

St Marcus Church Milwaukee

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St. Marcus school is [worth a deep dive](#)

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[00:00:00] Our first lesson today is from Acts 24, beginning with verse one. Again, we're thinking about this theme of unceasing testimony that when Jesus ascended into heaven, he said, and now I want you to tell the good news of what I've done, and I want you to do it in a Christ-like kind of manner. And what we see in Acts 21 through 26 is the Apostle Paul doing exactly that.

[00:00:24] Repeatedly defending himself repeatedly defending the good news of a resurrected savior. So Acts 24, which is right before where we're gonna teach on here in a couple minutes, is the Apostle Paul defending himself before accusing Jews and the Roman governor in Caesarea at the time, a guy named Felix.

[00:00:43] Acts 24. Beginning with first one, five days later, the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor when Paul was called in. Tertullus presented his case before Felix, [00:01:00] we have enjoyed a long period of peace under you and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation everywhere and in every way.

[00:01:07] Most excellent. Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. We have found this man, Paul to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect, which is an early phrase for Christians, and even tried to desecrate the temple.

[00:01:33] So he seized him by examining him, you yourself will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him. The other Jews joined in the accusation asserting that these things were true. When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied, I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation, so I gladly make my defense.

[00:01:53] You can easily verify that. No more than 12 days ago, I went up to Jerusalem to worship my accusers. Did [00:02:00] not find me arguing with anyone at the temple or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. And they cannot prove to you the charges that they are now making against me.

[00:02:11] However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the way. That's another early phrase for Christianity, which they call a sect. I believe everything is in accordance with the law and what is written in the prophets. And I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

[00:02:34] So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man, after an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. In other words, far from doing stirring up dissension in Jerusalem, he's bringing objective, good in, uh, blessing the community of Jews in Jerusalem.

[00:02:56] I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the Temple
[00:03:00] Courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any sort of disturbance. But there are some Jews from the province of Asia who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they really have anything against me, or these who are here should state what crime they found in me.

[00:03:16] When I stood before the sanin, unless it was this one thing, I shouted as I stood in their presence. It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today. Then Felix, who is well acquainted with the way adjourned the proceedings. When Las the commander comes, he said, I will decide your case.

[00:03:35] He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard, but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs. Several days later, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come, Felix became afraid and said, that's [00:04:00] enough for now.

[00:04:01] You may leave when I find it convenient, I will send for you. At the same time. He was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him when two years had passed. Felix was succeeded by Pius Festus. But because Felix wanted to grant a favor of the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

[00:04:22] This is God's word, and we'll pick it up from there in a moment. Our teaching today comes from Acts 25 verse one through 12. Again, Paul continuing his testimony before the world, and we read here three days after arriving in the province, FES this. Went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against the Apostle Paul.

[00:04:48] 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, Festus answered, Paul is being held at [00:05:00] Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. Let some of your leaders come with me and if the man has done anything wrong, They can press charges against him there.

[00:05:10] After spending eight or 10 days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. 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.

[00:05:28] Then Paul made his defense. I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple, or against Caesar. Festus Wishing to do the Jews a favor. Said to Paul, are you willing to go up to Jerusalem at least and stand trial before me there on these charges? Paul answered. I am now standing before Caesar's Court where I ought to be tried.

[00:05:49] I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself Festus know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving of death. I do not refuse to die, but [00:06:00] the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true. No one has the right to hand me over to them and I appeal to Caesar. After Festus had conferred with his counsel, he declared, you have appealed to Caesar and to Caesar, you will go.

[00:06:14] This is God's word. It dawned on me earlier this week that I have heard, I think roughly zero sermons on Acts 21 through 26 in my lifetime, at least not that I can recall. I've heard lots of sermons on Acts, I can't remember a single one on Acts 21 through 26, and I think that's for a couple reasons. One of the reasons is these chapters contain a lot of really lengthy dialogue.

