

Acts 14_pt2

by Bill Gallatin

God is a jealous God who won't allow someone else to be a god, and He'll let people see our flaws to keep us humble.

Duration: 56:41

Scripture: Acts 14:19-20

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses various instances in the Bible where God intervened supernaturally to deliver his people. He highlights the story of Peter being miraculously freed from prison by an angel, and Paul's escape from a city by being lowered in a basket. The speaker emphasizes the importance of using wisdom and making rational decisions in our lives, rather than solely relying on supernatural intervention. He also mentions Paul's experience of being caught up to the third heaven, showing how his relationship with Christ grew and each new day became more glorious than the last. The sermon encourages believers to trust in God's ways and to continually seek a deeper relationship with Him.

Transcript

Acts chapter 14. Thank you so much for your prayers. We had another fantastic tour.

And again, God is so special. It seems like every Bible site we went to, the Lord would isolate us and we'd be alone. That we could just fellowship with Him and worship, just get into the Word of God and had a wonderful time.

But there's no place like home. And spring is here. Man, the birds, you know.

The finches are back at my house. You know, eating that black fennel seed or whatever it is. Man.

Verse 19. We'll look in this. Acts 14, 19.

I think that's where we left off. You remember, if we can, that Paul and Barnabas were mistaken for gods. And this particular portion of Scripture shows you, you know, the fickleness of man.

How popular we can be in man's eyes. And then the very people that called them gods turn right around, are incited by the rabbis and the Jews that come and followed them and finally caught up with them and turned them against Paul and Barnabas to stop the spread of the gospel. And the very people that one

minute were calling them gods and praising them, stoned them.

You know, the popularity of man is so fleeting and so shallow. Never be impressed with someone's compliment. The Bible warns about flattery.

The Bible tells us that usually when someone begins to flatter you, they're setting you up. And you're to beware of it. And I've learned that myself.

Well, we learn this and something else is discovered here. You know, they're thinking they're gods and then God allows something to happen to show these people that Paul and Barnabas aren't gods. And sometimes that happens too, doesn't it, in our lives? People begin to put us on a pedestal and think more highly than they should of us and then God has a way of letting the people know that we're not gods.

And it's amazing how some people can't handle it. They almost want to stone you. Maybe God has used you in their life.

And they're looking at your life and you've been very influential with your witness. But then without maybe you realizing it, they're exalting you in their hearts. And all of a sudden God may just let them see a flaw because He's a jealous God.

And all of a sudden you find that that person who at one minute had you on a pedestal is always asking you to pray for them and thinking so highly of you, you can actually feel resentment from them. They've seen your flaw. Well, don't be discouraged because God is a jealous God.

And don't be surprised if maybe without realizing it you've put somebody on a pedestal a little bit higher than you should of. And all of a sudden without you realizing it, they're becoming your Jesus. And God will allow you to see a flaw in someone that you've really admired.

Don't change your attitude toward that person because it's a human. That person is nothing but a human that God is using. An instrument.

So don't change your attitude toward somebody that you respected or you admired and now you've seen their flaw. God's maybe given you the gift of discernment and the very first person that you have the gift to operate on is someone very close to you that you have put on a pedestal. And all of a sudden you think differently of that person.

Don't be that way. God's just showing you that they're not a God. And without realizing it so often in our own lives, people look at us the same way.

Here, God allows this to happen to show that they are not gods. Remember, I saw a great movie with Sean Connery. It seems like before everything was so filled with filthy language and sexual innuendo, you could watch a lot of movies.

You can't watch anything anymore. You can't even trust PG-13 anymore. Can you trust G? I don't even know what they mean anymore.

There's so many of them. And they lure you in, you know, and pretty soon you're fast-forwarding and you just give up on them all. But there was a movie made a few years ago.

It was called The Man Who Would Be King with Sean Connery and Michael Caine. It was an awesome movie. And the plot was that it was during the British imperial colonialism and their control of some area in northern India or up in Pakistan.

And they were in some kind of a war. And here the war was over, and somehow they'd been discharged, and they still had their uniforms on. And they were just a couple of drinking buddies, and they were coming out of the wilderness somewhere up there where their particular regiment was at the end of this war.

And they came upon this area that looked similar. It was in the Mideast, you know that, somewhere up around Afghanistan. And they came upon this group of people, this tribe of people in this colony, and they were pagans.

