

God's Work Through Paul, Pt. 1

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We are going to begin a unique series today, a new one. It's about Saul, which was his Jewish name, and then he began using his Roman name later on, which is Paul. Christ said that Paul would be his special vessel to go to the gentiles, and there are many things to be learned concerning his life and the things especially that God gave to him to teach to the Church, to give to the Church.

So, this series here now is going to be entitled, it is entitled *God's Work Through Paul*. Of course, this is *Part 1*.

We are going to continue on through some of the book of Acts because now we're up to a point we went through much of that. We're up to a point where it begins to focus more on how God and Christ worked through Paul. So, changing the title somewhat but delving into that even more so and bringing into the story then the account of some of the books that he wrote. Actually, they're epistles, they're letters called epistles. People refer to them as books nowadays, books of the Bible. But again, it's just a letter to certain areas or people in those cases.

So, we're going to go back a little bit to pick up some of this, just to get some of the timeline in here and some of the areas involved here. So, I'm going to back up a little bit in Acts, just cover a few high points and then we'll continue on, basically, from where we left off in the story flow of Acts.

So, I'm going to start here in Acts 11 here today. We're going to back up to about 44-45 AD, which was right at thirteen years after the Church had begun. And now Saul (or Paul) has been in the Church for about twelve years. So, it was about a year before he was called and came into the Church. God began to work through him; Christ began to work through him.

So, here in **Acts 11:19**, it says, **Now those who had scattered abroad from the persecution that came to pass on Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia** — this is modern-day area of Lebanon if you will — **Cyprus, and Antioch** — which is just a little farther up into the area of Syria there before you get into Asia along the Mediterranean coast — **preaching the word to no one but to Jews only**. So, that's how it began. They would go to synagogues; that's where people met.

And really, as we go into the sermon a little bit farther (I don't know if I'll touch upon it today), but it's really quite unique when you think about how they functioned and how they had to function and that transition from Judaism at that time into Christianity, into learning about Christ. And that mentality that they had and why that was such a difficult battle it really is quite unique, quite interesting the more we get into this.

Verse 20 it goes on to say, **But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Joshua. Even the hand of the Lord was**

with them, and a large number believed and turned to the Lord. Now, news of these things came to the ears of the Church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go up to as far as Antioch. That's just barely into the... That's in the western region then of Syria, about five hundred miles away as I've mentioned in the past, or three hundred ten miles, five hundred kilometers away from Jerusalem, basically, as the crow flies.

Verse 23—And when he came and had seen the grace of God he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue in the Lord. So again here, just barely starting and God's way of working with them, as He did with Paul, things would happen in an area, and they would have to leave and go on. And that's how God worked with them, to leave one area, one region, or whatever and go into another.

And so, all these people began to spread out now that the Church was fairly well established. But it was a hard struggle. It was a huge change as we're going to find as we get into this a little more deeply into this series.

Verse 24—For he was an upright man, full of the holy spirit and faith. Even many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus. And that's in Cilicia (which is the southern south-eastern part of that map we sent out)¹ in Asia there. So, it's just basically, if you look and see where Antioch is on your map and go across that little body of water in the Mediterranean, right up there is the area of Tarsus, which is where Paul, his home was there; that's where he was from.

So, then **Barnabus departed for Tarsus** in Cilicia **to seek Paul. Then when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch.** So, they went back down to Antioch because of all that was happening there. And again, led by God's spirit in these things. He went up there to bring him down to begin working in that area.

So it was for a whole year they assembled with the Church and taught a great many people. Now, the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. So again, unique growth of what was taking place, a message that was more powerful there in that respect from Jerusalem, then Antioch and their focus there.

And this was right after this time that a famine came upon the whole world as it's stated in Acts. Then Paul and Barnabus traveled to Jerusalem to help them. So, we covered some of those things already.

Now, moving ahead a little bit a couple of more years, 47-48 AD, again, which is about sixteen to seventeen years after the Church began in 31 AD, and a few of these first gentile Church areas were just beginning to be raised up. So again here, very slow as they began to work farther north and west, as Paul did anyway (as we're going to cover). And a little bit was being established at this time but again, very, very little at this point.

¹ Pictures of maps are inserted at the end of the sermon text.

Now, **Acts 13:13**, jumping ahead. **Now, when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos** — it's a city on the island of Cyprus there. So again, just a little way out there in the Mediterranean from the coast, from Antioch. — **they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.** I think that was John Mark.

And it says, **But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia.** Now, this is a different Antioch. That's why this gets a little confusing sometimes. If you look on the one map, it's number one, first one has the cities on it all in green. If you look at the area of Galatia it gives on the map, between there you'll see that area of Antioch, the city of Antioch, and that is in the region of Pisidia, but it's in Galatia, the region of Galatia. And anyway, a different Antioch than the one in Syria. Two Antioch's. One in Syria; one in up by Galatia.

So, they came **to Antioch in Pisidia and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.** So, it always began this way, always would go into a synagogue. Because the Jews were all over the region through there and so there were these areas that would have these synagogues. They would go in there because this is where people met for the Sabbath.

