

(Through the Bible) Acts 12-13

by Chuck Smith

God's sovereignty and purpose are evident in the lives of Peter and James, as demonstrated by Peter's miraculous deliverance and James' martyrdom.

Duration: 1:17:45

Scripture: Exodus 12:40-41, Joshua 14:1-2, Acts 13:26-44, Romans 10:9, Galatians 3:3

Topics: "Divine Intervention", "Gods Protection"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the miraculous escape of Peter from prison. Peter was imprisoned by Herod during the Passover period and was heavily guarded by soldiers. However, an angel appeared to Peter, causing his chains to fall off and instructing him to gird himself up. Peter followed the angel's instructions and was able to escape from the prison undetected. He then went to the house of James, who became a prominent leader in the early church. This story highlights the power of God to deliver and protect His people, even in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances.

Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to Acts chapter 12. Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. There are just a lot of Herods in the Bible and it is a little difficult to keep them all straight.

In fact, I don't expect you to keep them all straight. This particular Herod was Herod Agrippa the first. He was the grandson of Herod the great who was the Herod at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Herod the great had 10 wives. One of his wives Miriam had a son Aristobulus that was murdered by Herod the great as was Miriam. He felt that they were conspiring against him and so he murdered them both.

There was a saying during the time of Herod the great that it was safer to be his pig than his son and he actually murdered several of his sons. Aristobulus was one of them but before Aristobulus was murdered he had this son Herod Agrippa. Herod Agrippa the first, the son of Miriam who was a descendant of the Maccabeans.

She was a direct descendant of the Maccabeans which made her a Jewess but she was married to Herod the great and so Herod Agrippa the first was sort of half Jewish in a sense. He was very interested in the Jewish customs and daily offered a sacrifice according to the Jewish law. He kept the Jewish customs.

He spent some 30 years of his early life in Rome but then came back and loved living in Jerusalem and was seeking to curry the favor of the Jews living as the Jews lived and he was highly respected by the Jews. And so this Herod Agrippa the first, the grandson of Herod the great, began to persecute the church just to curry favor with the Jews. His son Herod Agrippa the second was the one that Paul faced in Caesarea as Paul was actually being interrogated by him in order that they might develop charges against him when he was sent to Nero for he had appealed to Caesar when he realized that he was getting the royal runaround by Festus, a political pawn, and he appealed to Caesar.

Festus did not have any charges to send with Paul and so he asked Herod Agrippa the second, the son of this Herod Agrippa the first, to hear Paul's case in order that they might develop charges against him to send to Nero when he was sent there. So about this time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church and he killed James, the brother of John, with a sword. James and John were called by Jesus the sons of thunder.

They requested one day that they be granted to sit one at the right hand and the other at the left hand of Jesus when he was in his kingdom. And Jesus said, are you able to be baptized with the baptism whereof I will be baptized? And they said, yes, Lord, we are able. Jesus was talking about his death and Jesus said, you shall indeed be baptized with the baptism wherein I was baptized.

But to grant to you to sit on my right hand and left hand is something that isn't really in my jurisdiction that's given to the father. So James is now following his Lord in martyrdom, the brother of John. And when Herod Agrippa saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

And then were the days of unleavened bread on the 14th of Nisan. They began the feast of the unleavened bread. And so it was during this feast of the Passover that Peter was arrested.

Now, according to their law, during the time of the feast of the Passover, they could not have any trials. And so he determined to bring him forth at the end of the feast of the Passover. You say, well, Jesus was tried during the feast of the Passover.

Correct. Good students. But it was a thoroughly illegal trial.

There were several illegal aspects of the trial of Jesus Christ. But he was intending to bring him forth for judgment and of course, for execution at the end of the Passover period. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, delivered him into four quaternions of soldiers to keep him, not a quaternion, was actually four soldiers.

As a rule, a prisoner was chained his right hand to the left hand of the guard. And in Peter's case, because they wanted to keep him sure, he was chained on both sides to guards. And then there were two guards who would stand watch at the door.

And four quaternions would mean that there were four groups of four soldiers. They served in three hour shifts around the clock in guarding the prisoners. So there were 16 soldiers altogether watching Peter in three hour shifts at all times, chained to two of them while two were watching the door.

And they intended after and it says Easter there, that's a King James translation. They did not know anything about Easter in the early church. The word in the Greek is Passover after this time of the unleavened bread.

But because Easter takes place during Passover season, because Jesus was crucified at the time of the Passover, he also rose again three days later. And so the Jewish Passover usually coincides closely with our Easter season. And because this was translated by the King James translators in 1600.

