

# 5/19/24 - Acts 22:12-23:35 - "The Sovereign Plan of God"

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[ 0 : 00 ] We'll be reading Acts chapter 22, verse 22 through chapter 23, verse 35. Up to this word they listened to him.

Then they raised their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live. And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, to find out that they were shouting against him like this.

But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?

When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen. So the tribune came and said to him, Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?

And he said, Yes. The tribune answered, I bought this citizenship for a large sum, Paul said. But I am a citizen by birth.

[ 1 : 16 ] So those who are about to examine him withdrew from him immediately. And the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief, priest, and all the council to meet.

And he brought Paul down and sent him before them. And looking intently at the council, Paul said, Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.

And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall.

Are you sinning to judge me according to the law? And yet contrary to the law, you ordered me to be struck. Those who stood by, would you revile God's high priest?

[ 2 : 23 ] And Paul said, I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest. For it is written, You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.

Now when Paul perceived that one part were Pseudoges and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee.

It was with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial. And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees, and the assembly was divided.

Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?

And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

[ 3 : 25 ] 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.

When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath, neither to eat nor drink, till they had killed Paul. There were more than 40 who made this conspiracy.

They went to the chief priests and elders and said, We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly, and we are ready to kill him before he comes near.

Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Paul called one of the centurions and said, Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him.

So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you. The tribune took him by the hand and going aside, asked him privately, What is it that you have to tell me?

[ 4 : 47 ] And he said, The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. But do not be persuaded by them, for more than 40 of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath, neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him.

And now they are ready, waiting for your consent. So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, Tell no one that you have informed me of these things. Then he called two of the centurions and said, Get ready, 200 soldiers, with 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen, to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night.

Also, provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix, the governor. And he wrote a letter to this effect. Claudius Lysias, To his excellency the governor, Felix, Greetings.

This 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. And desiring to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council.

I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. And 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.

[ 6 : 21 ] So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris, and on the next day they returned to the barracks, letting the horsemen go on with him.

When they had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.

And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's Praetorium. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Quite a passage today.

Didn't know that I'd be covering this passage when I'm dealing with sinus issues. But the Lord knew, and he's like, I'm going to make you depend on me, son. So here I am.

So, I've got to ask you a question. What do we make of the book of Acts? We're in chapter 22, going into chapter 23. It's been a long journey, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, through the series.

[ 7 : 33 ] What do we make of such a book? Well, one thing we can make is who the book is written by, who it was written to. Those are two vital questions when we're interpreting Scripture and when we're examining what God's Word is saying to us today.

We're reminded of the first volume that became a volume before Acts. Luke is the author of the Gospel of Luke, and that was his first volume that reads, as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative, the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who were from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us.

He says, in his first volume, Luke chapter 1, verse 3, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught.

And so we meet a man named Theophilus in this first volume in Luke's series. His name is also mentioned at the beginning of Acts as well. Acts chapter 1, verse 1 through 3, he says, in the first book, O Theophilus, this is in Acts now, it says, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up after he had given commands to the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

And the historical narrative of the book of Acts begins in the second volume. Got the life of Jesus, now you have the spread of the church in the book of Acts.

[ 9 : 27 ] And you see, this is important for us today because the book of Acts is a historical record of how Christ's words that he gave to his disciples in Acts chapter 1, verse 8, came to fruition.

Jesus told the disciples in Acts chapter 1, verse 8, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

Why is that important? Well, we're meeting Paul in chapter 22 and 23 with a lot of close calls on his life.

And we can make many conclusions from the text today of how Paul barely escapes dangerous situation after dangerous situation.

We can apply it. Well, this is why you need to not do this and not do that. But remember, this is a historical record for us, so we have to use that in our interpretation of the text.

[ 10 : 35 ] And we can give credit to a plethora of variables of how Paul escaped dangerous situation after dangerous situation.

We just read in the text, Paul had savvy and bold words of how he handled his words in his context. We could maybe say, well, he escaped because of his savvy words.

We could say that he escaped situations because of the tribune's dedication to due process to not flog him or to the various coincidences, quote, coincidences, of his nephew receiving the word of an ambush on Paul's life.

But one verse in the text today makes all the difference as we ask the question, how in the world did Paul get out of this one? This is going to be a question that we will be continuing to ponder through our time today.

And Lord willing, we'll be able to answer that by the end of our time. And we'll see this unfold in a central main point.

