

God doesn't just work around circumstances and situations He even works through them

--**We see this wonderfully illustrated in the life of Paul**

Acts 22:21-23

--Its important to not only have the right friends, but also the right enemies.

--How would the world react to your stance on the Gospel?

--To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God, AND vice versa.

V. 24-25 – Some speculate that the “commander” (title that meant he was in charge of 1000 troops) didn't know Hebrew, therefore, he was going to get him to speak Greek.

--Most probably you just simply have a display of Roman heavy handedness...rules of interrogation or steps of getting at the truth were unknown to them—they just jumped to the final step.

--They stretched over a block of wood or stone and tie your hands down or they would tie your hands to the rafters and your feet to the floor and give you few strokes with a cat of 9 tails and ask you questions.

VV. 26-29 – Roman Law explicitly prohibited the binding of Roman citizen without due process.

--A Roman citizen was not to be beaten under any circumstances even if convicted...the penalty for breaking this law was death! (thus the reason why Philippian magistrates come to Paul and Silas with hat in hand!)

Not to mention the fact that Paul was sort of an upper class Roman citizen having been born such.

--Most likely one of Paul's ancestors did a great service of the Roman government in Tarsus and the family was awarded Roman citizenship which meant that all descendants would be born as citizens (equal to any Italian Roman).

VV. 22:30-23:5 – A couple things to look at here:

1. Ananias = someone you need to know

--Was high priest and a Sadducee (all the high priest were—they were never Pharisees because they wouldn't collaborate with Rome)

--According to Josephus—Ananias was a wicked man who would rob from other priests leaving some to literally starve; robbed from the poor to feed the rich, collaborated with the Assassins; had James the brother of Jesus stoned to death.

--Paul calling him a “whitewashed wall” was right on the money wearing the garments of one who drew near to God but being the spawn of Satan!!

2. This makes his apology stand out even more boldly.

--Nowhere does the Bible allow us to disrespect authority – King Saul was demon-possessed man bent on evil towards David and yet David would not disrespect him or lay a hand on him in any way.

--All Authority is from God ==

-Bad authority God gives as a form of judgment;

-Good as a form of blessing

-All authority is from Him.

--**You can't disrespect authority without in some way**

disrespecting God.

VV. 6-11 – So, Paul lobbs this theological grenade into the group knowing what it would do.

--From here he is protected by the Romans both in Jerusalem and Caesarea and is ultimately transported to Rome where he testifies faithfully to the risen Christ.

--He does all this under great opposition and makes it by the skin of his teeth through a string of *incredible coincidences*.

Or does he??

Acts 1:8, 9:15-16 (predicted here 30 yrs. before that he would testify before kings and it would come through suffering on his part)

V. 11

Is this a string of coincidences or is this the work of the Sovereign God who knows all things?

--Paul just happened to be Pharisee.

--He just happened to have an ancestor who was declared a Roman citizen

--He just happened to speak Greek that impressed the Roman soldier and Hebrew that impressed the crowd.

--It just happened that the Jews who were supposed to bear the testimony of the Living God to world in their rejection of God,

--And it was a coincidence that the church was persecuted and Scattered throughout the world where it was bearing witness to Jesus.

--It just happened that the pagan empire of Rome footed the bill for the whole thing by protecting one of their citizens and paying his way to Rome, thus guaranteeing that the gospel went everywhere.

Too many coincidences!

The bottom line is this: People think they do what they want, and to some extent they do, but in everything God is still accomplishing His will.

--Lesson: God is in control...He **doesn't bite His fingernails...He doesn't take nerve pills!**

--Safest place to be is in the middle of His will: may not make sense, may not be fun, it may be hard, but it is safe.

--We would like for God to show us the whole script beforehand, but part of what's happening is the building of our faith.