And again, it was where they could actually go, and in many cases begin to talk, began to preach as they did. And kind of unique for us to think in these terms because of how they did this. Because you're talking about Judaism. But that's really all the region really knew and had to build upon so that's why it started with Judaism, with the Jews first — because of the Old Testament.

So, if they had begun to talk about (which Paul did often), began to talk about their migrations, Abraham, going on down talking about being in Egypt or talking about Moses and the law of Moses and the law that was given. And they talked in these terms that all the Jews understood until they got to the subject of Joshua, which always came along, and this is where the friction started coming in. But God used that to begin calling some people out of Judaism and into the truth, into those things that all that was physical began to show what was spiritual about it.

Verse 15—Then after reading the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak on. So, this is what would happen because they would go through and talk about some of these things, and then Paul or whoever would get up and begin to talk about the same things but leading up to Joshua and what happened in Jerusalem. Which, that news was all around the region anyway, but to hear it in the manner that they put it — quite different.

So again here, these cities that Paul had traveled to are located in one specific region that becomes quite important here, the first ones he goes into, just like Pisidia there, Antioch, if you will. Some of these areas here, we'll begin to see, are the areas of Galatia. Later on, he writes to the Galatians, and all these become important as far as where God was raising up the Church.

So, in covering Acts 14 last Sabbath we came across other cities where Paul preached that are part of Galatia. In this region there was Iconium... (Now, a lot of these have different pronunciations but I try to pick out one that's more along the average; but sometimes they have one, two, or even three different ways of pronouncing some of these, so it's not a big deal, but I try to do it in the best way possible.) ... Lystra, Derbe, and Lycaonia. Antioch of Pisidia is often included as, again, being in the region of Galatia. And this is around 48 AD that we're talking about right here.

Then the region just below Galatia on down to the Mediterranean coast are Perga and Attalia that are in Pamphylia. So, this region of Galatia really comes down almost to the coast and there is a small region there called Pamphylia and that just covers some of those cities right on the coast of the Mediterranean.

So again, for those who like maps, who like to see where cities are. I enjoy it. It helps me to picture these things and brings it alive a little bit more.

So, let's notice something here. Although it would seem that... This is kind of difficult because Galatians is believed to be the first epistle that he wrote, and because those are the first Church areas that began to be raised up. So, this is the first epistle that he writes. And that was written somewhere later they believe, around 48-49, and yet it seems to be a little later than that (that I'll get to), at least by a few years, as we'll get to in a moment. But anyway, it becomes important to realize some things that took place and what Paul was addressing when he did write to them.

Galatians 1; let's turn over there and notice some things that were stated, something that he had to say about this region. **Galatians 1:1—Paul, an apostle (not from men nor by men, but by Joshua the Christ.** So, showing where this was coming from. It wasn't from him, it's not from others, it's not taught by anyone else, it came directly from Joshua the Christ. **...and God the Father who raised him from the dead.**

Can you imagine some of these places when this is what they were hearing, especially in the synagogues, because these are the things he preached and it's like... (?)

...and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches in Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Joshua the Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God the Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. So, really powerful in the things that he had to say, an awesome message.

Verse 6. And this is what is important to pick up here — **I marvel that you are turning away so soon from he who called you in the grace of Christ...** So, when this was finally written, or when it was written he's already addressing this area, this region of the Galatians and the cities that are there that he visited, and he was marveling that they had been called and already in a very short time... And if we go by the time that they give it's even shorter. But I believe it was a little bit of time they had here, a year or two at least, a couple of years.

But it's incredible to think how these things happen. But it's not so incredible to us because of all the things we have experienced because of all the things leading up to the time after Herbert Armstrong died, seeing what happened without an apostle at that time, one who came along and wanted to do away with, became jealous of Herbert Armstrong, wanted all of his stuff destroyed. And they began to work in that regard until they actually began to try to make changes. And then we had the Apostasy. We've gone through a lot.

And it's quite incredible when you read some of these stories in that context, of what people have gone through in different ages and different times. But here, it doesn't come as a big surprise sometimes when you realize it doesn't take all that long for people just to vanish, turn away, turn to something else, because, throughout the history of being in the Church, these are the things that are really in a large part in the forefront of my mind.

All the people, and some of them didn't last very long. Come along, have a calling from God, have their minds open up to the truth, able to talk to us about the truth because of God's spirit, because of what they're able to believe, but then this matter of choosing to live by it. That's where the struggle is, which is what faith is, it's the choice to live by what God gives us the ability to believe. That's our choice as to whether or not we're going to hold on to it and live by it. And it's through faith that that process is accounted to us for righteousness.

This is how we're saved. This is the process we go through of changing and of being right with God in that regard and being forgiven of all sin on a continuing basis as we cry out to God for help to be forgiven of our sins.

But again here, not a great marvel that so many through time. It's not hard to understand when it talks about the few who have held on and the many who have gone by the wayside.

So again here, he's addressing something very early on in the Church. His first epistle, this is what he has to address. Barely getting started and has to address the fact that people are leaving. "So, I marvel." And it would be a marvel because this is the first time he's had to deal with this. He knows what happened to him. He sees things that he's chosen to live by, he's excited by and understands with an incredible depth, and then he shares that with others, their minds are opened up to it, and then to think that it's given up so easily. It is a marvel. It's mind-boggling.

