

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Politics and The Gospel

Acts 22:22-23:35

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: Paul is now encountering the first of several steps towards Rome. The events in which he finds himself pushed and prodded along are the result of false accusations by enemies of Jesus Christ. In it all we see a man who accepts the situations without falling into fatalism or surrender. Rather, he seeks to maintain a proper witness of Jesus Christ to a hating world. In our day the level of wickedness is stunning and with its rise there is a call to arms, so to speak, by people who posture themselves as leaders in the larger Church in America. This sermon considers Paul's overt teaching on our posture toward the government and compares his actual actions to it.

I. Introduction.

- A. We have a culture war that people are slowly waking up to.
 - 1. You could argue that this had started somewhere in the 1960's and on into the 90's with the rise of anti-war, anti-establishmentarianism, distrust of government, distrust of education, and a distrust of Western religion.
 - 2. With this came a strong push toward relativism for truth no longer meant anything outside the individual.
 - 3. In all of this, over the last 50 decades, the church in America has sought to somehow be relevant and instead of sticking with the Word of God, too often the Word of God has been reinterpreted through these various lens.
 - 4. And the war continues, but because of all of what I have described, plus much more, the lines of conflict are fuzzy and uncertain.
 - 5. With the open rejection of good and the love of evil in its every form, what is the Christian to do?
- B. Enter the case for Christian nationalism.
 - 1. Now, bringing this up is a challenge because it shows itself in so many different forms.
 - 2. This is important to keep in mind as I speak a bit on the subject because as the debate and discussion continues out in the internet and in classrooms, there are many assumptions that are missed or ignored.

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3. “Don’t you want to live in a Christian nation?” and the easy answer is yes. But this is because we don’t live in one. So when you say yes, you are usually doing it with a certain vision in mind of what that would look like.
 4. Like all things, the devil is in the details. We have a historical record of what this can look like by looking at how the various Protestant groups attacked one another in the early colonies here in America. All this the pursuit of a Christian nation.
 5. To get a sense of this whole thing I can recommend *Five Views on Christian Nationalism*, edited by Joe Rigney. Do not assume I agree with any of them.
- C. In our long passage today we have an opportunity to note several principles that seemed to guide Paul.
1. We also have Paul’s teaching on the Christian’s relationship with any governing authority.
 2. My plan is to show those principles in light of what Paul explicitly taught.

II. Politics and The Gospel.

- A. The challenge of this topic in the book of Acts.
1. What we have here in Acts is a narrative.
 2. However, we do have explicit teaching in the book of Romans regarding our attitude and posture toward governing authorities.
 - a. And there we have clear teaching and so I want us to begin by reading Romans, chapter 13.
 - b. Having read that we can then come back to this passage and see how faithful Paul was to his own teaching.
 - (1) So the question I want you to ask when we go through our passage in Acts is this: does Paul follow his own teaching?
- B. A quick and dirty look at Romans 13 and civil authorities.
1. This passage is typical of Paul. Exceedingly logical in its argument. It is also often abused beyond recognition.

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2. There is a man in Milwaukee who has become a sort of expert on defying governing authorities, speaking at many different venues.
 - a. He approaches this passage with three arguments:
 - (1) 1) that no where does it instruct that we are to give unlimited obedience to the civil government.
 - (2) 2) proper hermeneutics forbid this idea for other passages show believer disobeying .
 - (3) 3) Rom 13 contains a limitation clause that limits its authority.
 - b. The first is correct in that there are times the believer will disobey government in obedience to Christ. But this is used to push for a **proactive** rebellion rather than a **reactive** refusal.
 - c. The second fits with the first. The problem is how he blends Israel (a nation-state) with the Church. To argue that situation with Israel are equivalent to the church is poor interpretation and is usually cherry picked. Also, these situation are **still** reactive rather than proactive.
 - d. The third is, in reality, the key point. Vss 3-4 is supposedly the limitation clause. Only if they reward for good. But, the argument goes, if they punish for good, we can rebel. But this is not a limitation clause but an explanation, hence the "for".
3. The expansive command (1).
4. The expansive reason (for) (1).
5. The initial result/conclusion (2).
6. The rationale for this conclusion (3).
7. The secondary reason/warning (4).
8. The root reason to submit (5).
9. Some applications to this (6-11): we pay our taxes, we show honor, we are to be busy loving others.