And they came marching in with all their regalia, you know, and their British thing, you know. It was in the 1800s. And just all prim and proper with their weapons.

And, man, they fired their rifles a couple of times. And these people were convinced they were gods because they were pagans. They'd never seen a white man like a British soldier before.

And particularly their uniforms, you know. And then to see this thing fire and, you know, and shoot somebody and knock them down in an instant. And they were convinced they were gods.

And Sean Connery picked up on it, and he kind of liked it. And Michael Caine, you know, began to warn him. And they wanted him to be their king and their god to rule over them because they were so impressed with Sean Connery.

And he went along with it. He knew they thought he was a god. And before you know it, as the story goes on, he gets more and more involved.

And, man, they make this big palace for him, and there's gold and silver and women and all this. And so then as it gets toward the end of the movie, as they've actually begun to worship him and put him on this pedestal and everything in the movie, then they bring the most beautiful girl in this kingdom to him. They're going to marry her to the god Sean Connery.

And so then they have the big ceremony the night before the wedding and everything. And it's a celebration according to their pagan customs. And you can hear all the noise and everything.

And Sean Connery is getting all ready. Michael Caine is warning him. This thing is getting out of hand.

And if they discover that you're just a human, you know, it's going to be horrible what they do to you because they know the background of these people, how brutal they can be in their pagan ideas as far as torture and death. He said, you know, you're carrying this thing too far. They're going to find out.

If they find out that you're not a god, we're both dead. And Sean Connery says, no way. You know, I finally found my niche in life, so to speak, and I like this power.

And so they had done something with the girl the previous night, and she had some kind of a drug in her, part of the purification so-called ceremony for her to prepare her for her marriage to the god Sean Connery. And they brought her out in the big procession the next day. And, man, all these priests are all bowing down to him and giving him adulation, and the crowds are just in hysteria.

And she's led up by the maidens and everything, all of her companions, and they bring her up to Sean Connery. And somehow she just emotionally goes up to kiss him, and she bites him on the lip as she loses control in her emotions. And as she bites him, he pulls back, and blood trickles down his mouth.

And the whole village and all the people go, oh! And the camera, the timing, the silence. And then you could just see the looks on all the priests. They knew that gods don't bleed, and they just stared at him.

And you could see the change. You could feel the emotion and the danger, everything. Because he bled, they realized he was no god.

They'd been duped all along. And the next thing you know, they're running for their life, you know, across this big rope bridge over a big gorge. And you don't know how it all ends up.

They catch them, and then somehow the movie goes into the future, and it shows this old decrepit old guy all hunched over, you know, coming into a pawn shop in India somewhere years later with this woven basket. And you find out that he's relating this story, and he trips and stumbles. He's all crippled and broken and bent over like a leper.

And as he trips and stumbles, Sean Connery's old head rolls out of the basket. And you find out that this old crippled beat-up old beggar that begs the rest of his life was Michael Caine. They had tortured him and crippled him to such a degree that he was never the same, and they beheaded the god and gave it back to him, let him live as a reminder.

But I got to thinking, you know, he faked that he was a god, and they discovered that he was not a god, and they treated him pretty terribly because he bled. Now, Paul, you remember, is confused as a god. Now, God says, I'm a jealous god.

Now, you remember at Paul's conversion, he said, there's someone going to show you the things that you must suffer for my namesake because God is going to use Paul in a mighty way. And God will never allow someone else to be a god, particularly someone he's using for his own kingdom. And he will allow things to keep us from being put on those pedestals.

Now, if we climb up, he'll knock us off. Believe me, God has ways. Don't ever climb up on some pedestal because God is using you or because God has gifted you.

That's a dangerous thing to do. Well, look what God allows to take place to show them that Paul is no god. Just as easily as they can get all stirred up in a crowd because of a miracle, of a man being healed supernaturally, no matter what Paul tried to do, he was having a difficult time convincing them that he's not a god.

You know, the priest, remember, is going to bring an oxen down and slaughter the thing right in the center of town and offer up worship. And then in verse 19, just as quickly as the crowd is exalting him and calling him a god to worship him, notice how quickly the crowd can change, how fickle human beings are. It doesn't take much to just, you know, turn things and the wind can change.

