



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

Acts 23:11-22 ESV

¹¹The 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.”

A Plot to Kill Paul

¹²When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. ¹⁴They 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. ¹⁵Now 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.”

¹⁶Now the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him.” ¹⁸So 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.” ¹⁹The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?” ²⁰And 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. ²¹But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty 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.” ²²So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, “Tell no one that you have informed me of these things.”

[READ THE TEXT]

Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”

People – “Thanks be to God.”

[PRAY]

[INTRO. & BACKGROUND]



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

Alright so when we left Paul last time, he was hauled out by force out of the court at the temple by the Roman soldiers to prevent his death. You see now that they know he’s a Roman citizen they must protect him even if he is becoming a nuisance to them. Paul is currently sitting isolated, on house arrest in the Roman barracks, most likely reflecting on the past day. He’s beat up, bruised, sore, but at least he has a **good conscience** about the whole thing. Guys this is the scene you have seen in movies how many times where the heroine is sitting in the jail cell wondering just how did I get here?

He had gotten to the end of his purification rights as prescribed by James, and then in the **span of one day caused three different riots**, once by merely being in the temple, once by trying to reason with his testimony to his fellow Jews, and once in the temple itself causing the Sanhedrin to break out in bar brawl. If you were a frat boy, Paul is the guy you either hated or loved to take to a party with you, all depending on what your definition of fun was.

Now I don’t think any of us would see this as a blessing to be in this situation but that is exactly what it was for the Apostle Paul. God was going to use one of the most down moments in Paul’s life and turn it into an amazing blessing. That is exactly how God works in all our lives, by the way. **Paul is not the exception to Christian living he’s the example of what it means to live for Christ.** The Christian life is not about do good so good things happen to you, that’s the doctrine of Karma, or the prosperity gospel that runs rampant even locally. And it can’t be, you know why? Because being a Christian is all about God conforming you in the image of His Son.

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.

God uses hard times to make you better, he uses the trials of this world to do the work of sanctification, he uses the anger of those that hate God to bring you about into a glorious new creation! God used a hostile world on His already perfect Son to increase His perfectness ([Luke 2:52](#)) so our Father has



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

chosen the same path for you AND to show the world that God is in control of all things.

That is the topic we are talking about for the next two Sundays which is the topic of **God’s Providence**. Now we here at HCC we talk a lot about God’s Sovereignty over all things and Providence is a category of that doctrine. Sovereignty refers to the fact that God oversees ALL of creation, the good and the bad, all of it is under His control, not one molecule is out of God’s control all to bring us to **one point in time**:

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.

The two ways that you are aware that God does this is using **miracles** and secondly God’s direct intervention in the affairs of man or **Providence**. God never leaves anything to chance, according to Rom 8:28 he has decided who will be redeemed and in Eph 1:10 tells us for what reason, **therefore God has determined beforehand to be active in all aspects of life**. Miracles are when God moves against the laws of physics and nature to display who He is, but Providence is when He uses the events of everyday life to get His plan done - He is providentially providing the guidance to work all things according to His purposes.

People want to see miracles to believe God is real, when in reality **what they really want is to see God answer their prayers by miraculous efforts to see if they can control God by what they ask for**. That’s why they do it. Jesus has always pushed back on this desire by giving this statement.

Matthew 8:39 ESV

But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

The greatest/only miracle you will ever see is a person’s heart made alive, through **faith alone**, so that they believe God had rescued them by **Grace alone**, through the revelation of who He is in **Scripture alone**, which shows we



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

are saved by the works of **Christ alone**, to the **Glory of God alone!** That is THE miracle, for those people that truly experience that, they will never fall away, even in the midst of trial and heartbreak, for that miracle can't be undone because of the weight of its' glory! What we need to focus on, believe in, and praise God for is His Providence that works all things to the good of those He has called ([Romans 8:28](#)). Understanding Providence in light of the scripture is what Paul is about to experience and it is the example we will learn from today.

Main Point:

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

The ways in which we will track this today is to first see the **PLEDGE** by Christ to Paul, where we will spend the majority of our time this morning, next we will see the **PLOT** by the Jews to kill him, and lastly the **PETITION** by Paul's nephew to rescue him and all of it should be seen as an act of the **PROVIDENCE** of God to produce his **Safe Travels** to Rome.