[ 11 : 48 ] What's the main point? That the message of the Christian faith is protected and it's guided by God's sovereign hand.

The central message of the Christian faith is protected and guided by God's sovereign hand. And I want us to divide this into this long passage into three escapes in the passage today and examine that emphasis of all these close calls in Luke's historical record of Paul's missionary journey.

And so the sermon titled is the sovereign plan of God. And with that, we'll have three escapes that we'll examine out of the passage that was just read.

We'll break it down. And I'd like to call us all to prayer as we do this task. Let's pray. Father, we ask for you to help us to guide our minds, to incline our ears to your word, to help our sort of hearts that just eagerly want something new through instant gratification that breeds in our culture.

Father, help us to steadfastly sit under your word, perseveringly hear from your word, and see how this text so supremely and guides our lives today by your sovereign hand.

[ 13 : 23 ] Help us to see that and be fixed upon the truth of your word by the time we leave and help us to be changed, Lord. And we praise all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

You guys are with me so far, it sounds like. We'll see how you're doing by the third escape. escape. But, let's look at the first escape.

First escape is from civil unlawfulness. And at this point, I'm hoping my voice lasts to the end of the passage. We'll see how this does.

If anything, I'll just throw it to David and he can just read the rest. So we see this first escape from civil unlawfulness.

This takes us from verse 22 all the way to verse 29. And so the passage from last week wraps up from 22 to 24 as Paul is facing torture to not bully him but to extract information.

[ 14 : 29 ] The tribune needs to figure out what in the world is going on with this riot that caused such a ruckus in the temple court. And so the tribune intervened.

Remember last week he rescued Paul. How did he rescue him? He bound him in two chains. So you got two chain Paul standing there. Paul in chains. And he addresses the Jewish brothers in that Antonio fortress right next to the temple and they didn't like anything that he had to say.

And we see that unfold in this text. So he's taken away from this riot. There's three accusations upon Paul that he's anti-Semitic that he's anti-Moses and he's anti-temple.

Right? So this tribune scratching his head can't get anywhere. Paul's going to face the whip and now this is not your mama's whip. This is I don't care if she put the holes in the paddle.

This ain't your mama's whip. This is a leather thronged whip. This is a whip that had pieces of metal and bones.

[ 15 : 47 ] It might be your grandma's whip. But this whip when it struck flesh it would literally rip flesh from human beings. People who were scorched from this whip could very well die from the beatings.

And many of them were left crippled after those beatings. This was a pretty serious situation. I say that not to bring gruesome images in your head, but to bring the reality and the gravity that Paul was facing as he stretched out facing this beating.

And so in verse 25 we read here, let me get to 25, it says, but when Paul had, when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, is it lawful for you to flog a man who was a Roman citizen and uncondemned?

And when the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, what are you about to do for this man is a Roman citizen? Up until this point, and as we'll see continue today, Paul is quite savvy with his words, bold with his words.

We're going to see this continue. And just about the time when he was stretched out to be scorched and his flesh completely ripped, trying to, as the tribune is trying to extract answers from him, he rhetorically calls into question the injustice of this whole process.

[ 17 : 18 ] The injustice that the tribune has enacted upon him. It's all about Roman citizenship. He didn't just play the Roman citizenship card to get out of it.

He simply stated the facts. He said he's a Roman citizen, bound up to torture without just cause, without due process, without legal justification. It's not like our crazy world today.

Back in this time, you were innocent until proven guilty. These days, you're guilty until proven innocent. It's completely backwards today. And this tribune makes a landmark discovery. He's a Roman citizen.

And in verse 27 and 28, it's not only that, but in the conversation of the tribune discovering this in this case, Paul was actually a blood-born citizen.

He had more of a right to be a Roman citizen than even the tribune. the tribune had to pay a high price for his citizenship. In other words, if this gets out, if this tribune, his actions against a Roman citizen gets out, Paul could very well seek legal retaliation against this Roman tribune.

[ 18 : 36 ] he's the highest-ranking officer. He's got over a thousand foot soldiers, hundreds of cavalymen.

This man, this tribune named Claudius Listius, is on the verge of losing everything on account of his injustice towards Paul. And what we see quickly and what we can identify through this brief episode as Paul is bound up, about to be beaten unjustly without due process, is that retaliation and vengeance are not executed by the hands of the church.

Retaliation and vengeance are not executed by the hands of the church. Even in a world where Christians continuously face injustice all around the world, in Paul's actions we see how Christians are called to indeed speak up boldly, condemn unlawfulness, right?