It says in verse 19, there came thither certain Jews from Antioch, all the way, you know, from Syria, all the way over to Turkey, looking, trying to stop this spread of this new sect, this new truth, Christianity. And Iconium, who persuaded the people and having stoned Paul. They actually, and it didn't take long and they convinced.

Now, Paul couldn't convince them that they're not a god, but Satan stirred them up and before you know it, the very people that were claiming they were gods were talked right out of it and now they're wanting to stone him, they hate him. They stoned Paul and drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. You know, they pummeled him so with stones, probably knocked him, you know, silly, physically damaged him to a tremendous degree that they thought he was dead, probably in a coma.

And the way they throw these stones, I've seen Arab women stone their children outside the Damascus gate. I remember one night coming around the Damascus gate and these two little Arab kids were upsetting their mother and she just picked up a couple stones and let them have it. Right out in the street, outside the Damascus gate.

They didn't give her any more trouble. I kind of slowed down too. I mean, they're radical people, you know.

You heard about the Arab and the Jewish businessmen got together and it's always the same with Arabs and Jews and they got in this big argument and pretty soon the Arab guy says, You know, you guys, you're troublemakers. You cause all the trouble in the Mideast. You're even responsible for the sinking of the Titanic.

The Jewish guy said, What? I'm responsible for the sinking of the Titanic? An iceberg did that. The Arab said, Iceberg, Goldberg, you're all the same to me. I told you, it's four o'clock in the morning.

But he's lying there, stoned. Legally stoned. I'm stoned.

How be it as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and he came into the city and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. I'd have gone the opposite direction. Now, this is interesting what happens here.

Now, not only is God maintaining his honor and glory, that he's a jealous God, but for Paul's own sake he's allowing these people to realize he's not a God. If he was a God, he could not have been stoned to that degree and dragged out of the city and left for dead. So that's been corrected.

But God still is showing Paul, it doesn't matter what Satan does, you see, I'm going to raise you up. I'm not going to allow anything to stop your ministry until it's time to come home. Now, it's interesting what Paul learned from this, and he gives a little bit of the autobiography of this some 15 years later.

So turn to 2 Corinthians 11. Let's see what Paul learned from this experience. You know, we see, oh, poor Paul.

Well, nobody wants to get stoned to such a degree that he's dragged out of town and left for dead. But you remember, some 15 years later, Paul is reflecting on this incident. He's put in a situation because he's being slandered and lied about, and he's forced to share some of the things that took place in his life.

And as he goes through chapter 11, you remember in verse 25, he makes mention of the fact that he was stoned. Just brings it out, some of the other things he went through, sharing the gospel and laying his life down for these very people that have turned upon him. And then he speaks of glory, verse 30.

Now, he could glory because people thought he was a god. He could glory because he led multitudes to Christ. He could glory because he planted churches.

He could glory because through the anointing of the Holy Spirit he could cast out demons, call down blindness on wizards and witches, raise people from the dead. If anybody could glory, I mean, he had so much to glory about. And through some of the experiences that he had, he'd learned the most important thing as far as glorying.

And look at verse 30 of 2 Corinthians 11. If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. Now, that's also translated sickness in the New Testament, weakness, disease.

He says, if I'm going to glory, I will glory of the things which concern my infirmities, my weaknesses, my sicknesses. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed forevermore, knoweth that I lie not. Now, here's the great apostle Paul, and he's showing that he's not living above anybody just because he's Paul doesn't give him some kind of a glory road or easy ride or privilege above any other saint.

In Damascus, the governor under Aretas, the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison desirous to apprehend him. You remember in Acts chapter 9, they had taken a vow. They were going to kill Paul.

They were plotting, watching every gate into the entrance of Damascus to kill him. Now, he didn't get to Damascus to kill Christians, and so the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees from Jerusalem sent another batch now to kill Paul. They came all the way from Jerusalem.

That's 135 miles, and we travel that same road up over the Golan Heights, the Damascus Road. There's a spot where we're less than 35 miles from Damascus. In fact, on a clear day in the Golan, you can see Damascus from the Golan Heights.

And so here, the very same road that Paul took and met Jesus Christ, now the Sanhedrin, in their hatred, send an entourage of priests with new papers to find this Paul now, because he's spreading the gospel in Damascus, and they want to kill him. So Paul's on the wall, the outer wall, and all the cities had these walls, like Jericho and Jerusalem, and he was in a house hiding after a Bible study, and God didn't supernaturally move him like He did Philip. He could have transported Paul.

