

Acts 23:12-35

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Turning your Bibles to Acts 23. We are moving ever closer to finishing the book of Acts.

! We've been going through for quite a while now.! I don't want you to think that this is really just for me.

I really think that real students of the Scripture, if you ever really want to be a serious Bible student and really dive into the world, you have to dive into the world of the Bible.

You have to stop and consider the context in which you're reading because this was written a long time ago and things are made a lot more clear and vivid when you actually understand the world that you're reading about.

A lot of just historical context all through the book of Acts in the first century. And today, when I was thinking about this, I thought, I don't think there's another text in the Scripture that talks more about Rome than the text that we're looking at today.

[1 : 24] And so I really, a lot of people just don't know much about Rome in Judea in the first century. Now, of course, I'm going to spare you because I understand that there's a whole range of people here from people who love history to people who hate it.

And so I'm going to try to go in the middle somewhere. But I just kind of want to give you an introduction just to get you into the world of what we're reading about right now. And so maybe it becomes more vivid to you.

You'll understand it a little better. And then we will unpack our text with this kind of stuff in our heads, I hope, that will become a little more real to you.

And so there's a lot of great books out there to help you dive into the world of the Bible, the culture, the language, the geography. All that kind of stuff matters in a lot of ways.

Now, I do agree that I can nerd out a little too much this morning, so I'm going to try not to do that. So I'm going to try to go in the middle, like I said a minute ago. But I guess before we do that, I would just like to pray for our time.

[2 : 32] Then we'll give an intro, and then we'll dive into our text today. Let's pray together. Lord, we do gather this morning as your people to worship you as those that have been saved and redeemed.

And God, I just ask during this time, you would help us to forget about things that are going on in our lives that we'll be thinking and doing after the service. You allow us to be completely here, giving us eyes to see, Lord, and ears to hear your word.

Lord, help us to not blaspheme your word by walking away and forgetting it so easily. So help us to remember this morning, work in your people, Lord, by your spirit.

In Christ's name, amen. So I actually have visual aids for you today. So yeah, we'll go to the first slide.

So there's a whole history of Rome in Judea. And I could definitely nerd out on this, but just read Josephus, read Tacitus, some of the ancient writers, and they'll paint this really, really awesome, an awesome way.

[3 : 47] You'll see how the Bible parallels ancient history a lot. So, but let's just kind of hone in on this. Go to the next slide. You're good. So how did Rome even end up in Judea?

Like how did they actually conquer Judea? Well, as you know, there was a period between when the Old Testament ended and when the New Testament starts. And in between that time, Judea went under a lot of different conquerors that ruled over them.

But the Seleucid Empire, 312 BC to 63 BC, was like the Hellenistic Empire that basically was the result of Alexander's Empire breaking up.

And a section of that was in Judea. And then eventually the Roman Republic, around 63 BC, conquered the Seleucid Empire. And so Judea became like a client state of Rome, of the Republic. But as you know, Judea has always wanted to go back to being his own power, his own state. So they definitely kind of revolted when the power shift came. And there was a bloody, bloody subduing of Judea.

[5 : 04] A lot of you have heard of the Roman General Pompey, Pompey the Great. He was the one who initially came back and conquered Judea, besieged Jerusalem, and like just nasty, awful slaughter.

And so the Jews learned very, very quickly that Rome was unlike any other conqueror they ever had before. In terms of military might, wealth, education, literature, political stability, they had never seen anything like this before.

And as you can see, Judea kind of in the right lower corner of the map there. But eventually Rome conquered the whole Mediterranean world. And so, yeah, that was how they got into Judea. But they were definitely like one of the most advanced civilizations in the ancient world. They, around the first centuries, in our context, the empire stretched basically from England to Africa, from Syria to Spain, and a quarter of the people on earth lived under the rule of the Caesars. So a huge, huge empire. So the Roman Republic that existed all the way up to Julius Caesar was basically the empire being run by the Senate.

[6 : 23] But Caesar, Julius Caesar that is, kind of switched it and brought about more of an empire idea with an emperor ruling over the peoples with the Senate kind of playing underneath that, underneath the emperor.

emperor. And so, I'm not going to give you a long history on all the emperors, but I have some slides on them. Go ahead. So you have to start with Julius Caesar.

I'm only going to go through the emperors that basically are in the New Testament period. Okay? But I'm not going to, so if you're curious about this, Julius Caesar, but when he was assassinated by the Senate, his nephew, which is Octavius, took the throne, Augustus Caesar.

