

## Acts 16:16-40

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Open up your Bibles to Acts chapter 16. So I appreciate your prayers. As most of you know, I have some pretty serious respiratory problems, and I am pretty short of breath this morning for various reasons.

So I'm going to obey a really good rule of preaching, which is for the preacher to take comfort in the message that he's about to say. So what I'm about to say from God's Word is even kind of what's encouraging me and sustaining me right now.

But I'm also going to disobey another preaching rule, which is read the whole text before you start. But because this is a long text, I'm going to save myself the breath and just sort of walk through it with you.

A lot of Reformed pastors are like, no, read the text first. But I'm just going to just walk through it with you, scene by scene, step by step. Because it's a narrative, and because it is a narrative, it's pretty easy to do that.

So just join me in a word of prayer together. Father, we gather together this morning only for you. And I pray that if our hearts are divided, thinking about other things, that you would convict us of that and bring us to a right understanding of yourself and the gathering of your people.

[ 1 : 29 ] Just give us eyes to see, ears to hear this morning. And I pray that you would have your way. And Christ would be seen. In his name, amen.

So we're in Acts chapter 16. And Nathan did a really good introduction to last week about going, Paul and some other of the apostles going into Europe and kind of landing in Macedonia.

So I'm going to try my best not to go over to some of the same ground. But those of you who know me know I can't resist sometimes because there's so much awesome history in all of this.

But I just have this picture, you know, like of Paul and Silas and some of the other apostles just sailing over, you know, in a boat, like ready to invade Europe with the gospel, sailing across the Aegean Sea.

In the Aegean Sea, you've seen a ton of invasions. The Greek invasion of Troy, the Persian invasion of Greece, the Roman invasion of Carthage.

[ 2 : 40 ] All happened like right there. Now, this is like the greatest of them all. Now, this is Christ sending his people to invade like the pagan land of Europe. I just love it.

So it's this idea of our Jesus, the Jesus that we love kind of clashing into the world of Greek mythology and Rome and just ready to take it down.

So I love that. Just a picture of him invading Europe, not with natural weapons, but really the weapons of prayer, the gospel, the word of God, sacrificial love is what his weapons are invading this.

And why is this a big deal? So I'll tell you, for not all of us in here, but for most of us, I would dare to say that most of us come from a European descent.

Most of our ancestors were from Europe in some way or another. Not all. But I want you to see this as grace. Why? You ever stop and ask yourself, why didn't the gospel not go east instead of west?

[ 3 : 47 ] And this means that, like, the people that most of us descend from heard the gospel, our ancestors. And then ever since then, a lot of the time, it's been moving west.

It came from Europe to America to South America. Now it's wheeling back around and hitting Asia again. But God and his providence for some reason chose to comport the gospel message through Greco-Roman culture.

And at this time, the Roman Empire was in three, arguably four continents at the time, including Africa, Asia, and Europe.

And now Paul taking the gospel to Europe. And as Nathan mentioned last week, it kind of started in Philippi, a Roman colony in the heart of Macedonia.

And as he said last week, and again, I'll spare you all this, it was Philip of Macedon II, Alexander the Great's father, who the city was named after. And it was very much about as Roman as you can get.

[ 4 : 55 ] In Philippi had an amphitheater, a forum, an acropolis, which is like a fortified hill, an agora, a marketplace. So it was like a very picturesque.

They called it the Little Rome. So it looked very much like that. And settled by a lot of soldiers that had been discharged from service after the battle from Octavian or Caesar Augustus against, you know, Anthony and his baby cakes, Cleopatra.

After that, like a lot of them, went and lived in Philippi. So there was a lot of strong Roman people in this area.

And as he said last week, there probably wasn't enough Jews there to actually even form a synagogue. So that's why we saw them going to the river to pray and to gather.

And through his mercy, God saved Lydia and some others that were there with her. And so this is a great setup. So they just kind of stay there and they're kind of continuing their ministry in Philippi.

[ 6 : 04 ] And this is where we'll get into our text. Just join me and look at verse 16. Excuse me. So, sorry.

We're going to break this up in like three different scenes, if you would, of a story. But scene one is we're going to see in verse 16 through 24. Scene one is the predicament.

There's so many predicaments that we face. So this is the predicament, 16 through 24. It says, And she kept doing this for many days.

Paul, having become greatly annoyed, that's my favorite Bible word, by the way, hacked off, perturbed, turned around and said to the spirit, so not the girl, the spirit, and said, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And it came out that very hour. So great news, right? I mean, like deliverance. An amazing thing. Nope. Bad news for Paul and Silas.