So, he says, **I marvel that you are so soon removed from this, turning away from this, who called you in the grace of Christ into another...** It says, "**good news,**" "**gospel,**" "**proclaiming of a good news.**" Someone else comes along and teaches something different. And this is what he's referring to, the announcement or the message of good news that they have. People think they have a better idea, a better way, start teaching something. Different ones came out, Jews especially from Jerusalem and some of those in those areas that were scattered.

The age-old problem within the Church of people wanting to be the teacher, of wanting to be the one to do what Paul is doing or do what Barnabus was doing. And he had to address those kinds of things. And yet God gave them that task, that message to go out and to teach. And yet inevitably human nature is one that sees something that they want. Incredible! Not understanding how God works. Not understanding what it is they received and how they received it.

Verse 7—which is not another. Obviously, there is no other. **But there are some who trouble you and want to pervert,** the message of it in other words, **good news of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Christ to you than what we have preached to you, let them be...** The word is not “**accursed.**” Oh, this is what happens in life to people when you turn away from God. What happens is worse than what you were before. But it says, **let them be avoided.** That’s what the word is in the Greek language in essence. It’s the word “**anathema.**” It has to do with relationships.

It’s the beginning of something given to Paul that he builds upon through other books of being disfellowshipped, of not being a part of the Body, of things that should not happen in the environment of God’s Church, and how to deal with that. And so, Paul was given how to deal with it very powerfully so. Something that really wasn’t practiced all that well in God’s Church through times past. Things were allowed to continue on.

Ministers who had done things were transferred from one area to another to give them another change or whatever. You think, some things that were done should never have been given another chance. They shouldn’t. They can be a part of the Body, and they can learn if they want to humble themselves, but to continue to teach? No more. That’s the way it should be, should have been. But we have to learn those things oftentimes by going through different experiences and some of our history of what we’ve had to go through in God’s Church. This is how God refines us and helps us to become more deeply convicted of things that are right and how important those things are to God, to Christ.

So he says, **if anyone else comes along and preaches anything let them be avoided. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other message of good news,** supposedly some message that they bring along **to you than what you have received, let them be avoided.** So, he’s saying it twice. He’s putting extra emphasis upon it. This is what or how if you will, this is to be dealt with. They are not a part, and they are to be avoided. They are not to be – he didn’t use the word yet – but they are not to be a part of the Church, the fellowship of the Church. So, that comes out more and more as we go through the different epistles that he wrote.

Verse 10—For do I now put my trust in any human being, or God? So, when the mind is opened up and you understand the only reason you know what you know and see what you see is because God has given it to you through the power of the holy spirit and something has been taught to you, in essence, he’s saying here, “Hold on to it! Grab hold of it! Don’t trust in what anybody else comes along and says that’s different.” Common sense.

Or do I seek to please any human being? So, Paul is asking that, “Am I going to say things because I’m trying to please someone?” Because that happens. Things have been taught, things have been said, individuals have held back their real beliefs, like 14/15th Passover. We’ve had years and years and years for many of them who would not teach what they really believed. They taught something else they didn’t believe. They taught the 14th Passover because that’s what the Church taught, and they knew they wouldn’t have a job at that particular time or during some of those times if they did it. Until the Apostasy, then, finally, everything broke loose and a whole smear of ministers came along who began to bring it out this is what they believed, 14/15th Passover. Incredible, those kinds of things have happened.

So, Am I trying to please any human being? I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the good news which was preached by me is not according to any human being. So, he’s reminding them again, “This is not of any human being. It doesn’t come from any human being. It wasn’t taught by any human being.”

For I neither received it from any human being, nor was I taught it, in essence from any human being, **but it came by the revelation of Joshua the Christ.** “He’s the one who taught it to me more directly.”
Awesome!

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God beyond measure, even to destroy it. He was zealous in that because of what he believed until he was called.

Now, I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my peers in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous/jealous for the traditions of my father. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the gentiles I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. He says, “I didn’t go and visit with other people to talk about this. I didn’t,” in essence, “go to talk to the apostles in Jerusalem.” That’s what he says next – **nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those apostles before me, but I went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus.** Again, up in Syria.

So again here, he’s telling the story of what he went through, and that Joshua taught him there.
Incredible!

Then after three years... So, this lasted for three years that he was being taught. And we don’t know how that happened, how it took place, whether it was just by revelation of the mind. He had, perhaps, the Old Testament books, some of the scrolls. I don’t know but he was taught during that long period of time while he was down there. There’s not much said about it, so we really don’t know the ins and outs. I look forward to the day we can hear more.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. So, he’s very specific about this – not very long, fifteen days. **But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother. But the things which I write to you, look, before God, I do not lie.** I think of some of

these things here about how that that great church that started in 325, that this is one area that they never tried to really understand the scriptures on. They would not agree to the fact that Joshua had brothers because it's supposed to have just been one from a virgin, from Mary, and he couldn't have had brothers. That's what their belief was. I don't know what it is now, but incredible. Absolute refusal to believe what's very clear in scripture. Yes, he had brothers.