1. The PLEDGE by Christ that He will finish his course!

We are going from looking at Paul's, up to this moment, what was most likely his most down moment, and wouldn't you know it, the **Lord shows up!** Paul has had visions and dreams from Jesus, he has had confirmations that he was doing his will by other Christians, he's even done miracles in Jesus' name, but the last time he had heard his voice was in Acts 9 where he was knocked down, and it was told to him it was Jesus Himself he was persecuting and go to Damascus and wait for me there. It was then Ananias, not be confused with the current HP, that brought the word of the Lord to him.

Acts 9:15-16 ESV

¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Now Paul over the last several weeks has been dreaming of going to Rome, he sees it as his last chess move. If he could get there, he could influence the



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

most influential leaders on the world. But every time he has turned around, he has met opposition and death threats. He has spent decades doing Jesus’ will, he has endured countless sufferings for the cause of Christ, has he come to his last stop? It is while he was in jail that Jesus visits the man, confirming Paul’s mission by His own voice, so he now hears for himself his destiny.

*“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.”*

Paul, you have fulfilled my calling that I gave you in Damascus, you took the gospel to the Gentiles, and you have suffered for my sake, you read the plan correctly and didn’t run from your future here in Jerusalem, and guess what Paul? I am rewarding you with what you wanted to see, the world changed, I am sending you to Rome.

This is the sign of **Providence**, not just for Paul then, **but for all of us now**. Jesus is the one moving all things into place, He is the one guiding our steps, He is the one allowing our suffering to produce the path for Salvation for others, He is the one glorifying Himself through our lives.

LP x4:

Just a few things we can take away from this encouraging encounter:

- **The Lord stands by us through all things.** – **“TAKE COURAGE”** - By the rolling back of the veil between our world and the heavens we see that Christ was not some far away deity, He is the ever-present omnipresent God.

Joshua 1:9 ESV

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the **Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**”*

The Lord never sends us without He Himself being there with us. You can be afraid about many situations in your life but most of them are of your own conjuring. The lord is standing beside you as by Paul and nothing as with Paul will happen to you outside the will of Jesus.

- > Take Courage, that conflict you need to face, Jesus is there with you.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

- > Take Courage, that child that needs to hear the truth, Jesus is there with you.
- > Take Courage, the friend that is dabbling in the ways of the world, Jesus is there with you.
- > Take Courage, that sickness that is always dragging you down, Jesus is with you.

Your courage should not be built up in, will I be able to escape my predicament, will I be able to come out unscathed from my trial, or will I be able to keep my friendships I so desire. No, you take Courage, and in the Greek¹ it means struggle to **take your joy**, BECAUSE the Lord is with you! All shall play out as it should for, He is Providentially using your interactions to conform you into His image and to unite all things to Him. You will be successful in those goals no matter what, for those are the things that Jesus wants!

- **The Lord knows what we have been through.** – **“FOR AS YOU HAVE TESTIFIED”** Jesus related to Paul I saw everything, because I preordained everything, and I accompanied you through everything, I saw you giving that declaration based on personal knowledge; **testimony.**²

Luke 12:11-12 ESV

¹¹And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

The Lord knows what we have gone through because it is He that is making His people do the speaking by sending the HS. The Lord will use your words whatever condition your heart and mind are in for Jesus is the one giving you the words to say. The **Lord is fully aware of your story of heartache, pain, and disillusionment** because he was the one that brought you through those things so that they wouldn't destroy you but instead you would use them to **declare His goodness!** Not only that the Lord gave you that story so you could tell

¹ 2510 θαρσέω (*tharseō*): vb. [see also 2509]; ≡ Str 2293; TDNT 3.25—LN 25.156 **have courage** (in the imperative mood) Take heart!, Take courage!, Cheer up! (Mt 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mk 6:50; 10:49; Jn 16:33; Ac 23:11+) – Swanson, J. (1997). [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

² διαμαρτύρομαι (*diamartyromai*); μαρτύρομαι (*martyromai*). vb. **to declare, assert.** *The act of making a declaration on the basis of personal knowledge.* Taylor, G. D. (2014). [Testimony](#). D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

others how while you were still a sinner, He died for you ([Rom 3:23](#)), and gave you the miracle of new life.