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10. The hope of the gospel means we are free to do this for our salvation is ever nearer (11). So do not practice as the world practices (12) but as those who belong to the "day."
 11. A final expansive command, put on "Lord" Jesus Christ.
- C. An examination of Paul before the authorities.
1. The setting is in 22:21, where the risen Christ told Paul that He would send him to the hated Gentiles. This is simply too much.
 2. (22) We see the enemies of the gospel rise up with a clear desire to harm Paul.
 3. But in 25 Paul exerts the rights of his citizenship.
 4. When questioned (27) by the Roman commander he does no pontificating or histrionics.
 5. When given a chance (28) is clarifies his standing as a citizen.
 6. When the commander puts Paul in front of the Sanhedrin for examination (23:1), we find Paul addresses his accusers with simplicity
 7. Here (23:2) we find that the Jewish leadership is just as sinful and evil as the masses. They go straight to violence.
 8. Notice that here we find Paul losing self-control (3) by declaring a curse upon the one who struck him.
 9. (4) They confront Paul and are right to do so. But make no mistake, they are right in what they say but they do not say it for the sake of righteousness. They cloak their sin in the law and sit back smug.
 10. (5) Here is a key point. Paul immediately repents.
 11. In vs 6 he creates a division among his enemies by stating a key truth.
 12. (11) it is here that the mercy of God is seen. Christ appears to him again and gives him encouragement.
- D. Paul was suffering for doing what was right. We find that Peter has something to say about this in 1 Peter 3:8-16.
1. Expansive call to a pursuit of both positive and negative virtuous living (8-9).

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2. Expansive reasons given (10-11).
 3. Primary reason for this (12).
 4. Thought-provoking challenge: (13)
 5. Pushback against the inevitable "what-if" (14)-15).
 6. Exhortation (15b-16).
 7. The grand promise (16b).
- E. Back to Acts 23 where in vs 12 we find their dark hearts placing themselves under a curse if they do not kill him.
1. (14-21) this plot is revealed to the commander through the son of Paul's sister.
 2. Here we find (22-24) that this commander is more faithful and righteous than the Jews, who are supposed to be the people of God.
 3. So the commander puts together a large cadre of troops to protect Paul and he sends him to Caesarea with a letter of introduction to the governor there named Felix.
 4. Felix decides he will now hear Paul's case once the accusers come.

III. Conclusion.

- A. So consider Paul and compare his actual reactions to abuse by governing authorities with what he instructed to the Romans.
1. You see that even the governing authorities, though not believers, though wicked, fulfilled their roles in God's purposes.
 2. You find he was faithful.
 3. No sense of disrespect, rebellion, hate, or vitriol. The only exception was when he was struck and even then he immediately repented.
 4. Paul seeks to work with the governing authority, but you see that he does not hope in it. His hope remains with Jesus Christ and desires to honor Him in all things.
 5. This is the effect of the gospel in this age we live in.
- B. We see that as his enemies plot and rage, Paul prays for their deliverance. Never forget what he wrote in Romans 9-11, how he yearns for their salvation.

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- C. And we see the sovereign hand of God here too. Paul had expressed repeatedly that he hoped to go to Rome.
 - 1. And he was on his way, just as he desired. Except. . . in chains.
 - 2. May you consider that reality for yourselves this day.

Benediction

May the Lord answer you in your day of trouble. May the name of YHWH set you in a secure place on high. May He remember your faithfulness and prayers and may He grant you the true desires of your heart. Amen