Afterward, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. That area of Antioch and Tarsus again here. **But I was not known by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God in me.** So he said that there are those who learned those things and they were excited to hear that he wasn't persecuting the Church anymore. But they still had some battles with this, some of them did, because of what he did, knowing that he was there giving his nod of approval to killing Stephen and brought so many back to Jerusalem from different areas, Damascus, those areas up through there. He went up and took them prisoner, brought them back down to Jerusalem in bonds, beat them, and so forth, or had them beaten.

So, going on here to Galatians 2. We're going to continue into the first couple of verses in this next chapter here. And this was covered thoroughly in the first sermon of the year, *The Bond of Works to Grace, Pt. 3*. So, even though we covered part of that we're going to cover some of it here and then we'll build upon that later on.

But anyway, it says in **Galatians 2:1—Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. Now, I went up by revelation and communicated to them the message of good news which I preach among the gentiles.** So again here, Galatians, writing to them and talking about this traveling back to Jerusalem again after he had been there for that fifteen days with Peter, and now having talked about having gone back.

So, now after he was called he spent three years in Arabia. He went to Jerusalem for a couple of weeks and then on to the region of Syria and Cilicia there where Antioch and Tarsus are. So, putting this information together, being about one year after Christ's death and resurrection when he was called, and three years in Arabia, and now fourteen more years in the region of Cilicia, because that's what he just mentioned here in Chapter 2, fourteen more years in the area of Cilicia in Tarsus. Then that, you talk about eighteen years now altogether. So, this is what he's addressing before going back down to Jerusalem and what he's addressing here at this point in time. So, this brings us up to 49 AD.

Again here, we'll get to this point about Galatians again a little bit later on but to realize it wasn't long here and this is when it's attributed to him that he wrote some of this, but it had to be a little bit longer because he hadn't even gone up into some of these areas very much at all for them to get started—incredible—as we go on with the story.

So again, regardless of the specific timing some of these things can be off because there are a lot of different ideas and so forth out there. History is not kept very well, obviously, through time. But it's, again, interesting to see how these areas were brought along, how God brought them along, how Christ brought them along. Then, of course, it's good to see the growing truth that was revealed through Paul because each epistle that he wrote just continued to give more and more and more that have been the pillar in large part for learning so much in scripture and what God wants us to know and understand within the Church. More than any other individual used, Paul wrote a ton here, truly did, and gave much truth.

Acts 16:1 we're going to continue on from where we left off in *Part 6* of that last sermon series concerning *The Beginning of the Church*. So, this brings us up to the point we're going to keep going forward. It says, **Acts 16:1—Then arriving in Derbe and Lystra...** So again, these are the areas; he's moving up into the area of Galatia at this point, Acts 16:1.

And it says, **A certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.** So again, an individual mentioned here early on that becomes very important in scripture as well in the life of Paul and what Paul did and the preaching that took place and that which Timothy did as time goes along.

Verse 2—He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go with him. So, then he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. So again here, there is this. This is just the beginning and so there are things that Paul is trying not to offend large masses of Jews because it's hard enough talking about what he's addressing without having to address some of these things early on. So, this is very quick here, and so again here, had this done with Timothy because they put so much weight on these physical rituals and so forth as far as Judaism was concerned and that's where they always went first.

Then as they went through the cities, they gave to them the judgments to keep that were determined by the apostles and the elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number accordingly.

Now, when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the holy spirit to preach the word in Asia. So again here, you can see that area there, gives the whole region that it's talking about there.

After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia... So again, that's up in the left-hand corner of the first map there that has the different cities on it where we've just taken a look at there. So, up in the left-hand corner there, upper part of the Mediterranean to the east and north.

It says ... **A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, Come over to Macedonia to help us.** Now you have to look at a different map. So, here are the regions where it has Asia on the right, Thrace at the top, Macedonia, it's on the left, and Greece, actually, down below that. So, Macedonia is the area where Thessalonica is, up there at the top, Berea. You'll see Philippi and some of those cities up there to the left-hand corner on the map. So, this is where they've gone. They had to pass up this one area; God's spirit wouldn't let them stop, told them to continue on, in essence. That's what he's saying.

So **passing by Mysia, it says, they went down to Troas. Then a vision appeared to Paul in the night.** So, they were headed up toward that direction here, again, if you see the area there, Troas right on the coast there almost as it were. It says, **A man of Macedonia, again, pleaded with him saying, Come to Macedonia and help us. Now, after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.** So, because of that, that's why he made his decision, his choice, and that's what follows then.

Therefore, sailing from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis. So again, if you want to look for some of those. I'm not sure they're even on there. Thrace is up there. So, they were sailing that way. They were going to the west, **and from there to Philippi.** So again, you should have that on the map there because, again, they're staying up close to the coast.

Oftentimes they didn't go just across a huge body of water from one spot to another. They went around the coast where if there were problems and so forth... Sometimes the Aegean Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the weather, and so forth could really be bad. Paul had occasion where he was shipwrecked and so forth. So, we know some of those stories that will be coming up in time here. Again, they stayed fairly well close to the coast as they traveled in some of these areas.

And so they're saying, **from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city in that part of Macedonia, a colony. Now, we were staying in that city for some time. Now, on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made, and we sat down and spoke to the women who were gathered there. Now, a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God.**

Now, generally, this is looked upon as being wealthy. The seller of purple, how they got that, and so forth. I think it started with the Phoenicians, some of the Phoenicians, and the process they went through to get it, it was hard to get. They'd make garments from it and that color was sought after, so again here, expensive in that particular time.

