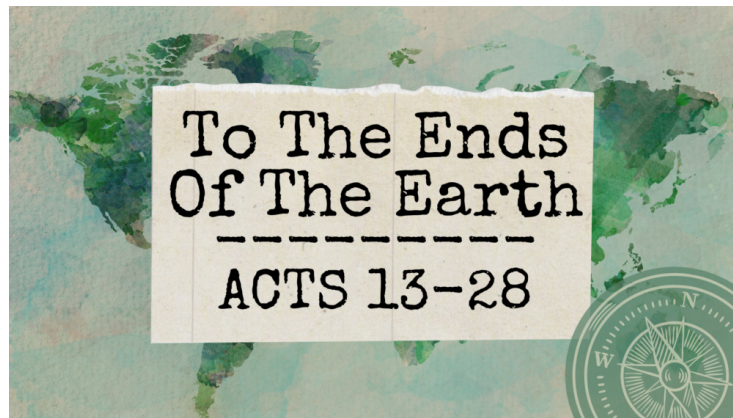


Paul's Secret to the Good Life



Acts 24

Bro Kory Cunningham

We are going to be dealing with conscience some today, so I want you to think about when you were a kid where you did something you knew was wrong. Maybe you got caught, maybe you didn't. Maybe it took a little while, but you knew if your mom or dad found out you were going to be in big trouble. Maybe it was your teacher, or a friend, but that thing that you did—well, you knew you shouldn't do it or maybe you accidentally did it, but you still knew it was wrong and you needed to say something about it and you didn't and guess what? You had a troubled heart. You had a guilty conscience. Do you remember that first time you really felt the weight of a guilty conscience and how it ate at you until you told it? Maybe you have never told it and it is still in you. That thing is still there. I can remember when I first started driving. I had a 1985 Chevy S-10. My sister had a brand new 1997 black Mustang. I didn't get a new truck because I had a lot of motorcycles, so I had an older truck. My parents loved me the same, but I had some other things so my truck wasn't as great as her car. Her car was amazing (I will say I was probably a little jealous of her car)! Anyway, I was a new driver and I was getting ready to leave one night and I'm in the driveway, I put it in reverse, hit the gas, and BOOM! I looked in my

rearview mirror—nothing is there, so I'm thinking...*what did I hit?* I get out of my truck and look and there is something there. There is a black Mustang there. Immediately, I think...*Uh oh, I'm a new driver, and I've just hit my sister's car. My parents and my sister in the house...nobody is out here. Nobody saw it. What do I do? Do I go in and tell my sister I just I just rear ended her car?* It is what I should have done. Instead, I decided to just go forward a little bit and then get around her car. I did check the bumper, but this is before cellphones with flashlights on them, so it was a little dim but I didn't see any red marks (her car was black and my truck was red), so I thought I was okay. I left because I didn't want to have to stay home...like get grounded or murdered...so I thought I would just let it slide. I drove off and I went to my friend's house. Do you know what thought about the entire night? My sister's car—Is there a mark on it? Are they going to find out? Have they already found out? Are they waiting for me when I get home? So when I drove back home, I'm imagining my dad and mom and sister are in front of her car with shotguns when I get home. That is what I'm thinking, but I got there, no one was there, and nothing happened. The next morning, I got up and just knew it was going to come out...so I go check her car in the daylight and I didn't see any red on the bumper. It seemed like nothing was there, so I do what anybody would do...I decide not to tell. I think it's done; it's over. Well, that whole day, do you know what I thought about? My sister's car. The next week, do you know what often crept up in my thinking? My sister's car. Months later, do you know what would circulate around in my brain? My sister's car. Is there a red mark that I don't know about? Does she already know? Do my parents already know? Are they just waiting? Was there a camera? Did does everybody know and they are just not telling? Those are the kind of things I would go to bed at night, and for a year or better, every once in a while I would think about my sister's car, because I knew I didn't mean to, but I hit it. I damaged her car in some way, even though they couldn't see it, and I should have told her.

