

Acts 18_pt2

by Bill Gallatin

Bill Gallatin's sermon on Acts 18 explores the themes of God's sovereignty, the power of the gospel, and the importance of standing firm in faith amidst manipulation and opposition.

Duration: 1:02:25

Scripture: Acts 18:26, Hebrews 6:1

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of a car accident where he miraculously survived without any injuries. He attributes his survival to the intervention of God, who recited the 91st Psalm and protected him during the accident. The speaker emphasizes the sovereignty of God and how He can work wonders even in the midst of difficult situations. He also highlights the importance of trusting in God's faithfulness and provision, regardless of the circumstances or the government in power.

Transcript

I think before I went to Moscow, I was in Acts, and we'll finish that chapter Lord willing. And so we're in Acts chapter 18 and starting with verse 12. Now you remember Greece or the world was under the control of the Roman Empire.

And so Rome, when they would conquer the world, as long as that nation would pay the taxes and submit to the yoke of Rome and its government, its ideology, they allowed religious freedom. And they allowed people to worship any way they wanted to. But they would establish a pro-council or a governor in each area from Rome, a Roman, to govern and to rule and then to answer back to Caesar.

And in this particular area, Cai, where Paul is, Corinth, is a man named Galio. History tells us he was a very fair, good ruler. The great Stoic politician and Roman, who's very well-known, Seneca was his brother.

And it's interesting that Seneca was the private tutor of Nero, Nero Caesar. And history tells us that it was either Nero or Caligula, probably Nero, who eventually had Galio, who Paul met, and Seneca both put to death. But it's interesting how God places his people, or gets powerful people in contact with believers.

You can see by the Scriptures that when someone stands before God at the white throne judgment, and remember you will never, if you're truly a born-again converted Christian, you will never face that

judgment. You as a child of God will never have to stand judgment at the white throne, or that great judgment of mankind where there's nothing but damnation facing the individuals. Because you've gotten to that point, left this life without a decision for Christ in a positive way, and so you wait until that resurrection at the end of the thousand years and stand at the white throne judgment.

And then the whole life of that individual is played back, and every account of their life, every jot, every tittle of their life, every idle word that has been spoken, every action, God will play back before that individual and show them every opportunity in the 60 or 70 or 80 years of their life that they had a chance to make a decision for Jesus Christ, or heard of Jesus Christ, before they are damned eternally. And it will be a righteous judgment. God judges righteously.

During the age of grace and the Gospels going out, you see, you and I have the opportunity and responded hopefully to the opportunity that God gives us now to have our judgment taken care of, our sin taken care of, by accepting what Jesus Christ has done for us on Calvary. Becoming the propitiation, becoming the scapegoat. He is the sin offering.

He's the perfect one that meets the just demands of God's righteous law, and He dies in our place, and we have life. God can impute righteousness to you and I because He's punished our sin on His Son, Jesus Christ. So we never face that judgment.

We sit with the Lord as His bride on the thrones judging. But there'll be many, many, many individuals powerful in this life. But it's interesting, no matter how powerful you are in this life, you end up a pile of dust with worms eating you eventually.

You may be a Stalin, a Hitler, a George Washington, a Truman, an Abraham Lincoln, whoever. How powerful you may have been in this life. A Napoleon, a Pharaoh.

No matter how great, no matter what you control, how many lives have been put to death, an individual will always end up dust with worms eating the body somewhere. In fact, many of the poets and the historians of the past say, when you handle a cup, in fact there's a great Persian historian and poet who said, when you drink out of that cup that belongs to the family, remember, be very careful, the dust of your grandfather may be in the clay. But one day, you see, they'll stand before the Lord and they'll be very humbled.

There'll be awe and respect then. Now, I really believe, as you look at the book of Acts, that God often tried to reach the most powerful people on earth by the very trials that He allowed the Christians to go to and stand to. Just like Galileo experienced Paul, like Felix, like Festus, all these Roman leaders.

Now stop and think how often people in Caesar's court got saved because of the ministry of Paul and they heard the gospel. Where they are today, we don't know. We will find out when we enter eternity if they did get saved.

But more often you just hear how someone was saved and is a relative of Herod the Great or in Caesar's court. Now stop and think, and we look historically at Nero, how many individuals who knew Christ were around his life politically while he was alive and he had his opportunities. He heard about Jesus Christ, the Galilean, the Jew from Israel.

Interestingly enough, as I told you before, the interpreter, the one who became me on countdown to eternity in Russian, was in the diplomatic corps and is Boris Yeltsin's personal interpreter. And he did the

video and did me in the countdown to eternity, Boris Yeltsin's personal interpreter. And he's a born-again Christian.

Tell me God doesn't love Boris Yeltsin. Oh the wonder of it all, the amazing work of God. But if Mr. Yeltsin never makes a decision or responds, one day he'll have that all played back, having personal contact with his own interpreter, Al Gore.

