

Acts 22_pt2

by Bill Gallatin

God's sovereignty and control are demonstrated through His use of Satan's government to protect His own and through the example of Paul's faithfulness to His plan.

Duration: 1:08:18

Scripture: Exodus 22:28, Matthew 6:33, Mark 13:9, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 6:14, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the previous week's events where Paul had caused another riot while preaching. The speaker emphasizes God's sovereignty and control over all things, including Satan's attempts to destroy the church. The sermon highlights the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty and resting in it, regardless of the circumstances. The speaker also emphasizes the significance of having right motives and a heart that seeks the glory of God, even in the midst of trials and failures.

Transcript

Before we start chapter 23, we should... let's back up to, is it last week? No, last week I was in California. The week before last, you remember Paul started another riot. It was his sixth riot from preaching.

And yet God in His providence and in His sovereignty, and we're going to see tremendous picture of God's sovereignty and control of not only the universe, but even how Satan seeks to use the world to destroy the church, how God takes whatever Satan's done and controls it for His own good at all times. The more you study the Scriptures, the more we see the sovereignty of God, the more you just rest and go, Lord, nothing is ever going to happen to me. I don't have to fear.

Until my witness and testimony is finished down here, nothing can harm me or touch me. And Paul is one of the examples of the faithfulness of God for all of us. Now you remember, the Roman centurion or the chief captain of the Roman governor who controlled the troops over the Antonia fortress in Jerusalem to stop any Jewish fervor from building up at their feast days for Rome, he was there when Paul preached and mentioned Gentiles to all the Jews and the riot started.

And so he was afraid of an insurrection, he'd be in trouble with Rome or Caesar, and so Claudius Lysias, that's his name, Claudius Lysias, the chief captain of the Roman soldiers, he came running down because he was terrified, especially when Paul said, Will thou punish a Roman citizen without a trial? And that terrified Claudius Lysias because he knew Roman law. Now one thing about Rome, they had a

tremendous judicial system and they maintained it worldwide for their own citizens. And if you went against Rome, you were a dead person.

And even its own citizens were held liable to maintain Roman law, to keep Roman peace in the earth. But again, by bludgeoning the earth through fear and submission into this peace, you did not break the law. And so what had happened, you remember, Paul was about to be beaten to exact a confession from him, according to Roman law.

They didn't know he was a Roman citizen. He was freeborn, he stated. Now, Cicero, the great Roman statesman and author of that time, wrote that to beat or bind a Roman citizen was a tremendous misdeed, according to Roman law.

It was almost equal to murdering your own father, in Roman law. To bind and beat a Roman citizen before they were even proven guilty or make a mistake about it. So, Claudius Lysias, when he found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, he was terrified.

And so immediately, here he protected Paul. Now again, here the Jews, the very Jewish people, who were to be preparing the world and evangelizing the Gentiles with Rome, they denied their Messiah. They had nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

Instead of being the people who would protect the one who spoke up for the Messiah, they were just the opposite. So God uses Satan's government itself to protect his own. Now, Satan controlled the world through Caesar.

And he would do everything he could to stamp out Christianity. And so here it backfires on the devil again, much like the cross backfired on Satan, which he thought he would destroy the Savior of the world and put an end to Jesus Christ, turned around to be the conquering of death, the resurrection, and the salvation of mankind. The very cross.

Much like Haman, you remember, the Babylonian, who hated Mordecai and had the gallows built 75 feet high in the center of the city to hang Mordecai because he would not bow down to him, this Jew. And after he had built the gallows, you remember, God in his providence turned things around with Esther at the banquet, and Haman was hanged on his own gallows that he prepared to destroy the Jews with. And Satan always does that for his own.

Remember, the Bible says that if you're God's child, you need not have to worry about defending yourself. You don't have to worry about trying to figure out, you know, the powers of darkness, what they're up to, because God says there is no weapon formed against you that can prosper. And every tongue that will rise against you in judgment, you will condemn because you're a child of God.

God's righteousness will protect you, no matter what is happening in your life right now. In the present tense, in the Greek, Paul says in Romans 8.28, God is working, not God works. God is working all things, whether they're positive or negative right now, whether you're encouraged or discouraged, whether you can't figure it out.

You feel that you have failed. You've taken three steps backward. You think, oh, God, are you working in my life? I'm a miserable failure.

God is going to work it to the good for you because you love him, and you're the called according to his purposes, and he's never going to give up on you. And you see, Paul discovered that. He was completely helpless.

The government of Rome, Claudius Lysias, the Jewish people hated him. The church was so weak because it compromised to bring in Jewish proselytes, and instead of making a stand and saying there's no Jew or Gentile anymore, they let that distinction be made and allowed some of the Jewish traditions to creep in just to please the Jewish converts, and it weakened the church. And again, every time we compromise the truth to make friends in Christianity, we forsake the truth, we forsake the power that God wants to give us, and the church was weak in Jerusalem.