He transported Philip several miles, you remember, after he shared the gospel and the Ethiopian was converted. And all of a sudden, supernaturally, God just picked up Philip and placed him in Caesarea, several miles away, a tremendous distance away, from the Gaza Strip all the way up to Caesarea. God could have just as easily transported Paul to protect him, because he knew that these men were after him, you know, a hundred miles away.

He could have just as easily, you know, as he released Peter from an angel. He used an angel, and he released Peter from prison, you remember. Blinded the guards, put them in a stupor, and made Peter almost invisible.

The chains fell off their wrists, you remember, and the gates swing open automatically from the prison, and out they walked, the angel and Peter, and the Roman guards didn't even see it. God could easily have done it that way. But God does it differently all the time, so we'd learn to trust Him and be flexible.

And notice what He had to do. It says, And through a window and a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped His hand. As they were watching the gates, somewhere between two of the gates of the city, at late at night, they put Paul in some kind of a basket, lowered him out the window down the wall of the city, so he could escape.

Normal means. God is supernatural, and a lot of times God is super when we're natural. And I think there's a mistake in the church sometimes, that it's a lack of spirituality to use my noggin and make a rational decision, and do something in the physical.

Instead of just sitting and waiting for an angel to appear, and thinking that it's going to be more faith, more spirituality, more depth, if it's strictly supernatural, and it's mysterious. And there's whole portions of the church that operate in that realm, and really sometimes they make fools out of themselves, and they suffer harm rather than make a decision and do something in the natural. If God isn't doing it in the supernatural, be super in the natural.

You see, He's equipped us with the Holy Spirit, and the mind of Christ to think. Jesus didn't just automatically disappear, and vaporize, or just dissolve Himself all the time. There were times when it said He hid Himself in the crowd.

He passed through the crowd. One time He even disguised Himself. He could have used the supernatural, so to speak, all the time.

And so we need to be flexible. God gave us a mind to think. And sometimes you need to make a rational decision.

And here, there was an emergency. God wasn't just making Him end up somewhere else and transport Him, so to speak. And so in the middle of the night when they figured out, hey, here's the best place, here's the greatest possible, they just bounce Him off the wall, lower Him down, and let Him escape that way.

Nothing to glory about. Now just think what He could do on the testimony trail if He had Philip's experience. You know, Satan just about had me, and God just, I got up, and I floated in the air, and the next thing I know, I was 100 miles away.

And this can happen to you. We'll pray for you if you'll line up after breakfast. We'll lay hands on all of you with a special anointing.

And you'd be amazed at the people that line up for some of that stuff. No, sometimes we just have to, Lord, You're not doing it in the supernatural, so I'm going to be super at being natural and make a wise decision in my life and do something instead of just sitting and waiting for an apparition. And then He goes on to say, and this is interesting, it's not expedient for me doubtless to glory.

I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. Now notice what He says here. I knew a man in Christ about 14 years ago.

That's the exact time when he was stoned in Lystra and dragged out of the city. In any of the records, He's never talked about it since then. He didn't change his whole ministry about that situation, what he experienced there.

And here he's being forced to talk about it. Man, could he write a book? I knew a man in Christ about 14 years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell. Some people, boy, they're just so specific about what they've experienced in the spirit realm.

He says, whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell. God knoweth such a one caught up to the third heaven. This person that I knew about 14 years ago was taken into paradise, the garden of God.

Literally, it's from a Persian word, the pleasure garden. That's where we're all going. The pleasure garden, paradise at the rapture to dwell with Jesus.

And I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell. Notice how he's deflecting all the attention to maybe him again. To make sure that they aren't overwhelmed with, oh, this experience that Paul had.

He's sharing it in such a way that they're just concentrating, or going to be able to concentrate on what happened, not the individual that it happened to. I think so many times we are in a situation, and if we're not careful, we can share in such a way, be so subtle with such false humility, that we can really share things and everybody will notice me. In such a way that I'm the one who prayed.

Of course, we'll give God the glory, but it was my prayer, my faith. What I did, it was my idea. No, it wasn't, you see, we can either share it, you know, the Holy Spirit really did something wonderful here.