And by this time, this pagan celebration of Ashtar had invaded the church and was changed slightly to Easter instead of Ashtar. King James translators just translated this word Easter because it does signify that same time of the year. Intending after Easter or really after Passover to bring him forth to the people.

Peter, therefore, was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing of the church and to God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains and the keepers were before the door who kept the prison.

And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him and a light shined in the prison and he smote Peter on the side and he raised him up saying, rise up quickly and his chains fell off of his hands. And the angel said unto him, gird yourself, bind on your saddles. And so he did.

Gird yourself, that is, tie your skirt on up. When they would gird themselves, and the purpose of it is they wore these long robe kind of things. Well, it's hard to run in a robe.

I've never really tried it, but I can imagine that it would be difficult to run in a robe. And so they would gird themselves up. That is, they would take the sash and they would pull the robe up to the knees and then they would tie the sash so that the robe would then be short and they could run faster.

And he said, gird yourself up. Always when you get ready to run, get ready to fight or get ready to work, you would gird yourself up or get ready to serve. It was a action that you would take in order that you might have greater freedom of movement.

Gird yourself up, tie in your sandals. And so he did. And he said unto him, put your garment on and follow me.

And so he went out and followed him. And he knew not that it was true which was being done by the angel, but thought that he was just seeing a vision. You know, this can't be real.

You know, these chains have fallen off and I'm walking past these guards and this can't be real. This is just a dream. This is just a vision.

It's not really happening. And that to me is very interesting how close the spiritual world was to these men where they really didn't know if it was reality or just some spiritual revelation, but they lived very close to the spiritual world, to the spirit world. So when they were passed the first and the second ward, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened to them of its own accord.

And they went out and they passed through one street and then the angel departed from him. Now, when Peter was come to himself, he said, I know of a surety that the Lord has sent his angel and is delivering me out of the hand of Herod and from all of the expectation of the people of Jews. Finally, when the angel left and Peter was standing on the street, he said, hey, it wasn't a dream.

I am out. Unreal, you know, and he realized that God had delivered him from the hand of Herod. So when he considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

Now go back to verse five where it says, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for Peter. So Peter came to the house where the prayer meeting was being held, the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, John Mark, who is the author of the gospel, according to Mark, it is thought that her house was pretty much the headquarters of the church in Jerusalem. In fact, it is thought by some that the upper room was actually in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark.

And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken whose name was Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she did not open the gate for gladness, but ran in a little scatterbrain girl and ran in and told how that Peter was standing at the gate. But they said to her, you're crazy.

But she constantly affirmed that it was true, and they said it must be his angel. This to me is quite fascinating. Going back to verse five, Peter, therefore, was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

So he comes to the place where the prayer meeting is being held. They're all inside praying, oh, God, help Peter, oh, Lord, deliver Peter and all. Now Rhoda comes running in and says, Peter's out of the gate.

They said, you're crazy. Isn't it interesting how much emphasis we often put on faith? No, you got to have faith, brother. If you don't have faith, God's not going to answer your prayers.

Well, let me tell you something. God's going to do what he wants to do, whether you have faith or not. The purposes of God are going to stand.

Surely you cannot accuse these people of praying the prayer of faith, because when they are told that God has answered the prayer, Peter is at the door, they don't believe it. They accuse the poor little girl of being crazy. And then they said, well, it must be his angel, must be a spirit.

Surely it can't be Peter. But Peter just kept knocking. And so when they opened the door, they saw him and they were astonished.

But he beckoning unto them with a hand to hold their peace. Don't make too big of a stir, fellas. They'll find out I'm here.

He declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, go and show these things unto James. Now, at this point, we are introduced to James, who became one of the leaders in the early church, who was a half brother to Jesus.

And he began to take a very strong role of leadership in the early church. James, the brother of John, has been put to death by Herod. But this other James, who will write an epistle after his name and who will take a role of leadership in the council in Jerusalem, is not the James of the gospel, except that Mark does name him as one of the half brothers of Jesus.

So, introducing now to you James, half brother to Jesus, who will now begin to take a more dominant role in the early church. And so Peter says, go show these things unto James and to the brethren. And he departed and went into another place.

James, the brother or half brother of Jesus, did not believe the claims of Jesus during his lifetime. In fact, James thought that his brother Jesus was mad and at one time sought to rescue him from the crowds. He said he's beside himself and they came down to rescue him.

It is said, according to the gospel, I think it is according to the Hebrews or the gospel of the Hebrews in one of the Apocrypha books, they have James saying after the death of Jesus and reported resurrection that he said, I will not believe unless I can see him myself. And interestingly enough, Jesus, after his resurrection, did appear unto James, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, 7. He made an appearance to his half brother. And after that point, his half brother James and his half brother Jude became pillars in the early church.

