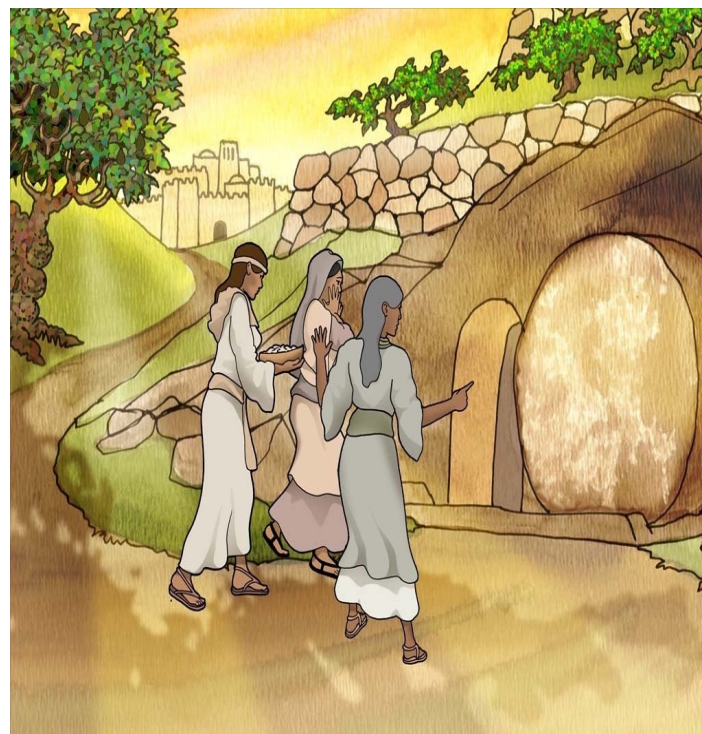
It is the crux of everything. It is the foundation of our faith.

Because Jesus is alive, we have victory over sin and death.

Because Jesus is alive, we can fulfill our role as the Lord's representatives on the earth and faithful stewards of the world He created.

Because Jesus is alive, we can be channels of God's love and justice.

If Jesus is not alive, our faith is meaningless.



Attribution: John Paul Stanley Yo.com



1 Corinthians 15:12-19 (NIV)

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

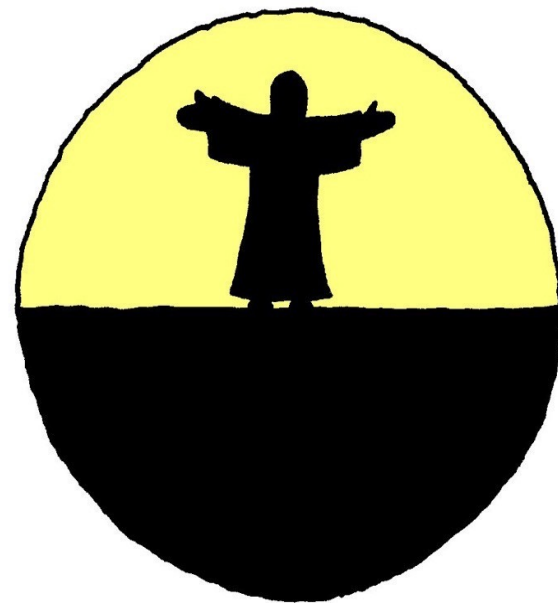


The Ultimate “How You Like Me Now?!” Moment

With the resurrection, Jesus is vindicated. He really is the King of the Jews! He really is the promised Messiah! He really is the King of the nations!

The resurrection demonstrates the Gospel, the good news that Jesus’s Kingdom has arrived!

As we started to see last week, we’re in a spiritual battle and the Truth of the Gospel is the Belt of Truth Buckled Around our Waist.



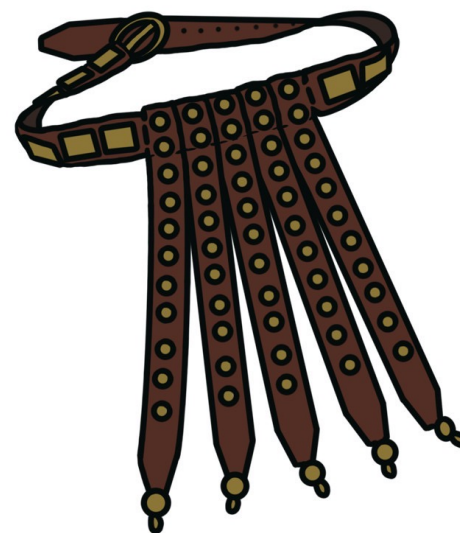
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The Belt of Truth Bucked Around our Waist

The Belt of Truth prepares us for Action.