See, I had a troubled heart. I had a troubled conscience because I knew I had done something wrong and I didn't tell. I didn't do the appropriate thing, which is to make it right. Maybe some of you can think about when you were a kid and you did something similar to that, or you are thinking

of right now and something that you have done to someone. Maybe it was an accident, but you haven't said anything. Maybe you purposefully did something wrong. You knew it was wrong when you did it, they haven't found out yet and you haven't told them, and you have a troubled heart. It is weary on your conscience. You can feel that in the pit of your stomach and you can't be around that person. You don't want to look at that person because you did something wrong. That is a guilty conscience. Maybe it's before the Lord. You know that you have done some things before the Lord that you haven't come clean with; you haven't confessed it before Him, so in a way you feel distant. You feel like you are not right before the Lord because you know you have done this thing that He told you not to, and you are doing like Adam and Eve—you are hiding and running and trying to cover up in guilt and shame rather than just coming and confessing it before your Father who is faithful to forgive you of all your iniquities. Maybe you are in one of those two places. You haven't done right before men or you haven't done right before God, and you feel guilty. You have a troubled heart.

The question is how do you not have a troubled heart? I think we will see in this text of Scripture Paul's secret to a good life, and I think the secret to a good life is a clear conscience. What do I mean by a clear conscience? It is knowing that you have always done right before men and before God in all situations for the right motivation, so that whether you are in public or private you know that you are standing before God doing what is right, and when you do what is wrong, you make it right as quickly as you can. That is what it means to have a clear conscience. In Acts chapter 24, Paul is going to be on trial where there is a microscope on his life, and he can stand before the ruler and say...*I have a clear conscience before God. Before God and before men, I have always done what is right, and when I have done what is wrong, I have made it right. Therefore, I am walking now with a clear conscience.*

If you want to have a life that is filled with joy rather than shame and guilt, you need a clear conscience. Where does a clear conscience come from? Paul is going to tell us it comes from faith and worship. Through faith and worship, you can have a clear conscience before both God and man. Let's

look at where Paul brings this up. We are going to read verses 14–16 in our key reading, and then we are going to walk back through this passage together.

Scripture

"But this I confess to you [Felix], 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."

We are going to see that this is Paul's life, his inner life, what he wanted to do—to strive hard to have a clear conscience before God and man. That in his dealings with man, he will always try to do what is right, and when he does do what is wrong, he is going to make it right as quickly as he can. Always before God, he is going to try to do what is right, and when he gets it wrong, he is going to make it right as quickly as he can. He wants to have a clear conscience so that when he is on trial or in private, no one can bring an accusation against him because he has walked in righteousness. What is his motivation for this? We are going to see that it is his faith in the Lord and his worship towards God. Through faith and worship, you can walk with a clear conscience before both God and man.

Before we park here and apply these verses, let's zoom out and look at the situation. We will see Paul on trial before Felix. Felix is a Roman governor of the Roman province of Judea. He is in Jerusalem, and he is over this area to make sure everything goes well under Caesar. He is the authority. Paul is some trouble so he is on trial. The prosecution is going to bring some charges against Paul, and Paul will have to give an account for these charges. Let's pick up the story in verses 1–4, "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. And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most

excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation, 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.” Paul is on trial and the Jews and elders have hired a guy named Tertullus. We get his name twice, which signals that this guy was probably a big deal. More than likely, he is a Roman prosecutor. He is probably one of those guys on the billboards telling you to call this guy. He is really slick. He is a good lawyer. You are going to have to have a lot of money, but he will get you off or get somebody in to get you off. That is what he does, one of those headhunting lawyers. So they bought a slick lawyer and they would have probably paid a lot of money to have this guy, who they know by name. So when Luke drops his name, everybody knew that he is a good lawyer and can get things done. This is who Ananias and the Jews hire to prosecute Paul. And so, this lawyer is speaking before Felix and he starts out with a lot of flattery...*Oh Felix, you are the greatest person that has ever lived on the face of this earth. You are most excellent! Under your rule, we are healthy and wealthy, and everything has been great. There is peace under you, and I could go on and on, but because of time, I need to stop so we can get down to business...*Now, every bit of this was a lie. If you look at Felix’s Wikipedia page, you can see he is not a good leader. In fact, up until this time, he was the worst leader that had ever been over this province. He had some people assassinated, he was a scoundrel, there was no peace, and there was a lot of violence. A lot of bad things happened under his rule. He was not a good leader. Though if you are a lawyer and you are speaking to a bad leader, you tell him how great he is. He is trying to butter Felix up so he will want to hear his case and side with him. This was very common in the court system of Rome. You started your case by telling the leader how great they were, and if you didn’t you would probably lose.