He interprets for Al Gore when he goes to Russia and who knows. Now I met the man and I said, oh so you're me. What do I sound like? Very intelligent, very educated, loves the Lord and his wife also.

So here you have Galileo, very powerful politician, the governor of this area of Greece. And when Galileo was deputy of Chia, or the area of Greece as it was called then, Corinth, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat or the Bema's seat, the Bema, where all the problems were taken care of, like the city court, the local courthouse. Now that as the gospel was spreading and Paul was, you know, leading Jews or Greeks who had become, you know, raised in the Jewish religion to the Lord and are responding to the gospel, not submitting to the Mosaic law, being known, knowing they're free from the baptismal rites of Judaism, the dietary laws, and particularly the Gentile converts, they knew they weren't needed to be, they didn't have to be circumcised anymore.

The news began to spread and so again, Paul is stirring things up. People are leaving the old religion, listening to this Paul. He's upsetting things.

The gospel will always come in and upset religion, will always stir things up. If the gospel isn't preached properly, it'll never stir anything up. You water the gospel down and you won't upset a family member.

You won't upset a friend and get a reaction if you water it down enough not to offend, so you won't upset them in their religion. And we should never intend to upset, but when we are faithful to preach the gospel, as we should, and remember, Jesus said the truth makes you free, people begin to respond to it, there's going to be a reaction by many times the rest of the family, or the community where the new movement has started, the neighborhood. And so they stirred things up and they go to Galileo, they go to the courthouse saying, this fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

In other words, they're breaking the Mosaic law. And again, Rome respected the Jewish religion because they didn't want an uprising. Some of the worst wars and the most terrible insurrections are over religion.

All you have to do is look at the tragedy in the news today of what so-called Christians are doing to one another, Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. The horror of what some Protestants did to a mother and her three children. The shock of it, it's sickening.

Now you know those people aren't born again. You know they can't be born again. And what blessed me so is to find the shock of it and the reaction against it that true Protestants and Catholics would know Jesus banded together to keep the peace, the shock of it.

But in the name of religion, that doesn't glorify God. But the reaction and how ugly religious people, how murderous and hateful and angry religious people can get. Now contrast that with the Beatitudes, that Jesus teaches what his kingdom is like.

He teaches, blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the poor in spirit, not the proud in spirit, and the self-righteous and the angry in spirit, and the resentful in spirit, but the poor in spirit.

The meek, not the mighty and the strong and the arrogant, but the meek.

It's so different. And religion breeds a different animal. Religion can breed a very dangerous, self-righteous, angry, violent person.

But you see that's not the character of Christ. That's not the gospel. The gospel brings peace.

In fact, Paul quotes Isaiah and talks about how beautiful are the feet of those that go in the mountains and preach peace, the peace of God. So when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Galileo, and again history tells us, he was a fair leader. He wasn't going to be drawn in.

They're trying to manipulate him and bring him in and do to Paul what they did to Jesus, you remember, at the crucifixion. To manipulate the Roman authorities that they manipulated Pilate and then coerced the crowd and stirred them up to get them all to crucify him, crucify him, to get rid of the Lord. And so now they're trying to manipulate Galileo, but he was wiser than that.

He said unto the Jews, if it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, in other words, if they were breaking civil law, if this Paul, and never did the Apostles or Jesus teach when you preach the gospel or serve or work in his kingdom that you break civil law. The only time you broke man's law in the scriptures is when it violated God's law. There are many, many places in the Bible Paul and Peter teach that we are to obey those in authority over us, even when they're unrighteous, to glorify God, to trust in Him as difficult as it may be, to be a witness.

And so they weren't breaking civil law, the law of the land. It was a trumped-up charge. It was a religious thing that related to the Jewish religion, not the Roman civil law or the government.

So he said in wisdom, in fairness, if it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. But he's wise to them. They're trying to manipulate him and draw him into something that's really none of his affair, just to get rid of the Apostle and stop the spreading of the gospel.

But if it be a question of words and names and of your law, in other words, the Jewish law, the Jewish religious law, look you to it. I will be no judge of such matters. He's going to wipe his hands clean.

He's not going to be manipulated. Don't allow someone to manipulate you and draw you into some family squabble under the guise of being spiritual or being a peacemaker. Be very, very sensitive to that.

The Bible warns about meddling in other people's affairs, thinking that you're spiritual. They come and knock on your door and say, well the scripture says here, and they're using scripture and saying the Lord showed me and I want you to go with me, brother or sister, and they're manipulating you. If the scripture's showing them, they should do it.

Don't be manipulated by somebody to get involved in something. Just leave it in God's hands. If the scripture's speaking to them, then you go.

But don't try to manipulate me with what God has shown you to get involved in some personal matter or some affair of this life. Remember Paul told Timothy, be very careful if you're a soldier for the Lord not to get entangled in the affairs of this life, because you can get out of control. It can just start spreading.

It's like throwing a stone in a pond and the ripples just start spreading and it covers more and pretty soon it's just encompassing more people and more people and getting out of control. So he says, you look to it. And he draved them from the judgment seat.