He had one of the longest reigns of all the emperors. And this was a dynasty called the Julio-Claudian dynasty. So direct descendants of Julius Caesar.

And if you know your Bible, Christ was born under the reign of Caesar Augustus. So that's when things kind of start. So go ahead. Next slide. Tiberius, son of Octavius.

[7 : 36] He, again, if you know your Bible, New Testament, Luke, ringing out in your head. Christ started his ministry underneath the reign of Tiberius. Kind of an okay ruler, not really great.

And then, the whack job of the whole dynasty, Caligula. Crazy stories about this guy. I mean, just look at him, number one. But, talk about insanity.

Like this man, two of his most incredible feasts was he, he came to the Roman Senate and he says, I'm going to appoint my horse to be a part of this Senate. And he was serious. So he appointed a horse to be a senator.

But also, very terrifying. He had like just fits of rage that he would go and just kill and slaughter. He kicked his own wife to death when she was pregnant. But definitely a whack job.

And, eventually, the people around him said, this isn't a good idea. We need to end his life. So, they did. Go to the next slide. And, during the slaughter of taking Caligula down, they made Claudius, who was of the royal line, really timid, shy, did not want to be emperor.

[8 : 51] You can even see it in his face. Like, they made him the emperor and he was always trying to measure up, always failing to measure up. But, as you, as you read in Acts, Claudius' name has come up a couple of times.

He was the one who, who basically expelled all the Jews from Rome. Um, but, unfortunately, poor Claudius. If you ever felt bad for an emperor, you feel bad for him, the whole time there was people conspiring behind him to overthrow him.

And, eventually, it did happen. Um, his wife was named Agrippina. And, eventually, she conspired to put her son, Nero, on the throne.

Second whack job of the dynasty. Um, I think he was probably right, barely behind Caligula. I would probably give Caligula first place for crazy. But, you see the neared on Nero.

Um, so, bad, uh, that's something you just don't want to emulate, guys. If you can't grow a full beard, just don't try. If it doesn't come up, just don't grow the neared. So, but as we know, as we know, Nero, he loved theater, he loved art, he loved to think of himself as like a dramatic performer.

[10:05] Um, the people, like on, you know, American Idol and stuff, if they tried to criticize him, he would just kill them all. He was not good, though, at all. And, but, uh, not much of a ruler, but, several uprisings happened towards the end of his reign.

And, the Jewish revolt, which eventually led to Judea being destroyed utterly, and the temple being destroyed, and the rebellion in Britain as well.

But, eventually, Nero, his own, his own guard turned against him, and they were hunting him down, and he kind of had a servant with him, and he, he took the knife and put it to his throat, and he, and he, he died the dramatic death that he always wanted to die.

He saw himself, like, as like in a play of like, you know, tragedy, like, I'm the, I'm the victim here, and I'm going to die. But, his last words, supposedly, were, one artist dies in me.

And, that was his last, famous words. Um, so, after he died, there was no direct descendants of, of Caesar anymore.

[11:12] So, the empire's top generals, three of them, started fighting each other, in a Roman civil war, to basically take the, take the throne by force.

So, while those generals, fought it out, this guy, Vespasian, he was the general sent by Nero to Judea, to subdue Judea.

And, he kind of just hung out, and, and watched everybody kind of, fight each other. But, there was so much chaos, within the empire, they all eventually looked, to Vespasian, to restore the order.

Like, come back, we all, like you, and you're going to be our guy. So, he became the next emperor. And, if you just look at him, he looks like a soldier. He's, he was very, calm and cool, under stressful situations, a great ruler.

But, as with Rome, you see like, both, sophistication, and, and, a civilized society, but then you also see, extreme brutality. And, he, he brought like, a reign of terror, on the Jewish people.

[12:18] The first parts, of his conquest, were, kill every single man, that has an ability, to fight. And, then enslave every, man, older man, woman, and child.

That was his policy. He might burn their villages, and destroy their crops. Like, make them fear, Rome. So, when he took the throne, Judea, had a little bit, of a reprieve.

But, after he became emperor, he sent his son, Titus, you can kind of see, some, something of a resemblance, back to Judea. And, Titus finished the job, besieging Jerusalem, then eventually destroying the temple, by accident, actually.

So, you can read more about that, in the writings of Josephus, called the Jewish Wars. So, that was a, that's basically, probably where you can stop, when you're thinking about, first century, Judea, and their relationship, with the Roman Empire.