[ 7 : 32 ] But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us Romans, as Romans to accept our practice.

The crowd joined in the attack, in attacking them. Excuse me. And the magistrates tore their garments off of them, and gave them orders to be beaten with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into the prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them in the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. So, you have Paul and Silas just sort of going about their daily routine.

They're there to love. They're there to serve. They're there to deliver the gospel message in a peaceful manner. They're there with God's direction. God sent them there, if you remember that.

[ 8 : 42 ] He sent them to this area. They're there with His authority, His power. They mean no harm, only good. And they're on their way. You know, they just get up in the morning, on their way over to the river, to spend some time in prayer together.

You know, birds chirping, sun shining. You know, a great, great morning to be alive. And on the way, they meet this slave girl, who was possessed by a demon, more likely.

And this slave girl, the word for divination here, is the word python. And so, it was a picture of, you ever heard of the, in Greek mythology, the oracle, the Delphic oracle, where a lot of the Greek kings and Greek generals would send their people to find out they were going to have victory or defeat in battle.

So, she was from this area. And python really was the name of this dragon or serpent that guarded the Delphi oracle. And, at least in Greek mythology, the god Apollo had come and slain this dragon or slain this snake.

And now he spoke through the Delphi oracle. So, it was seen as a, she had a spirit of prophecy. But make no mistake, this is a deep, dark, ancient, pagan, demonic practice that she was involved with.

[ 10 : 14 ] It's this idea of soothsaying, fortune-telling. I want you to know, guys, that stuff's real, okay? It's real, but it's not of the Lord at all.

This girl had this deep history. And she was the new age lady ahead of her time. She would have a 1-800 number today. So, you should know, though, if you're curious, God's people have been forbidden to deal with that kind of stuff.

Deuteronomy 18, verse 10, 1 Samuel 28, 8. Yet, know that she has this real, deep, dark, spiritual connection.

And that spirit in her recognizes that these are servants of the light. They weren't going around and saying this. They weren't wearing Christian t-shirts saying we're the apostles and we're here.

This spirit recognized who they were. She had this spiritual connection. These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation.

[ 11 : 19 ] Isn't that awesome? That dark, demonic spirit in her saw that and was saying that? She's like, If you think I'm awesome and my spiritual connections are great, don't.

These men have the real answer. These men have the way of salvation and they're proclaiming it to you now. So, this wasn't a really quick, short introduction.

It says she kept doing this for many days. So, all day Monday, all day Tuesday, all day Wednesday, on and on. And then finally, it says that Paul became greatly annoyed.

So, hacked off. He was just like, Yes, we are servants of the Most High God, but please just stop with the announcement. And, kind of turns around and just says to her, Like, come out.

Commanded the Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to come out. So, and she was delivered. So, that's great. I mean, awesome.

[ 12 : 30 ] But at least you would think all these great things are happening. But then, turns around and these slave girl's owners, who've been making money off of her, seek greedy and brutal vengeance against Paul and Silas.

So, they were exploiting her. Using her. Isn't it interesting? Stop and think about this. Isn't it interesting throughout the book of Acts particularly, but the Bible in general, that the desire for money, success, profit, always is working against the gospel.

You ever notice that? Simon the Magician in chapter 8. Demetrius the Silversmith in chapter 19. Isn't that interesting? This is another example.

The gospel is hurting their means of making a lot of money in a sinful manner. So, they seek this vengeance on them. It says they drag them into the marketplace before the rulers and before the magistrates.

So, in Roman law, like magistrates are put there to carry out civil authority. They were kind of like the arm of Caesar in the Roman provinces. And there was two usually assigned to each province at this time in the first century A.D.

[ 13 : 46 ] And they, these men lied. They lied. They bore false witness against Paul and Silas. They said, these Jews are disturbing us.

That word disturbing means to cause an uproar, like to cause exceedingly great trouble, chaos. Is that what they're really doing? Not at all. And they're advocating customs, not lawful for us Romans to accept.

So, understand that in some degree, Jews had kind of already gained a reputation, at least in the Roman Empire, for people who don't want to submit to the law of Caesar, the rule of Caesar.

Not long after this, Emperor Claudius, he expelled all the Jews from Rome. That's in history books. It's actually interesting that soon in Acts, like you actually see that Luke says that same thing.

Priscilla and Aquila were kicked out of Rome because they were Jews. And, basically saying, these punks aren't from around here. They're bringing trouble, this nonsense, from Jerusalem.

