

What Could Go Wrong? - Acts 21:20-40

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[0 : 0 0] can turn to Acts 21. We'll finish Acts 21 tonight. You thought I was gonna say we'll finish Acts tonight. Silly. We'll finish Acts this year, unless we're raptured, and then we'll really finish Acts.

Yeah, so last time we left Paul, he was traveling back from Asia, from the area of Ephesus, back to Jerusalem. He had returned to Jerusalem, to the church there at Jerusalem, and he had spoken with James and the other elders about what God had done, particularly about what God had done among the Gentiles. And we left off in verse 20a, that when they heard this, they glorified the Lord. And we stopped there. We'll pick up and continue on as Paul creates quite a ruckus here.

So tonight's message, if you want to give it a message, title would be, What Could Go Wrong? We've got a great plan. What could go wrong, right? Where are we in Paul's life? So we're finishing up the third missionary journey, and he's coming back to Jerusalem. Paul is in between here. He's kind of a man in transition. He's going from Paul the missionary to about to be Paul the prisoner.

And he's going to finish out the book of Acts as Paul the prisoner. Still a missionary, still sent, but under different circumstances. And if you look on the chart there, it says Romans would be written then, but it wasn't. It was written earlier. It was written from Corinth. So that's never compiled that.

But we're about AD 57 to 59, somewhere in there, as Paul has returned to Jerusalem. And if you remember last time we looked at in, well, in chapter 20, and then we looked at also in chapter 21, these prophecies that were given to Paul, we know in Acts 20, Paul tells us in verse 22, he says, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. He doesn't know the particulars, except that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. So Paul knows what he's headed for. He knows what's going to happen in a broad sense, that he's going to be bound and under affliction. And then last time, two weeks ago, we saw in Acts 21 and verse 10, that as we tarried there many days in Caesarea with Philip, the evangelist, there came down from Judea, a certain prophet named Agabus. And when he was coming to us, he took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet and said, thus saith the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 45] So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And then they implored him, don't go to Jerusalem. But Paul, his face was set, kind of like Jesus, his face was set to go to Jerusalem, to go to the cross. And Paul's is to go to Jerusalem as well. And if you remember, he wanted to be there in time for the feast of Pentecost. That's why he wouldn't meet in Ephesus. He wouldn't go to Ephesus to meet with the elders, the pastors in Ephesus. He said, hey, you guys come to the shore of Miletus and I'll meet you there because I want him to keep the feast of Pentecost. And so right now he is in Jerusalem and it's exploded with people. I don't know how many times over they say that the population increased how many fold when this was happening. So we'll pick up in verse 20. And when they heard it, when the church in Jerusalem heard what God had done among the Gentiles, they said unto him, praise the Lord, they glorified the Lord. And they said unto him, thou seest brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe? That's great, fantastic news. And they are all zealous of the law. Well, that's interesting. Interesting thing to say. I think it's interesting in this verse how Paul's just very particularly explained to them what has happened among the Gentiles and they glorify God and then say, well, yeah, okay, that's wonderful, Paul. But do you know what's going on here, Paul?

Do you know what's happening here? I almost fell off my stool there. I got to look excited. Right? They're focused on what's happening around them at this point. And it says here, and they are zealous of the law. The word zealous there means most eagerly desiring a thing, to follow a thing, or to defend and uphold a thing. So if we insert that definition, and they are most eagerly desiring of the law. They are following the law. They are defending and upholding the law. We're going to see as we go through this, there's kind of two churches right now. There's two branches of the church. You have the Judeo church and the Gentile church.

You have the Jews that are making up a very large portion of the church, thousands of them in Jerusalem. And then you have the Gentiles. And we're going to see as the early church talks about them here in Jerusalem, they talk about them almost like two different entities.

And as we go through this, the thing that is interesting to note is what happened? What happened that all of these thousands of Jews that the church was made up of, why don't we see that today? Why isn't the church made up of, why aren't there so many Jews in the church today? Why has it gone predominantly towards the Gentiles? At this time, Israel had rejected their Messiah. They'd crucified him. And yet there were thousands and thousands of Jews coming to faith in Christ.