[00:06:36] So for instance, we read chapter 24 just a minute ago. It's 27 verses. And you might have struggled a little bit to maintain your attention as I was reading through the dialogue between, uh, Paul and Felix at the time, and I think preachers get a little scared of that and they shy away from these things.

[00:06:53] I actually think there's a more pertinent reason, though more pertinent reason is what Acts 21 through 26 are, is [00:07:00] the Apostle Paul Winsomely defending his faith as a minority in his culture. And the fact of the matter is for 200 years in America, Christianity has not operated as a minority. Christianity has operated as a majority religion, and therefore, if there is absolutely no crisis, I think there is minimal perceived value from a lot of Christians in learning how to defend your faith in a winsome, respectful, calm kind of manner.

[00:07:31] That's changed. If you're not aware of this yet, society has changed. Uh, case in point, within the past couple of weeks, I've had no less than a dozen people email me an article from a, i I had not heard of this media outlet before, but it's called the Wisconsin Watch, uh, I think, and the title of the article was this False Choice, Wisconsin Taxpayers Support Schools that Can Discriminate, that Subtitled.

[00:07:57] Dozens of Voucher Schools have policies [00:08:00] that allow them to exclude LGBTQ plus students or those with disabilities, and in many cases, It is legal by a young woman named Phoebe Petrovich, and in the article what she does is she makes the case that religious schools that profess beliefs, or even for that matter have.

[00:08:17] Facilities or programs that she would deem as discriminatory against certain people groups. She's arguing they should not receive any sort of government funding. Now, I do wanna say this really isn't a new concept entirely. What's new is it's increasing in frequency and what's

new is the public narrative and public sympathy and compassion towards these types of issues has absolutely gone up.

[00:08:42] What's also problematic is the fact that Christians are largely out of shape. In trying to articulate our beliefs in this type of environment. So the first anecdote, for instance, that she uses is actually from a high school. Uh, here, uh, a Lutheran high school here in Wisconsin that [00:09:00] did not affirm a same-sex couple in their school.

[00:09:03] Now again, I think the issue is that we, we haven't had to articulate our position to people who don't already believe the Bible, and we're a little out of shape. In doing so, we've, those muscles have atrophied and when that happens, I think one of two things results. One, either we don't defend our faith at all.

[00:09:23] Which we just close our mouths and essentially over accommodate a culture that itself does not affirm the Bible, or we sort of wildly and aggressively defend ourselves in ways that are not the best and sometimes may hurt others or even hurt ourselves. And, you know, maybe one of the best verses in the Bible for how to win.

[00:09:45] So we defend our faith, sort of it, it's called Christian apologetics, the, the logical defense of Christian faith. Maybe the best verse to describe this is what Peter uses in one Peter three verses 15 and 16. He says, but in your hearts, revere Christ as [00:10:00] Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have.

[00:10:08] But, Do this with gentleness and respect and while keeping a clear conscience so that those who do speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. See what Peter is concisely summarizing here. The Apostle Paul is living out in chapters 21 through 26 of Acts. Your ability to explain not just what you believe, but why you believe what you believe from an evangelistic viewpoint, from an apologetic viewpoint, from a lifestyle viewpoint, are essential components to your Christian faith.

[00:10:49] It's never been more essential in a post-Christian climate than to be able to do this right now. And actually as we celebrate ascension and are just a couple days removed from ascension, [00:11:00] you know what

Jesus said, the very last thing he said before he rose up into heaven. You know, I'm gonna send my spirit, but here's what I want you to do.

[00:11:08] You are my witnesses now. So witness, witness the truth and witness in a Christ-like fashion. You are my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to all the ends of the earth. Whether you're talking about proactively for persuasion or reactively for defense. Christians must be able to articulate their faith in calm, logical, winsome fashion.