[ 14 : 54 ] And they're saying all this stuff against Rome. And really, that's not what they're doing at all. So then this unruly crowd kind of joins in, like, yeah, like they're here disturbing us.

And they kind of join in the attack. You ever just try to go the extra mile to love somebody and to, like, really sacrifice yourself for their well-being, then all of a sudden they're, like, coming at you with knives and hating you?

So it doesn't stop there. This fake trial results in severe punishment. So, you ever thought about this? I think about Christ and some of the other apostles that we see going through this kind of, we tend to overlook this.

Do you know how intimidating like an angry crowd can be when they're coming at you, stripping you down, yelling at you, beating you down? It's a scary, traumatizing thing.

That's, don't overlook that. So they had that happen. But then they were beaten with rods. What is that about? So throughout the Roman Empire, magistrates were followed around by these little attendants who carried these bundles of sticks.

[16:08] And to kind of serve as a picture of their authority from Rome. And they would beat people with them. So they were, they took the wooden rods and inflicted not just a couple, a brief spanking, but like severe blows.

Inflicted many blows upon Paul and Silas. So it couldn't get worse, right? But it did. After that, they threw them into the prison and ordered the jailer to keep them safely.

Put them in the inner prison, so not just the nice, you know, prison with bed and breakfast. They're like the inner dungeon, the dark, cold, wet, damp place where the rats are.

and fastened them in the stocks. So very uncomfortable, painful. So wow, like some swift, harsh justice, but a travesty of justice, injustice.

So, think about this later on, like Paul says in 1 Thessalonians, we were shamefully treated in Philippi. So imagine just sitting there in the stocks and in the cold, the dark dungeon, just kind of the shock wearing off a little bit and just sort of sitting there dealing with that.

[17:27] So in their place right now, what would you be thinking? What would be crossing your mind? How are you processing that sitting there in that dungeon? Many of us will be saying, why, oh Lord?

God, can we just kind of step back and review the day? Like we came here with the best of intentions to love people, to serve them, to give them the gospel, to lay our lives down.

You know, you used us to bring salvation to Lydia and her household. You used us to deliver to a slave girl from demonic oppression. Now we don't even have anything but the clothes on our backs. And now that's been taken even away from us. In case you haven't noticed, things down here have gotten really, really rough. So where are you? What is going on? We are here on your behalf.

What is happening? We've been falsely accused. We've been arrested. We've been beaten with our eyes. Thrown into the dungeon. Now we're cold and naked and lonely. Why is this happening?

[18:36] Ever been there? So suddenly, this great God that we sing about and that we proclaim isn't so great anymore.

We've shrunk him down to almost a little God and we put him across the table and we say, you owe me an explanation and this isn't right and you need to fix it.

But arrogantly, we seek to bring him down on our level. Not many places to turn today, but keep your hand there in Acts. Turn to Psalm 44.

Psalm 44. And so I want you to know that when you're going through suffering, when you're going through difficult times that you don't understand, I want you to know it's okay to ask God why.

Okay? But also be aware that it's really the spirit or the manner in which we ask him why. Alright?

[19:47] So, this kind of stuff is all over in the scripture, particularly in the Psalms. But, even in the Psalms, you see this unshakable confidence that even though I don't understand and I'm asking you why, I recognize that you are still there even though I can't feel you there.

And I'm putting my trust in you. So it's a humble asking, not an arrogant, angry, bitter asking. So Psalm 44. Look down at verse 14 and just picture Paul and Silas.

Picture your life. So you have made us a byword among the nations, a laughing stock among the peoples. all the day long and shame and shame has covered my face at the sound of the taunter and the reviler, at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

all of this has come upon us though we have not forgotten you and we have not been false to your covenant. Our hearts have not turned back nor have our steps departed from your way.

So they're saying like we've trusted you, we've followed you, we're here, we haven't left yet you have broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death.

[21:12] Jump ahead to verse 23. Awake. Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Browse yourself. Do not reject us forever.

Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? For our soul is bowed down in the dust. Our belly clings to the ground.

So here it is. Rise up, come to our help, redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love. So even though they don't understand, they're asking why, at the very end they say, redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.

Rise up and come and help us. So, we've all been there, some more than others, and you will before you breathe your last. You'll ask why.

So, this leads to the second scene, number two, scene two, the deliverance. Back in Acts, back in Acts 16. You see this in verse 25 through 34.