Charges Against Paul

Now, Tertullus is going to get to the actual charges against Paul. We see three basic charges against Paul. They are a riot, a ringleader, and a profaner. Let’s read them in the text. Verse 5 says, “For we found this man

a plague..." Right off the bat, he calls Paul a plague. If you are a leader hearing about a guy who is a plague, that sounds rather bad to you. If there is a plague, you probably want to get rid of it, not play with it. You probably want to remove it, rather than leave it. So, Tertullus is priming the pump to say to Felix that this guy is a bad dude—he is bad news, so you need to get rid of him. So, how exactly is Paul a plague? What exactly does he do? It says he is, "...one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and 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."

So Tertullus thinks he has this case locked, like there is no way Paul can defend himself against these things. Let's just look at these three charges. The first is that he is causing riots. The second is that he is a ringleader of the people who are causing the riots. Thirdly, he is profaning the temple. If you are Felix and you are the governor of the province—he is probably a Gentile and he is definitely a Roman—he probably wouldn't care as much about profaning the temple. That is probably not a big deal to him, but the other two, causing riots and being a ringleader of a religious sect of the Nazarenes, are big deals to Felix. If you are a governor of an area, what you don't want are riots. When things are on fire and burning down, and people are rioting, it doesn't look good on you as the leader. As the leader, peace looks good on you. When things are bad, the leader looks bad. When things are good, the leader looks good. So, Tertullus is saying to Felix that Paul is causing riots, so if you want riots and violence in your streets, just let him go because that is what he is about. He is a rioter. Felix has to consider this because if it's true, he definitely needs to keep Paul in prison or take his life.

Secondly, Paul is not only causing riots, he is the ringleader of this sect called the Nazarenes. It is a sect group. Tertullus is saying this is not a normal religion or majority religion, but this is extremism—that Paul is the leader of an extremist religious group from the east, from Jerusalem. What the west is often fearful of is extreme religious groups from the east. Felix is from the west, and he is in the east hearing about a sect group, an

extremist group, that foments violence and Paul is the ringleader. These are really strong charges. If they are true, then Felix is hopefully going to get rid of this guy named Paul, because if you take out the ringleader you solve the problems.

My family and I were watching World Watch, a little news program put on by World Magazine. It is directed to kids, but it's brilliant so the whole family gets around the TV and watches it in the mornings. On World Watch, they were talking about how in Africa they have been trying for years and years to stop the poaching of elephants. Of course, elephants have tusks that are very valuable, so it just continues. The land is so vast with all of the poachers live in those areas and it is really hard to stop the poaching, so now they are trying a different method. Through DNA testing, they are able to take the tusks of elephants and identify what areas they come from. In doing so, they can identify certain regions and people. World Watch said they are trying to find, not poachers, but the ringleaders. If they can take out the ringleaders who have the money and organizing the crimes, the crime goes away and poaching stops.

In Acts, Felix hears something is brewing that is going to be really bad. Violence is about to happen. These sect groups are extreme groups that are not according to the laid down laws, they are all getting powerful, and there is one ringleader named Paul. Felix is going to have to answer Caesar on why there was a lot of violence on the streets, so if he wants to get rid of this growing movement that is about to take over, Tertullus is saying, here he is...you need to make sure you do justice. So, there are three accusations: He is stirring up riots, he is the ringleader of an extremist group, and then he is profaning the temple.

Paul's Defense

We see in the text that all the Jews agree with these charges. Verse 9 says, "The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so." That is the prosecution. Now, Paul has to answer these and give a defense for himself. Let's see what Paul says. Verse 10 says, "And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my

defense." Paul starts off doing what nobody else does. Everyone starts off telling Felix how great he is. Paul knows he can't do that. If he is going to have a clear conscience, he can't lie about Felix even though lying is the thing you are supposed to do. Instead, he says...*Felix, you have ruled a very long time.* He wasn't saying Felix is good or bad. He is saying...*You have been in charge for a while, so I am really happy to make my defense.* He doesn't lie right off the bat like Tertullus did. Instead, he tells the truth as he starts with a normal defense, which is to butter him up a little bit, but he speaks truthfully.

- **Rioter**

So, charge number one, Paul is a rioter. He came to Jerusalem to start riots. He is going to various people and starting riots. Notice his defense in verses 11–12, "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." Paul, to that charge, says...*Let's just stop for a moment. I have been here for twelve days. I haven't even had enough time to coordinate riots; I am still unloading my suitcase. I haven't been here long enough for any of these charges they are laying on me to be true. By the way, since I have been here I haven't disputed with anyone. I haven't stirred up any crowd, and there haven't been any riots. So Felix, have you seen in the news that anything was happening in your city? None of the things they are saying is actually happening. It's all made up...* Paul is showing that this lawyer is saying a lot of stuff, but the stuff is not true.