[00:11:33] And today what we're gonna do is we're gonna break down the Apostle Paul Dne exactly that in one of his briefest exchanges with a public court, his trial before Governor Festus in Caesarea. And here's how it goes. In Acts 21, what happens is the Apostle Paul is wrapping up his third missionary journey and he gets to Jerusalem, but he's there with some of the gentile travel companions and ministers that he had along the way, and some of the Jews there.

[00:11:57] They don't like him because of one his [00:12:00] influence, and two, because of his overtly Christian messaging. And so they stir up dissension amongst other Jews in Jerusalem. They incite a mob in a rebellion that is grabbing whole of him and is gonna tear him limb from limb. Fortunately, the government steps in.

[00:12:14] Roman soldiers step in and say, ah, yeah, you're not going to do that. They give the Apostle Paul an opportunity to defend himself verbally, and he says, you know what? I'm, I'm, I haven't done anything wrong. I'm a Jew. I have total Jewish heritage. I'm here to worship at the temple. But yes, I do believe in the Jewish Messiah, the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth.

[00:12:34] And not only has he told me that salvation is for the Jews, but he told me to go and share salvation, the forgiveness of sins through him to the gentile world as well. That only made the Jews there more upset. And again, they're trying to tear him apart. The Roman soldiers step in and the commander at the time says, okay, you're gonna have a trial.

[00:12:53] But I'm gonna supervise. So they go to the Jewish Santa and he's observing this and he recognizes very quickly there's absolutely no [00:13:00] propriety in what they're doing. So he shuts it down and he, he

learns also of an assassination attempt. And he says, what I'm going to do is we're gonna have a trial for him, but it's gonna be on neutral ground.

[00:13:09] It's a change of venue up to Caesarea before the Roman governor Felix there. So they send Paul up there and some of the Jewish accusers also travel up to Caesarea to make their accusations. It doesn't work. Felix recognizes this guy is clearly innocent, but he also has constituents to appease. So he puts Paul in prison and he sits there for two years.

[00:13:32] Two years, but he's, at least Felix has placated The Jews got them off his case, and he also hasn't had to deal with what probably would've amounted to an unjust murder in the process. That brings us up to the text that I read just a minute ago. In Acts 25, in Acts 25, there is a change of governors from Felix to a guy by the name of PORs Festo.

[00:13:53] I just have to pause quick because of all great biblical names. This might be the best. [00:14:00] Pocus Festus literally means festival pig. Festival pig is the guy's name. Happy pig. Uh, what kind of rejected college mascot is that? Or for that matter, it reminds me a little bit of, uh, if today you call a guy jolly, like, I think you mean a little more than he is just happy.

[00:14:17] Like you're insinuating something when you call him jolly, aren't you? Porsche Festus. He is a festival pig. He's very likable. He's very admirable. He was way more well liked by the people of his time than his predecessor Felix was. And actually the first thing that, that the festival pig does when he comes into power is he goes down to Jerusalem.

[00:14:36] And he tries to make amends with relationships that have been strained by his prickly predecessor. And he speaks to the Jews. And the one thing they say that they want is, we would like Paul back down here and we wanna put him on trial before us. Now Festus is not only kind of a happy go lucky guy, but he's also pretty shrewd.

[00:14:53] And he probably has researched Paul's case at this point and he recognizes something suspicious going on amongst the [00:15:00] Jews request, and he's like, no, we will hold a trial for him, but it will be up in Caesarea, so you can bring whatever accusations you want up. The Caesarea, I will hold trial before him there.

[00:15:10] Well, when that happens, what we learn in verse seven is what? They brought many serious charges against the Apostle Paul, but they couldn't prove any of them. See, this is actually very similar to when Jesus was on trial. The accusations against him seem to be kind of inconsistent and incoherent and unprovable and speculative.

[00:15:34] Festus is a good ruler. He's a good governor, ruler, and he understands the concept of the presumption of innocence, which is a bedrock principle of every actual civilization. People today need to understand this too. Just because somebody says something on Twitter or elsewhere doesn't mean they're necessarily guilty of it.

