



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 80 “Safe Travels Pt.2”
By Pastor Jody May 05/26/2024**

Acts 23:23-35 ESV

Paul Sent to Felix the Governor

²³Then he called two of the centurions and said, “Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. ²⁴Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor.” ²⁵And he wrote a letter to this effect:

²⁶“Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. ²⁷This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. ³⁰And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him.”

³¹So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³²And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him. ³³When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. ³⁴On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.” And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod’s praetorium.

[READ THE TEXT]

**Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”
People – “Thanks be to God.”**

[PRAY]

[INTRO. & BACKGROUND]

This is a pt2 of a sermon that we started last week looking at the Providence of God, and as a good reminder let’s first look at the main point for these two weeks.



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Main Point:

The **PROVIDENCE** of God is provided through **ordinary means**, in **turbulent times, propelling missions**, and **glorifying Christ**.

Providence is not the same as miracles, it doesn't defy the laws of nature, but instead uses everyday means and people to get God's will done. We were made aware of this fact last week from the main verse which highlights for us not just this section we are going through, but for the rest of Acts it lets us know what is going on behind the scenes.

Acts 23:11 ESV

The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

Christ Himself is the main driving force behind Paul, it is as if Paul in a single moment has seen how it was Christ all along everyday making the way forward for Paul. Jesus tells Paul, you were exactly right Paul, I want you to go to Rome, and I will be the one responsible to get you there. I also wanted to remind you from last week of the reasons why our Lord **PROVIDENTIALLY** works this way.

Romans 8:29 ESV

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed** to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

His purpose in being involved in our lives daily through all means is because Jesus has a plan and that is to make you more like Him, for that is what brings His Father glory, that we His brothers and sisters would have the family resemblance. Then there was a second reason to all of this.

Ephesians 1:10 ESV

as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in **Him**, things in heaven and things on earth.



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Jesus’ plan is to accomplish the plans of His Father by making sure all things will unite in Him. All will bow the knee one day whether in humble submission or forced, there is a day on the Calendar we cannot see where this will happen, it’s called **judgement day**. Because of those two things the doctrine of God’s Providence is essential to our lives.

Last week we saw that process play out in how God:

- Uses the emotion of **mob mentality** to forward His goals. He used their **sinful desires** of murder and rage, their **irreverence** towards the law of God, and their **chosen ignorance** of Christ to get Paul under police protection.
- We also saw God use the **emotion of Individuals** to forward His goals. In Lysias we saw **fear** which sought now to preserve Paul when he was ready to kill him through torture of flogging to get a confession. We also saw the **love** by his nephew to risk being found as a traitor to save the life of his uncle.

God uses ordinary means, and ordinary people everyday to do His good will. This week we are seeing the third way and that is through government, that is through the rulers that He has put in place over us. He will now provide a way for His will to be accomplished EVEN when it is not their desire to do so.

[GOSPEL]

As one of the greatest examples of the Providence of God we are reminded of the sacrifice of His Son to save us. He used the High Priest’s office to stir up the discontent among the people and He used Pilate the Roman Governor to carry out the task. This was no accident, the Cross of Christ, was the predetermined sacrifice of a Righteous Savior that would give His life willingly show God’s desire to save through an unjust execution. **God used the desires of evil men to carry out the most glorious act in all of creation that displayed the totality of God’s love.** What the HP meant as a means to crush a rebellious religion God used to flame into the fires of Christianity a force that has changed the world. What Pilate used as an opportunity to bring peace to his region through violence God used to bring war against the devil to win back His people from slavery. Make sure you get this today, God uses all leaders to do His will, and none have a choice about it!



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This same work Jesus is doing today, He uses all leaders to bring about His glorious purpose of making His life known to the world. Last week we were able to take comfort that God is moving in our lives the same way as Paul, and today I want us to take comfort that even in some crazy, **turbulent** political times, God is still using our leaders to do exactly what He wants even though to us it can seem chaotic at times. This week we are going to continue our discussion of God’s Providence through looking at the **Gracious** provision provided by rulers, the **Goad**ing of the rulers by God to get them to do what He wants, and the **Gain**ing of alliances through God’s intervention to continue the mission of Global domination.

Main Point:

The **PROVIDENCE** of God is provided through **ordinary means**, in **turbulent times, propelling missions**, and **glorifying Christ**.