- **Ringleader**

On the second charge, Paul is a ringleader of the sect group of the Nazarenes, an extreme religious group that is probably going to be violent and want to kill everybody. That is the insinuation in the accusation. Paul addresses this in verses 13–16, "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.” Paul basically says...*I am sort of a ringleader, but I'm a ringleader of the Way. The Way is not some extreme, fringe, dangerous religious group. It is those who follow Jesus who said He was the way, the truth, and the life. So I am causing a following, but it's in accordance with the Scriptures. I am worshiping the God of our fathers, and the God of our fathers spoke about a Messiah who was to come. That Messiah came and His name is Jesus; He is the way. This group is a new group, in a sense, but it was what Judaism was always supposed to birth. Judaism was always supposed to birth Christianity, followers of Jesus. It is not some sect group; it is the group. We are God's people, which is what the Way is. I am worshiping the Lord. My hope is in the resurrection. So yes, I am a ringleader, but I am a ringleader for the glory of God because I am following the Messiah who He promised to those who are accusing me and those who need to come and follow the Way as well...*Paul is the one who has connected the dots that the whole story of the Bible has culminated in Christ. Now, he is following Christ and he is worshiping the Lord in Christ, and they should too.

So, the accusation is not true. He is not the ringleader of some crazy group. He is the ringleader of the Messiah, Jesus, who is the true Messiah, to fulfill everything that God said throughout the scriptures. The second charge is half-truth but not whole truth. Christianity is not a danger to Rome; it's going to be a blessing to Rome because these are the people who love God and love their neighbor as themselves. They are not going to be the people who cause riots. They are going to be the people who sacrifice their own lives for their fellow neighbors. They are going to be a blessing to Rome, a blessing to those around them.

- **Profaner**

The third charge is that Paul is a profaner, that he profaned the temple. We see Paul give his defense in verses 17–19, “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.” How did they find Paul? Purified in the temple. What is their charge? He profanes the temple. Paul says...*No, I was pure in the temple.*

According to the law, I was pure. I did the ceremonial things that made me pure within the temple, without any crowd or tumult! That charges doesn't stick. I didn't have a riot in there, I was clean, and I didn't make the temple impure.

Then Paul says, "But some Jews from Asia—they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me. This little line from Paul is very smart. We don't really understand what he just said, but for Paul, this was a brilliant defense. It is one of those mic drop moments. Here is a charge that he has caused the temple to be profaned. This was a charge that got him in trouble in chapter 21. Some Jews from Asia saw Paul associating with a Gentile out in the streets, so they assumed Paul brought him into the temple. They assumed he profaned the temple, though it was just an assumption. It didn't really happen, but it was an assumption that got Paul into some trouble. Now, here is the charge—he profaned the temple, but the charge is not from the high priest and the elders who were there. The charge was from some Jews from Asia, and Paul is saying where are these people who are bringing the charge? Why does Paul say that? Because according to Roman law, if you are going to bring a charge against somebody in a courtroom, the person making the charge has to be there. They have to be present in the courtroom or the setting for that charge to be given. Paul is asking where they are. Felix would have known right off the bat that this was not according to the law. So that charge would automatically have to be dropped in Roman court, if Felix was going to do what any good judge would do and judge according to the law. Paul brings this up because he knows this charge has to be dropped, even though the charge itself was not true. Paul never went in to profane the temple. He never had disrespect toward the temple, though he would say the temple had its purpose but now there is a new temple, it is us. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us now. There is a new temple that dawned at the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on and says in verses 20–21, "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.” Last week, remember Paul brought up the resurrection because he was arguing with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees didn’t believe in the resurrection and the Pharisees did, so he brought this up to get them to argue with one another. It did cause some tumult, but it wasn’t because of Paul; it was because of them. So, there is a little truth to that. The reason he was arrested was because he brought up a question that they ended up fighting against, and now Paul is on trial. That is the reason he is really here. It wasn’t any of those charges they just brought against him; it was this. They were angry that he brought up the resurrection and now he is here on trial.

