

You Are Immortal!

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[0:01] If you would take your Bibles, please, and turn to the book of Acts, chapter 23. If you're visiting with us, you can pull out that black Bible in the chair in front of you.

We'll let that black Bible go towards the back to page 113. 113, Acts chapter 23.

We'll start in verse 12 through the end of the chapter through verse 35, 12 through 35 this morning. Getting close to being done with the book of Acts.

So, it should be done by May. Acts 23, again page 113 in that black Bible, Acts 23, starting in verse 12, and I'll read to verse 35.

And when it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

[1:13] There were more than 40 who formed this plot. And they came to the chief priests and the elders and said, We've bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.

Now therefore, you and the council notify the commander to bring him down to you as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation. And we, for our part, are ready to slay him before he comes near.

But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush. And he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. And Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him.

So he took him and led him to the commander and said, Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you. And the commander took him by the hand and, stepping aside, inquired of him privately.

What is it that you have to report to me? Verse 20. And he said, The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the council as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him.

[2:23] So do not listen to them. For more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him.

And now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you. Therefore the commander let the young man go, instructing him, Tell no one that you have notified me of these things. And he called to him two of the centurions and said, Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen.

They were also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor. And he wrote a letter having this form, Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings. When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came upon them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council.

And I found him to be accused over questions about their law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment. And when I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you.

[3:41] So the soldiers, verse 31, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks.

And when these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. And when he read it, he asked from what province he was. And when he learned he was from Cilicia, he said, I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also, giving orders for him to be kept in Harrah's praetorium.

If you do a Google search, close calls video, you can come up with a bunch of different videos to actually show these people barely, barely, being missed by some car or truck or whatever. These people were about to be killed and it missed them by inches. I actually was going to show you a video up here and it failed to hit go in. It went this way and came out the other. Just Google it yourself. Just close calls video. You'll see different people, they're walking by this way and there's a car that actually gets in an accident and they just go this way and the car goes right past them this way.

[5:06] Or vice versa, they're walking this way and something lands right here next to them. I mean, just two inches this way, they would have been gone. Two inches that way, they would have been dead.

If God in His providence kept these people who as far as we know, I mean, are they believers? Are they not believers? We don't know.

But if they're not even believers, if He kept these people from sheer death, does He not care for you much more, Christian? Do you believe that?

To what extent do you believe that? Jim Elliot, who defied death on a few occasions only to be slain by the very people he cared about so deeply, he said this, quote, Remember, you are immortal until your work is done.

So what's the title of our message today? You are immortal.

[6:27] You are immortal until God's work for you is done. You're immortal.

Jim Elliot was right. A statement for you. In this mission that God calls us to fulfill, we have certainty that we are immortal until our work for His kingdom is done.

He is faithful to work so that He will accomplish His purposes through us, working all things for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8.28 In whatever circumstances you find yourself in today, remember that you are immortal until your work for God's kingdom is done and then He brings you home.

And then He brings you to Himself. What can people do to you? It's like what Paul says, we are more than conquerors.

[7:46] Who can separate us from God's love for us in Jesus Christ? What can man do to us? You're immortal. Until God's work He's going to do through you to accomplish His purposes are done and then He takes you home.

God will make it so that everything that happens in your life reflects His grace and so that you can speak His grace to others.

Paul is the perfect example of this. He does this perfectly. He shows that anything that happens is reflecting God being so gracious to him and then He takes the opportunity to proclaim that grace to somebody else.

To proclaim the gospel. He's amazing at this. Because Paul lived what he preached. Basically, nothing can hurt us without God's approval.

This is what you see in the text today. Nothing can happen to us that will bring such horror horror that we can't handle. Now, I'm not saying that you should go stand in front of a freight train and you'll be fine.

[9:12] If you do that, well, I'll do your funeral. I'm not saying you should go step in front of a freight train or, you know, Travis and I, we were in Los Angeles, you know, Travis says, well, he says, I'm going to step in front of I-5 where here's all the traffic coming.

I'm not saying that. Although, can I have your stuff when you, oh, never mind. No, I'm not saying that.

But, if the Lord Jesus does not want you to die from a freight train, you won't die from a freight train. It won't happen. Circumstances never limit God.