1. The GRACIOUS provision of God through our rulers. (vs. 23-25)

Paul Sent to Felix the Governor

²³Then he called two of the centurions and said, “Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. ²⁴Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor.” ²⁵And he wrote a letter to this effect:

Lysias upon hearing the news calls what appears to be a major militaristic force of almost 500 men. 200 would have made up the front wall with heavy shields, the spearmen forming up behind them to provide the offensive attack, and the Cavalry held in reserve to do the mopping up. Along with that Paul is put on mounts as well for speed of travel and the ability to move him quickly out of harm’s way. Then to top it off, they move out at night (3 hrs. after sunset) which provides the advantage for armed men expecting a fight freeing them up to attack anyone that would approach an armed convoy after dark.

Along with this sign of military force, that our political leaders love to flaunt, is we can see a **desire to do it quickly**. We are told that the soldiers on foot,



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all 400 of them, march through the night 35 miles to get him to Antipatris (v.31). Those of you in this room that have ruck sacked or have overnight hiked know that 35 miles with no rest with armor is daunting. Then the remaining 25 or so miles he is escorted on mount for speed by the powerful force of 70 men on mounted Calvary through a Gentile friendly countryside towards Caesarea. That also allows the marching force after a time for rest to get back quickly to Jerusalem in case someone didn't like the fact that Paul was transported so quickly.

Lysias, it seems is more than a little concerned and wants to be rid of this weight of conscience that Paul has put around the tribune's neck. He desires to take Paul all the way and place him in the hands of his superior who has a reputation on being hard against **rebel scum**. I will give you more on Felix next week when Paul meets him but just know it would not bode well for Lysias if anything bad happened to Paul. We should also note that he decides to write a letter to fully explain his reasoning and earnest work for safe protection.

I just want you to notice something here, **look at the lengths** that this ruler goes to for Paul. It wasn't because he was a converted believer that he chose to help Paul, it wasn't noted here in the text that he was even an honorable man as a matter-of-fact Luke has already told us he bought his citizenship, he didn't earn citizenship like Paul's family. Most likely what you take away, is there is a willingness to look good in the eyes of Felix, a man of power and reach in the Roman Empire, so that Lysias too most likely sees a plan for **advancement**. What we do know at this moment from last week is Jesus is the one steering the ship and He has chosen to let the self-interest desires of Lysias move him to take action for Paul, while at the same time Jesus is not culpable for any sin, He just allows men's actions to serve His purposes.

LP:

God is in control of the hearts of our rulers to give abundantly.

Proverbs 21:1-3

**21 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD;
he turns it wherever He will.**



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Notice what it doesn't say, it doesn't say first by winning over the king's heart because we know that sometimes it is better according to the plan of our conformity ([Rom 8:29](#)) and His uniting ([Eph 1:10](#)) to do things that bring Him more glory, and that is to do things while he actually hardens the hearts of rulers ([Exodus 9:12](#)).

Psalms 105:24-25 ESV

- ²⁴ And the LORD made his people very fruitful
and made them stronger than their foes.
²⁵ He turned their hearts to hate his people,
to deal craftily with his servants.

The Lord doesn't leave our futures to our rulers by chance just replacing them when they don't obey Him, even those that hate us, He still uses them to accomplish things for Him, because here is what He knows.

Proverbs 21:2 ESV

- ² Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the heart.

And we all know not to trust our hearts right!?! ([Jeremiah 17:9](#); [Romans 12:2](#)) God, doesn't only do things part way either, when He decides to act, He gets His rulers to go all the way through ensuring His plans come to fruition displaying the **GRACIOUSNESS of God**. The Tribune sent Paul with all the military might enough to trash not just 40 but an army and provided transportation in style. When Joseph had been abandoned by his brothers, he endured prison in Egypt, he was then elevated to the second under Pharaoh, all to bring his family into Egypt to preserve their lives so that the covenant to make them as numerous as the sands on the seashore could come true ([Genesis 45](#)). When it was time for them to leave Egypt by the mighty hand of God Moses led the hundreds of thousands of Jews, but they didn't leave empty handed for all the Egyptians surrendered their riches to the Hebrews as payment to get them out of town quick ([Exodus 12:33-36](#))! When Esther won the heart of the king, she didn't just save her people, but her cousin Mordecai became second in command under the king, and then they retaliated against their oppressors across all the land and killed over 75K



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([Esther 9](#)). When Ezra and Nehemiah went back to build the temple and walls of Jerusalem, they had more than what was needed and were always provided resources by Artaxerxes I to accomplish their desires. When our president talked about putting in conservative Supreme Court Judges, God just didn't put them in, He had them overturn Roe vs Wade! God gets all the credit for that, for we know the Lord has a plan to unite all things under His reign by **directing the heart of our rulers** but that never means there aren't times of **turbulence**/strife and worry before the deliverance comes! Our joy will be made complete if we are patient, we are persistent in our prayers, and we live obediently in front of this world by showing our faith in Him to do so.