Paul, in Romans 10, we're going to look at some verses in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and probably a lot of other places too. But Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, they've already been written. Paul already wrote these letters. And so there's some information we're going to see to kind of get Paul's thoughts and heart on some of these issues that he's already put down. And one of them is here in Romans 10, starting in verse 1. He says, brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal, there's our word, that's zealous, of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and then going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Now here's a group of Jews that did submit themselves unto the righteousness of God, the thousands of believers in Jerusalem. And yet, I think we could still say that they have a zeal that's not according to knowledge still, because they're still trying to uphold the law. They still look at some value here in the law. I'm just going to go right from the beginning and say it. For the believer, there is no value in keeping the law. For the person who is in Christ, there is no value for keeping the law. There is none. The law has been done away and set aside and fulfilled in Christ. We don't need the law, and we have no value for it. We're going to see some scripture later on about that.

[6 : 58] So they say, brother Paul, you see there are many thousands of Jews here who believe, and in verse 21, and they are informed of thee. They know about you, Paul. They've heard that you teach all the Jews, which are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. This is not true. Paul is not teaching all the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses. But he is teaching all the Jews among the Gentiles to turn from Moses to Christ, the fulfillment of the law. So this is not true. And they're saying, but they hear this. This is what they hear. Paul, if you remember, he had that Nazarite vow he took.

He keeps, he tries to be at the feasts, some of the feasts in Jerusalem. And we've talked before about how Paul, he did not seek to keep the law. He recognized there wasn't any value for his walk or his righteousness before Christ in keeping the law. But he was a Jew. He was a Jew, and he was going to keep his heritage and recognize that the fulfillment of Judaism was the cross, was Christ.

And now he can understand that better than most. In Romans, Paul tells us in chapter 14, starting in verse 4, he says, Who are you that judges another man's servant? Who are you to decide what they can and can't do?

To his own master he stands or falls, and our master is the Lord. Yes, he shall be holding up, for God is able to make him stand. One man esteems one day above another, another man esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, he that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord. He that regards not the day, to the Lord, he does not regard it. He that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. And he that eats not, to the Lord, he eats not, and gives God thanks.

What's the point of all that? Well, the point is what he repeats over and over in there, to the Lord, right? What he's saying is that I don't come to you and say, you must keep this law because I say so. And you're like, well, okay, this is a system that's been placed upon me. I now have to keep it for some end. He's saying, no, whatever you're going to do, you're doing as unto the Lord.

[9 : 12] So if you're observing a day, you're not observing that day because you think it has some extra special holy connotation, but it's unto the Lord. We just celebrated Resurrection Sunday. There are many people who go to church on Resurrection Sunday because it is the day, the day to observe. And you go to be holy or righteous or whatever it is. Put another, I guess, weight on this side of the scale of your righteous deeds. We don't do that, but we observe that day because this is unto the Lord.

And we are persuaded in our minds that what we are doing is not for righteousness sake, but to do it as unto the Lord. Paul will tell us in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 17, but as God has distributed to every man, as the Lord has called everyone, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised.

Is any called uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Jew or Gentile has no standing in the kingdom. Value, as far as like value in your relationship to God. But the keeping of the commandments of God, and that is not the Mosaic law. That would be the commands of God, which we know are when the disciples said, what is the work of God? And Jesus said, believe. It's to believe, it's to love, and it's to follow. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. There's no value, Gentile, for you to become a Jew. There's no value, Jew, for you to try and become a Gentile. You are who you are, and be that, and that's fine.

But the church here, for whatever reason, is impressing upon Paul this good idea they're going to have. What could go wrong? And I don't know if they've gotten so comfortable that they're more concerned with keeping peace than sound doctrine. You know, Paul, last time he was in Jerusalem for a long period of time, stirred up a lot of trouble. Not on purpose, but he was just very zealous for Christ, and they kind of had to get him out of there. So maybe they're thinking as he comes back, oh, it's been good, Paul. We haven't had persecution. We haven't had people stirred up. We have thousands of Jews that believe, and they're also zealous for the law. But hey, they believe in Jesus. We're not going to worry about that. It's okay. So I don't know. Maybe they've just become too comfortable.

And so in verse 22, what is it, therefore? The multitude must needs come together, for they will hear you are come. So they're pretty much saying to him, what are we going to do, Paul? They're all going to come together, and they're going to hear that you're here.