So, **a woman named Lydia heard us, a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to give attention to the things spoken by Paul.** So again here, when it talks about some of these things there's an attitude of mind that many of them had even in Judaism that it was about a mind and the way they felt in their mind and their thinking with what they knew toward God. And there are certain things there that God honored and blessed them, and this is part of this story.

Then when she and her husband were baptized, she implored us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. So she persuaded us. Now, it came to pass as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by foretelling (by her sayings, in other words). That's what it's about, by her sayings, of things that she would say.

And there are things in the demonic world that they know, that they have. Not a matter of something in the future but things that they know, and they can pass on to human beings, which is what, in this case here, what their practice was and so forth.

So, it says, **The same followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God.** So, they knew that. They knew that these individuals had this relationship with God. They knew that there was God's spirit in their presence when they were close to them. There are things that they can know and understand in a spirit realm and so they knew who they were. That's why some came along later on, as we're going to read, and they didn't know who they were because there was no spirit there in them. Obviously, it wasn't from God.

But here as an account. And so they're crying this, this individual is crying this out. So, **They are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to us the way of salvation. Now, this she did for many days. But Paul, being tired of it, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Joshua the Christ to come out of her.** So, he'd had enough. Can't imagine being in an environment where there are other people around and someone is hollering this on a continual basis. **Then it came out that very hour.**

But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and led them to the marketplace to the authorities. So, here was their bread and butter. Here it was they were profiting off of this, off of this demonic being, if you will, that was inhabiting her and the things that they were doing and saying and so forth.

Now bringing them to the magistrates they said, These men, who are Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe. So again here, being Romans. So, they would land on these things, talk about these things that there were certain regions that the closer especially you got down toward into Greece and even especially if it had Roman authority over it, that this held sway. And there were certain things that were allowed, in essence, accepted within the Roman rule, and there were other things that weren't. And we especially see that in 325 and what took place and what the outlawed and why it was so difficult for anyone in the Church at that particular time.

Verse 22—So, the multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore off their clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods. Some of these customs are kind of crazy, the things that they did, ripping off certain garments and throwing them on the ground. And they all had meaning to them, but it had to do with judgment and justification for themselves and what they were doing.

Says, **Now, when they had laid many stripes on them...** So again, sometimes we think we have it tough? This wouldn't be much fun. You know, it drew blood and took a time to heal. And these are things that Paul lived with a lot as time went along here.

It says here, **they threw them in prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.** So, he wasn't taking any chances because this was more serious because of what was said to him, to keep him, and he didn't want anything happening to where they weren't going to be there when the time came. Because it could mean your head.

Verse 25—But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Some of these things, think of what they went through and what they did, and how they expounded on various things.

Verse 26—Suddenly, there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were loosed. So again, some of the experiences of things they had, but others around them saw it, experienced some of these things, and stories would be told about it. Things would spread this way as well.

Then the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. So, that's why he did what he did, put them in stocks, as it were, in the deeper part of the prison, because he didn't want anything happening and now this happens and so it's easier for him just to take... Rather than the beatings and everything else that might go along with it in what he's going to have to experience before he's killed because he knows this means his life, and so he's ready to take his own life with his own sword. It's hard to understand things like that when you've never experienced anything like it. This is what they lived. This is how they lived.

So, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, having supposed the prisoners had fled. But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm, for we are all here. Like, who does this? If you're let loose and these things happen and they're still waiting around? **Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**

So, not knowing what was in his mind or why it was, but he knew that this wasn't a normal thing, this wasn't a natural thing that had just occurred. He saw something that doesn't happen happen. They're free, the earthquake took place, he realized they were set free, and again here, shook him to the core of his being so he's looking to them. He'd already heard them singing as the prisoners did and they were praising God and so forth in their songs.

So they said, Believe on the Lord Joshua the Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household. So, what they might have heard to lead to this conclusion, I don't know, because a lot of times you read

through these stories and there's not a lot there. It's kind of a summary of what took place and so you don't know. Because he had to have heard something in order to believe something. So, he's had to have heard some of this before. Again, some of these stories it leaves you wanting more that we don't have yet.

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. So, this is clear here what was taking place. Now he's invited them over, invited them in and they're teaching them about Joshua and what he went through and what he experienced, of what it means.

Then he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And right away he and all his family were baptized. So again here, to understand their minds being opened to see things that they couldn't see and believe what they heard is maybe a little difficult depending on what you experienced when you were called. But again, whatever that point is we may have read some, we may have heard certain things, but at some point all of a sudden we're able to see in the sense of knowing this is true. There's a knowing that goes with being able to do that, to believe something that God gives to us and then our choice to act upon it.

Well, this was very basic. They obviously were taught various things. They had to be taught about baptism, about probably the baptism of John, maybe even had heard about it before. Because this spread throughout the whole regions even way beyond the areas of Judea. And so, whatever it was here they understood enough to know that you have to be baptized and so forth, and so this is what they wanted. They wanted to be forgiven of their sins, they wanted to be right with God, and they believed that Joshua was the Christ. Very basic things that you have to come to at this point in time, and this is what God had brought them to, opened up their minds.