2. The GOADING of the rulers by the HS to accomplish His will. (vs. 26-30)

²⁶“Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings. ²⁷This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. ³⁰And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him.”

Lysias takes a moment here to take a troubling situation and turn it for his good. He writes a letter to his boss Felix, and it seems that by the way he writes this letter that he wants to make sure that the governor knows what such a good tribune he really is. What looked like a great opportunity to flaunt his credentials to Felix was actually the hand of God showing using the desire in Lysias' heart to prompt this whole militaristic escort.

In v.27 Lysias makes the claim that he came to Paul's rescue to save him from the Jewish mob, having learned that he was a roman citizen. Wait, if I remember in the story Lysias didn't know that yet when he rescued him, he left that part out. Of course, he is delivering Paul now from them but what about the part about stringing him up for a flogging before any of that? Then he goes one step further and before even getting to Felix, he tells him Paul is innocent in v.29 that as a Roman citizen he has broken no law. Lastly, he lets



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Felix know that there is now a plot against this citizen and that he should hear for himself the Sanhedrin’s case. All of that to say Paul gets a **bonified pardon** in writing by the Tribune before ever making one statement. It ensures Paul’s safety and better accommodations than a normal prisoner. What you also don’t know is that Felix has no love for rowdy Jews, so the Tribune is setting himself up as a savior and an indispensable right-hand man for the governor who wanted to rule over the Jews with an iron fist.

LP:

God controls the plans of rulers using them to make a way for His people.

Proverbs 16:9 ESV

The heart of man plans his way,
but the LORD establishes his steps.

That is the heart of man decides what he wants to do, how he wants to do it, based on the things he wants. Those desires and plans are what God uses to establish his steps, while the man may, in the intermediate time, gets what he wants, but in the long-range plans God is setting the course to Unite all things under the Son. While at the same time never forgetting the promise of **Romans 8:28** *to work all things to the good, for those who are called according to His purpose.*

God would work His plan of getting Paul to Rome through the plans of advancement by Lysias, all the while working it to the good of Paul, almost giving him a little vacation if you will. He is separated from the mob, safe under Roman guards, with friends, eating on the dime of the state, not having to worry about assassination attempts or a daily preaching calendar, in essence Paul got a little sabbatical provided through the heart of Lysias. It seems to me that Paul has picked up on the HS wave and now is coasting it in on a Roman shore because it is being supplied by Jesus.

Look, I know it seems amazing right now to believe that anything ever gets done in Washington. We are busier about sending our money, our goods, and support to those outside the country than those inside who are citizens. Everyone in the capital is making statements, public announcements, and



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bold promises all trying to look good to the voters that sent them there and to the lobbyists that buy their support. **Here is what I do put hope in**, all of their decisions can happen according to what they plan but God controls every one of the paths that they create, even those that are leading to the destruction of His people.

At one time in the capital of Babylon, present day Iraq, there were those that hated the Jewish people and wrote letters to the king to decree that anyone that does not bow down to the government that they would be destroyed. Twice Daniel found himself in this boat and twice God delivered him and both times put him in the driving seat of the Babylonian empire 1st and then the larger Persian Empire 2nd and he used that influence to protect his people and train the wise men to look for Christ at the time of His birth. All of that propelling revival in his day and promoting Gentiles to look for a Messiah as well.

[CHALLENGE]

Perhaps you are thinking today I don't want to watch the news and I don't even want to vote. How about this, why don't you start watching the news, pray before you do, and ask God to show you how He is going to use the foolishness of men to set up His wise plans. How about instead of being depressed, scared and overwhelmed, remember God is letting them do this to make a way for His Son, to work for your good, to make the wise seem foolish, and set up a revival like we have yet not seen! **What if the demoralizing of America leads to the reawakening of the Christian church in our land to make that great last surge to take the gospel to all nations so that our Lord will return.** What if we looked at all the crazy politics as God setting up something to do something wonderful for, He is! Look you know it, you know how this all ends, He returns, we win, and we celebrate for the rest of eternity. Family don't buy all the doom and gloom for underneath there is a divine will guiding everything and man cannot thwart those plans, he doesn't have a chance.