To hold civil leaders accountable to what they're supposed to be abiding by. But we must never forget to leave vengeance in the hands of the Lord.

Amen? It's a theological truth that we find in Paul's actions here and I wanted to highlight that for you. However, as we ask how did Paul get out of this one, how many of us might be quick to attest to Paul's escape here to his savvy rhetoric?

[ 20 : 12 ] The last minute, hey, is this lawful for you to do? But let's continue to see what really is at hand in the second escape.

We see this from verse 30 all the way to the next chapter in verse 10. So verse 30 starts religious unlawfulness. The tribune desires to know the real reason why these Jews are going nuts, right? Why they're accusing Paul of all these things and swarming around him like bees. In other words, what's the central issue to the case? What's central here? And so he brings Paul before the Sanhedrin, these men, these Jewish chief priests, and they have an informal meeting.

It seems. And let's slow down a bit while we look at this meeting. It says in verse 1 of chapter 23, And looking intently at the council, Paul said, Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.

He addresses their accusations here. The accusations that Paul is anti-Semitic, that he's anti-Moses, that he's anti-Temple. He says, I've lived in my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.

[ 21 : 33 ] He's not condemned by the law or the prophets. In verse 2, it says, And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

Then Paul said, God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall. Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law, you order me to be struck?

Religious unlawfulness. Here Paul condemns, again, religious unlawfulness. While using language stemming back to Ezekiel, chapter 13, verse 8 through 15, where false prophets of Ezekiel's day were denounced for misleading God's people, saying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace, who build a, quote, wall, and then cover it with whitewash.

And this is an illustration of sort of like a plaster substance upon an unstructural bearing wall, which gives the appearance of a solid wall, like it would be strong, but it will fall down.

And in Ezekiel's day, it was certainly true. And he calls this religious leader, this high priest, Ananias, a whitewashed wall. And so there is some context to that, stemming all the way back to the prophets.

[ 22 : 56 ] But Paul, being a man condemned of discarding the law and the prophets, he then goes to Leviticus 19, verse 15. Why the condemnation?

He's drawing conclusions that are defiance of the law according to Leviticus 19, 15. What this high priest just did by striking him in the mouth was going against Leviticus chapter 19, where it says, do not pervert justice, do not show partiality to the poor, more favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly, due process.

Here we have a ruler, quote, ruler, church, of Israel. Just as past rulers of Israel, he shares a lot in common with them.

the very rulers that Ezekiel addressed and the poor leadership then, Paul is confronting now boldly. And the fruit of his life by this unlawful strike bears no witness to any credibility that this high priest has, that he doesn't even resemble the intended high priestly role that God had for him.

And in verse 4, those who stood by says, would you revile God's high priest? He's got the title. He's got the parking spot in the church.

[ 24 : 22 ] He's the high priest. How could you say that to him? And Paul said, I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest. For it is written, you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.

I love how Paul says this here. I think what Paul's intention here is that he wasn't apologizing for saying such a thing. I think he was actually playing upon words, saying, oh, I didn't know he was the high priest.

I would have expected more from him, right? And so he says, some people think that he's apologized, but clearly this high priest is unhinged. There's no due process.

What kind of high priest is he? And he disqualified himself by the fact that he ordered that strike upon Paul. And that will continue, this unlawfulness will continue in our text today as the story unfolds.

And we see just as verse 30 brought us here before the Sanhedrin, we ask what's the issue with the text? What's the issue with these accusations? What is central to these riots?

[ 25 : 29 ] And Paul gets right to it. In verse 6, when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees.

It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial. God, what's the central issue at hand? This, the resurrection of the dead, is the dividing line.

Isn't this interesting? It wasn't only the dividing line with Paul's message to the Sanhedrin, it was also the dividing line between the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

They couldn't even agree on that. The central conviction of the Sadducees was that there's no resurrection. They only held to the first five books of the Bible, the Torah.

And so, in the Torah, there's no mention of the resurrection or anything like that, and that was their governing authority for the Sadducees. Now, the Pharisees, they believe that the prophets, the law, and the prophets are inspired, and they hold those books as truth, which the Pharisees believe in a resurrection.

[ 26 : 45 ] But that in Paul's central conviction, through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as Christianity states, is the hope in our resurrection because of Jesus Christ's resurrection.