Because circumstances are not independent from God. As a matter of fact, God is the one who creates circumstances rendering everything certain.

Do you really think the circumstances of your life limits God? Where He goes, oh, no, what am I going to do about that? That happened to Daniel. Oh, oh, oh, oh, looking in his pockets.

[10:24] What am I going to do? He doesn't do that. He doesn't limit God. God, through various human agents, would fulfill His purpose promise to Paul.

What was His purpose promise? It's in the previous verse that we started with, verse 11. Keep taking courage, for as you have solemnly witnessed to my cause of Jerusalem, it is necessary.

This must happen. You must witness at Rome also. It will happen. That's the plan. Stan, that's what's going to take place.

God, through various human agents, would fulfill this purpose promise He gave to Paul so as to bring Him safely to Rome to testify, listen, even using the very sin of God-haters to fulfill that purpose.

even using the very sin of these God-haters, these Jews, to bring about that purpose.

[11:28] You think I'm crazy? Look at Joseph. Joseph was thrown into that pit, screaming, crying out to his brothers.

Oh, look, here comes a caravan. Let's sell them. Sold them into slavery. He went to Egypt. He's 30, 33 years old, 30 years old.

He's the second in command of Egypt. And then his brothers come and say, we're looking for food. We need food. Oh my goodness, these guys are going to kill us. And do you remember what Joseph said to them in Genesis 50, which is really not just the theme of Joseph, but really, from when you go back to the fall, what we mean for evil, God means for good.

I mean, that's the theme. That's why, it's just like Genesis ends with that verse, more or less. What we mean for evil, God means for good. We fall in the garden, God means for good.

He's going to save sinners. What we mean for evil, God will turn this around to fulfill His purposes. It's amazing. I mean, who would have thunk, is that a word?

[12:51] Who would have thunk that an unbelieving Roman official would be the one the Lord Jesus would use to fulfill His purpose for Paul? I mean, why He would do that?

Paul will testify in Rome. Paul, you're immortal. Christian, you're immortal. God sovereignly cared for Paul.

When his life was in jeopardy, God's sovereign purpose and plan for Paul prevailed. Look, when God's mission's at stake, it's not really at stake.

because he has a plan to do whatever's necessary to accomplish his plan. You might think it's at stake. You might think it. Oh boy, he's just messing up here.

It's not at stake. As the song says, God moves in a mysterious way.

[13:55] Behind the frowning providence, He hides a smiling face. Many times, we cannot see why things are happening as they are.

Which is why we have the course. So God, we trust in you. When tears are great, when comforts few, we hope in mercies ever true.

Realize that God is at work in ways you would not have planned. Realize that God is at work in ways I would not have planned. And we could not have planned.

Is not the gospel the perfect, perfect example of this? I mean, it looks like everything failed.

And from the disciples' perspective, it did. Great! I mean, here's this guy, Jesus, we'll follow him.

Remember the road to Emmaus, Luke chapter 24?

[15:04] Great! And then, they crucify him. We thought he was going to save Israel. And Jesus is like, Oh, really? Are you guys for real?

You guys don't get it. It was meant for him to die. It was meant for him to be crushed. The Father unleashed his wrath upon his Son so that he could take his mercy and his compassion and pour it out and pour it out on his people.

Pour it out upon anyone who turns away from their sin and puts all their trust in Jesus Christ alone. That's the gospel. And if you're here this morning, you're not a follower of Jesus, that's what you need to do.

You need to turn away from your sin, repent, and put all your trust in Jesus Christ. The Father had Jesus live and die for sinners where he released all his anger upon Jesus Christ so that you can have grace and compassion instead of God's wrath and anger.

Just wrath and anger. That's the gospel. Our Lord is the perfect example of this. Because what they meant for evil, God, or excuse me, Peter said, according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross.

[16:31] What you guys meant for evil, God meant for good. He saved sinners through the gospel. So, that's introduction.

There's a method to my madness. You are immortal, and then we have three points underneath this. You are immortal in that, number one, evil will not ultimately harm you, but two, God will work for you so that, three, he will accomplish his purposes through you.