Felix Delays Judgment for His Own Purposes

So, three charges: Paul, he is a rioter, he is a ringleader, and he is a profaner. Paul says to all three of those—absolutely not, and the third one has to be dropped because the accusers aren’t even there. This is brilliant! Paul is not a lawyer. He is a theologian pastor, but he is brilliant. He perfectly defends himself on every charge given. So, the most natural thing would be for Felix to stand up and say Paul is innocent of all charges—go free. Of course, you guys know pretty much how Acts has gone so far...so that is probably not going to happen. Paul is probably not going to get justice. Verses 22–23 says, “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.” Felix had all the evidence and should have said Paul was innocent. Instead, he decides to wait and have a retrial later when the tribune gets there and let him deal with it. Why does he do this? It is because he was afraid of the Jews. He didn’t want to let Paul go because he knew this might cause some issues. Even though it was the wrong thing to do, he put Paul back in custody. But notice, Felix gave him some liberty. He was going to let all of Paul’s friends come and visit as much as they wanted. We are going to see that there is a reason why Felix wants people to visit Paul. It is because Felix is going to try to get Paul to give him a bribe. He wants Paul to give him money so

that he will let him out of jail. How do you get money? It is like a GoFundMe account—set up Paul's account and all his friends can give to Paul's case. If Paul gives a little money, Felix will let him out. We see this take place in verses 24–27, "After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish..." We see a little more color on Felix's life. He is a Roman married to a Jewish girl. In that time, here dad probably did not approve of this. There could be some other background issues going on, but we get a little bit more information about Felix's life as a governor. I can imagine for a lot of the Jews that seeing him as the Roman ruler who married one of their girls might not have gone well for the Jewish community.

Paul's Clear Conscience before God and Man

The verses continue, "...and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, 'Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.' 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." Felix keeps having this ongoing conversation because he is hoping that Paul is going to get the hint that Felix is not looking for an argument; he is looking for money. He was a governor who loved bribery more than justice. Paul has friends coming, he is connected, he is a ringleader, and he has cash. Felix wants cash and Paul will get out; it's that easy. What does Paul do? He doesn't pay a bribe. Why doesn't he? Wouldn't this be so easy? Just do what is common, do what is normal, pay the bribe, and be out. Instead, Paul doesn't because he has already told us what his life mission, his life aim is—he is striving to have a clear conscience before both God and man. He knows that this is perfectly normal before man. Before man, this is acceptable. Everyone would have told Paul just to give a bribe to get out. But Paul couldn't have a clear conscience before God because he knew bribery was wrong and it wouldn't have been justice. It would have been the wrong way out, so he remains two years in prison.

But not just that, but why wouldn't Paul just tell Felix what he wanted to hear? Felix is asking about Jesus and Paul says it is about faith in Jesus, and that works out in righteousness, self-control, and coming judgment, and it says Felix is alarmed. He is afraid; he is terrified. Why? It's because Felix is not a good dude. In fact, Drusilla, his wife, was his third wife. According to history, he stole her from another man. So, Felix and his wife come to meet with Paul, and Paul knows it was his third wife and that he stole her from another guy—and Paul is talking about righteousness, self-control, and coming judgment. Paul could said...*Hey Felix! You're a good dude. I think if you will just think positively everything will be great. Maybe just say Jesus' name and everything will be good...*No, Paul gave him the whole gospel. The gospel is not just about claiming Jesus; it is about getting His infused righteousness in you that works out in self-control. Felix was not living in self-control or a righteous life, so judgment for him was not looking good. In that moment, Paul would not say the things Felix wanted to hear or pay the money he wanted because Paul wanted a clear conscience before man and before God. God was watching in all those scenarios.

I want to ask that question. Better yet, how did Paul strive to have a life of a clear conscience before both God and man? Let's look back at the text of Scripture that we read in the beginning, verses 14–16. How did he get there? For Paul, it is really a secret to a good life. If you want to have a good life, have a clear conscience before God and man. Do what is right before men and before God so that if your private life is brought in public—even if you are on trial like Paul—you don't have anything to hide. You don't have anything to be ashamed of because you have always done what is right before God and man, and when you have done wrong, you quickly seek to make it right so that it can't chase or haunt you. You have a clear conscience. So, how do we get a clear conscience? Look again at our main text, ""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..."

That little word, "so." In other words, Paul is saying, therefore, because of what I just told you, this is what I do with my life, "So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man." Here is Paul's life. He strives. This is only time the word strive is used in the New Testament. It is very nuanced. It is talking about an athlete that practices and trains for a very specific sport to excel in a very specific task. Paul is striving toward this one thing, to have a clear conscience before both God and man. That is his life, whether he is in private, with Felix, on trial, with the Jews, the Gentiles, no matter where he is, he is always doing the right thing for the right motivation. When he does wrong, he quickly makes it right so he can always have a clear conscience, so that no one can bring a charge or guilt against him.