[11 : 53] And they're going to think that you're out there telling Jews to cast off the law. Now, Paul should have said, well, no, that's not true. And you know that. I'm telling them to turn to Christ.

You know, and he could have explained why the law has been fulfilled. But the church here, I think, cops out where the solution to this is when someone comes and says, Paul is teaching them everywhere not to obey the law. The church leaders should have just said, that's not true. This is what Paul is teaching them, whatever the consequences are. But I think they're too afraid here of what the consequences are. And we're going to see, they're going to move into this idea of appeasement.

Proverbs 29, 25 says, The fear of man brings a snare, but whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe. It's funny, that verse, we think of it in reverse, right? Whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Well, no, no, no. The reason I'm afraid of man is I want to be safe. I got to go along with them, or they might get me, or they might not like me, or they may be. My safety is blending in and fearing man. No, who puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Paul will tell us, as he writes the book of Titus, describing what a bishop, an elder, a pastor in the church, the qualifications. Picking up in verse 7, he says, for a bishop must be blameless. And then jumping down to verse 9, one of the characteristics is he must hold fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. This would have been one of those times with sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers. Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth. This Paul would have wrote Titus later, but still, this is Paul's position. This is who Paul is. Verse 23. Here's our idea, Paul. Do this. Do therefore this that we say to you. We have four men which have a vow on them. Okay, Paul, we've got these four men.

The elders at the church, they have this great plan for keeping the peace, right? But what they don't know is God has a plan, and it's to get Paul to Rome. And that's the one that's going to supersede this. Then take and purify yourself with them, and be it charges with them, that they may shave their heads. So this is like that Nazarite vow. And all may know that those things, whereof they are informed concerning you, are nothing, but that thou also walkest orderly, and does what? And keeps the law. Paul, if you go do this, they'll all know that you're a good Jewish boy, and you keep the law. The keeping of the law has no value for the believer. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, having already written this letter, chapter 6, verse 11, and such were some of you, but you are what? You are washed. Paul, take these men and go purify yourself. Ceremonial cleansing to show that you're ceremonially pure. Well, Paul will write to the Corinthians, the Gentiles, and say, you are washed.

[15 : 03] You are sanctified. You are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Why is Paul pretending to keep the law that he clearly no longer follows? What is his reason here?

Paul tells us in 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 9, he tells us what the law is for. The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners. What is the law not made for? The righteous. There's thousands of believing Jews that are zealous for the law. What they needed here was to be corrected and exhorted in sound doctrine that you don't keep the law any longer. Well, that might stir up the whole thing. Well, it might. It might. And this is why I think you're going to see, well, in AD, when did Titus come?

70? 80? Anyway, when Titus Vespasian, thank you, came and sacked Jerusalem, that pretty much flushed the church out of Jerusalem, the Christians at that time. They actually heeded Jesus' warnings, and he said, when you see these things begin to come to pass, run. Do not come down and take your coat. They heeded his warnings, and a lot of the church was protected. But you kind of see then the idea of a very large Judeo-Jewish church. It's not there anymore. I think the reason is this, because the church and the law are not going to coincide. And this experiment of kind of like living after the law while being a believer, it eventually was going to be flushed out by sound doctrine and by the Holy Spirit. Romans 3.20 tells us that, therefore, by the deeds of the law, Paul had already written the book of Romans, by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Appeasement is but the first step on the road to compromise. And so they're saying, Paul, appease us so that we can appease the people. We don't want to upset the people, Paul. Just go along with this. It's not going to hurt anything.

Affirming someone's sin to keep the peace or to appear non-divisive is only encouraging their darkness. What do I mean by that? Affirming someone's sin. I want to keep the peace. I don't want to appear divisive. I don't want to come across as that guy who's again pointing out the error.

Only encourages their darkness. Well, Ephesians chapter 5 verse 11 says, And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

[17 : 46] For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved, all things that are reproved when you reprove someone, are made manifest by the light. For whatsoever does make manifest is light. What does that mean?

