

The Overcoming Power of the Gospel
Christmas 2017
Sunday a.m. 12/10/2017

Last week we answered the question, [*Is the World Too Big for the Gospel?*](#)

❖ Today, we will look at **The Overcoming Power of the Gospel**

Watch this video how Southern Baptist missionaries are serving in Japan

■ **The Gospel Has Overcome the Government**

✧ **God established governments for His purpose and for his glory**

Romans 13:1 (NKJV)

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

• **The birth of Jesus**

Luke 2:1-3

✧ **God used the government to have Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah**

Micah 5:2 (NKJV)

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

• **Paul and his Roman citizenship (Acts 23-25)**

✧ **God uses governments to proclaim the gospel**

✚ Paul was placed under arrest by Roman soldier's due to the violence of a mob attack in Jerusalem

✪ **The Roman commander ordered Paul to be beaten to find out why the Jews had attacked him, but Paul claimed his Roman citizenship and therefore could not be beaten**

✚ A plot to kill Paul was overheard by his nephew

✚ Paul told the centurion commander and he escorted Paul to Caesarea with 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen

✚ Paul stood before Felix, the governor of Judea appointed by Rome

✪ **The Jewish leaders asked Felix to have Paul brought back to Jerusalem from Caesarea, but Paul appealed to Caesar**

✪ **This began the fulfillment of God's plan for Paul**

Acts 9:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

• **Government persecution**

✪ **Persecution of the church began with Jewish leaders of the Temple, with help from the roman government, which caused the church to go "into all the world"**

✚ The Roman Empire persecuted the church for over 300 years

✪ **Tacitus described Christians as a "class hated for their abominations", guilty of "hatred of the human race,"; not a "religion" but a "deadly superstition," worthy of repression**

64 A.D. a great fire engulfed much of Rome with many Christians (perhaps including Peter) being seized, tortured, and put to death in the arena

166–69 A.D. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was arrested during the "great persecutions that disturbed the province of Asia"

- ✚ Polycarp was told, “Swear by the genius of Caesar” and denounce “the atheists (Christians).”
- ✚ The proconsul persisted, “Swear, and I will release you. Curse Christ.”
- ✚ Polycarp replied, “**Eighty-six years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?**”
- ✚ He was condemned to death and burned alive.

324 A.D. Emperor Constantine proclaimed his adherence to Christianity and made Christianity the religion of the Empire, ending persecution

✧ According to The Pew Research Center, over 75% of the world’s population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions and many of these people are Christians.

✧ According to the U S Department of State, Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors because of their belief in Jesus Christ

- ✚ Persecution strengthens the church, puts our focus on God
- ✚ The Gospel becomes an even stronger message about hope

■ The Gospel Has Overcome Idolatry

- The psalmist describes idolatry

Psalm 115:3-8

- Paul and Barnabas confront idolatry in Lystra (Acts 14:14-15)

- ✚ A man, lame from birth, was listing to Paul preach
- ✚ Paul realized he had faith to be healed; told the man to rise and walk
- ✚ The people of Lystra thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods that came to visit them; Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes
- ✚ The Priest of Zeus brought oxen to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas
- ✚ Paul preached about the true God, the living God who made all things

- ✚ Jewish leaders came from Iconium and Antioch and stirred up the crowd
- ✚ They stoned Paul and took him out of the city, thinking that he was dead

- **Paul confronts idolatry in Athens (Acts 17:16-21; 32-34)**

- ✚ Paul was taken to Athens to wait for Silas and Timothy
- ✚ Paul's spirit was broken when he saw the idolatry of the city

- ✚ He spoke daily in the synagogue and in the marketplace about Jesus
- ✚ Philosophers heard Paul and ask him to come to the Areopagus

- ✪ **Paul declared that their Unknown God was the true God that made every man and determined the boundaries of the nation**
- ✚ Some mocked the resurrection but others believed and trusted in Christ

- ❖ People in our lives can be regarded as idols, like Paul and Barnabas
- ❖ **We can make idols to an unknown god in our lives**

- ❖ Anything that replaces Jesus Christ in our lives is an idol
- ❖ **Our focus must be on the power of the Gospel**

- **The Gospel Has Overcome Religion**

- **1 Corinthians 1:23 (NKJV)**

but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness

- **Jesus declared himself to be God (Luke 4:16-28)**

- ✪ **Jesus began His ministry in Galilee and was well received, until He went to His home town of Nazareth**

- ✚ Jesus went to the synagogue that he grew up in and read scripture from the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 61:1-2b**)

- **Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV)**

- ✚ Jesus told them that today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (**21**)
- ✚ They questioned His authority since He was Joseph's son (**22**)

✚ Jesus said He could not perform miracles in Nazareth due to their unbelief **(23-24)**

✧ **Jesus was the God-Man, the incarnation**

John 1:14 (NKJV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

dwelt - tabernacle, abide, reside

- **Jesus fellowshiped with the wrong people (Luke 5:27-32)**
- **Jesus healed on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11)**

❖ A friend from high school, Phil Reynolds, shared these thoughts

➤ The differences between following Christ and following a religion are:

- ✚ People seek God in religions; the Bible teaches that God seeks people
- ✚ People serve in religions to please God; the Bible teaches that people must follow God to serve Him.
- ✚ People try to reach God in religions; the Bible teaches that it is impossible for man to reach God, so God came to man in human form

Close

✚ Christmas is about the Gospel

Hebrews 9:28

so Christ was offered **once** to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

“Christ is God’s final word to man.”

✧ **Christmas is the reminder that God will not send another Son, another sacrifice**