No, it was my idea, and it blessed everybody. My painting, my song. I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell God, Noah.

Very similar experience to John, when he was given the revelation. Now, we find out that they supposed he was dead. He wasn't dead, he was probably in some kind of a coma, so badly injured.

And as he's lying there with his soul there, God just takes his spirit up in the glory, just like he did John. Now, John didn't die when he got the revelation. Remember, he heard God say, Jesus said, get up here.

When he was in the spirit on that day, you remember Revelation chapter 4. And the next thing you know, John's in the presence of Jesus Christ in paradise. His spirit, but his body was still on Patmos. He said, I was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for any man to utter.

Now, what this means is, he wasn't given instructions. Now, it's against the law of God to describe what you saw up here. What Paul is saying is that it would just be a crime to try and describe it with his human intellect.

It would detract from the beauty, so rather than even try, he wouldn't even speak about it. Man, could he write a book? Just think of the testimonies. Just think of the bookshelves in the Christian bookstores that Paul could sell the books, man.

Describing everything and what happened to him up there. But he says, you know, I saw things, it would be a crime with my intellect to describe it. It would just detract from the beauty, it wouldn't even come close to depicting the beauty and the glory and the perfection.

So I'm not even going to try. All I know is, this guy experienced paradise. And he's having a hard time remembering exactly how it was.

So it shows you, you see, as Paul goes on in his life and grows, the new experiences are greater than anything in the past. It's not like every six months he keeps telling the same story. Every new town he goes to, every new person he meets.

Boy, you know what happened to me? It's 14 years later and he's not quite sure exactly what happened, but he knew of a guy that was taken up into the pleasure garden of God, paradise. And then he was forced to bring it out to defend his character. Why? Why would he almost forget? Why would it just be once in 14 years? Because his everyday experience, every new day with Christ was so superior to the last.

You forget the past days. It's not like, oh, I wish my Christian life was like it was five years ago. Where'd the good days go? Why isn't it as exciting as it used to be? Because, you see, his relationship with Jesus Christ was such that every new day was more glorious than the last.

And you forget what's behind. Jesus is so wonderful. He's got so many wonderful, glorious things in each new day.

The experience, the fellowship, the love, the joy, the communion with Jesus Christ is so wonderful, so new, and so exciting that you forget those things. Oh, yeah, I got baptized. Yeah, I got tongues washed.

Yes, I was healed. I've seen this. Oh, yeah.

But what's just happening right now is so wonderful. Of such a one will I glory, yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. Hey, I could really get off on this Paul thing.

I could just, everywhere I go, every new town, every new group of people, I could start the study off by saying, I'm the one that this happened to. I'm the guy that wrote the book. He says, but if I'm going to glory, if I'm going to touch on anything, I realize how weak I am.

No matter what my revelations and experiences, it's just reminding me more and more how weak I am and how desperately I need Jesus Christ every day, His strength in my life. More of Him. All I do, I hunger and thirst for more of His righteousness.

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool, for I will say the truth. But now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he hearth of me, and lest I should be exalted above measure. Through the abundance of revelations there was given to me.

He realizes it was a gift. He's experienced something as a gift. Physical pain and buffeting from an angel of Satan.

He's seeing it as a gift. Because of his weakness, his tendency to boast, his tendency to receive the praise of man. He realizes through what God's doing in his life, this thing, and it could be, and I am convinced, you don't have to agree with me, that this thorn in the flesh, this physical imparity that he received, that he's been given from by God as a result of being stoned and so injured that he didn't heal properly.

And it changed him forever. And probably instead of being an upright, normal looking man that you could deceive, be deceived in the thinking of God, he was probably so beat up and scarred and brutalized from the stoning, and God didn't allow him to heal 100%, it crippled him for the rest of his life, and it disfigured him, all the things that happened. He said, this can't be a God walking around in human flesh.

They'd never make that mistake again. And that's probably what he received from God when he went into paradise, when he was in that coma, and God instead said, no, I'm going to, you're not going to die. I'm sending you back.

I'm not finished with you. But no one will ever make the mistake of thinking you're a God again. And maybe there's someone here, you've made a mistake in life, and people will never again think that you're a perfect Christian.

Don't let it bother you. Because Jesus Christ has perished for your flaws. He shed his blood.