3. The GAINING of alliances to accomplish our mission. (31-35)

³¹So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³²And on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting



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the horsemen go on with him. ³³When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. ³⁴On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.” And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod’s praetorium.

Well Paul finally makes it to his final destination not by his labor but all by God’s. The Calvary leader gives Felix the Governor the letter and Paul. Felix asks what province he is from, making sure not to overstep his boundaries before taking up this cause. Then he puts Paul up in his mansion, that used to belong to Herod’s family, with stunning views of the games and the shore.



LP:

God controls men, who don’t love Him, to give help in times of need.

Romans 13:1 ESV

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.



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Bottom line, it is through our governing system that God has already set up a system by which His people are already helped and in which they find alliances. Let us not forget that because of the **Constitution** we have the freedom of religion, yes it has been under attack, and it will be until Jesus returns. Perhaps you need to be encouraged, stop worrying about which candidate is the best, or which one has the best plans for your future and comfort, but maybe look into the candidates you vote for are more constitutionalists. Now I am not equating our constitution with scripture, but what it does show is that it was written under the influence of God’s Laws that must reign supreme in order for a society to flourish.

James Madison the biggest contributor to our Constitution and our 4th president, said, *“The future success of America is not in this Constitution, but in the laws of God upon which this Constitution is founded.”* John Jay, his coworker in that helped ratify the constitution through the *Federalist Papers* is reported to have said, *“The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.”* He also went on to say, *“No human society has ever been able to maintain both order and freedom, both cohesiveness and liberty, apart from the moral precepts of the Christian religion. ... Should our republic ever forget this fundamental precept of governance, this great experiment will then be surely doomed.”¹*

Don’t mistake that just because there are periods of silence and peace that it does not mean that there is not a period of disdain for God’s people. But in spite of that, God still controls our rulers' actions to give His people the help and services they need to get the job done that is universally make people aware of Him. **Here’s something we can all praise God for today**, because we have a constitution, it forces our rulers to do what God wants, it keeps evil at bay, and make no mistake that document was provided by a Sovereign God, to accomplish not just His will for America but His will for all time, to bring about the completion of His plan to unite all under Him. Felix got a letter, our nation

¹ <https://www.recorder.com/Faith-Matters-US-law-based-on-the-Bible-s-commandments-50155233>



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got a constitution, and it does the same thing every day and it is something that we should fight for by our prayers, our votes, and our speaking out. Why?

Main Point:

The **PROVIDENCE** of God is provided through **ordinary means, in turbulent times, propelling missions, and glorifying Christ.**

[CHALLENGE]

- Let me call on every family in here today, stop fretting about your tomorrows for Jesus is there.
- Stop fretting about the plans of evil that keep getting exposed for Jesus is still there.
- Stop fretting about the lack of Christina leadership in our country because Jesus is there.

Instead let us believe that He is for us, He has provided a letter to our nation's leaders that lets them know who is really in charge, and let us pray and be good Christian activists, vote, raise up the next generation of religious AND political leaders and let us instead plan on reaching the ends of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus. Because I will tell you this much, I know, that IS His plan and we should be a part of it, because in eternity I want us all to know we were in on it with Him together!

[PRAYER]

[CALL TO OBEY]

Elder – Read

Proverbs 21:3 says, "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." Church, our God is worthy of our obedience and our obedience as Proverbs 21:21 tells us will lead to the glory of our God and to life everlasting for us. For, "Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor."

[COMMUNION]



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[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – “Christians, what do you believe?”

Congregation - recites the LBCF 1689 Chapter 5 Of Divine Providence Section 4 God Is Sovereign Even Over Sin

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God are so demonstrated in his providence that his sovereignty includes even the first fall and every other sinful action of both angels and humans.

These sinful actions are not merely permitted by God. Rather, God wisely and powerfully binds and also directs and governs them to accomplish his perfectly holy purposes.

In all of this, the sinfulness of these actions originate only from the creators, and not from God. Since God is perfectly holy and righteous, he cannot be the author or approver of sin.

11. Romans 11:32-34; 2 Samuel 24:1; 1 Chronicles 21:1

12. 2 Kings 19:28; Psalms 76:10

13. Genesis 1:20; Isaiah 10:6-7, 12

14. Psalms 1:21; 1 John 2:16

[OFFERING+LAST SONG] -

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father,.

Go in the name of the Son,.

Go in the name of and power of the HS,.



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