It's the central dividing line even today. In other words, the response of the Sanhedrin made it clear that even those religious can't even agree on the essentials of their faith.

law and prophets, which are all the very accusations against Paul, not to mention what God has revealed through Jesus Christ in their fulfillments.

How did it turn out, how this dividing line turned out? Verse 9, that a great clamor arose, that's a good word, clamor, and some of the scribes of the Pharisee party stood up and contended sharply, and then the dissension became violent in verse 10.

And the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, in the middle of this chaos, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

[ 28 : 03 ] And church, as we stand back a minute in this text, as we look at this escape, and what just transpired in this escape, we see something develop and unfold, is that opposition to the gospel cannot be countered by keeping quiet about the gospel.

Opposition to the gospel cannot be countered by keeping quiet about the gospel. The dividing line of this council was the resurrection, and that is so prevalent in our day today among Christians. It's still the dividing line today. today. It's that question that asks, what happens when we die? What happens when we die?

I mean, we can thank pop culture for putting these pitiful little quotes in our head that heaven just gained another angel. Right?

Like, what is that? That's not in scripture. We don't become angels. No. or even the fact that some denominations that adhere to, like Seventh-day Advent is soul sleep.

[ 29 : 18 ] That when we die, our souls go to sleep for a time. And all of these things, it's a dividing line today. But the Christian, but the Christian who abides by the faith in Jesus Christ, the Christian can take great comfort in knowing that when believers in Jesus Christ die, our souls are taken to heaven.

Our souls are taken to heaven because our sins are forgiven. You see that in John 3.16, John 3.18, John 3.36, 2 Corinthians 5, 6 through 8, Philippians 1.23, heaven didn't gain another angel, heaven gained a child.

God. For unbelievers, though, that question, what happens when we die, probably reverberates in your hearts so darkly and deeply, those who are away from Jesus Christ.

They can take great warning here, not much comfort for a non-Christian because death is only the beginning of everlasting punishments, eternal punishments and judgments.

But what about the resurrection, though? What happens to our bodies if our souls go to heaven and our souls are with the Lord? What happens to our bodies? This is where we divide even today.

[ 30 : 39 ] But God's word tells us that all believers, all unbelievers, will rise bodily from the grave in final judgment. That's in Revelation chapter 20.

Of God's word. Truth is a matter of fact. It's according to God's word. And we have faith in that alone. And for that, the hope of our faith in Jesus Christ is that at our death, it is only the beginning of everlasting life with Jesus Christ in heaven is the beginning.

Without Jesus Christ, things get complicated. Things get divided, as it were, in this passage. And to say the least, Tribune was looking for an answer. Tribune got it.

These people are nuts. These religious leaders are absolutely out of their minds. They can't agree on their own counsel of what they adhere to. Not to mention what their accusations are with Paul. And he arrests Paul once again and saves his life. However, remember, we have to ask, how did Paul get out of this one? We may be quick to attribute it to his actions of, the quick actions of the civil rulers to arrest him and save him from getting completely torn apart, as the text says.

[ 32 : 00 ] We may attribute it to a variety of things, even what Paul says of mentioning Sadducees and Pharisees. Pharisees. But let's continue into the third escape.

And we see this from verse 11 to verse 35 to the end of the passage today. The answer to this question, which acts sort of like a stroke of a paddle thrusting the movement of a kayak forward in the water, so too this single verse is the thrusting reminder from Luke in this story.

Verse 11 makes all the difference. You want to know how Paul got out of this one and that one and the ones to come? Verse 11.

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.

In other words, the Lord is God's sovereign hand is guiding Paul through many different means, through savvy speech, through the hands of civil rulers.

[ 33 : 26 ] Yeah, the police aren't that bad of people, right? And the church ought to have a good relationship and a good theology of law enforcement in this day. They're not all bad. And actually, the message of the gospel has been carried along by the support of civil authorities.

We see that wonderfully in this country even today. But it is ultimately the Lord's sovereign hand guiding all of it through many methods upon this earth.

How did Paul get out of it? We can simply say, the Lord. And we see that in this third escape of the wicked plans of man. Verse 12 through 15, things got so bad that half of that Sanhedrin, there's mention of 40 people in this passage.

God only knows how many there were. And if they belonged to the Sanhedrin, things got so bad that they bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they got Paul.

Until Paul, Paul's heart stops beating. And he's dead. And so they devise a conspiracy to relocate Paul. Play buddy-buddy with the Tribune.

[ 34 : 40 ] Create some situation that relocates Paul. And then ambush him while he's en route in this relocation. And you can cue the Mission Impossible theme song.