So, go on to the next slide. So, most of you have heard, of the infamous, Roman legion. This is a picture, of a Roman legion, in the first century. So, the size of it, varied throughout, Roman history.

[13:29] But, in the first century, this is what, it would have looked like. And there would be around, roughly around, 5,000, 500 soldiers, in the legion. It was made up, of 10 cohorts.

And the first cohort, as you see, that was a little bigger, on the far left. That was made up, of some of the better soldiers, and they actually, were charged, with carrying the eagle, like the standard, of the legion.

And then the other, nine cohorts, kind of busted down. You saw little squares, those are called centuries, where you get centurion from. The centurion, commanded each, century.

And, the Roman military, unlike any other thing, the ancient world had seen, some Roman armies, could be up to, eight to ten of these. So, just imagine that mass, like coming towards you.

And unlike, other empires, before them, they fought, like in a single, a single unit. They didn't just rush you, and try to take you out. So, that's why they, very easily, conquered the ancient world.

[14:32] And, they had vast reserves, of manpower, that no other country, could ever dream of. Example, when Hannibal, invaded Italy, he destroyed, an entire Roman army, of about 80,000 men, destroyed them, like almost to the man.

And then, within a year later, Rome sent another army, that was just as big. They could not, just pull, vast reserves, of manpower, throughout the empire. And then, each legion, would have a small detachment, of cavalry with it.

But the Roman army, wasn't really big on cavalry. They mainly, wanted to get up on you, and fight you, face to face, with infantry. So, cavalry was mainly for, protecting flanks, and then softening up, the enemy, before the infantry, came in.

So, if you look, there are five, lower ranking tribunes, like in, sort of the, lower part of the screen. The tribune, in our text, in Acts, is probably, one of these, lower ranking, tribunes. They command, what they would have called, an urban cohort. So, that's, he's not a very, high ranking, tribune. You can go on, to the next slide. So, that's just a breakdown, of the Roman legion, in the first, first century.

[15:52] I kind of, explained that a little bit. But, yeah, if you're taking notes, and interested, and nerding out. Next slide. So, first century, again, this is what, a Roman legionnaire, would have looked like.

Had, state of the art, armor, and weapons. And again, as you can see, they fought side by side, so they would just form a wall, and just, push you right over. They were armed, with a large shield, a short stabbing sword, called the gladius, which is where you get gladiator from.

And then, they would carry two, javelins called pila. And the, the point of the javelin, was either to, obviously kill you, but if you had a shield, it would stick in your shield. And you see that little skinny point, it would bend.

So you'd either have to, you'd have to throw away your shield, if you were the enemy. And then you would be rushing on, and then they would throw the second one at you, when you had no, protection. protection. So, very devastating, military force.

Go ahead, next slide. I mean, this is a picture of them, how they would fight, side by side. They fought, and, in rows, and the centurion, would actually be charged, with like, blowing a whistle, or giving some signal, and the guy in the front, every five minutes, the guy in the front, would go back, and the next guy, would step up.

[17:18] So, if you think about that, they only had to fight, five minutes, out of 45 minutes, with the exchanging, like that. Next slide. So, in our text today, we also have some, light, lightly Roman, lightly armored Roman cavalry.

This is definitely, like what they have looked like, in the first century. So, again, not very heavily armed, like knights, but, meant to just kind of, come in really quick, and do, light damage, to the enemy.

Go ahead. So, in the Roman command, in our text, we see, again, like a lower ranking tribune. So, this is like, a picture of a tribune, speaking with the centurion.

The centurion, was known by his helmet, and the horse hair, that went over the, the top, and he carried, a wooden rod, to kind of symbolize, that he was in control, and he was a, career soldier, to the death.

And, these were guys, that would like, not back down, and have no mercy. They were, they earned that position, by being that way. And, they would wear their medals, those are medals, that are on the front of his, his armor there.

[18:31] So, in our text, we have a tribune, a lower ranking tribune. So, I think that's all, the slides I got. Yeah. So, in our text today, I mean, I've always wondered, was there a legion, in Judea, during the first century?

And, the answer was no. There was no legion, in Judea, during the first century. The procurators, that governed Judea, were lower ranking, and they were subordinate, to the senatorial governor, in Syria.

And so, the senatorial governors, they were the only ones, that could command a legion. So, what do we see then, in our text, is what they would have called, an urban cohort.