- **Through Faith and Worship**

How is that possible? What drives him? What motivates him? We have to look before the "so." We see two giant things: faith and worship. Paul says he is following the Way, believing the scriptures, he is hoping in the resurrection. What is that? It is faith. He has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to have a life with a clear conscience before God and man, it starts with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's faith allowed him to have a propelled life of clear conscience before both God and man.

But, it is faith and worship. What does he say? Because of the Way, because of my faith, I am worshiping the God of our fathers. He has faith in Jesus and he is worshiping God. What exactly is worship? When the crowd thinks of worship, they are going to the temple and they are doing things. They are practicing things in worship. They are bringing sacrifices. That would have been their picture of worship. We think it is just singing. Singing is definitely part of worship, but it is more nuanced than that. It's fuller than that. If you think about Romans chapter 12 when Paul said I appeal to you by the mercies of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable before the Lord, which is your spiritual, or reasonable worship. Worship is not bringing a bull to the temple, killing it and sacrificing it. It is bringing your body and not killing it before the Lord, but living a sacrificed life before the Lord, holy and acceptable. Paul has faith in the Lord, which leads him to a living sacrifice type of life. That is

Paul. That is his worship—that at every moment he is a living sacrifice before the Lord. What does he do as a living sacrifice before the Lord? He is striving, trying, seeking with all of his energy in every situation to have a clear conscience before both God and man.

I love how it is both God and man. It is not seeking to have a clear conscience before God...that is true, but it is half true. If you are only worried about your relationship with God, then you won't care how you treat your fellowman. Or, you will isolate and distance from everybody else and you will think you have no sin in your life, but you also have no love in your life. You have no service in your life. You are not doing anything for someone else. Yes, you are good with God but you are not good with man—which means you are not good with God. Paul is saying he has a clear conscience, not just before God, but before man and God. It is not only man, because if you have a clear conscience only before man you can do things that are wrong that cultures agree are right, and everything is good because your conscience will say that is fine. You can deal with man in a way that dishonors God and think you are ok and haven't done anything wrong. You have a clear conscience. But, when you look at God's Word, when you take it before the Lord, paying a bribe to Felix was a fine thing according to man but a wrong thing according to God. Paul wants both. He wants a clear conscience. He wants to lay his head down at night and when he closes his eyes, he wants to know that he has done right for the right motivations. And when he did wrong, he made it right so when he lays his head down, he has a clear conscience. When they pull him into court, he has a clear conscience. When they throw accusations at him, he has a clear conscience. Why? Because through faith and worship, he is living a life before man and God. He is doing what is right according to the gospel and according to his fellowman.

I think that is the secret to a good life. Do you want to have a good life? Do you want to have a life that is guilt-free? Do you want to have a life that isn't troubling you at night? Do you want to have a life where you don't have to hide from people that you normally see? Do you want to have a life where you don't have to hide anything? Then live your life in such a way that you are striving to have a clean conscience, a pure

conscience before both God and man, and have that inner awareness of whether you are doing right or doing wrong. How do we get there? Through faith and worship. You can't just strive hard to do it. It has to be with faith in the Lord and worship towards God.

I can't tell you how many times I walked by that car, looked at that bumper, and wondered if there was any red on it. Over and over, days, weeks, months—am I going to be found out? The truth is I told my sister...a few years later. She didn't even care. There was no damage. It was fine. But for a couple of years, I had a lot of damage. I knew there was something I did against her that she didn't know. But I knew, and God knew. I wasn't walking with a clear conscience before God and man. Some of you right now have a guilty conscience. As it says of David in Samuel, you have a troubled heart because you know you have done something wrong, either willingly or accidentally. You can't look at that person or be around them because you know it is not ok between you. Your conscience is eating at you. What do you do when you have done something wrong to somebody? You go and confess, repent, and ask for forgiveness, and you move past that. That would have been a short conversation on a Friday night that would have been fine afterwards. Instead, it was two years of guilt eating at me.

So, what do you do when you know you have sinned against the Lord? You don't run and hide like Adam and Eve, instead you confess. You tell Him. You confess so that you can feel cleansed, so that you know that you are standing before God in the righteousness of Christ, and you have a clear conscience before God. If you want to have a good life, it is not finding a beach somewhere and making it the best vacation you can get. A good life is having a clear conscience before God and man. How do you get that? Through faith and worship, because faith tells us that even when we get it wrong, we can make it right because Christ died and rose again. Let's be the people with a clear conscience before both God and man.