- > When you share your story with your church family that is when **Jesus is glorified**, and you begin to **actively work in that whole conforming thing** that Jesus wants to do in you.
- > When you testify to who you are and what God is doing in you the people of the church now **know how to pray** for you AND **challenge you** in where you are not living out the truths of scripture.
- > When you testify to the **Lost**, know that Jesus is there as well for, he **wants to use the message** of how He redeemed you, brought you back from the dead, and gave you life so others can be called out.

There is nothing that happens to you outside the knowledge of the Lord, that is why He is the one that avenges you, He will be the one to deliver you, He will be the one that gives you strength to endure so you may say what you have to say. He empathizes with all your plights, He is able to supply everything according to your needs ([Phil 4:19](#)), that’s why you are here this morning.

- **The Lord is for us.** – **“TO THE FACTS ABOUT ME IN JERSUALEM”** Paul had some pretty condemning words for the Jewish people, but **Jesus calls them facts**, the Lord is very aware that sometimes we will have to say things about Him that will make people mad, and when we do *He will never leave nor forsake us* ([Heb 13:5](#)). **Just because Paul was enduring through his persecution does not mean that Jesus had turned him over to the enemy.** There was never a time that the hand of Paul’s persecutors were not executing the will of God, giving meaning to Paul’s suffering setting up Paul for a future glory. Jesus though, did the opposite for us, He turned Himself over to the mob, He separated us from Him, to give His life, so we would never know the pain of true abandonment.

John 16:33 ESV

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; **I have overcome the world.**” – Someone has overcome the world, and He has demonstrated it comes through sacrifice which brings joy when it is done for God. Take heart church, when we have to confront this world know the victory is already won, for the **Lord is for us** and our struggle.

Romans 8:32 ESV



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him **graciously give us all things**? And as the Father walked with His Son and allowed Him to make the ultimate sacrifice for sin, we must remember we have a great high priest that intercedes for us at all times ([Heb 4:14-16](#)) who will give us strength all the way through our struggles. We will never know the depth of despair as Jesus did who bore the full weight of God’s wrath for sin. We will never know that, so even if you must die for Christ know this, it wasn’t because you deserved it, the Father is pleased with you through Christ, and you too will be raised up on that day.

- **The Lord isn’t finished with us – “SO YOU MUST TESTIFY ALSO IN ROME”**

He was going to send Paul to Rome, and yes that will mean Paul’s death, and yes it has been determined by Jesus, but also be aware the Lord has perfected in Paul the heart to want to be with Jesus more than anything else ([Phil 1:21](#)).

Jeremiah 29:1 ESV For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. – Our hope is not to have a non-challenging, non-glorifying life for Christ our Hope is to see Him as we have successfully persevered by His presence with us and hear as Paul desired *well done my good and faithful servant* ([Mat 25:23](#)).

It seems that Paul remembered Christ’s words before this whole thing had started.

Luke 12:11 ESV

¹¹And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say,

And because of that He was rewarded with the presence of Christ Himself, just a little taste of glory to keep Paul going. Now considering seeing what is really going on behind the veil we can’t see, now watch how the Lord’s plans begin to play out.

2. The PLOT by the Jews to kill him before he starts.

¹²When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

who made this conspiracy. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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.”

These Jews were definitely upset, weren't they? They had made a pledge that they will not eat until Paul was dead. Don't feel too bad for them in the Mishnah³ there was provided away to escape your pledge if it became unable to attain. Also, if you know the story they don't make it, at worst they lose a few pounds. I also want to point out another element of Providence and that is the pruning out of Israel and the grafting in of the Gentiles. It wasn't a mistake or failure of God that the Jews were rejecting Jesus, it was the sovereign will of God/Jesus to do so to save the Gentiles as well. Just read [Romans 11](#) for yourselves but we don't have time for that this morning.

Alright briefly just two things I want to point out because we need to keep in mind that it is Jesus making all things happen, to conform His people, and unite all things to Him.

First, Jesus is going to make sure the Temple courts hear Paul's defense. In Acts 24:10-11 Felix, who you will meet next week, calls the temple court to Caesarea to find out what did Paul do. While he entertains them first, he then gives Paul his chance to speak his part. That is to say that Ananias the HP couldn't use his tactics of violence and coercion on Paul anymore to get him to shut up the truth would be known. Then as Paul gets in the last word of course he makes mention of the whole problem was based on the resurrection of the dead-you don't want to believe in the Christ. Felix knows about Christianity, so he dismisses everyone and calls his wife to come the next day to hear Paul give the Gospel. I suspect that Luke is recording that so that the readers would know about possible changes in the life of Felix.