The church, instead of protecting Paul, could not do it, and so God uses Rome itself, a Roman soldier. So here we are now in chapter 23, and here's Paul standing before the very men that he grew up with in the Sanhedrin. He's brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council, the Pharisees.

The high priest of Judaism shows up, and here's Paul probably very, very discouraged and wondering, Lord, here I have created nothing but a riot. It seems like I was led by your spirit. I wanted to be obedient to you.

Here's another riot. I've created more trouble. The church is against me, my brethren against me, my family against me, and the very people that I've grown up with hate me.

Some of the very people that he sat in rabbinical school at the feet of Gamaliel with were probably the existing priests and Pharisees at that time, standing there staring at this man. He's wondering, what is going on in my life? Lord, I thought you were going to use me. And have you ever been that way? You just think, Lord, I have done nothing but just mess up.

I've done nothing but just create nothing but trouble. It just seems like I've blown it. And he's standing before all of his judges now.

All these people, he can feel the animosity, the hatred. And he says to them, as he earnestly beholds the council, again, probably some of the very young people, as the young man that he sat and was trained by Gamaliel with, that if he hadn't been converted on the way to Damascus, he'd be in that council with his bigoted religious hatred himself. So he can in some way understand their blindness because they're not born again.

And so he says, men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. I know one thing. My motives have been right.

Things may be messed up and things may be going backwards, but I know one thing. I've had no agenda in my heart other than the glory of God, and my motives have been right. See, I could never say that.

It's something to be able to say that I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. He knew in his heart that he may have messed things up. He probably figured, well, I don't know, things may be going wrong, but I know one thing.

I love the Lord. And I think God's not too concerned about how we fail. He's more concerned about our attitudes.

You know, I'd rather be around people that have the right attitude and fail than people that are dead right or just so right they're nasty. It's tough to be around a nasty Christian that has an attitude. Or you're around somebody and they seem to, you know, Paul writes to the church about serving with eye service.

In other words, they really kick up a dust and put on the servant show when they know they're being watched because they're using their ministry, not out of a pure heart to enjoy it, but as a stepping stone to what they think is greater. And you can sense it sometimes in people, that they have an agenda, that their heart is divided. It's not totally, totally given to what they're doing at that moment, and if God would leave them at that position, they would care less because God's being glorified and they're being fulfilled, and they want to bear fruit for the Lord.

And you know it. You know there's no agenda, no attitude. It's so important.

You see, God's not so concerned that we do everything perfect. And sometimes I think that we get discouraged because we don't see results. And God's not concerned about that.

He says, I just would like you to be a witness. I'll take care of who responds. I'll take care of who gets saved or who gets healed when you pray for them or whatever.

That's not your business. We don't have that power. He said, I'm just asking you to be a witness, to share your faith and to speak for me with the right attitude, to somehow make mention of me to somebody, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

Don't be discouraged. And sometimes I think we put too much upon ourselves, or we get around somebody and they begin to pressure, try to manipulate you to do more, and you almost feel compelled, not because the Holy Spirit is motivating you, but somebody's pressuring you. Don't let that happen because you won't enjoy it.

Jesus said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. If somebody is ministering by your side, or you're ministering to somebody and they're giving you orders or they're telling you that you need to do this and they're God's authority and you have to submit and you have to do this, and you're finding it miserable, you know what? Quit the ministry and move on. We'd rather see you smile.

God would rather see you smile. It's not some big heavy ordeal. And someone who's serving God under some duty and they don't have any joy and they're miserable, it's like they soak their face in a lemon every night before they come to church the next day and they, oh, I'm being faithful to God.

No, you're not. No, you're not. You're not a witness.

That's not a witness. Jesus said, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And Jesus will never design a ministry for somebody where it will be miserable or of a heavy burden of the Lord.

David said, I delight to do thy will, O my God. So if you're in the ministry here at Calvary Chapel and you're not enjoying it, do everybody a favor and quit. Do yourself a favor so you can enjoy your salvation and so everybody can be blessed being around you and you can get rid of the lemon look.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Now, does that mean I don't have trials? Absolutely. That does not mean that I am free from trials.

But some people, you look at their life serving God, they're in a perpetual trial. That's not an easy yoke. You see, that's making Jesus a liar.

Oh, the Lord's laid this heavy thing on me. That's a lie from Satan. And it's a lying pastor or minister or a person in the ministry that would make people under them serve that way.

My yoke is easy and my burden is light. Now, Paul, as he stands before these men, he looks back in his life and he realizes, you know, I may have botched things, I may be in a mess right now and I've really blown it, but I know one thing, Lord, I love you and my motives were right. And that's, again, that's what God's concerned about, the attitude.

He'll take care of success and failure. My pastor told me, do your best and commit the rest. And he'll do the rest.

He does it all. You remember back in Philippians later on, some four years later, when Paul is describing that he was a Pharisee at one time. And he said, I think it's in Philippians 3, verse 6, he said, concerning zeal, I persecuted the church.

Persecuted. But when it came to the law, I was blameless. So here was a man who was so dedicated to the glory of God, so dedicated in his zeal for God, that he could say something like that.