[00:15:50] We have to proceed with the presumption of innocence. The apostle Paul understands that too, and actually what he says to Festus at this time is, I've done nothing wrong. Against the [00:16:00] Jewish law, against the Jewish temple or against Caesar. And that's a good summation of what the charges are, that he's violating Jewish law, that he desecrated the Jewish temple and that he's practicing an illegal religion that would be subverting, uh, Caesar's authority.

[00:16:13] And he says, Festus, you know, I haven't done this. Come on. You know that, and Festus does know that. And so what Festus tries to compromise and he says, well, would you at least be willing to go down to Jerusalem and make a case for your innocence down there? And what the Apostle Paul says at that time is No way.

[00:16:29] He says, I'm a Roman citizen. I'm being charged right now in the exact place that I should be, which is before you in Caesar. And if that for whatever reason is untenable or unfeasible, then as a Roman citizen, I'm exercising my right to appeal to Caesar. Now, interestingly enough, we're told in Acts 23 that the Lord had visited Paul in the middle of the night and he told him, don't worry, you are gonna end up witnessing the gospel in Rome.

[00:16:56] And Paul might be sort of putting the pieces together here about [00:17:00] what God's providential hand is orchestrating. But we get to the last point here in verse 12 and in Festus is in a unique position because he doesn't want to alienate his constituents. But he also doesn't wanna look incompetent as a ruler in sending one of the first cases that he presides over and says like, I can't handle this.

[00:17:18] I need to outsource it off the Caesar. Nonetheless, he decides on that. And uh, again, I think he, he doesn't want to be in responsible for unjust murder. He doesn't want to alienate his constituents. And so his final statement here is you have appealed to Caesar and a Caesar, you will go. See this from Paul's perspective.

[00:17:36] Two years earlier, he was thrown in jail for unjust accusations from the Jews, and he was kept in jail due to unjust rulers and governance by a corrupt sort of official. And here we are two years after the fact, and what God has done is he said, you know what? I am going to get you with guards to travel you to Rome to do [00:18:00] the thing that you always wanted to do anyways, which is preach the gospel in the biggest city on the planet.

[00:18:05] You probably wouldn't have made it safely without these guards, but God's providence is getting Paul the missionary to roam, to proclaim the gospel. This is God's providential hand in all of it. Now what does it mean? Got a couple takeaway points for you here today. The first one is this probably kind of obvious, defending ourselves in an accusatory world.

[00:18:26] Uh, some of you have heard me say before, Dietrich Bon Hoffer, who was a German Lutheran pastor in the mid 20th century who got executed for speaking out against the Nazis unjust treatment of innocent Jews during World War ii. He's one of the heroes of, of mine, probably his, his book, the Cost of Discipleship probably is number two, uh, after mere Christianity as far as most influential Christian books of the 20th century, but a contemporary and much lesser known guy of.

[00:18:57] Bon Hoffer was a guy named Martin Neeler, [00:19:00] and, uh, Nemo was a German pastor and theologian who was also a founder of the anti-Nazi confessing church during Hitler's rule. In other words, he spoke out publicly against, um, Hitler's racist policies. He spoke out publicly against, uh, the government's trying to take control over the German churches at the time.

[00:19:19] And because he spoke out like this, Sure enough, he was arrested by the Gustapo in 1937. He was thrown in a concentration camp and until he was freed by the allies in 1945, when he was in that

concentration camp, one of his colleagues, a, a German pastor, came and visited him and we have a record of their conversation.

[00:19:40] The friend says to Martin, Martin, if you had just kept your big mouth shut, you'd be a free man. Have you forgotten Romans 13? Have you forgotten? Paul wrote that we should submit ourselves to governing authorities. What in the world are you doing in this prison? See, he's even using scripture and distorting it a little bit to try to scold [00:20:00] ne moler.