And so go show these things to James, to the brethren. And he departed and went to another place. He figured that they would be coming to Mary's house looking for him.

And so he no doubt went to hide out from Herod. So he went to another place. Now, here we have an interesting enigma.

Herod stretched forth his hand against the church and he killed James, the brother of John with a sword. And he put Peter in prison, intending to bring him forth for trial and execution. But God intervened and miraculously delivered Peter question.

Why didn't God intervene and miraculously deliver James? Now don't try to figure out an answer because we don't know. The ways of God are beyond our finding out. We know that God could have delivered James by a miracle, even as he delivered Peter.

But for some reason, God did not see fit to deliver James, but allowed James to fall prey to Herod's sword, though he did see fit and purposed that Peter should be delivered from Herod's sword. And I don't think the prayers of the church were the deciding factor, because as we noted, the prayers obviously were not prayers of faith. I believe the deciding factor was just the purpose of God, the sovereignty of God.

As far as God was concerned, it was James' time to come home. It wasn't Peter's time yet. I believe that all of our lives are bound within the purposes of God, and that God knows the day in which He's going to take me home.

It's all set. God knows exactly the day and the circumstances by which He's going to take me home. And God has, in the meantime, a work for me to do.

And until I have accomplished that work that God has in mind for me to do, God's going to preserve me and keep me till that day. But the moment I have accomplished that purpose of God and plan for my life, then God's going to take me home. In the book of Revelation, chapter 11, we read concerning the two witnesses that come to bear witness during the tribulation period upon the earth.

And it says that they have power to call down fire from heaven. They have power to shut up heaven, that it does not rain during the period of their prophecy. And if anybody should try to take them, they can call down fire from heaven and consume them.

And yet the scripture said, and when they had finished their testimony, then the Antichrist has power to put them to death. But not until they have finished their testimony. So, obviously, God was not yet through with Peter.

There was more work for him to do. And thus, God preserved him. However, outside of the council in Jerusalem, this is the last mention of Peter that we have in the book of Acts.

Chapter 15, he'll speak up and again tell of how God led him to the Gentiles. But Peter passes off from the picture. Paul tells us in Galatians how he came to the church in Antioch, caused some trouble that Paul had to rebuke him for.

Some of our other records tells us that he went to Rome and was there crucified upside down. And of course, he wrote his epistles. But as far as the record in the book of Acts, it shifts now from the church in Jerusalem.

And beginning with chapter 13, Antioch becomes the center of the church activity. Jerusalem passes as the center of the church's activity. It now moves to Antioch and all of the missionary activity in taking the gospel into all of the world centers out of the church in Antioch.

So as soon as it was day, meanwhile, back here at the prison, there was no small stir among the soldiers of what was become of Peter. I mean, they woke up and here Peter was gone. And you can imagine the stir that this must have created among these guards to find Peter gone.

And when Herod had sought for Peter and found him not, he cross-examined the keepers and commanded that they should be put to death. Or according to the Roman law, if you were guarding a prisoner and he escaped from you, then you received the sentence that would have been given to the prisoner, which shows that he was planning to put Peter to death. The soldiers who were the guards over Peter were put to death taking the sentence that was to be placed upon Peter.

And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and he stayed there. Now, Herod was highly displeased with those who were from Tyre and Sidon. Cities that exist to the present day that have been in the news quite a bit of late as Israel has gone into southern Lebanon.

And we hear almost daily of the tensions that exist with the Israeli occupation forces and the people of Sidon and Tyre today. And these people depended upon Palestine for their food supplies. And so they were pretty much a vassal to Palestine at this time.

But Herod was angry with them. And there came and they came with one accord to him because they had made a friend of Blastus, the king's chamberlain, and they desired peace because their country was nourished by the king's country or by Palestine. And so on a set day, Herod arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made an oration unto them.

And the people gave a shout saying, it's the voice of a god, not of a man. Of course, they were seeking to flatter him in order that they might gain his favor and his help. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he did not give God the glory.

And he was eaten of worms and he died. According to Josephus, Herod came into the theater there in Caesarea. Now, all of you who have visited the Holy Land are familiar with the theater in Caesarea.

For through the years, the theater was covered with sand and as a result was well preserved. And in the area around Caesarea, they had observed all of these sand dunes. And one day someone started digging down into some of these sand dunes and they found this beautifully preserved Roman theater there right next to the Mediterranean Sea in Caesarea.