It means when I bring to the light something, it may cause division. It may cause someone pain. They may not like that, but that's the truth. And they may react to you like you've harmed them, or that is darkness. Well, the scripture here tells us that if something makes manifest, it's light that's doing that. You cannot look at the reaction to the light that's being shined. If it makes manifest, it's light. So when we affirm someone's sin, we're allowing darkness to continue in their life. Because I don't want to make manifest what's going on, even though that shines the light on it. And the light is a good thing, because we're not to have any fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. But you know what they're going to do? Do you know what they're going to say? Do you know how they're going to react? Paul, we've got thousands of believers.

The church is growing. They all tithe. We don't want to upset them, Paul. We want to make sure that this is the feast of Pentecost. Everything runs smoothly. But as touching the Gentiles in verse 52, the other part of the church, the Jewish church and the Gentile church, like they're two separate entities, as touching the Gentiles which believe, well, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols and from blood and from strangled and from fornication. They don't need to act like the Jewish church.

That's different. The Gentile church is different. The Calvary Chapel church is different than the Baptist church, the Methodist church. In the Galatians, a letter Paul had already written in chapter 3, verse 26, he says, For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. There are not different offshoots of the church. There are not different sects of the church. There's not Jew and there's not a Greek church. Remember when Peter was come up to Antioch and Paul was there. Paul tells us that he had to withstand Peter to his face because he was to be blamed. In Galatians chapter 2, verse 12, For before that, certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles. So before the elders who came from James in the church in Jerusalem came up to Antioch, Peter was whooping it up with the Gentiles.

He's like, hand me the pork, boys. This stuff's good. You know, he's just living like a Gentile, which he should because what was let down from heaven to him three times? A sheet full of all manner of animals. And God said, what I've called clean, do not call unclean. But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him. So here you have believing Jews that are causing this division, this stumbling, because of the law. In so much that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

[21 : 04] But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to what? The law? The truth of the gospel? I said unto Peter before them all, if you being a Jew live after the manner of Gentiles and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? He said, Peter, you're a Jew, but you live like the Gentiles. Well, here now we are in Jerusalem and the church in Jerusalem is saying, no, no, no, no, no, Paul. We need to convince all of the Jews here, the believing Jews, that you live like a Jew because we don't want any trouble. Paul will tell us that he wants to be made all things to all men in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, another epistle he'd already written.

In verse 19, for though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew. Well, okay, Paul, what's wrong with that? Maybe I'm wrong. That I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law is under the law? That I might gain them that are under the law? To them that are without the law as without law, being not without law to God, but under the law of Christ. That I might gain them that are without the law. Okay, so I guess we can throw out everything I just said. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. And I made all things to all men, that I might by all means do what? Save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Was Paul doing this for the sake of the gospel, to save some, to be able to present the gospel. He was doing this. They were a bunch of believers. They already believed. He was going along with their compromise to appease them.

Paul said, yeah, I'll become as a Jew if I might save the Jews, if I might bring them into the light of the gospel. And then he says to Peter, where he said to Peter, Peter, you live like a Gentile now that you are free and in the gospel. And you are under Christ. You don't need that law, which he tells us in Timothy is for the unrighteous. It's to point out sin. It's not going to make them righteous.

Then Paul took the men in verse 26, the next day, purifying himself with them and entered into the temple to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. I think Paul's heart is so for his people. I do think behind this is the idea that maybe this can work out to encourage the church. I want to be a team player.

Maybe this will work out to be able to preach the gospel. But I don't think his premise is right, which I believe he's compromising on his beliefs that we just read that he's written down to do this. And so appeasement leads to compromise. And here Paul says, it's taken these men in until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. Is that a sin offering? No, it's not a sin offering. There are many different offerings of dedication in the Old Testament and under the law. But it does make me think about what Paul did write about an offering. He says, therefore, in Romans 3.20, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. Nothing you can do under the law, the Mosaic law, will justify you before God. For by the law is the knowledge of sin.

[24 : 24] And then whether Paul wrote Hebrews or not, Hebrews 10.14 says, for by one offering, he, Jesus, has perfected forever them that are sanctified. I just think, Paul, what if you would instead preach this to the church? What if you, like you withstood Peter to his face? What if you in love and grace said, hey, guys, guys, come on, what did Jesus do for us? He fulfilled the law.