Second, Festus the returning governor for Jerusalem and the Palestine area upon arrival a few days later heard the complaint from the temple on Paul. They were still trying to kill him and asked he be sent to them so they could ambush

³ https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4329319/jewish/The-Mishnah.htm



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

the escort and get to him. Festus decides to take the temple elite back to Caesarea with him instead and questions Paul there. At the end of the questioning in Acts 25:11-12 Festus wanted to please his Jewish cohort perhaps not realizing their murderous intent, but Paul declines and by his Roman citizenship instead ask for his trial to go to the supreme court, Caesar. Where Festus by law must answer, *“To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”* (25:12)

LP:

The evil that men plan is the providence that God ordained to bring about His glory.

The whole conspiracy of death, Jesus thwarted and used the tenacity of the Jews to go after Paul thus putting him under house arrest for his own protection and getting him a trial by Festus who was the man with the power to get Paul to Rome. The whole situation is a set up by Jesus, for we know it was His will to get Paul to Rome. What did we learn, even when it looks like the powers of this world is doing all it can to come against the Kingdom of God nothing happens outside Jesus’ Providential will for all things to accomplish His goals of conformity and uniting all things to Him.

3. The PETITION by his nephew that ensures safe passage.

¹⁶ Now the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him.” ¹⁸ 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.” ¹⁹ The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?” ²⁰ 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. ²¹ But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty 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.” ²² So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, “Tell no one that you have informed me of these things.”



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

This is the only time we have in scripture where we hear about Paul’s family. In [Phil 3:8](#) Paul has related to the church, “For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.” I would suspect that Paul coming from a tradition of Phariseeism that his family has disowned him, but it seems that his sister’s love for him has affected the heart of his nephew.

As we look at this text you have to ask why the boy was in with this group, how did he hear about the planned assassination? Could it have even been Paul’s own brother-in-law that was a part of the Jews who made the oath of death against Paul? Whatever it was Jesus had laid the plans out so that this boy would make Paul and the tribune aware of the plot thus putting the pieces into play that would get Paul to Rome.

Again, family what are we learning today?

Main Point:

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

It doesn’t matter what you are going through, who knows about it, you were never alone, Jesus is always for you, and He won’t ever stop being for you because He has a plan for you to fulfill. There is an allotted time that we all have to live, and it is Jesus Himself that keeps that watch, and no man can cut that time short, and no man can thwart our Lord’s plan. Christian be encouraged today the Lord of Hosts is for you. If you don’t know Him and this sermon is making somewhat sense to you as well, be encouraged that is Jesus using this message to bring you to Him. Seek Him and you will find Him ([Mat7:7](#)) that is a promise from Him to you. Nothing is coincidence here today my people, for He is always in Providential control.

[PRAYER]

[CALL TO OBEY]

Elder – Read



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Church, our Sovereign God calls us to obey out of a heart of love. If we love God, Romans 8:28 tell us, “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

So, if we love Him, we obey Him. If we obey, all things work together for our good and His glory. It is in this good conscience then, with a heart full of love and a life of obedience that we can say with Paul in Romans 8:31, as he was being led to his execution, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

[COMMUNION]

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – “Christians, what do you believe?”

Congregation - LBCF 1689 Chapter 5 Section 1 God Governs All Things

God, the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, determines, and governs all creatures and things, from the greatest to the least. He does this by his perfectly wise and holy providence, for the purpose for which they were created, according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of his own will. All of this results in praise for the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

1. Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:11; Isaiah 46:10, 11; Psalms 135:6

[OFFERING+LAST SONG] –

[BENEDICTION]



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 79 “Safe Travels Pt.1”
By Pastor Jody May 05/19/2024**

Go in the name of the Father, that has laid out before time how He would bring many sons to glory, through the master architect plan He set out for His Son.

Go in the name of the Son, that followed the plan of God perfectly, thus securing our inheritance while never losing one of those His Father gave Him, all by His Providence.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that is there to lead us in all of life, empowering our testimony for Him, now go and share this good plan with the world.