Or has strived to be like him. But maybe you're never going to be the same. You may never recover from your fall.

You may never be the same. But it doesn't mean God's not going to use you. It may disfigure you in some way.

But no one will ever make the mistake again of thinking you're perfect, and that you can't make a mistake either. And God can even use you more. It may be that it's just to knock a little bit of pride and self-righteousness out of your life.

But God's going to use you now. And even give you more revelation. But that messenger of Satan will be there to buff it.

Just as Paul had to discover, and you realize it's a gift given by God. There was given to me, not because Paul was bad or wrong or evil, but for his own safety. A thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan.

This is translated throughout the Scriptures, angel. An angel of Satan. An evil spirit.

Not to inhabit him, not to control him, not to diminish his Christian life, but to enhance it, the buffeting, the trouble, maybe the temptation that never goes away. And this thing was so painful for Paul. It could be that somewhere one of the stones hit him in such a degree that it affected his eyesight, damaged him that he was never totally recovered from it.

Maybe brain damage to such a degree that it affected his motor functions, and he lost some coordination, or he walked with a limp. Or maybe a natrophy set into one of his arms. All we know is that Paul suffered terribly at times, and he began to plead with the Lord.

And when he least expected, because of this infirmity, and it could have been from this very stoning, a reoccurring pain that shot up his back or down his leg or in his head, migraine, headaches, whatever it may have been. And he pleaded with God in the beginning that he would take it away. But it was necessary, lest he be exalted above measure.

He'll never be exalted above measure again. And maybe in certain times when God's really using him and the anointing's upon him, at the same time the messenger of Satan is right there that no one knows about, buffeting him, giving him pain, and reminding him, this anointing is coming from God, not from you. These people are listening because of what God's doing, not because of you, Paul.

They're coming back because of me, Paul, not because of you. Don't ever forget that. The messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. It was extremely painful. It wasn't continuous.

It would come when he least expected it. And he said unto me. Now, he could have said that to Paul when he was in the pleasure garden.

But whenever it was, he said, my grace is sufficient for thee. You're going to make it. Your mind is telling you, I'm not going to make it.

If you don't help me, Lord, I'm not going to make it. And he's saying, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you. You are making it.

Don't think that way. My grace is sufficient for you. Not it will be in the future.

It is. It's an ever-present, active. You see, you have all you need right now.

You are making it. You just want it to go away. My grace is sufficient for you.

Why? For my strength is made perfect in weakness. It's reminding you how weak you are. You know, we're pretty haughty when we're young, aren't we? You know, you get around some young people.

And I see myself. You know, you don't think that you're ever going to have a sore bone in your body or a weak muscle. And you really, you know, Mr. Charles Atlas, Hercules all rolled into one.

And you can be pretty haughty when you're a kid, especially if you excel in sports and athletics. And you get a little weak and things start happening, a little limp forms here and you start dropping your keys and you can't figure out what's happening. Why do I keep dropping these dumb things? It changes you.

My strength is made perfect in weakness. See, it was forcing Paul just to cry out to the Lord. Lord, give me strength.

Lord, I need your strength. Help me, Lord. Maybe you have something in your life and you've been pleading with God to remove it.

Now, he wants to remove sin. Don't think that you keep sinning because God has made that the buffeting, the thorn in the flesh. No.

Don't make that mistake. Don't let Satan deceive you and think, well, I guess this sin is going to stay with me. That's what the angel of Satan to buffet me.

No. We'll clear that up right now. God removes sin.

He hates sin. He wants to remove sin. But the thing that's buffeting you, it may be a temptation.

It may be a weakness. It may be something in your life you just wanted to go away. And it's keeping you dependent upon the Lord.

It's keeping you with any semblance of a prayer life. When this thing stirs up, you are praying. It's not just now I lay me down to sleep.

And so Paul said, Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me, not knock me down and pulverize me. I like that. The power of Christ.

We hear a lot of talk about the power of God. Isn't it wonderful? The power of God rests upon you. And when does it rest upon you? When I realize how weak I am.

Not when I'm mouthy and boastful and claiming and naming and professing and demanding. When I'm just saying, Lord, I am weak. Lord, I need your strength.

Lord, I'm afraid. Lord, I need your power. And it will rest on you.

I like the way God puts his power on us. So Paul said, Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.