You are immortal. And we're going to go through each one of these points, one, two, and three. You are immortal in that, one, evil will not ultimately harm you, but instead, two, God will work for you so that, three, he will accomplish his purposes through you and then, and then, he gets glorified. He gets all the glory. He shows what a wonderful, amazing, magnificent God that he is. Evil will not ultimately harm you.

Two, God will work for you. Three, he will accomplish his purposes through you. Now, if you don't get these, that's okay, I'm going to go through each one, one by one, so don't panic if I, as I push the button, he goes, no, he goes away, you jerk.

[18:08] Number one, evil will not ultimately harm you, verse 12 through 15. For some, justice doesn't move fast enough. So these Jews, they formed a conspiracy.

They bound themselves under an oath, it says, in verse 12, saying that they would neither eat nor drink. until they had killed Paul. There were more than 40 who formed this plot. More than 40 swore an oath.

They wanted to kill Paul. They won't do anything until he's dead. They went to this great extreme in order to completely eradicate Paul. Who were these Jews?

We're not told. Not all Jews were hostile to Paul, but obviously these were. this plan flies in the face of God's plan for Paul from verse 11.

But it's not, it's just going to be the stepping stone that God will use for his glory to get Paul to Rome. Now you've got to give it to him.

[19:17] They've got spunk, right, these guys, these Jews? They're zealous. I mean, they thought they're defending truth by agreeing to, you know, lie and murder.

That makes sense. Isn't it ironic? They took an oath before God while they're violating the very word of God. Well, that makes a lot of sense. Totally irrational.

It reminds me of what Paul said in Romans, I believe it was Romans 10, that the Jews had zeal without knowledge. You've got to give it to them. They had spunk.

But see, they did not realize that their plan was totally impotent because Paul's life belonged to the Lord Jesus. He was sovereign.

He had everything in his hands. They couldn't do a thingless thing to stop him. And as a matter of fact, he says, you know what, you guys are going to do a little plot thing. I'm going to take that.

[20:21] I'm going to use that. What you mean for evil, I'm going to mean for good to get my servant to Rome. How do you like that? Bam! In your face. That's what he does.

Notice, verse 14. They came to chief priests and elders. We bound ourselves on our solemn oath. This is what you're going to do. You're going to notify the commander, verse 15. Bring Paul down to you as we're going to determine this case.

By more thorough investigation. We're in our part, we're ready to slay him before he comes near. Notice, they bring the chief priests and the scribes in on this and basically tell them this is what you're going to do for us.

They're ordering them. Notify the commander. Want more info. He'll bring Paul down. Nah, we've got him. Even more irony here.

Remember when Paul last week, he said to the high priest, God's going to strike you, you whitewashed wall. He was right.

[21:32] Because here the chief priests and scribes, they're agreeing to murder. They're agreeing to deceit. They're agreeing for lying to take place.

The very thing that Paul said, agreeing to this deception, they're violating the very law that they say they defended. So here we see this evil. This plot.

So you see it's coming and then you're like, there's no way. He's going to, there's no way. What's going to happen? Evil will not ultimately harm you. It will not. Because instead, number two, God will work for you.

All of a sudden, in verse 16, just out of nowhere, excuse me, Luke brings in Paul's nephew. How many sisters did Paul have?

How many kids did she have? And did they live in Jerusalem? How long did they live in Jerusalem? Were they just visiting Jerusalem? I don't know. So stop asking me all those questions. You sound like my eight-year-old.

[22:38] No offense, is it? So at 16, all of a sudden, Paul's sister, Paul's son, the son of Paul's sister, heard of the ambush, entered the barracks, tells Paul, Paul, one of the centurions, lead this

young man to the commander, brings him to the commander, commander took him by the hand, what do you have to tell me?

Verse 20, the Jews agreed to bring, bring Paul down to the council as though you're going to inquire. Notice verse 21. Do not listen to them.

This young man, probably a teenager, maybe even in his 20s, early 20s. Do not listen to him. More than 40 are lying in wait for him. They bound themselves under this curse.

They're ready and waiting for the promise from you. I mean, some interesting things I want to point out. Notice how much weight Paul carried to have the ability to summon and direct the centurion. Not to mention the respect from the commander. I mean, notice, it's amazing, in the midst of this whole plot, this evil is taking place, Paul is talking to the commander because God has worked out for Paul to have this respect with the centurions and the commander.