In other words, he banished them. Get out of here. Don't waste my time.

Chased them out. Now what had happened, you see, the Jews had stirred up the Greek Jews. I'm trying to think of the right word.

The Greeks that believed and the Jewish Jews, which was a large contingent of the synagogue and the local assembly, had stirred up the crowd and come to Galileo, dragging Paul, trying to force this situation. And then when it didn't work, it's interesting what happened to the leader of the synagogue. Then all the Greeks took Sosones, the chief ruler of the synagogue, the one who stirred them all up, was the leader, going to speak on their behalf.

And all this anger and frustration. It's interesting how God turned the tables. Now there are several Proverbs that says if you roll a stone to try and destroy somebody, it's going to roll back upon your own head.

The individual that digs a pit to see if he's trying to destroy somebody, they'll fall in their own pit, their own ditch. So here this Sosones was stirred up by the crowd. And he's going to be the leader and the spokesman to destroy this Paul for getting people to leave, you know, their religion.

And the crowd and their anger and their frustration and their hostility, after Galileo ran them out, they took it all on Sosones and they beat the leader of the synagogue. And it shows me too, again, you never have to defend yourself. When someone begins to slander you or attack you, and you get wind of someone trying to destroy your character, don't even respond to it.

Leave it in God's hands. He'll take care of it eventually. You make sure you stay righteous.

Just make sure that the plots or what's being said against you is false. And you put your trust in the Lord. Don't defend yourself.

Job says if I defend myself, I begin to defend myself. My own mouth will condemn me. Leave it in God's hands.

I have learned from experience that God is better able to take care of lies and troublemakers than I am. And he may not do it as quick as I want it, but I've seen and I've heard he's done it. I don't rejoice in that, but I marvel and I awe and I am so thankful that God is my defense.

And so here's Sosthenes. Now, here is the sovereignty and the power of God in this situation. Now, here he is the one who stirred them up and is the so-called leader.

And so they turn around and they beat him right before the judgment seat. Here his plan was to beat Paul. Paul's standing there.

He gets pushed out of the way. They drag him, you know, they don't even get out of the building yet, out of the area, and Galileo's still there. And they turn and beat Sosthenes before the judgment seat.

There is the power of God to turn the tables on the enemy. Reminds me of Haman, you remember, seeking to destroy the Jews. This anti-Semite that hated Jews in Persia, remember? And he couldn't stand this Mordecai.

He was such a bigot. And he plotted to kill Mordecai and all the Jews. And he had gallows built 75 feet high on the edge of the city, right in the center of the city, actually.

And he was going to plot to have him hang there. And God turned the whole thing around, let Haman build his very own gallows, and God in his sovereignty and providence began to work and change things in one night. And the next day they dragged Haman out and hung him on his own gallows.

Mordecai and Esther didn't have to do a thing. But here's, this is amazing to me. Now, who else was a great hater of Christians and did all he could to destroy Christians several years earlier? A man named Saul.

And it's interesting how God turned the tables on him, how he would beat Christians and hail them and drag them to jail, put them to death, consent in the stoning of Stephen, thinking he's doing God a service in his blindness, in his religious bigotry and zeal. And God in his grace and mercy met him on the way to get some more Christians to beat, on the way to Damascus, and it changed his life forever. And he became the Apostle Paul.

Now, he sees that happen to someone else. And it's interesting. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, five years later.

This is a letter he's writing back to this area five years later. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1, look at verse 1. Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother. God has ways, doesn't he? Here's a man that once was filled with hatred like Paul, and God used this whole event in Providence.

Here, Satan's stirring the whole thing up to destroy Paul, and he has Sosthenes at his agent, this powerful bigoted Jew that hates Christians in Corinth. And what does God do? He turns the tables. He gets beaten.

He gets beaten severely, and it drives him right to Christ, because who's there to minister to him in the love of God? The great Apostle Paul, because he could identify with it. And five years later, he writes a letter back, and who's his close friend? Sosthenes. You know, God is so great.

How he can take a negative situation that we can't control. And you know what? Probably before Paul was dragged before the Bema seat, he was probably at a time praying, saying, Lord, use me. And look how God did.

He uses us in ways that we could never design. Now, you see, in Isaiah 55, what's he say? My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts.

I can work salvation, redemption, and work protection from you, and protect you from Satan in ways that you can't conceive of when the situation seems most hopeless. I've experienced it in my own life. I remember many, many years ago, when I was still a carpenter.

Worked all day long, was tired, couldn't wait to get home. We didn't have a house yet of our own. We had left California, gone out for about six months, moved out of the area, came back to California, and we

hadn't found a place to live yet, and we're living with friends.

Didn't have the money. I'd gotten a job working as a carpenter. Had a vehicle, but didn't have a house, and just waiting for Lord to open the door for a house to have the money to move in.

And it's very expensive, even 25 years ago in Southern California, because you had to have a deposit a month in advance, and then a month to live there. And Newport Beach is a very expensive place to live. And so we're praying.