It had been roughly, around a thousand men, and they would be made up, of auxiliary troops, from Syria, or even locally recruited, soldiers from Samaria.

And, so they weren't, like your European legionnaire. They were, lightly armored, and they were not as well trained, but they were still, a force to be reckoned with. Most Romans, did not like Judea.

[19:42] They saw it as like, the armpit, of the empire. And if you got sent there, it was probably because, the emperor didn't like you. And, it was hot, as you can imagine. Imagine going from like, a nice, cool, temperate, European weather, to like a desert, you know.

And, you got sent there, it was a very troublesome, and uncomfortable place, for any, high-ranking Roman, to be posted. And, legions did reappear, again, like in the Jewish revolt, in 66 AD.

Vespasian and Titus, brought four legions with them, and they were recruited, from Italy, Spain, and Greece, and Macedonia. So those were your, your bad boys.

That's, that's who they brought back, to kind of finish, the job. It was a nasty, brutal, subduing, of Judea, that Judea never, recovered from, ever.

So, just know, that like in the Roman world, there was no other, you didn't want to mess with them. Like you, you really just wanted to, thrive under them somehow.

[20 : 48] And Judea, had done that. They had, thrived under Roman rule, in a sense. They didn't have their own independence, but, Rome allowed them, to worship, and allowed them, to keep their temple traditions.

And, as long as they paid homage, to the emperor, but, as we know, eventually, that, boiled over, and there was a, massive revolt. And today, if you go to, Jerusalem, the only part of, the existence of the temple, you see is the, is the western wall.

And, because Rome tore down, every bit of it, after that happened. So, just keep some of that in mind, I guess, as we, look into our text today.

I'll try to give you, like a really brief overview, of where we've been, and then dive into it. But, in Acts 23, kind of where we find ourselves today, just a little, little reminder, like a, of where we've been.

Paul came back to Jerusalem, he was preaching in the temple, and he was attacked, and then eventually arrested, by Roman authorities. He was allowed to speak, to the mob, and he addressed them, and basically testified, of Christ, and the gospel.

[22 : 06] They got more, and more angry, and unruly. And, finally, the tribune, brought him, before, the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, and they were, not helpful, either.

So, this eventually, leads to him, kind of going back, to the drawing board, and thinking, what do we do next? Because, I don't know what to do, with this guy, Paul. Because, he's a Roman citizen, and somehow, I have to protect him.

So, let's just start, in verse 10, and then we'll read, all the way through, 35. It says, And when the dissension, became violent, this is the Sanhedrin, the tribune, afraid that Paul, be torn to pieces, by them, commanded the soldiers, to go down, and to take him away, from among them, by force, and bring him, into the barracks.

The following night, this is a key verse, 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.

And when it was day, the Jews made a plot, and bound themselves, by an oath, neither to eat, nor drink, till they had killed Paul. There were more than 40, who made this conspiracy.

[23 : 26] They went to the chief priests, and elders, and said, We have strictly bound ourselves, by oath, to taste no food, till we have killed Paul. 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 when, and when, and we will be ready, to kill him, before he comes near. Now the son of Paul's sister, heard of their ambush, so they went, and entered the barracks, and told Paul.

Paul called, one of the centurions, and said, Take this young man, to the tribune, for he has something, to tell him. So he took him, and brought him, before the tribune, and said, Paul, the prisoner, called me, and asked me, to bring this young man, to you, and he has something, to say to you.

And the tribune, took him by the hand, and going aside, he asked him privately, what is it, that you have to tell me? 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, but do not, be persuaded by them, for more than 40, of their men, are lying in ambush, for him, who have bound themselves, by an oath, to neither eat, nor drink, until they have killed him.

And now they are ready, waiting for your consent. So the tribune, dismissed the young man, charging him, tell no one, that you have informed me, about these things.

[25 : 03] Then he called two, of the centurions, and said, get ready, two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, to go as far, as Caesarea, at the third hour, of the night.

Also provide mounts, for Paul, to ride, and bring him safely, to Felix, the governor. And he wrote a letter, to this effect, Claudius Lucius, to his excellency, the governor Felix, greetings.

This man was seized, by the Jews, and was about to be killed, by them, when I came upon them, with soldiers, and rescued him, having learned, that he was a Roman citizen.

And desiring, to know the charge, for which they were accusing him, I brought him down, to the council. I found, that he was being accused, about questions, of their law, but charged, with nothing, deserving death, or imprisonment.