Right? As the Sanhedrin, these Jewish leaders are plotting. But one thing they forgot. They cannot conspire against the Lord.

Psalms 1 is pretty clear on that. And as verse 11 indicates, he's not done with Paul quite yet. Verse 16 and 17, we've realized that Paul has a family.

Paul has a sister. And he has a nephew. Isn't that interesting? Specifically, Paul's nephew who heard of this conspiracy. He alerts Paul, who then sent his nephew straight to the Tribune to inform him of this conspiracy that they're about to carry out.

And in verse 18 through 22, it's worth mentioning the pleasantly surprising demeanor of this Tribune. It's interesting because not only has God used the civil ruler to protect Paul's life twice of preserving his life.

[ 35 : 55 ] Here, he receives Paul's nephew. Look at the description in this chunk of passage. By, he receives him by the hands. He listens.

And not only that, he acts on accounts of preserving Paul's life. Verse 23 all the way to 30, the Tribune plans to relocate Paul to Caesarea, deliver him to Governor Felix.

And around the time that all the assassins against Paul would be tucking in, nestled in their beds for sleep, Paul would make his escape to Caesarea.

Not only did Claudius Lysias take action, he took quite precaution. Who escorted Paul on this journey to Caesarea?

Paul was literally escorted by an army. The Lord led Paul out of trouble, out of the wicked hands of man, not just by a couple people, but an army.

[ 37 : 04 ] Two centurions were in charge of 80 men. And so, between all of that, the text indicates from verse 23 to 30, that included 200 foot soldiers.

It had 70 cavalrymen and 200 bowmen. I mean, nobody's getting Paul. Right? Even if those assassins decided to stay up late that night, nobody's getting close to Paul.

And so, Paul is escorted. A letter in hand to Governor Felix, promised to be protected, and escapes yet again.

And then the passage kind of resets until we meet again next week. He says, on reading the letter, he asked what providence he was from.

And when Felix learned that he was from Cilicia, he says in verse 35, I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.

[ 38 : 07 ] I'll give you due process. And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium. And so, we'll put pause on the passage today.

But isn't it amazing how God's protection often feels like you're being escorted like a king with an army protecting you? Have you ever experienced that?

You feel like God's surrounded you so clearly in your life that it feels like you're being escorted like a king. So clear. But was it his nephew?

Was it the escorts? No. It was the Lord's hand guiding all things according to his sovereign will and mission in Paul's life.

Amen. The central message of the Christian faith is proclaimed and protected by God's sovereign hand. The central message of the Christian faith is proclaimed and protected by God's sovereign hand.

[ 39 : 16 ] There's no way around it. So how is the Christian faith proclaimed? How do we proclaim that? Well, it's our bold witness of the church to stand up against injustice of any form.

Right? Holding a firm conviction to the gospel regardless of the cost. It's not bowing down to idols, but boldly proclaiming the gospel.

In other words, while followers of Jesus Christ are willing to die for the message, how many of you are ready to die for that message? Right? We should not default to seek out martyrdom in some extreme form of Christianity that runs right into the sword.

It takes wisdom. Because what witness of the gospel would there be if there is no witness? They take out the witness. We see that the church should accept protection from a civil authority if able to.

We don't have to be completely counter every form of protection in this life. And we can trust in our government at times to protect and to help us in this journey according to God's mission.

[ 40 : 36 ] But how does God protect then? Is it just, you know, hiding behind a constitution? Is it just hiding behind our rights and our freedoms? Well, how does God miraculously protect Peter in prison and Paul in prison at times as they miraculously escaped?

It could be miraculously that he protects his church. It could be civil governments as Lystius' actions attest to. And it could also just be simply good Samaritans that give word of upcoming danger and the church responds wisely to those threats.

In other words, it would be an egregious situation to ever dismiss the miraculous, despise civil governments, or downplay those God uses in our lives to protect his church.

These are all means of which God protects and guides his church according to his sovereign plans. And so may we continue to submit ourselves to that mission, church.

The mission that God has for all of us. You could be a YSU student. He has a mission for every student with us today. It could be husbands and wives. He has a mission in your family to your spouse and your kids.

[ 41 : 58 ] It could be your employee or employer that your mission is set forth. We're just simply being church members here.

God has set you on a mission. God has placed you on a mission and he is Lord of that mission in life or death. Amen? Amen.

Let's pray. Amen.