Rosemary and I are living with some dear friends, and I'm working, and I'm on my way home after work, and for some reason, the Lord just had me start praying in tongues. Man, for 45 minutes, I'm going down the highway in Southern California, just praying in the Spirit, just praising God, and just going off in tongues. People think I'm nuts.

You know, just grinning from ear to ear, higher than you can believe, and all of a sudden, I am so built up in the Spirit, a girl pulls out of an intersection without even stopping, and I hit her over 50 miles an hour in a main thoroughfare in Southern California. The next thing I know, I'm flying through the air. The impact knocked the boots right off my feet, my work boots, wrapped a four-foot rule around my neck, like a U. Fifty-pound kegs of nails hit me in the back of the head.

I'm flying through the air in the California thruway, rolling over, and it's in slow motion, and I feel a hand get me, and the voice of God recite the 91st Psalm, and lay me right in the highway. I stand up, and there isn't a thing wrong with me, and I see my four-wheel drive go off the edge, and hit a concrete abutment, totally destroyed, and the girl had hit me. She's over in the curb.

I stand up. Brakes are screeching. People are screaming, running up.

Can't believe I'm even alive, not bleeding and mangled. I'm in my socks. The impact knocked the boots off.

The steering column went through the seat. If I'd have been in the seat belt, I'd have been impaled by the steering column. My skull saw flew into the front seat.

I'm looking around, feeling there's nothing wrong with me, and the first thing I say is, where's my Bible? And the state placement thinks I'm crazy. I always have my Bible on my dashboard. I'm going, wow, Lord.

I don't know. Thank you. But the Lord actually recited the 91st Psalm, and laid me in the throughway, that his angels would bear me up.

So I immediately go over to the curb. The policeman wants to get a, you know, an account of everything, and here's this little girl laying in the grass bleeding, and here is the sovereignty of God. Sassanese gets beat, gets saved.

Here's the way, and you see, I'm, without realizing it, I, in the morning, Lord use me today. I wouldn't design it that way. Absolutely not.

But to show you how the sovereignty of God is. So we get over there, and they're waiting for ambulances and everything, but she's laid out in the grass, bleeding, all beat up. And so I kneel down, I pray over her, pray for her, ask God to be merciful.

Rosemary shows up, news gets back to the house, and I go home, go to the place we're living, and go to church that night, and I shared at the church at Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa. Just, you know, I shared with Chuck what happened. So he has me share before everybody, and we were in a tent in those days, meeting in a big circus tent.

Get back to the house, and well, no car, no house, but Lord, there is no mark on me. And next thing you know, we have to call the parents of the girl. It turns out she had no driver's license, she was only 15 years old, she was high on drugs, she was loaded to the max, and she was practicing witchcraft.

Her parents had left on a vacation, left her home alone. Without their knowing it, she had secretly stolen the car keys of the parents, and had a duplicate made of the other car that was home. And so she was out smoking dope and doing things with her friends, driving around in the other car, with her parents not knowing it, and that's what happened to her.

Well, right away, the lawsuit, they're no man, they're getting sued to the max. We don't know who this man is, but we just know it. It's our daughter's fault.

There's all kinds of charges against them. There, you know, you're talking millions, man, emotional stress, sore neck. I can see it now, you know, a home in, you know, the Riviera.

And so they're concerned, man, they know. And it's interesting, the phone rings and it's the husband or the father. You can just feel the apprehension, and I have the privilege to say, well, I'm not going to sue you, God didn't harm me at all.

Lord Jesus, and I just gave me a chance to share Jesus Christ, and tell them how wonderful the Lord Jesus is, He's your daughter, okay. And here's what it turns out. It turns out that they were backslidden Christians, and I didn't sue them.

I said, I don't want to sue you. I don't want your money. I wouldn't mind maybe being reimbursed, you know, my car's been totaled, if you could, but I don't want any money from you.

I just want you to know that Jesus loves you, and I forgive your daughter, and I pray that she knows the Lord. It turns out they were backslidden Christians, and it brought them back to the Lord, and the car was totaled, and the insurance payoff was enough money to pay and get us in our own house. And we got another car! Old 278, we called it.

The license number was OLD278. An old beat-up piece of iron with four tires, and it ran. Old 278.

We had a car, and we had a place to live. Through the whole thing, God worked everything to the good. Now, are you going to pray tomorrow morning, God use me? That's the way God is, though.

So wonderful. You can't figure it out, and he works so much glory out of it. Well, here's this Sassanese.

He hates that Paul. And man, the tables are turned, and the very people beat him, and you see five years later, he's a disciple. Who ministers to him? Paul, because Paul says, I was just like that once.

And now notice what happens. Notice the next verse. And Paul, after this, tarried there.

Why? Why do you think? To minister to Sassanese. He stayed there a good while. Kind of like the love he showed in the Philippian jail, to show the love.