You see, he realized. And it's all through something that happened 14 years earlier in a city called Lystra. Not because he was in sin or out of the will of God.

Just because God designed this for his life. He was preaching the gospel. He was stoned and dragged out of his city.

People were thinking he was a god. So God allowed something to happen in Paul's life. No one will ever think you're a god again.

So do not be discouraged. Someone's seen you make a mistake. Well, Jesus knew all along you were going to make the mistake.

He still loves you. They just don't think you're a god anymore. You put your shoes on like everybody else.

You're a Christian who needs Jesus. And God will use you. Notice back in Acts, Howbeit as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up and came into the city.

And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra and to Iconium. Lystra, the very place where he was stoned.

And to Iconium and Antioch. And notice what he did. Notice what he learned through this.

He's going to preach things, and he's going to experience it himself. Elijah was going to preach, and he pronounced judgment, and he did not escape the problems that came on the whole nation. He went without food and water for a while too.

The drought affected him too. Just because he was the prophet, he didn't escape. And notice Paul, just like Jesus, didn't go back to the people that stoned him to show him or show them.

He only went to the believers to confirm them. Now maybe they didn't realize that he came back and out of that coma, that near-death experience, they didn't know he'd gone into paradise, his spirit. They may have thought he was dead.

Are we ever going to see him again? What are we going to do now? The great Paul. What are we going to do? How are we going to make it in our Christian faith? So Paul goes back to the very city where he was stoned, not to reveal himself to the mob that turned on him, but to encourage the converts there. He could care less if the people that hated him knew what happened to him, that God had taken his side.

He didn't go back and say, God's on my side. No, he was going back to confirm the saints, the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus said, In this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.

You know, we were on the Temple Mount and things are so volatile. We are so close to the end and the Muslim tension against the Jew on the Temple Mount, the most volatile, important piece of real estate, 33 acres on the face of the earth, ready to explode into a third world war. And so we're up there on the Temple Mount.

You can't even take your Bible up there anymore because the Muslims react. They're so afraid of, you know, someone teaching about Jesus Christ. In fact, Mrs. Clark, one of our teachers, Pastor Rick's wife was with us.

She just had a map or something rolled up. Hadn't even opened it. And we were standing in a crowd and I was pointing out some area according to Bible prophecy on the Temple Mount.

And we weren't there five minutes and they came walking up, you know, rousting us and going up to carry on. What have you got there? And opened that up and it was just a map of the Temple area. No Bibles or anything.

One time I was up there and I had my arm around my own wife. You see, one of the things in Islam is you can't show affection in the presence of Allah. And they came running over the police.

Very volatile. And I was thinking, what if they said to the Apostle Paul, you can't take your Bible up here. And we wanted to make sure we didn't create an international incident.

You know, Pastor from New York creates mob scene. The idea of rubber bullets rocks me and all the Palestinians are going nuts, ABCs there, you know, and they're dragging me away. I didn't do it.

I didn't do it, you know. All for Jesus. And so we want to make sure we listen to the guys that don't take your Bibles, don't open them up.

They'll go nuts. They'll come running out of every little crook and cranny. They're watching everything you do.

And so, praise the Lord, you know the Scriptures. You can make reference and speak. I started worshiping over at the Eastern Gate and David said, I knew it.

You're going to start a riot. You're going to start a riot. I just had to wear the Eastern Gate.

And I just started to sing. I knew this was the day. You're going to start a riot.

I don't think the Apostle Paul would have cared. I got to thinking about that. Where he went.

If you share Christ in Saudi Arabia, they'll publicly behead you. That's what Paul lived every day in that kind of tension. He goes right back to the town where he was stoned.

And sometimes we are so frightened in this land of peace to share our faith. We make so many excuses why we shouldn't do it. And really, to be honest, sometimes we're just flat out afraid.

We aren't at that point. We may be amoral, but we still have the freedom to share our faith. Someone may spit on you.

Big deal. Or threaten to fire you. Or not have anything to do with you.

And I always think, if someone doesn't want anything to do with me because I love Jesus Christ, I'd be careful of that kind of a person. I'd be very careful of a person like that who just simply because you love Jesus Christ threatens not to have anything to do with you. That's a very dangerous person.

You can't trust someone like that. That doesn't want to associate with you because you don't lie. You don't want to do drugs or watch pornography or deceive.