I could not say that. Because as I look back on my life, so many of the things I did were for own personal glory. Now, other people may not have known it, but I wanted to hear my name mentioned.

Or have people think that, oh, you're spiritual, you're something. And those things are in that heart. That heart, that little thing that pumps so many gallons a day in the human body, really is bigger than the whole universe.

The things are going to be hidden in there. The evil, the self, the pride, the boasting, the desire for glory, until God can expose it to us and work, and then to the point where you go, Lord, please get this out of me. I don't want this anymore.

I want to truly glorify you. I want my attitudes to be right, Lord, for your glory and your glory only. Like Paul said later on, God forbid that he glory in anything but the cross.

And if he'd glory, he'd glory only in his weaknesses, that the strength of Christ would be made perfect, that God would be glorified by saying, you know, I couldn't make it without the Lord. I'm free from the pride now to say, you know, I don't have to be proudful and put some kind of show on that I've got some kind of faith when I don't. I can't make it without the Lord, and I know it.

I know it. Now notice when he said that, it offended Ananias, the high priest. Now, more than likely, Paul knew the men.

They knew each other personally years previous. Now, this is some 30 years, maybe 27, 30 years after Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and Paul shortly thereafter had his conversion as a zealous Pharisee. And again, if Paul hadn't been converted, he'd have been a member of that council if he'd have been alive, if he hadn't had some death or tried to.

Now, he was only in his 50s, so he was a very healthy man. When you look at the things he experienced, being beaten and tortured, fighting wild beasts in the Colosseum as a Christian, so you know he was a

healthy man. But then as he looked at his peers, people that he had known and ministered with in the old religion, and that's all it was, you see, an old religion now, the Jews' religion.

He makes reference to that in the book of Galatians, you remember, the Jews' religion. The high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth. Man, that quick, the high priest, just because Paul spoke and claimed that he was innocent of any guile or attitude in his motives, and he just hit him, smote him right in the face.

Now, you've got to know the background of Ananias. First of all, he was a very evil, corrupt priest. He was nothing but a Roman quisling.

He cared less for the glory of God. He did everything the Roman government wanted, and it was all just a position to keep money in favor from Rome. He was a glutton, a wealthy, gluttonous, evil man that was nowhere near godlike in the qualifications of the Levitical law to be a high priest or even a member of the Sanhedrin.

But he was nothing but a Roman government puppet, a chaplain for Satan's government with a religious job, pushed in the front of politics, and he could care less about the glory of God. And notice how quickly Paul responded. I like that about Paul.

Now, you say, well, that isn't right. I mean, Paul was wrong in saying that. I'm not too sure.

Then said Paul to him, Paul knew the law and knew that he had done nothing to break Jewish law, and he was being smitten contrary to the law. He was being judged contrary to the law. He was, according to the fulfillment of the law, sharing the very Messiah that the law said would come, that Ananias should have been doing.

You remember in John 18, 23, when they smote Jesus Christ, he said, Jesus challenged them and said, And so Paul here is entering into the fellowship of suffering and identifying with Jesus himself. Now, many, many commentators have different viewpoints on what Paul did here. First of all, he said, well, he's not respecting the priest.

He's not a good witness here. He should have turned the other cheek. And then others say, if you read their commentary, some of them say, well, because of Paul's eyesight.

Now, we do know that when Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, he said, You see how large a letter I have written with my hand. It's possible he had ophthalmia, which was a very common disease of the Mideast in those days, and the Arabs have it to this day. You see many, many Arabs in the old city of Jerusalem with that same disease, practically blind, usually blind in one eye, a disease because of the way they live, the Bedouins, and in their tents.

And they refuse Israel's hospital help just out of pride, and the health benefits because of their hatred for the Jews. And many of them suffer needlessly, and that's one of the diseases. It's very possible that some think that Paul, and I believe that Paul did have eye damage because of the blinding that damaged his eyes on the way to Damascus when the Lord of Glory revealed Himself to him suddenly and damaged the retinas in some way, and maybe he had dry eye, and it continually ran in some way where there were continual fluids because of the dusty area.

They didn't have Visine in those days. It's very possible because when he went, you remember, to Ananias, the brother in Damascus, Ananias prayed for him. He got baptized in the Holy Spirit, and it said there like scales fell from his eyes, and he could see again.

He was totally blind, and was led by his hand all the way to Damascus after that experience. It could be that Paul's eyes never did heal completely, and he had them damaged. And he didn't recognize Ananias as the high priest.

Maybe he was looking to someone he knew in the crowd, and the high priest had him smacked in the face, and out of his peripheral vision, he didn't know who hit him. But he knew whoever did it. He said, you're a white-walled sepulcher.

They say that he didn't recognize him as a high priest because he'd maybe traveled so long out of Jerusalem and been out of touch and out of the loop of the Sanhedrin and known who the different high priests were as they rotated and took office all the years of Paul's wandering, preaching the gospel. He just got out of the loop and didn't know who the local high priest was at that time. But you see, that would be wrong because Paul would identify the high priest robes because he was a Pharisee of the Pharisee.