So, when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. So, that's why he was excited, that's why he was rejoicing as he was. Because not just him but his whole household was able to agree they saw the same thing. God opened up their minds and blessed the whole family because of this. And so, they saw it, they were baptized as well. Incredible story to see how God was working, especially early on. Because this is just the beginning in these areas, just the start.

Verse 35—Now, when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, Let those men go. They were already gone, you know, they were already released. **So, the keeper of the prison told these words to Paul, saying, The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace.** So, no action on this, it's just for whatever reason, God always being involved, this is what was told to them, "Let them go." And so he was, again, another time to be thankful that they were able to go in peace, able to go in peace.

But Paul said to them, They have beaten us openly without having a trial, being Romans, having thrown us into prison. So, we all may react differently to some things. I think most of us would go. Why

stay around? Why push this? But Paul was the one who would push the envelope and a lot of this having to do with what he had done before, how he had lived, and he was zealous in what he did in the first place toward the Church.

Now he was zealous toward Christ and toward his calling, toward God and that had an effect upon his thinking because of the things he knew he was guilty of in the past, and so, he's willing to take a stand on certain things that he didn't care, in essence, what they would do to him. And that comes out a lot as we go through the story of Paul. Because there are things that he grasped and understood, that his life was in God's hands and this was his decision. So, he's going to make a point here, "I am a Roman, and they beat me!"

You couldn't do that in any of these areas. In any of this region, all the way through there, it was under Roman rule – all the way down in Jerusalem, all the way even farther south and into areas of Egypt and so forth. So, if you come all the way up through here Roman rule throughout the region and Romans had a certain standing, if you were a Roman. Because there are those who had to buy that citizenship and pay very large sums in order to have it. Others were born with it. Paul had it from the very beginning and this is what he's telling them. "I am a Roman."

And in essence, it was against the law for any magistrate or anyone to do such a thing to a Roman because they should be judged by Romans. Not anyone else had the right to do that. So, this story happens over and over and over again here, where there are certain restrictions as far as the Roman rule and the Roman government and Roman law was concerned, and there are some who feared this mightily because they knew this could be their life for what they did, if you took it upon yourself to have judgment and so forth upon someone of that citizenship.

So again here, it says, **But Paul said to them, They have beaten us openly without having a trial, being Romans, having thrown us into prison.** All that against the law to do to a Roman. **Then now do they cast us out in secret?** So, "Now they want us to leave in secret because they know or there is that which they understand I am a Roman?" **No indeed! Let them come themselves and lead us out.** Pretty bold! Pretty gutsy! (...want to be on the first cart out of town.)

Verse 38—Now, the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. So, this happens again and again and again, when something happens to them and someone takes it upon themselves to punish them, to beat them, to do whatever to them, to throw them into prison, and here now they find out he's Roman and all the more so they're fearful.

Then they came and implored them and led them out asking them to depart from the city. Being very nice about it now, you know, humbling themselves, "We made a mistake. Please go. Please leave us."

So, they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia. Now, when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

So again here, sometimes it's a little hard for me to know how much material to have. I am finished with my sermon, but I did bring along news because I knew this might happen.

But as we get into some of these stories, his whole life and the things he went through, and the things he experienced one region to another become quite incredible. They really are – inspiring and incredible.

Okay, been eventful this past week. I'm just going to read a little bit of what happened toward the beginning, but again here, even in conversation at the beginning of services here, some had made comment about what's happening in Europe, seeing a change that's taking place. We're able to witness this. We can see that attitude of mind, of them turning in a different way concerning the US and how they think about us.

And if you think about two previous wars and what happened, the US was very much one that didn't want to be involved, which is understandable. But nevertheless, a growing in power and might, especially by the time of WWII, but trying to keep out of it totally, let them fight their own wars. And yet, this attitude of mind happening in Europe now. These are the kinds of things that come back. They remember what happened in WWII, and they remembered that we didn't want to be involved, and they remembered Lend-Lease Act and different things that took place and the games that were played by governments and even by this nation, of not wanting to be involved.

Which, again, is understandable on a physical plane, but not very good when you're a major nation in the world with great power and can help people that are being slaughtered and some of the things that took place, the atrocities that took place during WWII. I still remember vividly going through the museum and seeing the newspapers. You think you go through a museum, and you just see newspapers along an area where they have them behind glass, a glass barrier, but you can see, you can go up there to them and read them, what was said. And all over the world, they were showing from different places, including the US, that there were things that came out, that they knew about the atrocities of what was happening in WWII even with the Jews and the killing of Jews.

So, this was in Jerusalem and the Holocaust Museum, and you walk through that, and you see some these things and you think... To me, it was kind of a stark reality. I didn't know that we knew about many of these things long ahead of time, of certain things that were taking place. And to not...? Especially when you look at a carnal, physical world, not to want to be involved not to want to help? Kind of... Again here, there's always been this attitude in the world toward the Jews. Interesting. Not for the reasons that many think.