You just want to glorify God and you love God. And they don't have anything to do with you? I'd be very careful of a person like that. But he went right back to the very area where he was stoned.

God, by His Spirit, give me that kind of boldness that if something like that happens in this country before the rapture of the church, I'd be like the Apostle Paul. Lord, grant me the measure of the Holy Spirit that I don't deny You. That I always confess You before men.

When they had ordained them elders in every church and had prayed with fasting... Now, isn't it interesting? Satan's trying to stop the church. Jesus said, remember, that gates of hell will not prevail against My church. He's stoned.

Satan sends up more Pharisees from Jerusalem. But notice, churches are planted through the tribulation, through the struggles. Churches are planted.

The power of God is resting upon them. Outwardly it may seem weak. But notice, now they're ordaining elders.

They've got so many churches planted in every church. And notice how they did it and had prayed with fasting. In other words, before they got together with the local house fellowship and this home and this neighborhood and this little town and these areas of Turkey, they'd get together and say, who do you think would be a good elder? Who's really in the Word? Who's got their act together? Who's a real witness and example of the believer? Let's pray.

Oh, so-and-so. Oh, Titus. And so they prayed and fasted and then Paul said, you know what? Paul said, we think you're right.

The Holy Spirit, they're the ones. Pick those. Start with those young guys.

And off they go to another town. And they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed. And after that they passed through Pisidia.

They came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the Word in Perga, they went down to Italia. No signs and wonders.

They're just teaching the Word here. On this particular trip, no signs and wonders. They're just preaching the Word.

As they're moving around, going back down to the port of Italia to return to Syria as they leave the country. The one real sign was a healing and then Paul being stoned, dragged out of town. There's a couple wonders for you.

And yet on other occasions, many healings. And hence they sail to Antioch. They're on their way.

They go back to Syria. And whence they had been recommended to the grace of God with the work which they fulfilled. Notice Paul when he returned from Paradise and God raised him up out of that coma, probably brutally disfigured and crippled for life with this physical pain, whatever it was as a result of it.

And then Satan, this angel, buffeting and causing it to flare up when he least expected it. Maybe like a kidney stone that'd never go away or some other malady. Rather than say, well, it looks like, man, doors are closing here.

I'm never going back there. Let's just get on the boat. Satan's probably just wondering, what do I have to do to stop these people? Why do they love Jesus so much? Why can't I get them to just quit? There's so many quitters.

But this Paul, he's gone right back to the town where I did it to him. Why? Because it wasn't fulfilled yet. God hadn't released him yet.

Paul wasn't a quitter. And seeing little difficulty as an open door to run and say, well, the Lord's moving me on. It wasn't fulfilled.

Now it has been. And they're back now in Syria. And when they were come and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

And there they abode long time with the disciples. Oh, what a report they had! And what Paul learned through it. Great report.

Churches planted. Satan befuddled. Paul learning more about himself.

How God operates in a life. Learning that God wants to give more revelation and learning that the power of God will be upon you that you don't have to fear. And knowing that he doesn't have to worry anymore about someone putting him on a pedestal.

Tremendous things learned just in those experiences. And you see, God's got them all designed for all of us. For our own good.

It was given unto me. He learned this thing for my own good. To make me dependent on Jesus Christ.

That the power of God may rest upon me. You don't have to be afraid of the power of God. It rests upon us.

Shall we all stand? Father, you're working in all of our lives here tonight. You have a plan for each one of us. What a privilege, Lord, to glorify you.

Not to have people think that we're little gods. But, Lord, we are people with infirmities, with weaknesses and flaws that you use to confound the wise. And yet we can have the power of Christ upon us.

So, Lord, we present ourselves to you just as Paul. Lord, there are some here tonight that have thrice pleaded with you to remove this buffeting. Lord, give them understanding that it may just be a gift from you as you desire to do more in their lives.

To give them more revelation as you're calling them to yourself. Lord, may we, like Paul, not be afraid. And may we fulfill, Lord, all those things that you've planned for our lives, that we'd have much to share with those that we meet.

And, Lord, may we confess you openly and never deny you, Lord. Help us by your Spirit, Father, for we truly are weak. But yet your strength is made perfect in our weakness.

We thank you for that, Father. And we thank you that the power of God will rest upon us when we acknowledge our weakness to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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