He would have recognized the difference because they really had a lot of pomp. They didn't dress like Jesus Christ like you and I every day. They had to have special robes to show that they were superior, the high priests.

And so Paul would have recognized it. The interesting thing is, Paul said, God shall smite thee thou white wall. Just a few years later, Ananias was assassinated and killed.

I believe they're all possible, but I believe they're all wrong. I don't believe Paul was an error at all, especially if Jesus could question. You see, he was silent before his accusers until they broke God's law.

And Jesus spoke out when he was smitten unjustly. I personally believe that Paul was under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And this is why I believe it.

Now, even though Exodus 22-28 says, Thou shalt not curse the high priest. And Paul was aware of that. I believe something else here took place.

Turn to Mark chapter 13. Now remember, Jesus taught this before Paul was even saved. And practically every apostle experienced this.

In verse 9 of Mark chapter 13, Jesus said, But take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten. And you shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake for a testimony against them. And the gospel, or the good news concerning me.

What is the gospel? That God wants to forgive you because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross on Galilee. It doesn't matter what your sin is. God is willing to forgive you.

God loves you. And His love is greater than your sin. If you'll just put your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ, God will forgive you.

That's the good news. That there's no sin that could be so evil that God could say, I can't forgive you. It doesn't matter how many years someone has committed the sin.

God will forgive you. God loves you. That's the gospel, the good news, the good evangel.

And so that's what Paul was doing. That's true Christianity. And it must be published among all nations.

But then notice what Jesus said, But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what you shall speak, neither do you premeditate, but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. It came out so quick. Paul didn't have time to premeditate that.

Paul didn't even concede that this riot was going to take place and that Claudius Lysias was going to have him before the council. Everything was going just the opposite of what Paul hoped for. He hoped that he'd be received by the church.

He hoped that he'd be received by his Jewish brethren. He hoped that the door would open. He'd be able to preach the gospel with all these things.

This wasn't premeditated. It just came out so quickly because it was given of the Holy Ghost. Now, was Paul speaking correctly? I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest.

For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. Paul quoted Exodus 22-28 immediately. He said, I know the Scripture.

So what was happening here? What was the Holy Ghost showing and speaking through Paul? I personally believe that all the commentators, they mean well, but I think they all missed it. Because, remember, this is, again, 30 years after Christ's burial and resurrection. There's only one high priest now.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 4. And I don't believe that Paul spoke with an attitude or resentment or screamed in rage. He just spoke the truth. God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.

Now, remember, he referred to him as a whited wall. What were the whited walls? They were the whited sepulchers around Israel that when, you see, you are not allowed, according to Jewish law, to touch the bones of a dead body. And so to protect anyone coming near a grave, they would paint the outside of the tomb white, and they'd put the dead carcasses inside the tombs, and the rotting flesh and the carcasses would be on the inside, but the outside would be covered with flowers and painted all white.

Inside it was filthy, smelly, a stench, and death. And what Paul's saying, you are standing there representing God, but you're nothing but a filthy stench on the inside. You're a whited wall.

And Jesus used the same term, referred to the Pharisees, you remember, as whitewashed sepulchers. You wear your robes and you appear righteous on the outside, but inside you're filthy. You remember, God showed Ezekiel what was in the minds of the priests when he had Ezekiel in vision bore through into the holiest of holies, and he saw the graffiti and the pornography on the walls of the chambers of the temple from the high priests.

They were doing secretly their deeds. They were perverted and filthy. But outwardly they'd parade around in their robes, acting like they're so holy.

But they were whitewashed sepulchers. And this is what Ananias clearly was. But now notice Hebrews 4, look at verse 14.

What does the Spirit of God tell us? Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities or our weaknesses, our temptations. But was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.

Jesus knows what it's like to be tempted because he was tempted in every way. Every aspect of life, Jesus was tempted as a human being to lash out in anger, to seek revenge, to be hostile, to lust, to lie, to protect himself, to be envious, envious of the easy life, question why God is allowing this. Every aspect of life, the Bible tells us clearly, Jesus was tempted in all points.

But the thing, see, but he was without sin. You and I give in. There are areas where we just give in.

But see, he was victorious in every area. You remember in John he said, the prince of this world comes, Satan's coming, and he'll find nothing in me. There's nothing in my heart where he's going to get me with a temptation.

He'll find nothing in me. When he flashes a thought on me, I'll identify it quickly and I won't give in to it. I won't sit down and begin to mull it over in my mind.

Is this the Lord or is this not the Lord? Should I or shouldn't I? He'll find nothing in me and nothing will work. You see, there's the victory through Jesus. And the more we yield to him and the more we allow him to take over completely, you see, the more we become like him and less the temptation gets us.

He does it all. And the wonderful thing is, even though we do sin, we fail, he is so quick to forgive us when we ask him. So Paul says, our great high priest is in heaven.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace. Notice it's a throne of grace, not retribution, not a throne of ridicule, not a throne of, why did you do it? I want an explanation before I forgive you. No, grace doesn't do that.