[00:20:01] And you know what his response was? Nemo's Retort was, you know, I think the real question is, why on earth aren't you in this prison with me? How are you? Okay not speaking up the truth of God's word when you see injustice going on in the world. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Said something very similar in Cincinnati at a church in his 1967 speech called Knock at Midnight, and uh, he said this, the church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather it's the conscience of the state.

[00:20:38] It must be the guide and the critic of the state and never its tool. And if the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal. I mean, you wanna talk about kind of a prophetic statement if, if church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.[00:21:00]

[00:21:00] The cowardice of the individual Christian. For that matter, the cowardice of the Christian Church, and when I say cowardice, I mean simply the ability to honestly humbly winsomely state what God's word actually states. That might be the biggest failure of the modern church. If you're wondering what my list is, the top five are, one, allowing race-based slavery.

[00:21:24] Two, losing biblical incy. Three, falsely equivocating Christianity with moralism. Four, turning the Bible primarily into self-empowerment messages. And five, this one fearfully. Running from problems and staying quiet for reasons of self-preservation. That cowardice, amongst other reasons, is absolutely shrinking The American church today.

[00:21:50] And you know, there's actually good I think that can come from that. A bestselling Christian author by the name of Philip Yancy wrote a book about a decade ago called Vanishing [00:22:00] Grace. And the book is about how Christians have come to be identified less with bearing good news, more with bearing judgment and bearing intolerance.

[00:22:08] And in the book, he tells us really interesting story about a Muslim gentleman that he met once, and the Muslim says this, He says, I've read the entire Quran and I can find in it no guidance on how Muslims should live as a minority in society. However, I've read the entire New Testament many times and I can find in it no guidance on how Christians should live as a majority.

[00:22:34] You follow that Islam almost doesn't work unless it develops a majority culture. Christianity struggles to work. Unless it's in a minority culture, and, and Yancy very astutely adds this point. He says, Christians historically best thrive as a minority, a counterculture. Historically, when Christians reach a majority, they've yielded to the [00:23:00] temptations of power in ways that are clearly antithetical.

[00:23:03] You know what he's saying there? When people get into power, including Christians, they tend to use majority means. What modern people might refer to as bullying, assertion by force, assertion by power, and will. And actually historically, when Christianity was at its most persuasive, like in the early Christian Church, is what it did, what the early church did, what it did, what Paul is doing right here.

[00:23:28] So what exactly is Paul doing here? And I'm gonna, we're gonna spend the rest of our time just sort of diagnosing this and then what I'm gonna have you do as we diagnose it, Those of you who are in small groups, what I'm gonna have you do is go back to that exact article that I referenced earlier on at the beginning of the message, and you're gonna use Paul's three steps to say, how would I particularly respond to that particular incident?

[00:23:50] Okay, so here's Paul's three steps defending ourselves in an accusatory world. The first thing is Paul is always very respectful to God's system of governance, cuz he [00:24:00] understands it was established by God. Notice what is said here in verse four. Festus says Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon.

[00:24:09] Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can then press charges against him there. If he's done wrong, then they can press charges. That is exactly what you want your government to do. Somebody is bringing false accusations against Paul. They want to just kill him.

[00:24:29] But the government intervenes and says, no, you're not going to do that. We need an unbiased third party who can adjudicate and arbitrate this case based on what we would refer to as the natural knowledge of God, the moral law that exists and is accessible to all mankind and to rule accordingly. That is precisely what God designed the government to do.

[00:24:49] Paul respects that Paul always respects that even when he is been mistreated under that system. Interestingly enough, uh, a lot of Christians today get really bent outta shape when they don't get [00:25:00] people in the positions of leadership publicly that they would otherwise, like. You know what I would say to that?