[ 22 : 18 ] So, about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying, and he's like, yeah, I'll be praying too, like God, get me out of this, here's how you're going to fix it. They were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake.

Wow, amazing timing. So, the foundation of the prisons were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. And when the jailer woke and saw the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

Sorry. But Paul cried with a loud voice, do not harm yourself, for we are all here. And the jailer called for lights and rushed in with trembling and with fear.

He fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them in the same hour that night and washed their wombs, and he was baptized at once, he and his family.

[ 23 : 52 ] Then he brought them up into the house and set food before them, and he rejoiced with his entire household that he believed in God.

So deliverance, double meaning deliverance, not just Paul and Silas, physical deliverance, but this man's and his family's deliverance from the slavery and death of sin.

So they praised him in their pain, right? There's no guarantee they were going to get out of there. They pretty much set themselves ready to die. They just went through all that oppressive stuff, and then about midnight, so I almost just don't want to overlook that.

Think about how Luke could be saying about midnight, you know, that dark hour when the adrenaline is worn off and you're just sitting there dealing with reality, you're thinking over just what happened.

praying, probably getting me out of this, but no, they were praying and singing hymns to God, right? Amid their suffering, our brothers, Paul and Silas, experienced this overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives with this great joy that's inexpressible.

[ 25 : 14 ] Remember when Paul was writing to the Philippians many years later? Peter, I wonder if he even thought about this experience as he wrote to them. Can you just hear him praying?

It's been a painful day, Lord, but we rejoice in you, O! Lord, because you are not far, you are near, so we will not be anxious for anything, but in everything.

We will turn to you in prayer and rejoice at all times and be thankful. And now your peace is flooding our souls. Sound familiar? Philippians 4, 4 through 7.

So, I believe that happened and that just kind of erupted into praise. It erupted into glory to God. And then this supernatural earthquake happened and their chains fell off.

So, quick break and run for it, right? Nope. They stayed there. and they called this Macedonian jailer in who was about to kill himself because his punishment would have been death.

[ 26 : 19 ] So, he thinks, I'm in trouble either way. I need to go ahead and take my life which had been seen as an honorable thing to do in that culture instead of bearing the shame.

And they stop him and say, wait, stop. We're all here. Don't harm yourself. So, this proud jailer came in with just fear and trembling, of course, right?

And he took them out to his house and then he asked the question, sir, what must I do to be saved? Not, well, become a member of the church, be baptized, and sign a card, and you're good for the rest of eternity, but and go get busy doing things for Jesus, but believe in the Lord Jesus and you'll be saved.

God's strong, overwhelming, powerful belief and faith that changes how you live, not just an acknowledgement, but a deep belief in your heart that changes how you live.

[ 27 : 23 ] And so, he believed, he gave his life to Christ. The jailer washed their wombs. One of the early church fathers said, the jailer washed and was washed.

He washed them from their stripes and was himself washed from his sins. The whole family ended up believing in the gospel and they rejoiced. This really is a cool word that's actually not used in other Greek literature at all this time.

It's not mentioned anywhere. So it's this idea of deep spiritual joy. They rejoiced. Wow. was then scene three.

Number three, the outcome, verse 35 through 40, the rest of our story. But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, that's an American word, sent the police, the popo, let those men go. And the jailer reported these words to Paul saying, the magistrates have sent to let you go. So they actually went back to the prison, right? They sent to let you go. Therefore, come out now and go in peace.

[ 28 : 41 ] But Paul said to them, they have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens and have thrown us into the prison. And now do they throw us out secretly?

No. Let them come themselves and take us out. And the police reported these words to the magistrate. And they were afraid. Yeah. When they heard that they were Roman citizens, so they came and apologized to them and took them out and asked them to leave the city.

So they went out of the prison, visited Lydia, and when they had seen the brothers, they were encouraged. They encouraged them and then departed. So the magistrates had a chance to kind of reflect on what happened and they were in serious trouble.

So they secretly ordered the release of Paul and Silas. and why Paul responded this way, we don't exactly know.

Maybe they thought, the magistrates thought, they've suffered enough, let's just let them go. But it seems like they were scared when they found out they were Roman citizens. And that terrified them.

[ 30 : 02 ] So they were just like, hey, just tell them to go. Tell them no hard feelings. keep this on the down low. Kind of go out the back door, please.

We're cool, right? Just that. But Paul says, no. Let them come themselves and walk us out. And I want to point this out. I don't think this was because Paul was angry and seeking vengeance on them.