Grace says, you've come to me, it's over. You've asked for forgiveness, it's forgotten. You've suffered enough in your conscience for what you did.

I'm not going to torment you by having you go over it all over again. I knew what you did and I died for you. I shed my blood for you.

It's forgotten. You're forgiven. Let's go on.

That's grace. Beautiful forgiveness. And that's it.

Let's go on. I forgive you. So let us come boldly or without fear to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Not a lecture, not threats, not penance. You have to do so many of these and so many of these and so much of this. No, grace.

You're forgiven. You're cleansed. Forgetting those things which are behind now, Paul says, I press toward the Lord.

Let's go forward. It's a new day. You're forgiven.

Cleansed. Quit whipping yourself and acting like a pagan and doing penance. I'm so sorry.

I'm so sorry. The Lord says, I forgive you. You're cleansed.

Let's go on. I want to renew your spirit. Don't act like a pagan.

You're forgiven. So Paul, you see, is telling the truth here. I didn't know you were the high priest.

You know why? Because God says there's only one priest now. There is no priesthood anymore. It's been disannulled for over 30 years.

And if the Holy Ghost will give you that very hour, what you need to say before the council, and it came out so quickly, it was coming right from the throne. You're not the high priest, Ananias. My son, Jesus Christ, is the fulfillment of Melchizedek.

He's the high priest, and he's the only priest that a human being needs. He died once and for all, and there's no other mediator anymore. No priesthood on earth that anybody needs for the forgiveness of sin or to show that reverence for.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 7, and I believe the Scripture can prove it, what Paul was saying. He was absolutely right. I knew not that you were the high priest.

Why? Who was the high priest when Paul was standing there? Look at verse 11 of Hebrews 7. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek and not be called after the order of Aaron? Now, what was so unique about Melchizedek? It says he was without mother or father, without genealogy. He just appeared suddenly to Abraham, out of nowhere, with bread and wine. It said he was the king of Jerusalem, the king of peace.

Just appeared suddenly, no genealogy, not knowing who mother or father was, and he blessed Abraham, the father of us all. And the Scripture says the blessed, or actually the less is always blessed of the greater. So whoever this Melchizedek was, he was far greater than the Aaronic priesthood, and even greater than Abraham, the father of us all.

And it's interesting, he disappeared just like he appeared. All of a sudden he's gone, after he blesses Abraham and brings bread and wine for fellowship. The same implements that we use in communion with our high priest, as we remember his death till he come.

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

See, the priesthood according to the law came through the line of Aaron. So Ananias would have come through the line of Aaron. But the high priesthood disannulled the earthly priesthood that was temporary until the great high priest Jesus himself came.

That's all been done away with. It's been changed. And no one knew it better than Paul, who got the greatest revelation of the church by spending three years with Jesus himself in the Arabian desert.

And it is yet far more evident for that after the similitude of Melchizedek, there ariseth another priest, who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. See, the human priesthood would come, live, die, live, die, live, die. But the eternal priest, the one priest who replaces it all, Jesus Christ, is the everlasting Son, who is God, who never dies, after the order of Melchizedek.

He has a perpetual priesthood. He appears suddenly, and then he disappears. For he testifieth, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus has a different priesthood. Now listen, pay attention to this, please. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

See, God doesn't even recognize the priesthood of Ananias. Since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the priesthood and the Mosaic law, it's all been disannulled. And the Holy Spirit reveals it and writes it right in Hebrews.

And Paul knew this. It had been in effect for almost 30 years. And so when he was smitten, he turned and said, I did not know you were the high priest, because he knew who the high priest was, his precious Jesus at the right hand of the Father.

The Holy Ghost gave him that very moment what to speak. And it's interesting, God shall smite thee, thou white wall, and surely thereafter Ananias was assassinated. Why is there a disannulling of the priesthood in the Mosaic law? For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God.

And inasmuch as not without an oath, he was made priest. For those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath, by him that saith unto him, The Lord swear and will not repent, thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. An endless priesthood.

David prophesied of the very one who would come out of his own lines would be the priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus Christ himself. Now look at verse 22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this man, because he continueth forever, has an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and Ananias wasn't that.

Separate from sinners. I remember one of the denominations. I was in several denominations.

But I'll never forget some of the get-togethers this denomination had. And they'd have to earn money. They'd gamble on the church grounds and have special carnival days.

And then they'd have the drinking bouts. And my gosh, you'd get down there and you'd see the guy who's supposed to represent Christ. You know, I'd say, that's my kind of guy.

He relates to the people down there, smoking and drinking with everybody else. He wasn't separate, holy, and undefiled. But Jesus, you see, is so different.

Paul knew that. He was looking at a man, a human priest, that he knew was filthy. And he knew that that priesthood was disannulled for over 30 years because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And he knew who his high priest was. And there's only one. And there's only one mediator between man and God.

And that's the man, Christ Jesus. The priest after the order of Melchizedek. An everlasting priest who ever liveth to make intercession for you and I. See, a human priest can't take away our sin.