[00:25:05] I would say please read through the book of Daniel. Maybe if you, if you don't have enough time, just read through Daniel too at one point, Daniel who remember, is in Babylon at the time. And has won the favor of, uh, in a foreign land. In a foreign culture cuz he is an alien in this world. At one point in chapter two, he says, praise be to the name of God because he deppos kings and he raises others up.

[00:25:30] You don't have the right to stress out about governing officials because you have a God who is sovereign over the entire system. Okay. The apostle Paul knew that this is God's system and he's powerful and he is authoritative over it. The second thing Paul recognizes is the importance of his own personal purity.

[00:25:48] I can't control necessarily who's out there in public offices or what the world is going to do, but my jurisdiction is like epidurals deep, right? And so what we saw from Paul, look [00:26:00] in verse seven here, it says They brought many charges against Paul, and yet they could not prove any of them. Because his life was pure.

[00:26:10] If you get in trouble and the government opposes you or, or the police come after because you've, let's say you've murdered somebody or you've embezzled from your company and then you complain to God

about getting in trouble, like that's a, that's God's system working exactly the way that it was supposed to work.

[00:26:24] It's doing the justice that God designed for it to do. That is a good thing. You can throw yourself at the mercy of God and he absolutely will. Cosmically forgive you for any mistakes, but if you get punished for something you did wrong, that's God's system working exactly the way that it's supposed to work.

[00:26:41] What the encouragement here is keep your lives pure. That's what Paul says. That's what Paul did. That's what, if you remember what Peter said in first Peter three, what did he say? Your pure lifestyle is absolutely an essential part of your Christian apologetic because this world is gonna accuse you whether you've done right or you've done [00:27:00] wrong.

[00:27:00] The world's gonna accuse you. You can't control that. Just make sure that they're not right, okay? The world will accuse, just make sure they're wrong. So the Apostle Paul respects the system of governance. He practices a personal purity in his own life. The final thing is when somebody unjustly accuses him, he presents very calm logic.

[00:27:20] Watch how quickly you get emotionally upset when someone accuses. They don't even have to accuse you. If someone insinuates that you are less than perfect in any way. Watch how quickly. Watch how quickly if, if you're a parent and someone insinuates that your parenting is less than an A plus all the time, watch how quickly you start to get defensive over that, right?

[00:27:45] It happens to all of us. Now, compare that to what the Apostle Paul does in Acts 21 through 26. He has plenty of opportunity to sling some mud. He has plenty of opportunity to throw some fists. He doesn't do it. You'll notice the apostle [00:28:00] Paul never gets triggered. The apostle Paul never gets gaslighted, and I'm choosing those words very clearly, very specifically because I hear more and more Christians today using those terms, and I don't like them.

[00:28:11] You know why? Because they totally disempower you. If somebody else can say something that if you have the spirit of God inside you, they can't make you feel anyway. They can't make you think anyway.

They can't make you do anything. Somebody else doesn't trigger me. Somebody else doesn't gaslight me. I have more agency than that.

[00:28:30] I'm not saying other people don't hurt us. I'm saying I don't want you to think of yourself as less powerful than you actually are. Cause you have the spirit of God living inside you. You have agency. Paul has agency. He practices self-control. And what does he say? Like, Festus, you know, I haven't done anything wrong.

[00:28:48] They know that I haven't done anything wrong. He calmly, logically defends his innocent, and he actually even goes so far as to say if I've done anything wrong, that if I've done anything worthy of death kill me. That's [00:29:00] fine. That's, I, I submit to that. Go ahead and do it. He says, but you won't find anything wrong, nothing worthy of death.

[00:29:07] Uh, in defending your innocence, your facts are always more important than your emotions. Your emotions, by the way, only sort of lower your defense system against Satan's temptations often. So the summary of what Paul is doing here again, is in your Christian testimony of the world, trust the systems that God says he put in place.

[00:29:27] Not because they have perfect individuals operating in them, but because a perfect God established them and he's sovereign over those systems. Secondly, if you are guilty of doing anything wrong, humbly and remorse, fully accept those consequences. That's helpful for your witness too, to be able to acknowledge your own wrongdoing.