And so it has been completely excavated around there and partially restored. And it is a very interesting site and an interesting study in Roman architecture and gives us a little bit of the culture. Now, according

to Josephus, it was into this theater, which is an outdoor theater, that Herod came, according to Josephus, with this fabulous robe made of silver cloth.

And as he came into the theater, the sun reflected off of this silver cloth. So he came in like a shining god, making this speech to the people. And of course, the people began to cry, it's the voice of a god, not of a man.

And because he did not give God glory, he was smitten by an angel and there died. So the end of Herod Agrippa I, we will deal with Herod Agrippa II, his son, in a few weeks as we move on in the Book of Acts. But the word of God grew and multiplied.

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry. Remember, they had taken up an offering. Agabus had come to Antioch and predicted a great drought was going to come.

And so they took up a collection to take back to the saints in Jerusalem. So Paul and Barnabas had come back to Jerusalem with this collection that was taken from the church in Antioch. And now Paul and Barnabas are returning back to Antioch and Mark, John Mark, who is a nephew to Barnabas, is returning with them.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, that is called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Menaean, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and Saul. Interesting the backgrounds of these men. Barnabas was from the island of Cyprus.

Simeon, who was called Niger, which of course is a Roman name. Simeon is Hebrew name. Lucius, who was from Cyrene.

And Menaean, who had been around the Herods, grew up in the royal court. And also Saul, who had that very interesting background of being born in Tarsus, schooled in Jerusalem. God had brought them together and they were the teachers and the prophets.

They're in the church in Antioch. And as they ministered to the Lord, interesting statement to me. These men were ministering to the Lord, but their ministry to the Lord involved their ministry to the people because that's what the Lord had called them to do.

Now, Paul later writes and says, whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God. And you're to do it as unto the Lord, knowing that of the Lord, you're going to receive your reward. And I think that this is an important point for anyone who endeavors any ministry for the Lord, that you recognize that God has called you to minister to people.

But in reality, that's your job as His servant. In other words, as the servant of God, He has called me to minister to people. Now, ministering to people can be very frustrating.

It can be worse than that. It can be very irritating. People don't often appreciate what you've tried to do for them.

Or people can be just obnoxious. And there are times when I find myself grumbling over the demands that people have made on me. And in those times, the Lord speaks to me.

And He said, who are you serving? Whose servant are you? And I said, I'm your servant, Lord. Then He says, quit your griping. Do it as unto me.

You're serving me by serving people. And thus, I've learned to do a lot of things that are not as attractive or interesting as things that I would choose to do. I've had to do some pretty rank things for the Lord.

Now, if I were doing them for men, I could get very upset. But doing them for the Lord, after all, I'm His servant. What can I say? Yes, Lord.

So, He tells me to, you know, get in and go for it. Yes, Lord. And you've got to do it because you're serving Him.

But as long as I can keep that mental state of, hey, I'm serving the Lord, I'm all right. If I get the idea of who made me your servant, then I get into trouble. And so, I have to keep that mental attitude.

I'm serving the Lord. Whatsoever I do in word or deed, I'm doing unto Him. Serving the Lord.

So, notice it says, they were ministering unto the Lord. They had the right concept of the ministry. But their ministry unto the Lord involved their serving the people.

Teaching them, helping them, strengthening them. And that was their service to God. Ministering to the Lord.

And they were fasting. And the Holy Spirit said, separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. Now, how do you suppose the Holy Spirit said this? It says very plainly that the Holy Spirit said.

And I believe that the Holy Spirit did say it. But how did He say it? Were they just sitting there and a voice came in? And if so, was it a deep, resonant voice? Or was it a high-pitched voice? What kind of a voice do you suppose the Holy Spirit has? The Holy Spirit said. The fact that it tells us that there were prophets in the church.

I believe that it was spoken through the word of prophecy by one of those who had the gift of prophecy. And thus, they were directed by a prophetic word through one of the men that the prophetic word came, separate Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And thus, the Holy Spirit spake through one of the prophets these words.

Later on, Paul the Apostle, as he is writing to Timothy concerning those gifts that had become dormant in his life, he told him to stir up the gifts that are in you that were given to you at the time that hands were laid upon you and the word of prophecy was given. So, in the early church, they did have a practice of laying hands on people, praying for them. And oftentimes, a word of prophecy would come as a guide or as a direction for that person.

And so, this gift was exercised in the early church, the gift of prophecy. And no doubt, the Holy Spirit, through this prophetic type of gift, speaking forth the word of God, said, separate unto me Saul and Barnabas for the work where I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

So, they being sent forth by the Holy Spirit. Now, in verse 3, we have they fasted and prayed, laid their hands on them and sent them away. But the next verse tells us that it was actually the Holy Spirit that sent them forth.