A human priest is a sinner, just like Ananias. But, you see, our great high priest died for our sins. He was sinless.

He who knew no sin became sin that we might be made the righteousness that's in him. He imparted his righteousness to our faithful high priest. And he shed his blood to cover my sin.

And he'll forgive. And so I can go to the high priest at any time because I'll receive grace. He will not give me a lecture.

Because any sin I've ever committed, he will say, Oh, I didn't know you'd do that. Why, you surprise me, Bill. Bill never surprises the high priest.

He knows me so well. You see, he's already taken care of all of our sin on Calvary. It's a past tense, you see.

The wonderful thing is, you see, I know I can go to him. And, Lord, I've sinned. And he forgets.

Oh, what a high priest. Paul knew that high priest. And he knew that a high priest wouldn't smack him in the face, even if he did speak out of line like that.

It says, This high priest who is separate from sinners is made higher than the heavens, who needeth not daily as those high priests, Ananias, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's. For this he did once when he offered up himself. Only once.

Once and for all. For the law maketh men high priests, which have weaknesses. But the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the son who is concentrated forevermore.

So, you see, Paul knew who the high priest was. Paul knew that God didn't even recognize the Jewish priesthood anymore. It was disannulled.

And it had been disannulled for 30 years. The only high priest that God recognized was his glorified son sitting in his right hand, making intercession for Paul at that moment, and the whole church as he's done through the ages, as he's doing for you right now. Knowing what's going to take place when you leave this building tonight.

Tomorrow, he's interceding on your behalf because he loves you. And you always have opportunity when you're his child that no matter what happens, you can go to him and he will receive you in grace. So, Paul was making a correct statement.

You know, you've got all this pomp and this religious hypocrisy, and you're standing here in judgment on me because I share the truth concerning Jesus Christ, who you don't know and you profess to know, and you haven't been faithful to your calling to your people. He says, I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest. Kind of a, you know, sarcastic remark.

Sarcasm. They should have known. The tragedy is, you see, none of the men who'd been to rabbinical school or trained for the priesthood knew him either.

And that's the tragedy of the church today. There are so many men that say they represent Jesus Christ, or they wear robes or a tie. No matter what their background, they really don't know him.

And so to try and lead the sheep or lead them into the truth, it's almost like they're smiting them every Sunday. Or if you make a mistake, they smite you. And they haven't the slightest idea what grace and forgiveness and what the real high priest is like, how patient and gentle and long-suffering and loving and forgiving that he is, and how powerful his blood is, the actual act, what it meant to God, what it did to destroy sin and the power of it in God's eyes and release God to always forgive without any kind of lecture or demeaning or penance.

He just forgives. And then he says, I forget. So you forget.

Let's go on to something new and wonderful in our relationship. I have blessings for you. I have a wonderful plan for your life.

So Paul knew the Scriptures, and he'd never speak against the high priest Jesus Christ. He says, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. Their problem was they didn't know who their ruler was.

They had made Caesar, Satan's ruler on this earth, who claimed to be God in human flesh, the August one, Augustus Caesar. You see, that's who the Jews made their ruler. They said, Away with this man.

Thirty years earlier, the very priests that were standing there judging, Paul said, Away with this man. We will not have him to rule over us. We want Satan's ruler on the earth.

We want the Antichrist, Caesar. And the world is right now ready to do it again. The United States in the last election said, Away with Jesus Christ.

Away with morality in the United States. We want the ruler that's going to rule the world and make the economy strong. We don't need morality.

We don't want morality. We don't want biblical principles. We want sodomy.

We want abortion. We want pornography. We want drugs legalized.

We don't care who rules over us, but we're away with this man, Jesus. And the United States has made its statement in the last election. And the United States is going to reap the whirlwind quickly from this day forward.

Mark my words. That's exactly what the Jews did of old. We will not have this man to rule over us.

What they want is the coming Antichrist, and he's alive today, and he's right around the corner. And he's got the whole world in the palm of his hand, ready to receive the mark of the beast in an instant because it will open the door for Kauffmans, for Wegmans, for the emergency room in the hospital, for telecommunications, for travel, for health care, one number. And he's going to have the whole world wrapped up, just as the Bible said, under one economic, political, military, religious system, the great whore.

And the world is ready because they've said, away with this man, away with this Jesus. They've got some generic Christianity that everybody can call themselves a Christian because they wear some trinket around their neck and do whatever they want to do because some phony televangelist will tell them they're still saved, or some wolf in a pulpit in sheep's clothing. It's a tragedy when a country says, away with this man.

The Jews said, away with Jesus. But Paul would never say it. Even when his life was threatened and he was before his friends, the people he grew up with, when his own religious friends turned against him, his own family, he did not say, away with this man.

He said, my high priest is in heaven, not some man on this earth. And I'll never deny him to get, you know, your approval, Ananias. Some half-baked religious phony on this earth because he wears robes.

My high priest is in heaven. His name is Jesus. And I'll never deny him to survive.

And that's Paul, you see. And now it's interesting. He's going to start another riot.