Trump's Ukraine envoy: EU won't be part of peace talks² People going crazy over some of this because they weren't invited in to be a part of the peace talks. But you've got to think about their mindset and what they are seeing first, not waiting around to think, "Well, he might have a strategy of

² Catarina Matamoros, "Trump's Ukraine Envoy: EU Won't Be Part of Peace Talks," Euractiv, 20 Feb. 2025, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/trumps-ukraine-envoy-eu-wont-be-part-of-peace-talks/>.

why he wants to meet with and talk with Russia first, Putin first, and not including in us.” There’s this pride. There is this matter “This is happening on our doorstep and why aren’t we being included in it?”

And I don’t know if you’ve heard some of the rhetoric back and forth between Zelensky and what he’s saying about President Trump and then back and forth, what was said visa versa. It hasn’t been a pleasant week. But these things go out to all the world and their eyes are upon it. It’s affecting how people think and what’s going to happen in time.

“Munich, Germany – Donald Trump’s Ukraine envoy, Keith Kellogg, told Europeans on Saturday that their inclusion in talks to end the war in Ukraine was “not going to happen”. Kellogg dropped the bombshell...” So, even in this in going some of this it’s like, things are said sometimes off the cuff that have a tremendous impact, and then they have to kind of walk certain things back. Didn’t mean it exactly that way.

Anyway, “...Kellogg dropped the bombshell at the Munich Security Conference after Europeans for a week had scrambled to emphasize no Ukraine peace talks should happen without Kyiv or them. Asked whether Europeans should have a role in future talks, Kellogg said he was “from the school of realism, and that is not going to happen”.” This is powerful stuff because it stirs up a reaction then in Europe and amongst European leaders and parts of the world in their thinking toward this country that will lead up to what we know is going to take place.

I still marvel how it wasn’t too many years ago it was like none of this was taking place, and only a little bit could you see attitudes beginning to change over there toward the US. But now, today?

“The comments are the most explicit confirmation yet by a senior US administration official that they intend for Europe to follow the talks from the sidelines, beyond preparing any post-deal security guarantees for Ukraine.” So, this is a total flipflop in a lot of the policies that have been taking place, and it doesn’t go over well because, well, what are they going to do? And the bottom line is that feeling “They’re not going to have our back if we need it. They’re not going to come to our intervention if we need it. We have to do this on our own.”

So, people are at the point right now where they’re talking NATO is of no value. It’s like people thinking about the United Nations, it has no value, it has no effect in the world. And now there are people talking about, and even over here, of not being a part of it anymore. So, that doesn’t give any security to anyone over there, obviously, so they understand this is “We have to make our own choices, of what we’re going to do.” All prophetic.

Another article here. This is from RT, again, Russian perspective. **Germany urges NATO unity following emergency meeting on Ukraine**³ “The US wants its European allies to serve as Kiev’s security providers

³ RT. "Scholz: Ukraine's NATO Security." RT News, 20 Feb. 2025, <https://www.rt.com/news/612908-scholz-ukraine-nato-security/>.

after a potential peace deal with Russia. Convened by French President Emmanuel Macron, the leaders' gathering was aimed at establishing a unified European stance following the shift in US policy..."

That's still amazing. All the way back in the time of Daniel of what God said, the last part of that statue, iron mixed with clay. And it's so perfect in what it describes. There is power there, but they don't use it. They're not held together. They don't have a common unified goal and effort in what they're trying to accomplish but this is pushing them to that point of one day being able to do that.

So again here, "...stance following the shift in US policy, though some dissenting EU members were notably absent. At a press conference after the meeting, Scholz was dismissive of questions regarding Germany's potential troop commitments to Ukraine, calling them premature and irritating, while expressing confidence in NATO's security framework." So, they give word of mouth to some of this not believing it for a second. That's basically how it's working right now.

Another article: **Ukraine's Zelenskyy says Trump lives in 'disinformation space' amid rift on Russia talks**⁴ Not a smart move. You know, you think you want help, you want weapons, you want... And it's like cutting your own throat. It says in the article (this is Fox), it says, "'Unfortunately, President Trump – I have great respect for him as a leader of a nation that we have great respect for, the American people who always support us – unfortunately lives in this disinformation space," Zelensky said. Zelenskyy's canceled trip to Saudi Arabia was widely seen as a rebuke of the agreements Trump's team made with Russian counterparts during their Tuesday meeting there. Trump also followed up the meeting with aggressive criticism of Zelenskyy and Ukraine.

"Trump envoy Keith Kellog, a retired 3-star general, arrived in Kyiv to hold talks with Zelenskyy on Wednesday. Ukrainian officials have emphasized that any peace deal will require U.S. security guarantees in order to ensure Russia does not continue the violence." So, in their minds, it's like, "Do we really have it?" And that's what it all comes down to. It's going to come down to do we want to have this war in Europe. Because they know it's coming in time. That's what they fear; that's what they believe. And so, they realize they have to take this into their own hands, or at least they're starting to in some areas.

Another article here: **Trump calls Ukraine's Zelensky a 'dictator without elections' as rift widens.** So, because Zelensky says something it comes back a lot stronger.