Because like I said, we're not going to see this large Jewish church again. I think the thing that really held them was the fact that they were saying, it's okay for you to keep the law. The book of Hebrews was written to Hebrew believers who are trying to go back to the law. That's why it's written, there's therefore no more sacrifice for sin. If you could go back to the law, then the cross wasn't good enough. And there's no sacrifice left. The law can't do it. And then in 1 Thessalonians 5.22, Paul will write, abstain from all appearance of evil. Abstain from all appearance. Paul, why are you trying to convince them? You're keeping the law. Romans 14.13, let us not therefore judge one another anymore, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. And here is a stumbling block. But this good idea, it looks like it's working.

Okay. Paul's gone into the temple. He's got these guys. He's been a few days with them now. They finished their ceremony. They're purified. They're waiting for an offering. And the church is like, look at our good boy here, Paul. He's doing everything he needs to do. It almost worked.

Almost. And it is God's mercy whenever he lets our best efforts fail. God's mercy lets us fall on our face in self-effort. Thank you, Lord. But then in verse 28, I'm sorry, in verse 27, when the seven days were almost ended, so we have a whole week of Paul keeping up this facade, the Jews, which were of Asia. So from Ephesus, when they saw him in the temple, because they're all there for the feast of Pentecost, stirred up all the people and laid hands on him. They went over and they grabbed him and they're like, can you believe it? Crying out, men of Israel, help. This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people. You see, the church hadn't helped. They did not come against that idea, even within the church. These are the Judaizers. This idea about Paul had crept into the church to where the church in Jerusalem was believing these lies about Paul. Instead of saying, no, it is not true.

They tried to, through appeasement and compromise, convince these men that Paul was actually a law keeper. This is the man that teaches everywhere against the people and the law and this place.

[27 : 17] And further, he has brought Greeks into the temple and has polluted this holy place. For they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus and Ephesians, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. So they're in the city and they're walking by like, oh my word, it's Paul. Oh, it's Paul. He's got that, he's hanging out with those Gentiles. And then they assumed that he had brought Trophimus in.

Appeasement had led to compromise and compromise had led to catastrophe. The truth, these men didn't care about the truth because the truth did not fit their agenda. They had an agenda. The church's attempt and Paul's attempt to go along with it, to appease them by compromising the truth, isn't going to help because they don't care about the truth. They have an agenda. And going along with their agenda, like we said, all it does is encourage the darkness. We want to shine the light. We want to make manifest because that is light. And all the city was moved. So that's a lot of people. This is the Feast of Pentecost. And the people ran together and they took Paul and drew him out of the temple. And forthwith, the doors were shut. So they closed the doors to the temple at the Feast of Pentecost because they're so afraid, like it's been polluted by this man, Paul and the Greek. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. For Paul, for Paul, this was simply life as usual, wasn't it? He was expecting this. But religion apart from God is very deadly, very deadly. It is not a benefit to man as people think. Well, faith-based organizations, religions, we can all come together. Religion is deadly. It'll result in physical death. And even if doesn't go that far, it will result in spiritual death. It will just keep people bound in their death and in their sin. And so this captain, we will visit with him in a second. What did he do?

He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down onto them. And when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, when the Jews saw them, they left beating of Paul. So who's this captain? And what does it mean he ran down? What's going on here?

The fortress Antonia was off to the side of the temple mount, the temple precinct. You had the court. And then as you go into the temple, you have the outside court of the Gentiles, court of the women, and then the court of the men, and then the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies.

The Antonia fortress was built up above the temple precinct so that the Romans could look down into it and see that everything was, everyone was behaving and they could keep a watch.

[30 : 07] The fortress Antonia was about 40 acres in size. It accommodated the 10th Roman legion and it comprised of 10 cohorts and each cohort had 500 men. So it held 5,000 soldiers. Here where it tells us that the chief captain of the band, who did he come with in verse 32? He took soldiers and centurions. The centurion was over how many? A hundred. So you have multiple hundreds. So most likely this is one, this was over one of the cohorts, one of the 10 cohorts, which you imagine they were, especially at the feast, you had one cohort on at all times. And so as he sees this ruckus, he's got multiple centurions, which means hundreds of soldiers, and they are rushing down to quell this, what they look at as an uprising.