You know, sometimes the greatest ministry is when someone attacks you, and hates you, and does something that hurts you, and is even successful, and it gives you the opportunity to say, I love you, I forgive you, I have no hatred towards you. See, there's Paul. There's Jesus.

And so Paul stays a good while, just as he did in the Philippian jail. The jailer says, he has every right to flee. I'm a dead man.

I'm gonna run this 18-inch sword right through my stomach, because I know what Rome will do to me. My prisoners have escaped. And he hears out of the dark, don't harm yourself.

All the love that Jesus Christ can give us. The love he has. And the more hatred someone has, the more love Jesus has for them.

Because, you see, that's the greatest power there is, to change hatred and resentment and bitterness. They don't know how to handle it. It just overwhelms, it destroys Satan.

Love and forgiveness. And so Paul tarried there a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed fence into Syria with them Priscilla and Aquila, having shorn his head in centuria, for he had a vow. Now, remember, this is five years before he's written the great treatise on Galatians and Corinthians about not being bound by the law, particularly Galatians.

People say, well, was Paul under the law? Was Paul free? What did Paul do? Why would he take a vow? Now, there are many, many vows in the Old Testament that a godly man would take. Also, there was the Nazirite vow. There was the vow that someone would take, a Jew would take, if he had a very close call with death, or a terrible illness, or some crisis in their life, and God was very good to them to deliver them, they would make a vow to God in thanks.

And this is how the vow operated. And it could be a Nazirite vow. A Nazirite vow was a man who would say, I'm making a vow, I'm separating myself unto God so totally that you can make it last a week, a month, several months, years, even lifetime.

Remember, Samson's Nazirite vow was to be a lifetime, but he wasn't faithful to it. And when you make the vow, you would come to no alcoholic beverage or any fermented fruit of the vine. You wouldn't even eat raisins, anything that had to do with pleasure or joy, artificially.

All during the vow, they would not touch the fruit of the vine. They would not attend a funeral or expose themselves to death, which is the fruit of sin, the death of mankind, or go near or touch a dead body, all during their vow. They would not cut their hair.

When their time was up, they would shave their heads. And if they were in the land of Palestine, they had to go at a feast day with their shorn hair to the tabernacle or the temple and offer their cut hair, signifying their vow has been broken. They're free now to go back in that normal Jewish life under the Mosaic Law.

And they offer up their hair with three different sacrifices to the priest unto God. And they let their hair grow again. If they were outside of the land and their vow ended, and by chance hadn't gotten into the Holy Land and could not get to the temple in time for the feast, they still could cut their hair, keep the hair until they got to the land of Israel or back to Palestine, and then maintain the feast day, and then break their vow and go to the priest with their hair.

They would save the hair when they're out of the land. God made allowance for it. Now, it could either have been that or it could be this.

Notice what Paul writes. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 9. You see, he knew the freedom in Christ. He knew, the great writer of Colossians knew that he wasn't bound by those holy days.

They were all types and shadows. But notice what he writes in 1 Corinthians 9. Again, he's in the midst and everywhere he went, the first thing he wanted to do was preach the gospel to a Jew and not to offend them because of their belief. I think that was the wisdom and the love, again, because they were apostles and knew their freedom in Christ.

They didn't attack somebody who wasn't free yet. They didn't belittle them. They didn't make it difficult for them.

They were very sensitive to those who still had not been set free in their spirit from certain old traditions from their religion. And so notice what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9. I think it's 1 Corinthians 9. 19, is it verse 19? Notice what Paul tells us. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself slave unto all that I might gain them more.

In other words, I would humble myself in their presence, not to dominate them or manipulate them, but to serve them. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews. I'd submit to the ritual or the custom of their home if I was in their home.

I wouldn't rail on them and try to open their eyes because of my freedom until the Holy Spirit did it, unless they asked me. So unto the Jews I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews. Now remember, this is five years after the account that we're reading now in Acts.

To them that are under the law is under the law. I would keep the Sabbath, Saturday. He always went to the synagogue.

It gave him an opportunity to preach the gospel and show them that the Messiah was Jesus, indeed, in their Jewish scriptures. And I would put myself under the laws, under the law that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without the law is without the law.

I knew I was free. I could eat as a Gentile. I could worship on a Sunday.

I could worship on a Monday. I didn't have to keep the dietary laws or the Sabbath laws or all the washings of the pots and the pans, the kosher laws. And so to them without the law is without the law.

Being not without law to God but under the law to Christ, the law of liberty and love. Do nothing to stumble anybody. Then I might gain them that are without the law.

To the weak became I as weak. If they're vegetarian, I wouldn't harp on them that you can eat meat. I'd eat, I'll eat vegetables with you.

You know, Paul said them that are weak, eat only vegetables. They don't have the faith. Wrote a whole chapter in Romans 14, thinking that by vegetables only they'll become more pure and more spiritual.

But Paul said that's their liberty. Don't with your meat choke them. If they're going to be weak, let them stay weak.

But don't stumble them. So to the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak. I made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.