I think he was really worried about how the church and believers would be perceived in the Roman world. He wanted to make sure that. They were seen as good citizens, as people submissive to the authorities, not troublemakers.

And so he was like, no, you tell them to come and walk us out so that everyone will know that we were not guilty of the crimes that we were accused of. But Roman law could have permitted Paul to really seriously bring down the system on these men.

Law during the first century protected them from punishment, from execution, or even torture without trial. So they had even the right to appeal to a higher court in Rome itself, which he does do later on.

[ 31 : 16 ] Paul says that he was born a citizen, right? So he carried this with him. He wasn't just a Jew, but he was a Roman citizen. So though many believers, right, they didn't want them to be, many Jews were considered as troublemakers, he didn't want that stench kind of carrying!

on to the believers in the empire. So that's why I really think that he decided to just kind of let it go, but not let it go. So exercise your rights as citizens in America underneath the kingdom of God, underneath mercy.

Don't just say, it's my rights, I'm going to do it anyway. Think about God's purposes. And then we see the church was strengthened, right? Of course.

What a heck of a story that would have been. We're like chilling at Lydia's house and Paul and Silas come, you know, really looking rough, and they encouraged the brothers.

And what a story that would have been to share with the brothers. So some application from our story. When life trials come, and we're tempted to ask, you know, like, why?

[ 32 : 30 ] Oh, Lord. You've got to remember that we are the most finite, short-sighted creatures imaginable. We cannot see tomorrow. And very limited perspective.

And we're tempted to believe in those moments that God is not sovereign and He's not good.

Right? I hope you follow my analogy here. But life to us is like, most of you, some of you may know what a mosaic is.

It's like a big picture that's made up of a lot of different smaller pictures. So when you stand back, you see the whole deal. And life is like that to us. We have these little snapshots, these glimpses in the moment that don't make sense.

like, I don't make any sense of what I have right here at all. And in those difficult moments where you have those snapshots, you have to believe that they do fit into God's bigger picture. And He's always doing that. He's always moving and creating this beautiful mosaic that testifies of His glory and His grace. So in moments of doubt, remember God's providence, that He works all things, all things, after the counsel of His will.

[ 33 : 46 ] Ephesians 1.11. It says of Jesus in Hebrews 1.3, He upholds the universe by the word of His power. So this stuff did not just happen when God was gone or on vacation.

He ordained it. He allowed it. And we always can't just see it, but just remember the word providence. If you're looking for a good definition, Puritan pastor Ezekiel Hopkins said, Providence is an act of God, whereby according to His eternal and most wise counsel, preserves and governs all things, and directs them to all their ends, but chiefly to His own glory.

So know that life is not about you. It's not. It's not about me. When you really ponder who you are before God, you will realize you have no rights at all.

And anything you have is only by His goodness, only by His grace. That keeps me from asking why a lot of the time, because I know I deserve far worse than I have gotten, infinitely worse.

So know that when you're living in that little picture that God is directing all things toward their ends, but chiefly to the glory of His name. so some things, maybe another message on this another time, kind of, we could do a whole message on what are those things that God is always doing, no matter what, no matter how, what your situation looks like, what is He always doing, we could have a whole message on that, but just from our story, here's one thing, God is always seeking to receive praise in dark places.

[ 35 : 32 ] Very easy to praise God right here, and seeing His excellence, but when we go through dark places and trials, His supreme worthiness is really seen in those moments when we praise Him and we trust Him, and we're saying to everyone around us that this isn't what's controlling me, God is controlling me, and I want to show all creation that He reigns, that He's sovereign in this moment, and so when you see Paul and Silas doing that, they're praying and seeing hymns to God, who do you think is getting the glory for that?

Because all the men, it says the men in the jail were listening to them, like what is that about down there? Crazy. So often we look at God and we want Him to change our what?

Our circumstances, circumstances, but what's cool is God is often more focused on changing us in the midst of the circumstances.

So look to God when that stuff happens, take your eyes off the circumstances, and He either will choose to calm the circumstances, or He'll calm you in the midst of the circumstances, usually what He likes to do.

So as we praise God, He changes us, He fills our souls with hope, with joy, with peace. Just a few more things for you. In those little snapshots, God is always seeking to save the lost and bring them to salvation.

[ 37 : 04 ] This might be heavy for some of you. God is committed to bring salvation to His people no matter what it takes.

And He's providentially, He places His people in places of suffering and death in order to call lost souls into His fold. A Bulgarian pastor in 1985 was arrested and imprisoned by the communists for preaching to his congregation.