And then it says in verse 32, who immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down onto them. And when they saw the chief captain, the soldiers, they left arguing with Paul. They left yelling at Paul. They left debating with Paul. They left beating of Paul. It just says it's so nonchalant. It's like, oh, and when the Jews saw the captain and soldiers, all right, all right, we'll stop beating him. We'll stop pummeling him. Poor Paul. And it made me think, if like Paul, I knew the future that was coming. If God had prepared me and told me over and over and over, this is what's awaiting you. This is what's coming. Would I have chosen to follow that if I knew the future like Paul? Paul chose God's will over his own comfort and safety, knowing what was coming, knowing that bonds and imprisonment, beatings and trouble were coming. He knew that right from the beginning when Ananias came and prayed for him, that that was his lot. And yet he chose to follow and to set aside his own comfort to follow God's will. And again, I think the reason God doesn't reveal very often our future or what's coming is because I don't think we can handle it. Paul could.

Paul was able to handle it. I don't think I would handle it. There's things in my life I can guarantee you as I look at them and look back over them and think, if I knew that was coming, I'd try and avoid it. I'd try and run from it or I'd try to deal with it ahead of time. There's no way I would have gone through that, that horrible situation or whatever it was. I don't think I could have just left it in the Lord's hands. So God gives us the grace in the season. So that is the Antonia Fortress. And as you can see, it's overlooking. So there would have been stairs where they would have rushed down into there.

Um, you know, there was like watchmen up on those peaks on the towers and they're like blowing the alarm. They're, they're, they're having an uprising. Then the chief captain came near and took him and commanded him to be bound with two chains and demanded who he was and what he had done.

Remember in Acts chapter 20, again, verse 22, Paul says, and now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, except that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. Paul's just been beaten and now he's bound. As much as that's a tragedy in the sense of like having to experience that, what an encouragement in a sense. Paul's like, Lord, I know you're with me. You warned me of this.

[33 : 24] You told me of this and you said you'll be with me. Who he was, who was Paul and demanded who he was and what he had done. Paul was very much like Jesus, wasn't he? John 18, Pilate then went out unto them and said, what accusation bring you against this man?

Pilate therefore said unto him to Jesus, who are you? Are you a king? Jesus answered, you said that I'm a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that's of the truth hears my voice. Who are you? Who are you?

And what had he done? Matthew 10 verse 24 tells us the disciples not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant has his Lord. If they've called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them?

Of his household. Who are you? I'm a follower of Jesus. What have you done? I've done what my master's done. And some cried one thing in verse 34 and some another among the multitude. And when he, the captain, could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was born of the soldiers for the violence of the people. So like, come on, Paul, let's go in. And you have like, what, hundreds of soldiers? And the people are so violent wanting to get to Paul that he can't even walk up the stairs himself.

[34 : 53] They're having to carry him. God sent Paul a personal bodyguard, chained him to the guards. And so we're going to get you up in there, Paul. I'm going to protect you. God can use even corrupt civil authorities to protect his people if he so chooses. And he can do the same today.

We live in a land of corrupt civil authorities, but God, if he so chooses, can use them to protect his people. And then the captain, I'm sorry, for the multitude of people followed after in verse 36, crying away with him, away with him.

And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said to the chief captain, may I speak unto you? Who said, can you speak Greek? So the captain's surprised because he says to him, aren't you that Egyptian?

Which before these days made an uproar and led out into the wilderness, 4,000 men that were murderers. That's like, oy vey, says Paul. I like this drawing because it showed clearly what it looked like to have, where it says they put chains on him.

It literally means, where it says to be bound with two chains, meant one side was bound to one guard and one side of him was bound to another. He was very well protected.

[36 : 10] He says, aren't you that Egyptian? Paul was misjudged and misunderstood. If you remember back in Acts chapter 5, when the disciples are brought before the Sanhedrin and Gamaliel says, leave him alone.

He kind of rehearses this thing. And he says, do you remember that before these days rose up Thaddeus, boasting himself to be somebody, to whom a number of men, about 400, joined themselves, who was slain, and all as many as obeyed him were scattered and brought to nothing.

After this rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and he drew away much people after him. He also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

And so to this captain, Paul is just another rabble rouser. Paul was misjudged and misunderstood, and Paul said, I am a man, which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city.