It's not that he does it intentionally. It's just that he doesn't cut any slack. He loves Jesus, and he will not.

He doesn't fear man. So Paul is never going to be politically correct to survive. I think it's the most disgusting, wimpy thing I ever saw, when a Christian gets politically correct on television because he's afraid of what his peers might think in Washington or even in a group of people.

I can't stand it. I don't see how anybody can love Jesus and become a chameleon to survive in a certain situation. Deny Christ for friendship with a human being.

And see, Paul loved Jesus too much to be politically correct. And Paul wasn't, you know, spewing out vindictives and, you know, infectives and hatred. He was just speaking the truth in love.

Don't compromise. That's not right to be nasty, but don't compromise. So Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees.

He cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee of the hope and resurrection of the dead. I am called in question. The very thing that you Pharisees are claiming to believe in.

And you deny the Holy One, the just one, the Son of God who conquered death. You say away with Him, you want someone else. But I believe in the same.

He's the one. And you're calling me into question because I'm claiming that Jesus is the Messiah, that He's the one that brought the resurrection. He's the hope of the dead.

Now, this automatically created division because this is what happened to the Jewish religion in Paul's day. You had the conservative side and the liberal side. The Pharisees, they believed in the resurrection.

They were the fundamentalists of the day, the conservatives of the religious people of the day. They believed in the resurrection. They believed in spirits, believed in angels, and they believed in the minutest detail, not only of the written word, but also all tradition.

They would strain it in that, that they deified their traditions. And so, if you didn't keep their traditions, you couldn't be saved. They were so legalistic in their conservatism.

But they claimed to believe in those things, the coming Messiah, the resurrection, angels, spirit world. Now, the Sadducees were the liberals of the day. They were the humanists.

They got involved into the religion that didn't believe in the totalitary of the word of God. They spiritualized the word of God and didn't believe the literal interpretation of the word of God. They did not believe in the resurrection.

They did not believe in spirits or angels or the supernatural. They were just religious humanists, the Sadducees. That was the other camp of what happened, how Judaism with the Bible got so degraded at the time Jesus came.

Now, the humanists and the liberals believed in free will. The Pharisees believed in predestination. And so, they were at opposite viewpoints spiritually, but they all worked together to get rid of Jesus.

And now they were working together in unison to get rid of Paul, and they would agree with each other in a way to keep Rome from taking their freedom from them. They could care less about the Messiah in reality. They just wanted to please Rome.

They were more concerned about God's, not God's son, but Caesar. Maintaining status quo with Caesar. And so, when Paul said, I am a Pharisee, and I believe the way the Pharisees believed, when he had so said, there arose a dissension.

And this is a fact. You can expect this. I don't want to alarm you.

And I think it's wrong for a Christian to go out and try and stir up trouble, to look for an opportunity to stir up trouble, and then walk away under the self-deception that they're suffering persecution for righteousness' sake. No, you're suffering persecution for foolishness' sake. When you have an attitude, and you like to get into arguments.

But if you really love Jesus Christ, and you're not ashamed of Jesus Christ, you can be sure you're going to be in a situation where there's a lot of people that are going to always be politically correct, and then when you get in their midst, there can be a dissension. Don't be ashamed. Don't be discouraged.

And you may be the only one. But they're politically correct, and they want to say all the right things in front of the right people, even to the point where they'll change colors with anybody to survive. You can't do that if you love Jesus Christ.

And it can create dissension. And I challenge everybody here, in this church, you're about three weeks away from getting together, one of the traditions, and it's my favorite time of the year. It's my favorite holiday is Thanksgiving.

There's so much to be thankful for. I am so thankful I'm an American. So thankful that God brought me into being as an American citizen.

As bad as things are, I can't think of another place I'd rather live under any kind of a system, no matter how weak they are, that God allowed me to come into being under the American system, and to save my soul, and give me the freedom to openly express Him, and worship Him, and love Him. And I have so that

God has been so good to Rosemary and I, so good to my boys. He's blessed my life, blessed my family, blessed me with love.

A wonderful wife. Two wonderful sons. I mean, a fantastic daughter-in-law.

Grandsons. I mean, I couldn't ask for more. That love Jesus Christ, that are not ashamed of Jesus Christ.

A family that worships God together. So our Thanksgiving is glorious. But some of you are going to be in a Thanksgiving, and there may be dissension.

Because you're going to be with people that claim to believe in Jesus, and you know they're Samaritans, they're idolatrous. You can tell by the way the afternoon, how it progresses after the dinner, how much they love Jesus. What comes out of the cooler or the refrigerator later in the day.

You can see what it progresses. It either climbs upward in the glory of God, or as the day goes on, it just goes down. And you might be in the midst of people like that, who all claim to be Christian.

And if you are faithful to Jesus Christ, there just could be some dissension before the day is over. If you're not going to be a chameleon. See, Paul wasn't.

He didn't take pleasure, he didn't look forward to things like that. But he loved Jesus. What amazes me is that when people like this get together every year, they say they love their families, they love their relatives, but they don't love them enough to tell the truth.