And, when it was disclosed, to me, that there was a plot, against this man, I sent him at once, to you at once, ordering his accusers, also, to state, before you, what they have, against him.

[26 : 13] So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul, and brought him back, to Antipas. And on the next day, they returned, to the barracks, letting the horsemen, go on with him.

And when they had come, to Caesarea, they delivered the letter, to the governor, and presented Paul, also before him. On reading the letter, he asked, what province, he was, what province, he was from.

And when he learned, that he was from, Cecilia, he said, I will give you a hearing, when your accusers, arrive. And he commanded him, to be guarded, in Herod's Praetorium. So, there's three things, we're going to just use, to look at, to unpack the narrative.

I know, it was a mouthful, of narrative. So, three things, and then we'll get into, a little bit of application. But, point number one, is the plot, conceived.

That's, verses 12, through 15. So, they so hated, Paul's life, and Paul's message, that they had banded together, 40 of these guys, to, conceive a devious plot, to murder, Paul, in cold blood.

[27 : 26] And, I want you just to think about, this kind of dark imagery, about sneaking out, under cover of night, behind closed doors, hidden from, the public eye, and meeting, like a nest, of conspirators, to, hatch a devious, plan, to, to kill.

It's, it's very, very, very reminiscent, of, what happened, to our Lord, and how it was like, in the middle of the night, an unjust, unfair trial, that brought him to, and, much of the imagery, you would see, in Roman history, of emperors, imperial families, and senators, collaborating, against one another, to overthrow, and to kill, often leading to, cold blooded murder, or poison being put, in a cup, very, can't trust anyone, just deceiving, this is a picture, of that kind of idea, the same scenario, so Satan here, is trying to work, through the wicked, to stop, and destroy Paul, by this plotting, and, these were no, lukewarm, wishy-washy men, at all, since they had, strictly bound themselves, by oath, to taste no food, or drink, until they killed Paul, so the Greek says, they anathomized themselves, meaning that, may God do to us, what we were going to do, to Paul, if we fail, may we die, if we don't, may God curse us, if we don't, fulfill this pledge, so they were ready, to do whatever it took, to murder Paul, to kill any Romans, that were with him, so they banded together, to bring about, this assassination, and so, this nest of vipers, came together, and hatched their plan, and they tried to lure,

Paul out of, the protection of the Romans, by saying, hey, come back to the council, because, they're going to hear you out more, they're going to, you know, get more exact, like what is actually going on, and, so out of the blue, right, we have, a young man, who happens to be Paul's nephew, kind of, turn up on the scene, but, I don't know, have any of you, I doubt it, but, have any of you, ever been plotted against, I just, I just want you to think about, like how terrifying that is, just to think that, you can't trust anybody around you, that anything you say, could be, shared with someone, that could do you harm, and just to walk out, every day, thinking that, these people are conspiring, against me, Paul, is very aware of this, very reminiscent, of, even King David, when he was fleeing, from Saul, people conspiring, to take his life, and,

Paul, knowing the, the scriptures very well, would have had a ton, of good things in his head, that David wrote, from, people plotting, against him, Psalm 31, verse 11 says, because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach, and they, they order death, to my acquaintances, those who see me, in the street, flee from me, I have been like one, who is forgotten, and dead, I am a broken vessel, for I hear them, whispering, terror, on every side, as they scheme, together, against me, as they plot, to take my life, very, strong words, but, he is aware, that God is with him, he is aware, that Christ said, I will take you, to Rome, this is going to happen, so he is leaning, on that promise, think about, how similar, in a lot of ways, Paul's life was, to our Lord's life, he said, in Philippians 3, 10, like I was to share, in the sufferings, of Christ, and he had, he had been plotted, he had stood, before an angry mob, he had been, judged, unjustly, by the rulers, and he was a prisoner, in the fortress, in Jerusalem, and both being innocent, of the crimes, they were being, committed with, so this is, the plot conceived, like let's murder Paul, in cold blood, and any who stand, in our way, so that's the plot, conceived, the second point, is the plot, unveiled, this is 16, through 22, in our text, so again, no other reference, in the Bible, to this character, but says, the son