He's like, first of all, I'm a Jew. That's why I understand these people. Second, I'm a citizen of no mean city. I'm a citizen where I'm a Roman citizen because of the city that I was born in, Tarsus in Cilicia, which makes me a Roman citizen.

[37 : 22] And I beseech you, suffer me to speak unto the people. Paul was not afraid to use the tools God gave him to open an opportunity for the gospel. He's like, okay, I see this opportunity here.

I understand the tools God gave me. I know who I am. I sat at the feet of Gamaliel. I understand the Jews, but I'm also a Roman citizen. My citizenship is in heaven, but God has given me this tool. I'm going to use it to open the door for what?

The gospel, specifically. Paul was never political, nor did he take any interest in politics. And if you can find it in Acts, I'll give you \$100 that he actually did that.

He was never political, nor did he ever take any interest in politics. Paul was interested in the gospel only. And any means that presented itself as an opportunity to further the gospel became his interest.

If politics furthered the gospel, that was his interest. If being like a Jew furthered the gospel, that was his interest. Politics, for the sake of making America greater or making the world better, was not his interest.

[38 : 22] And here, unfortunately, I think he kind of gets led into where being a Jew for the sake of keeping the peace and appeasing these people and not for the gospel. Now, like we said, man has his plans.

The heart of man devises his way. But the Lord directs his step. And God is going to do this. The scripture, for us, does not teach that the church is here to make the world a better place.

Sounds like heresy, doesn't it? The church is here to make the world a better place. No, it's not. It is not. But that the church is here to tell the world that there is a better place. That's why we exist in this world today.

To tell the world there is a better place. Not to make this world a better place. Because the Bible says it's not a better place. John 17, 16, Jesus said, they are not of the world, praying to his father, even as I am not of the world.

I wonder what that means. Maybe it means they're not of the world. I don't know what else you're going to do with that. It's pretty obvious. Because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

[39 : 22] You know what I'm not? Of the world. I'm not. My citizenship is in heaven. I gave up the citizenship here at the cross. My citizenship is now in heaven. Now, like Paul said, in whatsoever state you are called, abide.

Was I called being a citizen of this country? Well, then I'll be a citizen of this country. And I'll faithfully do that. But for what purpose? For the purpose and sake of the gospel. That's why. And when he had given him license.

So Paul besieges him. He uses humility and honors this man in humility. And just says, please, let me speak to them. And this is a miracle. This is straight up a miracle.

The guy's like, yeah, okay. You know, I mean, all this that's just been stirred up is your fault. But go ahead. Talk to them. And we had given him license. Paul stood on the stairs.

See, Paul had a preaching license. And beckoned with the hand unto the people. So Paul was a hand talker. And when there was made a great silence, another miracle. He spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying.

[40 : 24] We'll figure that out next time. So remember last time when we talked about prophecy. And all these things that are being prophesied to Paul.

And what that looked like. Well, we saw what prophecy fulfilled meant. Prophecy fulfilled meant for Paul. Prophecy fulfilled in Paul's life meant pain. Misunderstanding. Arrest.

And having his character maligned. That's what prophecy fulfilled was. Man, I want God to speak with prophecy into my life. Yeah. You know, God does speak with prophecy.

He prophesies through his word. As the word is taught. And as we read the word, he does. And a lot of times it brings pain. It brings me. I have misunderstanding. And God corrects me at that. Thank the Lord he does. It arrests me.

It arrests my flesh. It arrests my heart. That wants to go in its own direction. And the gospel grabs a hold of it. The word of God. The prophecy of God's word grabs it. And a maligned character. How often I malign God's character.

[41 : 20] How often I think, God. Your will be done. I wouldn't do it that way. And God is so gracious. So as we started by asking the question.

What could go wrong? What could go wrong? Well, a lot went wrong. But thankfully, God is able to use even that. For his glory. And our good. For God's glory. Philippians 1.12.

But I would that you should understand, brethren. Says Paul. That the things which have happened unto me. Have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. God used every bad situation for his glory. For the furtherance of the gospel.

And it's for our good. Romans 8.28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. To them who are the called according to his purposes. So what could go wrong? Quite a lot.