They departed unto Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. Now, Antioch is about 15 miles up the Orentes River from the coast. And so, they came down to the coast of 15 miles to Seleucia, got a boat and headed off for Cyprus on the first missionary journey.

And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they also had John Mark as their servant. He was a young man and he had gone along to just take care of a lot of the menial things that needed taking care of as a servant to Paul and Barnabas.

And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they had gone actually pretty much the length of the island of Cyprus, they found a certain sorcerer. Paphos was, of course, the capital of Cyprus at that time. There was a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Barjesus, which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, who was a prudent man.

Sergius Paulus was the governor over the island of Cyprus. The people in that day were very superstitious kind of people and most of the rulers had their own wizards who they would seek counsel from. It sort of troubled me when Jean Dixon wrote her book, *A Gift of Prophecy*, how she spoke about how many presidents called her for advice.

So, really, we haven't changed too much through the years. The leaders would often look to these people who supposedly had these particular gifts, psychic type persons, and look to them for advice and counsel. And in those days, they each had, each of the leaders had their own psychics or wizards that they used as advisors.

And so, this Barjesus was the wizard or the advisor of Sergius Paulus, the governor of Cyprus. But Sergius Paulus called for Barnabas and Saul for he desired to hear the Word of God. But Elymas, the sorcerer, for that's his name by interpretation, Barjesus interprets into Elymas, withstood them seeking to turn the deputy away from the faith.

Then Saul, who is also called Paul, Saul is his Hebrew name, Paul is his Greek name, fell with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And he said, Oh, full of all subtlety and mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Interesting, isn't it? Don't you wish sometimes you had that kind of power? I'm afraid we'd make a mess of it. But there have been some people that I like to stand up against as Paul. I like to say Madeleine Murray O'Hara.

How long are you going to pervert the ways of God, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness? Now the deputy, Sergius Paulus, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. And now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and there John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. Why John Mark departed is not told.

It did upset Paul. He got very upset that John Mark would leave. In so much that when they started out on the second missionary journey and Barnabas wanted to take Mark again, Paul said, no way, I don't want him to go.

And the contention between Paul and Barnabas became so great over Mark that Barnabas took Mark and took off towards Cyprus again. And Paul got Silas and he headed out in another direction towards Asia

Minor. And it brought a separation between Paul and Barnabas, the issue over Mark, because Paul was still upset that Mark had left them here in Pamphylia.

However, whatever breach did exist for a time was healed. And Paul later on writes concerning Mark, and he says, please send Mark with me and have him bring the parchments. He's been a great comfort and a help to me.

So, whatever problems existed were ultimately dissolved, and there was a beautiful relationship developed between them. Between Paul and Mark in years to come. Now, they did not preach in the area of Pamphylia.

The area of Pamphylia was the coastal plains. The reason why they did not preach there is because Paul became quite ill at this point. The coastal plains around Pamphylia were filled with malaria fever.

And it is thought by many that Paul got a good case of malaria fever. And thus, they did not stay in the coastal area of Pamphylia, but they headed on up into the high plateau region around the area of Antioch, of Pisidia, Iconium, and those areas up in the higher plateau regions about 300 miles away. And Paul had to travel about 3,600 feet elevation in order that he might recuperate from the malaria fever that he picked up there on the coast.

Later on, when Paul wrote to these churches of Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia and all, in a letter known as the Epistle to the Galatians, for this whole area was known as Galatia. When he wrote his Galatian epistle, he said, you remember how sick I was when I was there with you. And how out of my sickness I was declaring to you the truths of God and all.

And he made reference to his great sickness that he had when he was with them there at Galatia. So, because of this, they believe that he probably got malaria fever. And that particular strain of malaria fever caused a person to have extremely severe headaches.

In fact, one man described it as though there was a sword being thrust through your temples. The headache that accompanied this particular strain of malaria fever. And caused just a tremendous pressure on the eyes even.

And you remember Paul said to the Galatians, I testify how that you would have even given your own eyes for me. That's how much you loved me when I was with you. What's caused this love to wane and all? So, they did not stay in the coastal regions, but headed on up into the highlands, the plateau area of Pisidia coming on to Antioch.

So, they departed from Perga. They came to Antioch in Pisidia. And they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and they sat down.

And after the reading of the law and the prophets, and of course, the synagogues they have each Sabbath day, they read a portion out of the law and they read a portion out of the prophets. And even to the present day, they follow the little ritual and they read both out of the law and the prophets every Sabbath day. And you can actually tell what Sabbath day it was in the year from where they were reading because they continue the same reading patterns today.