of Paul's sister, so his nephew, the only reference, to him in the scripture, we don't know, what he was doing, in Jerusalem, other than, that's just where he lived, and he somehow, snuck his way, into the barracks, and told, told Paul, of the plot, as a Roman citizen, Paul had been given, really good visitation, right, so, his nephew, had easy access, and then he said, okay, well let's, go about this the right way, you tell the centurion, and he'll go tell his commander, that's kind of what happened, and I found it, very interesting, that, I really think, Paul is not really afraid, for his own life, I really think, that he's really concerned, about the Jewish people, because if they carry this out, and, there is an attack, on Roman soldiers, and Roman soldiers die, there could be, massive repercussions, you know, to come down, on the Jewish people, because of their actions, so, to kill a Roman citizen, under Roman protection, was a, a serious crime, and, these zealots, were bold enough, to do that, they were ready, to do whatever it took, and, if you picture, his name is, Claudius Lucius, is how you say his name, it's a Greek last name, he shows like a level, of like dignity, and nobility, that you wouldn't always see, like in the, the Roman army, but, it's more of like Maximus, if you've seen Gladiator, he's like a, more of a noble, dignified, [33 : 46] Roman commander, if you just, read the language, it says he took him by the hand, and let him look over to the side, and he says, alright, oh man, what is it you have to tell me, tell me, and, shared the plot with him, and then after it was over, he says, okay, you know, I've heard you, keep this on the down low, and, and go quickly, be careful as you go, leave it in my hands, I'll take care of it, you know, just a very responsible, honorable, Roman tribune, so, this plot is unveiled, they now know what's going on, and, so, this goes into point number three, which is, the plot frustrated, the plot frustrated, 23 through, 35, so, Claudius, who's the tribune here, he decided to take no chances, he knew, that, at least, throughout history, a very strong show, of military force, could, like, deter, a rash action, by rebels, and, so, he ordered a large force, nearly half, of the men in Jerusalem, were, to accompany Paul, so, that shows you, how seriously, he took this, to protect Paul, as a Roman citizen, who we saw as innocent, and to possibly, prevent, an uprising, for slaughtering,

Roman soldiers, so, he took no chances, and he sent, an attachment, of the urban cohort, auxiliary troops, to go with them, and even gave Paul, a horse to ride, and they slipped out, onto the cover, of night, so, I guess the poor conspirators, starved to death, I don't know, like, I don't know what happened, but, they didn't get to fulfill, their oath, you can just see them there, clenching their teeth, as like, this massive group, of soldiers, walked by, and, just being furious, that Paul, was getting away, and so, as the proper protocol, of the day, Claudia sent a letter, to Felix, explaining the situation, heads up, this is coming, get ready for it, and he sent it, to Caesarea, explained the situation, and, gave the governor, time to prepare, it also provided, legal documentation, for Paul's case, as a citizen, so,

I just like, how specific Luke is, like he's giving you, these details, to show you, this really happened, and here's how it happened, so, Paul was finally, delivered safely, and Felix promised, to give him a hearing, once the Jewish, accusers arrived, and, it was a distance, of about, 62 miles, that wasn't any big deal, for soldiers to do, in the heat, or the cool of the night, and so, that's, just the unpacking, of our story, but what can we learn, from the story, so, just a few things, to hold on to, and I love this one, this is, a great one to start with, some application, number one, God, forwarded, the plans, of the wicked, God, forwarded, the plans, of the wicked, so, in our day, when there seems, to be so much, stuff going on, that the whole world, seems to be just, coming around us, and against us, plotting against the gospel, plotting against, the church, the church having, both enemies, within, and without, to bring it down, know that,

God is not, subordinate, to their plans, that, he, sovereignly, as it says, in Psalm 146, he thwarts, the way, of the wicked, and that's the story, of the Bible, from Joseph, to the death of Christ, God, is completely sovereign, and he rules, absolute, and he even uses, the evil actions, of men, to play into, what he wants, every single time, not plan B, but plan A, the death of Christ, being the ultimate, example of that, crucified, by evil, wicked men, but yet, little did they know, that they were accomplishing, playing, a part in God's plans, to bring about, redemption, on the cross, these Jewish conspirators, fell into their own trap, and, think about, what Job wrote, Job, said, he frustrates, the devices, of the crafty, so that their hands, achieve no success, he catches the wise, in their own craftiness, in the schemes, of the wily, are brought, to naught, that's Job 5, 12, so the plot, the conspirators, failed, so know that,