And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. So it's possible that in his relationships in Corinth where he left after the incident with the Sadducees, he had made a vow with some Jews to try and convert them and win them to Christ. Or he had a personal vow, something between him and God that he was doing, and he wanted to make sure he got to the temple to offer that.

Either way, five years later, he had more light himself, as you see him write in Corinthians and in the book of Galatians. But you notice the sensitivity that they had with others who were still not free yet. I think sometimes we need to be very sensitive to our brothers and sisters that are new converts coming out of maybe a system of works, particularly Roman Catholicism, or maybe some strict, legal, rigid holiness movement where they think that you have to dress a certain way to be received by God.

And if you don't dress a certain way, and you look at them and they're so stiff, they can hardly move, but they sure look nice. That's the only way you can dress in the presence of God. Well, Jesus didn't even dress that way.

Man, he had it down. You know, nothing but a nice, loose robe man in sandals. I can dig it.

Not after November. But you see, God doesn't look at the outward countenance, does he? He looks at the heart. But sometimes I think we've flawed our liberty.

We want people to have our understanding and our level of, you know, freedom right now. And we let an attitude build up inside that doesn't glorify the Lord toward them because they aren't changing as quick as we want them to, or they haven't gotten light or revelation as quick as I did. They must not love the Lord like I do.

What's taking them so long? Be careful. God says in Philippians that he will perform that good work in each individual until the day of Jesus Christ. He doesn't need me or you.

He'll do it. And he may work a little faster with you, a little faster with someone else. He may work slower with me or with you.

Hey, don't let it be an issue. So Paul, whatever that vow was, when he came to Ephesus, he left them there. He's really in a hurry to get back to Jerusalem.

He himself entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. In he goes. I'm sure he could have good entrance if carrying a bag of hair and a bald head.

They say, well, he's still keeping the law. You know, he's got some kind of a vow. He's still one of us.

Then they noticed the response. They desired him to tarry longer with them, but he consented not. Isn't it amazing? That he must have sensed, and of course the Spirit's driving him, he's being led by the Spirit, that they have such an attitude and a desire that God's going to take care of them and he doesn't need me.

It's great to be at a point where you realize that God doesn't need me, that I'm not God's man of the hour. You know, God will always have someone there. If I fail or I have to move on, God's going to have somebody.

And so he didn't stay. They desired him to tarry longer, but he consented not. But bade them farewell saying, I must by all means keep this feast that come within Jerusalem, probably the Passover, but I will return again unto you if God will.

Notice the wisdom there. Boy, we put ourselves under such a burden when we make a vow or promise. That's why the Bible says you're not to make oaths or vows or pledges or promises.

Remember, God's the one who makes promises to us. The Bible says you're not to make promises. Because you see, he knows how weak we are.

We may mean it, but then we fail and then we come under our own self-condemnation for failing, or we come under the condemnation of Satan, then we feel guilty, and then we get all flustered because I promised to be there and I can't. Something's come up and oh, what am I going to do? And then you begin to avoid somebody because you didn't come through, you promised you'd be there, you're afraid they're going to think of you. And so the Bible says, always in it, if God wills.

If the transmission doesn't fall out, if I don't sleep in. God has sovereign ways of saying, you didn't say, if the Lord will. You didn't check with me.

I know you love that person. I know you want to help them move and you want to be there, and you're afraid of what they'll think of you. If you aren't there to help move the furniture, but I may not will let you be there.

Make sure always, you know, James reproved the people by saying, hey, it's not good to say we're going to go here today and buy and sell and tomorrow make gain. Play the stock market, so to speak, and expect to have success. You should say, if the Lord wills, we will do this tomorrow.

Always. Because you don't know what tomorrow will bring. You may want to be there three days from now, but God may not want you there.

And so you don't have to feel guilty. Lord willing, I will be there. And that's what Paul said.

That's maturity and wisdom. And then Satan can't condemn you. We're not showing up.

That's why it says, let your yea be yea and your nay nay. If you don't feel like doing it, say no. And you shouldn't have to feel guilty.

The Spirit of God should stir our hearts and make us willing. Don't allow yourself to be manipulated by somebody. If God isn't telling you to do it, just say no.

If God's telling you to do it, say yes. Lord willing, I'll be there. There's no condemnation.

That's freedom in Christ. Just because a Christian asked you to do something, doesn't mean that Jesus wants you to do it. These were believers responding.

He said, Paul, stay here. Stay here. You're not a local pastor.

You don't have to... He consented not. And he knew that they wanted him, but he had somewhere else to go. He said, I'll be back, Lord willing.

And he sailed from Memphis. And when he had landed at Caesarea and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. Boy, he's really moving around.

It's like he's being driven. Now, this is taking periods of weeks here. It's not just a matter of hours from one verse to the next.