And so, after they had read from the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogues sent unto them saying, Ye men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak up. So, Paul stood

up and he beckoned with his hand and he said, Men of Israel and ye that fear God, because there were not only the Jews that were there, but there were the Gentiles who had proselyted into the Jewish faith. Ye that fear God, give me an audience.

The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt and with a high arm brought them out of it. And about the time of 40 years, he suffered their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

And after that, he gave unto them judges for the space of 450 years until Samuel the prophet. And afterwards, they desired a king. And God gave unto them Saul, the son of Cush, a man of the tribe of Benjamin by the space of 40 years.

And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also he gave testimony and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Now, Paul is just rehearsing for them briefly their history. God was with your fathers and delivered them by miracles out of the bondage of Egypt.

After putting up with them for 40 years in the wilderness, he brought them into the land that he had promised to give to them. And then he established judges over them who ruled over them for about 450 years until the time of Samuel the prophet, when the people asked that they might have a king, that they might be like other nations. Up until this point, Israel had been a theocracy, a people ruled by God.

But they were no longer satisfied with the theocracy. And the saddest day in the history of the nation of Israel is when the people requested to go from a theocracy to a monarchy, that they might be like the nations around them. We don't want God to rule over us.

We want a king to rule over us. And we remember the tragic story in first Samuel of the request of the people that they might have a king like the other nations. Samuel, of course, was deeply disappointed over this.

But God said, Samuel, don't be so disappointed. They have not rejected you. They have rejected me from ruling over them.

And so, God had Samuel anoint Saul, the son of Cush, to be the first king over Israel, and he reigned for about 40 years. Near the end of his reign, Samuel was now an elderly man, could hardly see. But the word of the Lord came to Samuel to go unto Saul and to tell him to go down and to utterly exterminate the Amalekites, kill all of the animals, kill everything, don't let anything remain alive.

And so, Saul went down against the Amalekites, and the Lord delivered the Amalekites into the hands of Saul. But when he saw the healthy, strong cattle and sheep, he decided not to destroy them, though he did utterly hack in pieces all of the sickly animals. But he saved the healthier animals alive, and he brought them back along with King Agag.

And Samuel came out to meet him. And Saul said, as the Lord liveth, I have done all that the Lord commanded me to do. As the Lord liveth was a religious, part of the religious jargon of that day.

It's much like the religious jargon today, we say, oh, praise the Lord or bless God. It's just religious jargon. It can be meaningful and it can be meaningless.

There are a lot of people who use religious jargon. There's one Arab boy in Israel who is a vendor on the streets. And these vendors in the streets of Jerusalem become extremely sharp.

They know you're from California the minute you come walking up. You're from California, brother. Praise God, brother.

Oh, praise the Lord, brother. Bless God. From California, aren't you? And he goes on with the praise God, bless God bit and four camels for a dollar, you know.

But he is really a very avowed Muslim. And I've tangled with this kid a few times. He gets real upset with me.

In fact, he remembers me and he usually turns and goes when he sees me now. But we've had some real times of disputing concerning the truth of Jesus Christ. And yet I see him, you know, going up to these groups and praise the Lord.

Bless God. Hallelujah. But it's only to sell his wares.

It's good to use these terms if we use them sincerely. But we have to be careful that they don't become just a manner of speech and meaningless. Now, this phrase as the Lord liveth was a spiritual jargon.

You want to impress somebody how spiritually are you say as the Lord liveth, brother, you know. And so Saul was using the spiritual jargon as the Lord liveth. I've done everything God commanded me.

And Samuel said, if you've done everything God commanded you, how come I hear the sheep and I hear the cattle? Oh, he said, you know, they were so healthy and strong and good looking. We decided we would bring them back and sacrifice them to God. And it was then Samuel said to obey is better than to sacrifice and to hearken.

Then the fat of rams. Do you not realize that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft? And because you have rejected God from ruling over you, God has rejected you from ruling over his people. And God is going to seek for a man after his own heart who will do his will.

That seems to be the case throughout history. God is always seeking for a man after his own heart who will do his will. Too many times we have self at the center of our lives, as did Saul.

And because self is at the center of our lives, we're interested and more interested in doing our will than we are doing God's will. And we often rebel against the will of God when it comes to a choice, my will or God's will. Too often we take our will over God's.

So God's was seeking for a man after his own heart during the time of. Ezekiel, he declares, and God sought for a man among them who would stand in the gap, who would fill in the hedge, but he found none. How tragic.

God's searching for a man after his own heart who would do as well in the time of Ezekiel. He could not find any. But not so at this period of history.

