



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Genesis Sermon Series

Supports Session 11: Revealed

Sermon Title: “Trusting God’s Perfect Plan” (Acts 23:1-11)

Connection to Session 11

Like Joseph, Paul was imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. Paul learned to trust God’s timing even when things didn’t seem to be working out like he wanted.

Introduction/Opening

When I was in school, many students—including myself—often complained that our teachers were unfair. Sometimes the complaints were legitimate, but most of the time we complained because we simply didn’t like the workload. One of my teachers had a great response to such complaints: “Life’s not always fair. Get used to it.” Alas, he was correct on that point. One of the hardest lessons to learn is that life is not always fair, and no one knew that better than the apostle Paul. He was brought before the Sanhedrin for a crime he did not commit. Yet through it all, God proved He was still in control.

Outline

1. An unpleasant confrontation (vv. 1-5).

- a) Paul had been accused of preaching and bringing a Gentile into the temple (Acts 21:27-29).
 - i. Ananias had been high priest for about ten years by this time.
 - ii. According to Josephus, Ananias was very corrupt.¹
- b) When Paul defended himself, Ananias ordered him to be slapped.
 - i. Paul called the high priest a “whitewashed wall.”
 - ii. When Paul was informed he was addressing the high priest, he retracted his remark (he did not like Ananias, but he respected his office).
- c) We should stand up for our rights, but we must also respect authority.
 - i. Paul stood up for his own rights on occasion (16:36-40; 22:24-29).
 - ii. Paul knew the importance of submitting to governmental authority (Rom. 13:1-7).

2. An unusual controversy (vv. 6-10).

- a) Paul mentioned that he was a Pharisee who believed in the resurrection of the dead.
 - i. He knew the Sanhedrin consisted of both Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - ii. He hoped his comment would push some of the Pharisees to his side, since Sadducees did not believe in any kind of life after death.
- b) As Paul expected, his mention of the resurrection struck a nerve.

- i. A debate ensued, and it soon turned into a heated argument.
 - ii. The Pharisees wanted to release Paul, but the Sadducees did not agree.
 - iii. The argument became so intense that the Roman commander had Paul removed from the proceedings for his own safety.
- c) Many Christians are rightly disgusted by the chaos in today's society.
- i. People have bought into so many false philosophies that they are starting to contradict each other.
 - ii. It's only a matter of time before our society collapses under its own weight, but this will give us a great opportunity to proclaim the gospel.

3. An unexpected confirmation (v. 11).

- a) We can only imagine what was going through Paul's mind.
- i. He had spoken before the Sanhedrin, but he was still in prison.
 - ii. He'd had big hopes of visiting Rome and even Spain (Rom. 15:24), but now it looked as though his hopes were dashed.
- b) During the night, Paul had an unexpected visitor: the Lord.
- i. He assured Paul he would bear witness to Him in Rome.
 - ii. Two years passed before Paul went to Rome, and then he went as a prisoner. Be that as it may, the Lord kept His promise.
- c) It's not always easy to trust God's plan, but we must trust Him, anyway.
- i. His timing is always perfect.
 - ii. He always has good reasons for making us wait.

Conclusion

One of my favorite comic strips is *Beetle Bailey*. I remember one strip that showed General Halftrack standing before a large assembly of soldiers in an auditorium. They were about to take a test, and the general announced, "The test will begin immediately." Then his aide whispered to him that the pencils hadn't arrived yet. General Halftrack turned to the audience and said, "Due to circumstances beyond our control, immediately has been postponed for a few minutes." Alas, many circumstances in this world are indeed beyond your control. If you haven't realized that yet, just give yourself a few more years, and you'll see that it's true. However, I can tell you this on the authority of God's Word: there never have been or ever will be any circumstances that are beyond God's control. You may not understand everything that's happening in your life right now, but you just keep your trust in Him, and keep doing what He has commanded you to do. Sooner or later, you'll see His plan come together, and that He's been in control all along.

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¹ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.2.