You're talking hundreds and hundreds of miles by ship, and then, you know, caravan from Caesarea up to Jerusalem, whatever feast he was at, and then by caravan back down or into Syria by, you know, caravan, or else going back down to Caesarea, getting on a ship, and then going up to Antioch and going into a port in Syria, entire Sidon. He's covering a lot of time here as he's moving around, and nothing significant that the Holy Spirit's bringing out, not even telling us clearly what the vow was. And Luke chronicling this thing accurately, nothing really specific that needs to be recorded for our edification.

But Luke, as the doctor, as a medical doctor, with his good analytical mind, one who writes down facts, you know, recording this thing. After he had spent some time there, he departed, went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. He's back in Turkey all of a sudden, from Greece back to the Holy Land, Syria, and up into Turkey, traveling all over Turkey, strengthening all the disciples.

Just his whole drive, his whole goal in life was to strengthen, exhort, and encourage the Church. In our Bible class this morning, we were looking at what the Bible says what prophecy truly is, and the true spirit of prophecy. Prophecy is a prophet is someone who comforts, encourages, and builds up.

And that's all Paul wanted to do, to encourage, to build up, to comfort, to encourage you in the Lord, and remind you how good he is, how faithful he is, the power that he has to help you and to come to your aid, the forgiveness he has, the patience, the love, the resources that you never have to worry. If the government fails, God won't fail. He's not bound by the flag or democracy.

He's far superior to it all. And it doesn't matter what culture, what economic system you're living under, no matter whether it's in communism, whether it's in democracy, fascism, South America, Africa, Islam, wherever you're a believer, God's there for you and will take care of you. It doesn't matter what the government's doing or how they're running things or what the laws say, God will take care of his own.

It's not just in America where you have certain laws to give certain types of freedom. God's far above all that. So no matter where you are, you see, and that's what Paul loved to do, is go everywhere in every political system and in every culture, where every religion was, to find true believers and say, God is with you.

God will take care of you. You never have to worry where you live or what government you're under, what laws are formulated, what's happening in your system. God will take care of you.

He's far superior to all the isms of man. He's not bound by the American government or the European government or the New Age or the New World Order. That's what Paul loved to do.

Now, there's a transition from here to Acts 19. As Luke begins to record it, they're beginning to meet believers who need to go deeper in the Spirit and understand the fullness of the Spirit. They've met Jesus, but they haven't experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit or learned about the walk in the Spirit and a deeper life and gone beyond water baptism, conversion, repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ.

And so there's a transition starting here that goes into chapter 19. A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Now, there were at that time, in that day, at least a million Jews in Alexandria, Egypt.

Hellenistic Jews, the word I was looking for earlier. Greek Jews and the Greek culture. The Greek culture ruled the Mediterranean, that area, and reached down into Egypt.

The Ptolemies ruled. The Egyptian Empire and the Greek culture influenced it, yet there were millions of Jews. That's where the Septuagint version of the Old Testament came from.

And so here's a person who realized that Jesus Christ is Messiah, either in Jerusalem at one of the feast days, heard the preaching of John, in some way was converted, was water baptized, repentance, you know, leaving the old religion, but he was limited. Even though he was eloquent and he had all this zeal, he was going around now trying to prove to everybody that the Messiah is Yeshua of Nazareth, mighty in the scriptures. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord.

Some of the older manuscripts, the Syrian manuscripts, the older Jewish manuscripts actually say Jesus here, because it's referring to Jesus, the Lord. He was instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Just repentance, turning from your old life and sins, and submitting to water baptism, crossing over into the new life. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, trying to do what Paul did, what Jesus did on that great day. We're going to learn about that Sunday morning, what Jesus did in Nazareth, why he read from Isaiah 61.

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Now, you look at the first few verses of Hebrews chapter 6, and you see the writer of Hebrews is telling the Jews to go beyond, you know, those initial things of Christ and grow. Remember, Paul had to write to the Corinthian Christians that they were carnal, and yet babes that need to learn to eat meat.

They were still drinking milk, the initial, you know, primary things of Christianity. Repentance, the second coming, water baptism. He said, it's time to grow and get into the deeper things.

Find out about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Don't go around claiming you have it when you really don't. Learn about the gifts of the Spirit and know that they're operating in your life and what gifts you have.

Don't claim to have them and believe in them and know down deep inside you don't. You're missing out in the fullness and the blessings of all the land. Go in and take all of the land, God said, the spiritual land and the riches of the walk in the Spirit.

And Aquila and Priscilla sensed it. And we'll see that Paul sensed it with some believers in the next chapter. And so, notice how, you know, with such wisdom and love, how they said, now, hey, we're going to share some things with you.

You really have a love for God. These are great things. But if you, do you know about this yet? And they knew how to instruct him in a beautiful way.

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, in other words, from Ephesus go across over to Greece, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him, who when he was come helped them much which is believed through grace. In other words, Apollos, there was something he began to apprehend after Aquila and Priscilla ministered and began to see the beauty of the doctrine of grace, the power of it. Remember, it says, by grace you stand.