[00:29:47] And thirdly, if you are unjustly accused of anything calmly and logically, defend your position. Uh, again, I'm gonna have those of you who are in growth groups, I'm gonna have you work through these three points on that article that I [00:30:00] referenced earlier, later in this week. But for now, I wanna move on to our last point, which is, The lawyer who is convicted in our place.

[00:30:08] The reason you and I can be so incredibly confident whether we are accused justly or unjustly is we because, because we have an incredibly powerful and loving defense lawyer with almost without question, the most popular and influential documentary series in the past decade, I guarantee half of you have watched it, is called Making a Murderer.

[00:30:31] On Netflix once you watched it, right? It was hit close to home too, right up in Manitowoc, uh, Brenton, Dassic and Steve and Avery. And, uh, it was absolutely like swept the nation and would capture the imagination of America, Manitowoc, Wisconsin for, for a couple months there. But you know why that was such an influential documentary?

[00:30:49] Because it did the thing that documentaries are supposed to do. Documentaries are not news. And by the way, your news should not be documentaries or editorials either. Otherwise it's not [00:31:00] actually news. Documentaries, take news events, and they put them in a narrative arc in order to present a moral theme.

[00:31:10] You know what the moral theme of making a murderer was that you're supposed to take away quality. Legal representation matters. Quality, legal representation matters. If you get a court appointed lawyer who doesn't care about you and is completely incompetent to defend you, you are doomed. Doesn't matter if you're innocent, you're doomed.

[00:31:28] On the other hand, if you get a defense lawyer who cares about you and invests in you and would even lay his or her life down for you, that might be the difference between life and death for you. And that, by the way, is exactly how the gospel works. The fact of the matter is, according to God's holy law, every single one of us is guilty.

[00:31:48] But God's son came as a perfect and gracious defense lawyer. His defense, by the way, his defense is not about defending our innocence. He's not acknowledge like that, [00:32:00] that's not the case. His defense for us is in acknowledging and advocating for our deliverance based on his innocence, based on his righteousness, based on his death and his payment in our place for our crimes.

[00:32:15] And what that means is when somebody accuses you of something that you've actually done, Ron, you know what you do. You admit it. In fact, one of the things that I would encourage you to do is when somebody accuses you of something, try this next time. Say you don't even know the half of it. I've done way worse stuff than that.

[00:32:32] And the fact of the matter is you have in your brain, in your heart, you have done way worse things than what somebody superficially has observed in your life. You know you have, but it's not gonna hurt you

because it's already fully paid for by your savior. Humans spend so much time in energy defending themselves.

[00:32:50] Before a fallen world to get a verdict from a fallen world, spend more time and energy praising a perfect defense lawyer who [00:33:00] pays for your crimes in your place, that's much more productive. And then in the midst of all that honesty, when the world does accuse you of something that you didn't do, then absolutely defend yourself.

[00:33:12] That's not just about you not wanting to face uncomfortable injustice. It's about injustice never actually glorifies God. And if we don't speak up when we face injustice or when we see someone else facing injustice, all that does is it furthers a system that is more inclined to injustice the innocent.

[00:33:30] So we must speak up in those instances, but we do all of this humbly. And fearlessly with an understanding that our final verdict is not guilty for the sake of our loving lawyer. Jesus, let's pray. Lord Jesus, you have faced all injustice in our place for our sins. So help us now live humble, decent, honest, pure lives [00:34:00] whereby we are credible before the world in defending innocence.

[00:34:05] May I glorify your name? Amen.

[00:34:18] This message was a production of St. Marcus Lutheran Church. For similar content, subscribe on iTunes, Google Play, or our YouTube channel. For more information about how to support our urban gospel ministry in Milwaukee, please visit stmarcus.org. And your children and their.