His first name was Heristero. This is something he said. So when they threw him in jail, this often happens to believers. They're thrown in jail and they become such a nuisance to the jailers and the people in there because they continue preaching the gospel to the jailers, to those who are holding them captive as well as to the prisoners.

And he said this, both prisoners and jailers asked many questions and it turned out that we had a more fruitful ministry there in prison than we ever could have had just inside church walls.

God was better served by our presence in prison than if we had been free. I mean, do we think that way? Let's see what I do with this thing. It's sitting there somewhere.

[ 38 : 25 ] On your bulletin, there's a quote by my man, Sinclair,! In relationship to this, he said, God doesn't exist for you and for me.

Hear that. But rather God exists to fulfill his own glorious purposes. It is so true in scripture and in the lives of the Christians of whom we read in history that what we see God doing is not just for their benefit, but because he wanted to work in them and through them for others.

And that's what we see here. God will even allow death to come to someone who belongs to him if it means reaching others for salvation.

If you think that sounds harsh, then you need to contemplate the cross because he allowed the one he loved the most to go to the smallest little picture and die on the cross in order to bring you and I into salvation.

He is dedicated to saving his people in the hardest and most dreadful places. Jesus said this in John 6 verse 37, all the father gives to me will come to me.

[ 39 : 44 ] Whoever comes to me I will never cast out for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And there it is, this is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raised it up on the last day.

So Jesus has come to save his people and he will do it. God is always seeking to do good to his people.

So God isn't committed to what you want or you think you need. He's committed to giving you only what is good which means what's best for you in every situation.

So he's not really as concerned with our temporal joy or our temporal blessings. He's more focused on eternity which makes this realm look ridiculous.

And we know our famous Romans 8 28, don't let that verse become too familiar to you. We know that for those who love God all things work together.

[ 40 : 56 ] That working together and just, they just work out. It means that God is working providentially, sovereignly, working those things for their good. Right?

For those who are called according to his purpose, not our purpose. Fourthly, and I think lastly, God is always seeking to point to Christ.

Right? Not just in terms of salvation, but he wants to show Christ in all that he does. So Christ went into the smallest snapshot of life on the cross, and he cried out to his father, right?

Even Jesus did this. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Yet, he trusted the sovereign plan of his father, and in that darkest hour, he said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

Yet, as is the story of history and the story of the scripture, we see what man devises for evil. God uses it for good.

[ 42 : 06 ] Genesis 50, verse 20. Ah, this is such a good, I don't want to get into this too much, but this is Joseph talking to his brothers, but he said, what you meant, what you designed, what you meant for evil against me, God meant it for good.

Alright, I want to just explain this just briefly. There's a lot of talk out there in the church, and by some well-amending people, so I don't want to, I'm not trying to hate on this, I'm just trying to say that right thinking will change how right thinking about God, right thinking about life is important, so it doesn't just mean, think about when a tragedy happens, what do you hear on the radio, what do you hear in the news, God didn't want this to happen, but whoops, like it happened, and now he can come around and clean it up and just make something good for it, we've kind of heard that, right, and it sounds right, but was God caught off guard, was he asleep, like, is he now rushing to the scene of an accident, trying to clean it up and hopefully make something good out of it, no, and like this text here in Genesis 50 verse 20, what you meant for evil, like you willfully did this for evil, God meant it for good, so last night, I was looking up how to pronounce this Hebrew word, and Kathleen was like, what is that, because it was like, saying it to me, kashab, the word meant, God meant it, it means to plan, devise, calculate, imagine, or invent, so it doesn't mean that God was like, oh shoot, let me clean this up, it meant that he sovereignly designed that evil action to work against itself for good, and so you see in scripture the willful, sinful actions of men playing right into what God wanted every single time, great reason to praise him, Piper says, people lift up their hand to rebel against the most high, only to find that their rebellion is in the unwitting service of the wonderful designs of

God, even sin cannot frustrate the purposes of the almighty, if you think about it, most vividly, most seen clearly at the cross, right, Peter says early in Acts, this Christ, he was delivered up according to the predetermined, definite plan of God, right, these evil men crucified him, but it was according to the predestined plan of God, so you can't fight God, who just turn your own traps on you, every single time, plan A, not plan B, so keep in mind, just those things that God is always seeking to get praise in dark places, he's always seeking to save the lost and bring them to salvation, he's always seeking to do the best, the good to his people, and God is always seeking to point to Christ, so let's just ponder that, reality, let's pray together, and continue to worship

God.