So they don't care if they go to hell, just so they can have a good time that day and don't have any stress. But that may be the only day where you can really show real Christianity, because the rest of the year you never have the reason to get together unless it's a wedding or a funeral. And I'm amazed when people say, well, I love my parents too much to create an argument at Thanksgiving or Christmas.

So I'm going to let them be damned. I don't want them to hear the truth. I don't want to challenge them or plant a seed and stir something up.

So I just love my mom and dad. I love grandpa and grandma. I love uncle so-and-so.

And they're going to be there, and man, they're going to walk in with a quart of whiskey, and we want to have a nice Thanksgiving. I know he'll be blotto by 3 o'clock in the afternoon, but I don't want to offend him. And I know the kids are going to be exposed to residual smoke, and that's just as bad as if you smoked yourself, but I don't want to give even a hint that there could be deliverance and that you could have a wonderful life without having to do those things, that Jesus Christ can make you so high that you don't have to resort to those things to feel good.

So when Paul said, hey, I believe in the resurrection, and I'm being called into question for that because I believe in the resurrection exactly the way you profess to believe. But notice, you can always hit the professor's button. Notice, there was a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the multitude was divided.

Jesus said, I come to bring division. Remember, Jesus said when he was teaching, I did not come to bring peace, I came to bring a sword to a house, to divide a mother against her daughter-in-law, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a husband against a wife, parents against their children, children against the parents. I come not to bring peace, but I come to bring a sword and create division.

Any man that loves his mother, his father, his wife, husband, children more than me cannot be my disciple, and yea, even their own life. So we've got about three weeks to get ready to love Jesus and say, I'm not going to be a chameleon this year. I'm going to be faithful to my Lord, my High Priest, and I'm going to speak the truth in love.

I'm not going to go in with guns blazing, ready to get them and cut their ears off like the Apostle Peter. I'm just going to openly love Jesus Christ. I'm not going to play some spiritual prude and get self-righteous, but I'm just going to love Jesus.

And I want, Lord, You to work in my heart that Your light will shine and reflect that they may see Your glory. In fact, you can pray yourself up and get so bound up and wrapped up in Jesus Christ. Remember, you see light, you don't hear it.

But you can live in such a way that they can't escape it. The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees confessed both. And there arose a great cry.

Things are stirring up, getting noisier. The scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man, because he was agreeing with them. They began to agree with them.

But if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him unto the castle. Now, here, if Satan had his way, he would have been pulled apart.

But here God is saying, Na, na, na, na, Satan, I'm going to use your government to protect my servant. Here's the sovereignty of God. Now, you see, the church should have protected Paul.

His Jewish friends should have stood by his side. Satan had them in his hip pocket. The church wasn't strong enough for the witness.

The Jews had forsaken their Messiah. So Satan says, I got them. He says, Now I'm going to kill this apostle.

I'm going to kill this apostle of grace. They're going to pull him apart now. And I rule the world through Caesar.

It's my government. It's the new world order that controls the whole world. Rome, my Caesar.

I rule Jerusalem. I'll just use their laws to kill this apostle. What's God do? He touches Claudius Lysias.

And what's he do? He says, Protect him. The very government of Satan protects God's servant. You see, he works all things to the good.

There's nothing Satan can do to harm you. God controls everything. And if he wants to use the devil's government, he'll use it.

Next week, we find out even more. It's more amazing how God works sovereignly in the apostle Paul's life. And it's so encouraging to know.

Wow, that means I do not have to fear. All I have to do is just share my faith and trust God. And he'll take care of everything.

Nothing to fear. God's got it all under control. Shall we stand? I hope I didn't destroy your Thanksgiving.

It's funny. There's some members of the family that I haven't seen in over 30 years. They just never invited me back.

But I have wonderful friends in the body of Christ, the real family. It's amazing, isn't it? When you're in the body of Christ, it's like you really find that there's a closeness, there's a beauty and a brotherhood and a sisterhood that's even closer than a natural family you came out of because of the Holy Spirit. It's amazing.

Wonderful. Father, we thank you that you are overriding with your presence and your providence and sovereignty all the events of man. And Lord, as the scripture says, the wrath of man will praise you.

Lord, the devil is nothing but a pawn in your hands when it comes to your church. You've promised, Lord, that the gates of hell will not prevail against your church. None of the members of the church.

Lord, we are so safe in Jesus Christ. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And we thank you, Lord, as we'll learn next week, how you cheer us up, how you remind us that you're not discouraged when we get discouraged.

Even the great Apostle Paul had his moments of doubt and discouragement, and you were there instantly to encourage him, to strengthen him in your love. And so, Lord, we pray that you might do that tonight. Whoever there may be tonight feels that they've blown it or they just haven't been what you expect, Lord, you're not surprised.

You're not finished with anyone this evening. You're just beginning to work. You're going to complete that work and continue to work by your grace and every heart that's been yielded to you.

So remind us, Lord, continually how much you love us, that we might return it to you by our trust, our faith, and our love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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