God found one, even David. And so Paul declares and God found David, a man after his own heart who would do his will. Not a man who is perfect.

God can't find him. He doesn't exist. But a man who will put God at the center of his life.

And when the issue arises and the showdown comes, the man will choose the will of God over his own. A man who will do God's will is the man after God's heart. So I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfill all my will of this man's seed.

Now you see, Paul is rehearsing their history a bit, but he's coming to Jesus. And so he takes now a big leap. He comes to David in a very brief survey of their history.

And as soon as he comes to David, he leaps frogs over to Jesus. For to David, God said of this man's seed, God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a savior, Jesus. At the time in David's career, when he decided to build the temple for the Lord, he came to Nathan the prophet and he said, you know, I've got a desire to build a house for God.

It's got to be glorious. Here I'm dwelling in this beautiful palace. God's still living in a tent.

That's not right. God should be living in the greatest building that man could erect. And I'm going to build a house for God and it shall be glorious.

And Nathan said, great David, do all that is in your heart. But that night the Lord came to Nathan the prophet and said, Nathan, you spoke too quickly. And you've got to go back now and tell David that I can't have him building me a house.

His hands are too bloody, but you tell him I will build him a house because I took him out of the sheep coat from following after the sheep and I made him the king over my people. And from his seed, there will sit one on the throne of Israel forever. That is the Messiah will come from David.

So Nathan came back to David the next morning and said, David, I've got some bad news and some good news. Bad news first. You can't build a house for God.

Your hands are too bloody. But the good news, God's going to build you a house, David. And from your seed, there will be one who will sit upon the throne of Israel forever.

David knew exactly what God was saying. The Messiah is going to come from my lineage. And David went in before the Lord and he said, oh God, I was a nobody.

I was just a kid out there in the hills of Bethlehem following after the sheep. And you took me from that sheep coat and you made me the ruler over your people. You've done so much for me, God, already.

And now you speak of the time to come, the Messiah, the king. Oh God, what can I say? And David, the man of words, was speechless. So wiped out was he by the grace of God.

And those, I think, are some of the greatest experiences in my own life when I've been wiped out by the grace of God and I become speechless. You know, what can you say? God, you're so good. Oh Lord, I can't believe it.

And you just, there are no words to express your feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving and all for all that God has done. Speechless before God, a good place to be. Savonarola said, when prayer reaches its ultimate, words are impossible.

When praise reaches its ultimate, words are impossible. You just can't, you know, you just open up the Spirit and just let it flow. Just there in silence before God in the deep communion of the Spirit.

Wiped out by grace. And so Paul makes mention that God has promised that from David, the Messiah is going to come. He leapsfrog now to the Messiah.

Of this man's seed, God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus. And when John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all of the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his ministry, he said, whom do you think that I am? I'm not he.

But behold, there's coming one after me whose shoes of his feet I'm not worthy to untie. Men and brethren, Paul is now addressing them. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham and whosoever among you that fears God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

God has kept his promise. God has sent the Messiah. He sent the forerunner, John the Baptist, and he has sent the Messiah, who is Jesus.

For they that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled the prophecies in condemning him. Now, though they have the prophets read to them every day, yet they didn't really know the prophets and they fulfilled the word of the prophets. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow, acquainted to grief, and they rejected him, fulfilling the prophecies concerning him.

And though they found no cause of death in him, yet they desired Pilate that he would be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree. Psalm 22 has now been fulfilled.

Isaiah 52 and 53 have been fulfilled. When they had completed the prophecies of the Scripture, they took him down from the tree and they laid him in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead.

This is the only full sermon of Paul the Apostles that we have. Interesting sermon. Remember, as we pointed out in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, the central theme was the resurrection of Jesus.

And so with Paul's sermon, working towards the resurrection, because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to salvation because a dead Savior can save no man. Resurrection is essential to salvation.

And thus they always came around to the central theme of the message, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which proved his deity, which proved the validity of his atoning death. And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto this people. And we declare unto you the gospel, the glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that he raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm, thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee.

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore, he also said in another psalm, thou shalt not suffer thine holy one to seek corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption.

But he whom God raised again saw no corruption, be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. So Paul is really getting into his message, quoting the scriptures to them, showing them from the psalms the promises of the resurrection, the body not seeing corruption. This David could not be speaking of himself because his own body did see corruption, but not so with Jesus.

God raised him from the dead and through him we are preaching to you the marvelous possibility of the forgiveness of sins. Man's greatest need can be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, because your greatest need is the forgiveness of sins. Because you cannot have oneness or fellowship with God apart from the forgiveness of sins.