I don't know if you saw it today, what happened up in the meeting of governors? Anyway, the president was talking to them, and he started talking about how that there is one area, he said Maine, that is trying to have an individual enter women's sports that shouldn't be there. And anyway, so he's asking, he makes the comments about this and asked if the governor from Maine is there, and she said she was,

⁴ Pawlyk, Oriana. "Ukraine's Zelenskyy Says Trump Lives in 'Disinformation Space' Amid Rift over Russia Talks." Fox News, 20 Feb. 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ukraines-zelenskyy-says-trump-lives-disinformation-space-amid-rift-russia-talks>.

and he said, "Are you going to back this up," in essence. Different words that he used. I can't think of what are the words that he used.

That, "Are you going to enforce this and so forth in Maine because..." And she says, "We are." "Are you going to force the law on this?" And she says, "We are following the laws of the State and the Federal Government." He says, in essence, "I am the Federal Government," in essence, and telling her in no uncertain terms that this is going to be done, and she needs to address it. Anyway, it came down to the fact she said, "We'll see you in court." He says, "I look forward to it." So, you think, these things that take place anymore, we live in a crazy world.

And talk like this here overseas? How much worse then when you're talking about different nations and what is taking place in the sense of military?

So, it says here, **Trump calls Ukraine's Zelensky a 'dictator without elections' as rift widens**⁵ And candidly, that's exactly what should happen. You know, when someone is a ruler of a certain area of the world and they've been elected to a certain job they have the right to do certain things and to pass certain things, and they should be applied. If law is law people should live by it. But they say it's not and we have this merry-go-round, and you wonder what on earth?

Anyway, it says, "President Donald Trump blasted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as a "dictator without elections" on Wednesday after the U.S. left Ukraine out of initial peace talks with Russia this week." I don't know how many of you know the history of some of this, but I feel very strongly that most of the country has no idea of how Ukraine got to this point, of the government that was there before and the government that came along and how it came along and some of the things that have taken on in Ukraine.

And it really isn't a pretty picture, but it's been backed by Europe because "This is at the forefront between us and Russia" and there are some really nasty... I mean, when you don't know where billions of dollars have gone that you've received, and others claiming that a lot of the weapons are in the hands of different groups in Mexico and on down through South America, cartels, some of the weapons that are supposed to be in Ukraine are down there. And you think, is that possible? In this world, sadly so. Because even when people are suffering there are those on the sidelines there are those who try to make a lot of money out of it. Sick, sick, sick world. It's always been that way during wars.

So it says here, ""A Dictator without Elections, Zelenskyy better move fast or he is not going to have a Country left," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "In the meantime, we are successfully negotiating an end to the War with Russia, something all admit only 'TRUMP,' and the Trump Administration, can do. Biden

⁵ Wulfsohn, Joseph. "Trump Calls Ukraine's Zelenskyy a 'Dictator' Without Elections as Rift Widens." Fox News, 20 Feb. 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-calls-ukraines-zelenskyy-dictator-without-elections-rift-widens>.

never tried, Europe has failed to bring Peace, and Zelenskyy probably wants to keep the 'grave train' going." Think, man, not mincing any words.

"Trump added, "I love Ukraine, but Zelenskyy has done a terrible job, his Country is shattered, and MILLIONS have unnecessarily died – And so it continues....." So, this rift just gets wider and wider.

"Describing Zelenskyy as a "modestly successful comedian"..." So, a lot of people don't know he was a comedian before he became ruler of a nation. So, he says he was a, "... "modestly successful comedian," Trump said the Ukrainian leader "managed to talk the United States of America into spending \$350 Billion Dollars, to go into a War that couldn't be won, that never had to start, but a War that he, without the U.S. and 'TRUMP,' will never be able to settle." Trump decried how the U.S. "has spent \$200 Billion Dollars more than Europe, and Europe's money is guaranteed, while the United States will get nothing back."

So again here, the Bible talks about in prophecy we buy our lovers. Always, Manasseh and Ephraim, it's been their modus operandi, if you will, to buy off other nations to be their lovers. It's the way they've done it. And all this money that goes out to other places.

So, some of these things are catching up in that respect, as to what's been going on for a long, long time and that's why he's talked about you have to up your amount to 5% now. I think at one point it was 2% or 3% he said you had to get up to. And so, very few have really done that. Now he says you have to be up to 5% supporting. Because the United States was the primary one, it's the primary one that gives to the United Nations. I don't know if you saw some of the statistics on that or heard some of that, but it's incredible the amount the United States has had to pay to keep it going compared to other nations. Billions and billions more. And here is another example.

And then NATO as well, how much more the US has had to pay. And now, talking about all this money that's gone to Ukraine, that Europe, it's like a loan, they're going to get money back supposedly out of some of these things, but the US has had no guarantees for the money going in there. So, that's why they want the mineral rights, of precious metals in Ukraine. So, that's why some of those talks are going on.

So, I hope we're hearing some of these things out there in the news of what's taking place. Maybe we don't like to hear the news. That's fine. But it's something to keep abreast of because these things are happening fast, they really are. And attitudes in Europe are changing fast. Yeah.

Hope we have a Feast there – if we have a Feast this year. That's how we have to think. We don't know what's coming and when it's coming but things like this that are taking place it just shows we're getting closer and closer and closer.

I'm going to stop there today and not read the rest. But incredible what's happening in the world and it's good for us to keep abreast of it.