But God is able to work through that for his glory and our good. And as we leave Paul. Paul has raised his hand to speak. And that's where we leave him. And Paul will write in Ephesians chapter 6.

[42 : 19] And we've used this verse quite a bit on Wednesday nights for prayer. Talking about praying in the spirit. Starting in verse 18. Paul says, So Paul writes that to the Ephesians.

And as Paul's about to now do this. He's saying, Hey, pray for me. Paul wasn't confident in his flesh. He writes in Philippians to have no confidence in the flesh. And so I think if Paul said, Hey, pray for me.

Man, we need to be praying for one another. Right? That God would do that. That he would give us utterance. That he would give us words. You know? God sometimes opens these doors for us to like, to speak to people.

And I stand there sometime. The doors open. And I'm like, I have no idea at the moment. And then it kind of passes. I think, Oh Lord, I didn't have any utterance there, did I? Nothing uttered forth.

You know? God is so faithful. He can use all things for his glory and his good. But we pray the utterance may be given. That I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. Not to appease.

[43 : 38] Not to compromise. To open my mouth. To make manifest. To shine light. Whatever the circumstances. And here, Paul, next time, he's going to do that. He's like, Alright, enough of this.

I have an opportunity to speak the truth. As I ought to speak. So, we will find out next time what happens to our buddy, Paul. Prophecy is wonderful.

The gifts of the Spirit are wonderful. But they have to operate how the Holy Spirit wants them to. We can't, we can't grab a hold of them and torque them and twist them and make them into what we want. The Spirit of the Prophet is subject unto the Prophet.

But that doesn't mean we tell the Holy Spirit what to do. It just means that we have a part in that. That God's not going to force us. There's a part we play in subjecting ourselves to God.

And as we do that, then we are used as God's means in this world. He said, You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. We are His light and we are His witness.

[44 : 38] You don't have to try and be a light. You don't have to try and be a witness. Scripture says you are. What we're not supposed to do is hide the light. We're to let it shine. In Luke, it says, Behold the lilies.

Consider the lilies, how they grow. They toil not. Man, that's been speaking to me so much. Just behold how they grow. They don't toil in their growth. Growth just happens.

They soak in the sun. Their roots go deep. Growth happens. Right? That's really just brought me peace this last week in situations where I want to grow because I see I'm deficient.

And God has allowed me to stay deficient in that area. And I think, What's wrong with you, Lord? That's why I'm a line of His character. Why have you not grown me in this area? Well, He has His reasons. And as I learned just to leave that with Him, I can't grow myself.

I just soak in the sun and let the roots go deep and let Him take care of that. So that's why I just can encourage you. It is of God that we seek for boldness. We seek for opportunities.

[45 : 37] And we are in this world not to make it better, but to tell people there's a better place. So, Father, we thank You for that. Thank You for this beautiful picture tonight, Lord. Thank You for Paul, Lord. Lord, thank You for showing us His humanity.

A man who, I believe in just about every situation is presented to us in Acts. He wants to do the best He can. But, Lord, He's a man.

And He has fallen flesh. And sometimes, some of His decisions, we wonder, was that in the Spirit? Was that compromise? What was that?

But, Lord, as I look at my own life, I see the same thing. Sometimes I wonder, was that the Spirit or was that just my own idea? But, Lord, You are so good that You take all things and work them together for our good.

And then, Lord, as Paul said, the things that have fallen out unto Him has fallen out for the furtherance of the Gospel. Lord, may that be said about our lives. That our lives are a witness and a testimony and a light to what You are doing in this world as You are calling men and women and boys and girls out of this world into a better place.

[46 : 41] This world is passing away. This world is perishing. The end of this world is not happy. Even the thousand-year reign, it will end in fire. That this world will be dissolved and a new heavens and a new earth will be created.

Lord, we look for that and we look for Your return. Come quickly, Jesus. And until that day, Lord, would You please give us boldness, give us utterance, open our mouths, Lord, and give us opportunities to be a light and to be a witness, Lord.

But let us not strive. The servant of the Lord must not strive. Let us be like the lilies, Lord. They don't toil in their growth. They just receive the sunlight, let their roots go deep.

And, Lord, we pray that You would rain down on us by Your Holy Spirit. And in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.