[23:57] These pagans. All for God's glory. All for God's glory. 22 commanders says, don't tell anybody you told me these things. Though in chains, the commander was considerate of Paul.

So, what does this tell us? Get this. God, in his perfect providence, raised up a helper from Paul's own family to be his rescuer in his time of need.

You never know what God is up to in order to fulfill his purposes. You never know. You never know about this event that goes down this way and what God's going to do or this event that happened that way and what God's going to do.

You don't know. Christian, God is not working against his people.

He is working for his people. He's not working against you. He's working for you. Notice the dashes.

[25:11] Even though it may not feel like it. You face circumstances and it doesn't feel like he's working for you. You hit situations that doesn't feel like he's working for me.

You go through this tragedy that he doesn't have to work for me. It doesn't feel like it. Again, can I point out to you, Joseph. He's there in jail for two years he's waiting.

He doesn't hear anything. Two years before, he told me, hey, can you put in a book, put in a word for me to the big man, to Pharaoh, can you do that?

Two years. Our Lord, they were all against him. They were crucifying as he was hanging on the cross.

They're hurling abuse and ridiculing him while he's on the cross. It looks like it's a failure. Christian, God is not working against his people.

[26:23] He's working for his people. He works for those that fear him. He works for those that trust in him. So God, we trust in you.

So evil will not ultimately harm you. God, as I said before, God will work for you. And then, number three, he will accomplish his purposes through you.

He will accomplish his purposes through you. It's amazing that he, God uses these unsaved pagans to get Paul out of there.

To get Paul to the place where he's just one step away from getting to Rome. Which we will see in another chapter or two.

That's what happens. He appeals to Caesar. You appeal to Caesar, to Caesar you will go. Notice 23. This is what the commander does.

[27:44] Call two centurions, get 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, 200 spearmen. We're going to leave at 9pm. He isn't going to mess around.

So he ordered a force of 470 soldiers. Eh, you know, that's just a few. To bring him to Caesarea, that was the Roman governor's seat in Judea.

Notice it says, 24, they would provide mounts to put Paul on, bring him safely to Felix the governor. So Paul was riding on a horse, or Paul was riding on a donkey or something.

He was riding though, even for his safety in that way. More safety for him. Bring him to Felix the governor. Felix, his rule was very violent and chaotic.

But why would they bring such a large force? The commander didn't trust the Jews. from Jerusalem to Antipatrus, it was filled with ambush possibilities.

[28:53] Not only to mention he was displaying Roman power, there ain't no way you're gonna mess with one of our Roman citizens. Back off. Look at what God's doing here.

Working for Paul so he can accomplish his purposes for Paul. Look at what he's doing. Look at what he's doing. Look at what he's doing. And then you have this letter.

25 to 30. Claudius Lysias, the most excellent governor, Felix. Greetings. This man was arrested by the Jews. He disturbed the peace in a major way, this man. He was about to be slain by them. I came upon them with the troops and rescued them having learned that he was a Roman. Oh, just strikingly failed to mention the misunderstanding he had with Paul. Not to mention the fact that he was about to whip him and he found out he was a Roman. He says, Oops, I didn't put that in the letter. Whoops. We just won't put that in there. 28, wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. [29 : 56] 29, I found him to be accused over questions about their law. To do with questions about their law, Jewish law. We're under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment.

On our side, on our end, as Romans, in our empire, this is huge. A neutral party, quote unquote neutral party, assesses that Paul was no threat to Rome.

It was only an internal religious matter. As a matter of fact, he did not want to indict Paul, but A, peace was still disturbed, and B, Paul was a Roman citizen, so he was going to be protected. Verse 30, I was informed that there was a plot against the man. I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you. It is ironic that the commander thought Paul was innocent, and yet he still was a prisoner.

But at the same time, the commander wanted to preserve Paul, to keep him from any harm that the Jews could bring upon him. So notice verse 31, the soldiers in accordance with their orders took Paul, brought him by night to Antipatris.