God is for you, there is no one, who will stand against you, they cannot stand, God will always, thwart the plans, of the wicked, always, he is in control, secondly, God proved, his faithfulness, to Paul, so when we say, God is faithful, alright, here's what we mean, it means that, God will always do, what he said, he would do, and fulfill, his promises, alright, that's, God is true, to himself, is what we say, when God is faithful, he doesn't forget, he doesn't fail, he doesn't falter, to his word, he's always true, to his word, and remember, in verse 11, the risen Christ, had promised Paul, you will go to Rome, you are going to go, and testify, to Rome, and so, when these evil men, plotted against him, Paul knew, like come hell, or high water, I don't know how, I'm going to go to Rome, somehow, because God has promised, and here we see,

[39 : 50] God taking the first step, in that, by being escorted, by none of the Roman soldiers, on his first step, to Rome, and, I just find it, very, very ironic, that, again, the point is not to be like, man, the Romans were awesome guys, like they were not, they were wicked, cruel, brutal, and pagan, and they have never, been a friend of, of Christ, ever, they were the instrument, that crucified him, Paul has been beaten, and treated, you know, severely by Romans, already, and I just love, how God just, I could just, I'm making this up, I could just see God, just, hmm, it would be fun, just to use them, just to manipulate them, because they've been, you know, against my cause, I'm just going to use them, right here, to further my cause, and, before, he knew it, he turned, these soldiers, into an armed force, moving Paul, to safety, and, so, God proved, his faithfulness, he worked, and accomplished, what he said, he would do, to the first step, to move Paul, towards Rome,

Psalm 36, 5, your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, and your faithfulness, to the clouds, so, are you concerned, that God will drop you, that he's not going, to pull through, that, you've been so hated, and so, people have let you down, again, and again, and do you think, that God somehow, is again, going to just drop you, because, he doesn't keep his word, either, just, no, he will finish, what, he started, so don't worry, he will deliver you, as he's promised, to believe, he is faithful, is faithful, not that he just can be, he is faithful, alright, number three, and this one, is not directly out, but sort of implied, in a metaphorical, sense, I just kind of want to tell you that, just because we want to be, very clear here, but, believers, are in a different military, and in a different war, okay, that's an application, here,

Rome had his own agenda, his own agenda, to conquer, and subdue, new territories, and the spreading, of Roman culture, to seeing as a, that they were dominant, through culture, literature, architecture, civilizing, and settling, conquered provinces, it all was for human vanity, and for human glory, all of it, right, and, indeed, they succeeded, I mean, look at our western world, look at, even, if you go to, Washington, look at our buildings, look at how we do education, that's all, Greco-Roman, so they have, succeeded in a lot of ways, but, they influence the western world, and it's astounding, right, so wars that Rome fought, were to expand their empire, and to show they were a dominant culture, simply just for temporal gain, all right, so that was Rome's agenda, that's what they're trying to do here, protect their interests, so, so, know that Christ, different agenda, right,

Christ has his own agenda, never for a minute, did a Caesar rule the world, Christ ruled over the Caesars, it wasn't, Caesar sitting on the Palatine Hill, in Rome, on the throne, when it was Christ, sitting at the right hand, of the Father, it says in Psalm 135, 6, whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven, and on the earth, in the seas, and all the deeps, that is a definition, of sovereignty, God does what he pleases, whenever he pleases it, so it pleased God, for Rome, to temporarily rule, the Mediterranean world, but I just want to give you, an example of this, and I could get into it, all day, but just an example, that the ancient world, had never, had a way to travel, the way it did, before Rome came, the Roman systems, of roads, that they saw, as a way to dominate, became footpaths, for the gospel, to go all over, the Mediterranean world, so thanks to the Romans, and their system of roads, their trade routes, their engineering, the gospel message, could spread, easily, unlike any other time, previous, very, and so Christ used that, for his own intentions, to spread the gospel, and so, we are, right, a part of, expanding,

God's kingdom, and, eventually, we are to, to conquer, this world, for Christ, through the power, of the gospel, through sacrificial love, we are to, to expand, the kingdom of God, to all nations, and we will, succeed, like it will happen, and we will do it, not with natural means, that men wage war, but, by the spirit, and by the word of God, look at Revelation, 12, verse 10, so, so, the apostle John, wrote this, when Rome was, at a very, very high level, of power, and he wrote this, and just think about, what might have been, in his mind, that Christ, was using Rome, for his own purposes, and, slowly, judging the empire, as it decayed, from within, this is a, a word, of saying, that Christ's