Be strong in the Lord. Not in yourself. Our God is mighty. Recognize that you're in a spiritual battle. Remember that the devil is no match for the Lord! Not even close! Don't let the devil push you around. The devil is a liar. The enemy attempts to whisper lies in our ears to discourage us. Lies about ourselves and our circumstances. Don't listen!



Attribution: Aya and Nicole Velasquez



The Breastplate of Righteousness In Place

God is a God of righteousness and justice. One day He will judge the world and make everything right. He'll end injustice.

Christ's resurrection was the start. Jesus was vindicated and in Christ, we are justified – our status has changed – we're in right-standing with God.

With the Breastplate of Righteousness, we reflect godly character and work to dismantle injustice.



Attribution: Aya and Nicole Velasquez

What's God's take on Justice & Injustice?



- Ezekiel 22:29 (NIV) ²⁹ The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice.
- Isaiah 59:4 - No one calls for justice; no one pleads a case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments, they utter lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.
- Isaiah 59:7 - Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. They pursue evil schemes; acts of violence mark their ways.
- Isaiah 59:15b - The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.
- Micah 6:8 - He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly^[a] with your God.



Feet Fitted With The Readiness That Comes From The Gospel Of Peace.

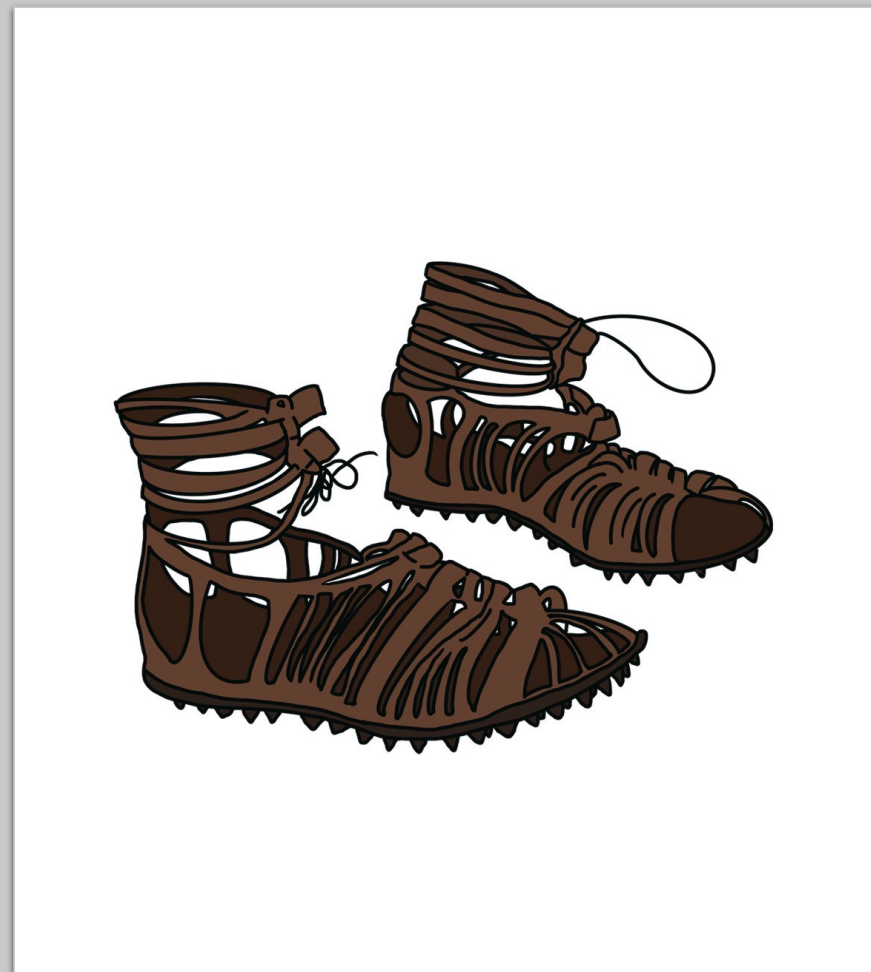
In Christ we have

Peace with God

Romans 5:1 (NIV) **5** Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Peace with one another

2 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV) ¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.



Attribution: Aya and Nicole Velasquez



Discussion Questions

Discuss why it matters that Jesus is alive and not dead.

Based on the passages we read (Ezekiel 22:29, Isaiah 59:4, Isaiah 59:7), what kinds of injustice bother God?

What kinds of injustice bother the church? What's your impression? What's the impression of people you know?