The beauty of God's love, his tolerance with our mistakes, his love for the sinner, hatred for the sin, his understanding, his long-suffering. And the way he speaks. You remember in Luke chapter 4, one of my favorite passages that had such an effect on my own life.

Now remember, here you have Apollos, this powerful, dynamic believer, but believing and only experiencing John's ministry. Well, what kind of a ministry did John have? You repent, you vipers! Who told you to get baptized and escape the wrath to come? And, you know, call them whitewashed sepulchers and vipers and sons of the serpent. Naming them, you know, and all this stuff.

Well, that's the way John's Here's what, you know, Apollos got saved under that ministry. And it could be, you see, as he's preaching Jesus, that's the way he's doing it. And Priscilla goes, you know, he needs to know grace.

I mean, he's speaking the truth, but he needs to know grace in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He's a little too tough. And now, stop and think of how Jesus affected the synagogue that day.

In Luke chapter 4, a real eye-opener, at least for me. He stands up and reads in the synagogue, reads that certain portion of Isaiah chapter 61 that speak of the Messiah coming to set the captives free, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to preach that gospel, the good tidings to the meek. And then he stops.

He closes the text and says, people were astounded. They were stunned. They were stunned.

Now, remember, the Jews read in cycles through the Bible every year, the Torah. It's designed that they go through the Bible every year, through the seasons and calendar dates, certain portions of Scripture. They heard their rabbi in Nazareth read that text and teach them that year after year after year.

If they grew up in that synagogue, they'd heard it for years, the same text. But when Jesus taught it, they said, we've never heard such gracious things. It's the way he said it.

It's the love, the love he had for the people. And it came through in his teaching. He didn't talk down to them, or at them, or condemn them, or belittle them, or threaten them.

They said, we've never heard such gracious things, such gracious words. He did it the right way. True prophecy.

It edifies, it exhorts, it comforts. Now, Apollos has learned that. He's giving the message in a different way.

And notice, when he was coming, he helped them much which had believed through grace. They're beginning to respond even more. Now, he became so powerful.

People became so influenced. You remember, Paul, when he's writing Corinthians, factions started. Now, Apollos didn't do this.

He had no intention to do this. But remember, they said, we follow Apollos. We're of Apollos.

We're of Peter. We're of Paul. And Paul had to, you know, rebuke them for their childishness.

He said, that's childish. Exalting and following the man that God is using, rather than seeing that he's trying to get you to follow Jesus Christ. And you should be quoting Jesus Christ and making reference to Jesus Christ, not the one he's using, not Apollos.

And cause these factions. And that's where your denominationalism was starting right there. And Paul said, aren't you all babes and carnal? You're like little children in the crib, afraid to climb out and follow Jesus and Jesus only.

And so you've got to keep looking at this man and you're exalting this man. And you say, that's who you're going to follow. And you should be following Jesus.

Who is Paul? He says, I didn't come to baptize. I'm glad I baptized hardly any of you. One plants a seed, another waters, another has the harvest.

We're all nothing compared to Jesus Christ. We're just being used by him. And it's wrong to exalt someone that God is using.

It shows your immaturity, you see, Paul saying to the Corinthians. You're going to quote somebody and testify, try to lead someone to Christ, share Christ. That's someone that God is using.

And so see, Apollos became so powerful. The thing that troubles me, I've been around people and they talk more about Martin Luther or maybe some television evangelist they do about Jesus. They get more excited about the books somebody writes than the Bible.

And when you're around them, that's all they talk about is somebody that's enamored with them that has been used mightily of God. And they make the same mistake as the Corinthians. They put some Apollos on a pedestal.

Now Apollos didn't want it. No true servant should want it and should see it coming and know how to deal with it. Because whether the person climbs up himself or allows people to put him on the pedestal, God can knock you off.

Only exalt Jesus. Never exalt the ass he rides in on. Why did somebody respond? Well, he started to apprehend grace and he mightily convinced the Jews and that publicly by showing by the Scriptures.

He knew the Scriptures. It wasn't his personality or his good looks or his ability to sing or play the guitar. He knew the Scriptures.

He mightily convinced the Jews and that publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. You see, he's someone just like you and I. God says, I can do it with you if you're willing. Shall we stand? Gee, it's only 830.

What are we going to do? Praise the Lord. Father, what a delight to apprehend the message of grace. To know, Lord, that no matter what we may be going through right now, if it's like Sassonese or what Paul experienced, Lord, it's your way to work something wonderful if we'll just rest and trust you and not panic and try to change the situation and run from it.

Lord, you can work salvation out of any seeming failure, an uncontrollable situation. You can enlighten an Apollos if you have an Aquila and a Priscilla to be sensitive to their ignorance and their foolish zeal. And Lord, we thank you that you can use us just as you used Apollos when we learned the Scriptures, how mighty the Scriptures are.

And we thank you, Lord, that our faith can increase by the hearing of the Word. So, Lord, stimulate us by your Spirit. Fascinate us, Lord.

Draw us to even desire to be closer to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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