And so preaching unto them the possibility of man becoming one with God through the forgiveness of sins available through Jesus Christ, because he fulfilled the prophecies, he died and he rose again. And by him all that believe are justified from all of the things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. He is superior to the law.

Through him you can have justification, something the law cannot offer you. But those who believe in him are justified. So Paul's favorite theme, justification, by faith, which of course we have covered quite thoroughly through our study in the book of Romans.

But Paul gets to this theme. He loves the theme of justification by faith. Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, that you're not as those of whom the prophets spoke, behold ye despisers and wander and perish for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you.

And so when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them on the next Sabbath day. And now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and the religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas who spoke to them and persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And this is the problem that they had in Galatia though, continuing in the grace of God.

And when Paul wrote his epistle later on to the Galatians, he said, oh foolish Galatians who have bewitched you that you should so soon turn from the grace of God. Having begun in the spirit, are you going to be made perfect in the flesh? And the very things that they exhorted them to do is the things they didn't do. You know, God doesn't waste words with us.

And so many times we feel, well God, you don't need to tell me about that. I know that. I don't have any problem there, Lord.

You don't have to, you know, speak to me about that. But God doesn't waste words. And you can be sure if God speaks to you about something, that's the very place where you're going to be running into some problems.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. And God doesn't waste words with us. He deals with issues that he knows.

Though we may feel it is unnecessary, it's usually in that very area where we fail. So with them, continuing the grace of God that they didn't. Now the next Sabbath day, almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God.

Man, word got around and everybody had come out. And when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy. And they spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

And then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and they said, it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you. But seeing you have put it from you and you have judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life. Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

So they had brought the gospel to the Jew first. But having been rejected, they now turn to the Gentiles. Paul said to Romans 1 16, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation to those that believe to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Paul usually followed this pattern, taking it to the Jew first in order that they might have the opportunity to reject it and then carrying it to the Gentiles. They had judged themselves. A man judges himself as you judge Jesus Christ.

Pilate said, what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? He made his judgment. But in reality, he was judging himself. That question of Pilate is one that every man faces.

Every one of you must face the question, what am I going to do with Jesus? I mean, every one of you must face that question. That isn't for Pilate exclusively. That's your question.

What are you going to do with Jesus who is called Christ? You must judge yourself what you are going to do with Him. But in reality, in judging Him to be either the Son of God or not the Son of God, the Savior or not the Savior, in reality, you are judging yourself. Because you are the one whose destiny will be determined by your decision.

Your decision concerning Jesus won't change his destiny at all. What he is, he is and will always be. But your destiny is determined by what you do with Jesus.

Paul said, since you've judged yourself unworthy of everlasting life, we're going to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and they glorified the word of the Lord.

And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. What a fascinating Scripture. We've dealt with the subject of predestination as we were going through Romans chapter 8. And here we find it.

As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed. I'm not going to deal with it tonight. I don't have time.

And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up devout and honorable women and the chief men of the city, and they raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of their coast. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them and they came to Iconium and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

They are sort of companions. Filled with joy is to be filled with the Spirit or to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with joy. So, they next record for us the work in Iconium and at Lystra.

But this is all the area, the whole area known as Galatia. And so, it's sort of like Orange County, but you've been to Anaheim and Fullerton and Garden Grove and Santa Ana and Newport Beach. You're in the area

of Orange County.

So, in writing the letter, he addresses the letter to the Galatians, the whole area though they had ministered in many different churches in this region or they had established many churches in this region. And next week, we will move on to their continued ministry there in that area. So much for us to ponder as we go back over now in our minds the Word of God that we've studied tonight.

Our ministry unto the Lord, our service to God. Am I a man after God's heart? Do I have God at the center of my life or is myself at the center of my life? When it comes to a showdown, will I do my own will over God's? Will I reject the way of the Lord as did Saul? Will I rebel against the commandment of God and do my own thing? Or will I as David yield unto God? And when God calls to attention my guilt, confess my sin and repent and seek the mercy and grace of God. Have I received the forgiveness of sins? What have I done with Jesus who is called Christ? I've judged myself, but how have I judged myself? Worthy or unworthy to receive everlasting life? Have I been ordained unto eternal life by believing in Jesus? A lot to think about, a lot to ponder.

And may the Lord be with you this week as you think about these things, as you think about your relationship with God, as you think about what God wants you to be and what God wants you to do. May the Lord be with you to guide you and to direct you and to help you through this week, strengthening you, giving you wisdom, giving you powers and abilities by His Spirit to serve Him effectively. That you might bring glory unto His name.

God bless you. Be with you and keep you in the love of Jesus Christ.

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