[31 : 13] The next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks. The horsemen took Paul the rest of the way, the foot soldiers returned to the barracks, kind of gives you a little window as to the type of soldiers, Roman soldiers were.

33, they came to Cessaria, delivered a letter to the governor, presented him to Paul, him meaning Felix to Paul, and when he read it, he asked him for what province he was, he learned he was Cilicia, which is interesting, because normally they would say, okay, you go to Cilicia, and then you get, the trial is going to be there in Cilicia, but Felix says, I will hear your case after your accusers arrive.

So then Paul was kept in prison, in Harrah's Praetorium, so he's under Roman protection, but also Roman custody. All in all, Paul was making his way to Rome.

Though Roman justice was flawed, God still used it for his glory. In the midst of sin, suffering, hostility, and afflictions, God uses all for his glory, so that his purposes will stand.

he will use any means to conform us into the image of his son. He will use any means to conform us into the image of his son. All of this is toward us, so that we are a people who reflect his grace, and a people who proclaim, faithfully proclaim his grace.

[32 : 55] These are just opportunities he gives to us. Where he's going to opportunities where he gives, circumstances he puts us in, where he's going to show his grace, he's going to show the gospel at work in our lives, and he's also going to give us opportunities to be able to proclaim the gospel to others.

Now his gospel word is at work in our lives. Interesting, the different responses to the gospel. Hostile, and indifferent. Obviously the Jews were hostile. They hated Paul. They hated Paul. The Romans were indifferent. Interesting, living life, carrying out the duties of life, rather than getting serious about eternal things.

And yet, in all of this, God is providentially making it possible for Paul to travel to Rome to bear witness to the Lord Jesus in the highest levels of Roman society.

God will do what he needs to do so that you, we are exactly where he wants us to be.

[34 : 09] God will do what he needs to do so that we are exactly where he wants us to be. God will do what he needs to do so that you are exactly where you need to be.

but wait a second what about that sin what about that horrible event in my life see when we talk about God being sovereign rendering certain everything that happens all the circumstances in our lives it's not like we're saying that God says well I'm just sovereign just get over it look what that's not how it works let me share with you how it works and what I'm about to say to you is going to be shocking it's that job it's that tragedy it's that death it's that abuse that rape that abortion that crime you know what God does he brings you over here and he holds you and he says

I know it's painful I know it hurts and he holds you and he braces his people and he does this come here look look look at what I'm doing that's what we mean by sovereignty that's what we mean that

God renders things certain do you believe this he has you exactly where he wants you Christian he will take that evil and he will turn it into good because that's what he did at the cross God's sovereign hand is actively involved in all of our life experiences so it behooves us to trust that he will work out his perfect glorious gracious saving purposes negative or positive events positive or negative events when it's all said and done the only one who will truly protect us is the Lord Jesus Christ you're immortal until the Lord Jesus is finished with what he's going to do in your life you will accomplish

God's perfect plan and in the process you know what he does he conforms you more to the image of his son what grace what a beautiful painting there's another illustration the painting the blotch is right there and we just see the blotch of black ink there and that's all we see but then God God pulls you back and he says but look at the painting and you see his beauty right you might say well God can't deal with my situation my circumstances my life is too much of a mess really no offense but are you totally crazy is not the Lord God sovereign over your life all your situations in your life in those circumstances

God works through you now doesn't mean it will be easy never said that actually the Christian life is a hard life because it's hard to believe but God is there for his people for those who trust love adore worship and submit to his son Jesus Christ he is there he loves you in Jesus Christ he does you are immortal until God's work for you is done we praise you Jesus Christ because in this gospel very gospel word of grace that we speak we see that

[39 : 40] Father you showed your sovereign hand in all this for your son saving sinners turning this horrible horrible horrible evil event the worst evil human history has ever seen is the crucifixion of your son and you unleashing your wrath upon your son and yet you turn that to good encourage us that evil will not ultimately harm us that you work for us and you will accomplish your purposes so that you get all the glory just like you did with Paul so you will do with us take a few moments and ponder think what we've seen in

God's word this morning and after a few moments we will do our time of giving singing our last two songs and our closing prayer preparing us to eat together and have fellowship together in our food think ponder what we've seen in his word