

**A Declaration of Those Things Which Are
Most Surely Believed Among Us**
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 23- **Luke 23:1-25**
342- The Love of the World; The Condemnation of Jesus
and The Sovereignty of God- Part 4

April 2, 2017

Luke 23:1-25

1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

3 So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "*It is as you say.*"

4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."

5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

6 When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.

11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

13 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

15 "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.

16 "Therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

17 [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.]

18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!"

19 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.)

20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,

21 but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!"

22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt *demanding* death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him."

23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices *began* to prevail.

24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.

25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

To the Glory of God

Now I want to remind you that there are actually three things going on here as Jesus stands before Pilate:

1. The Love of the World in Pilate
2. The Condemnation of Jesus by the Crowds
3. The Sovereignty of God

And several years after the Resurrection, this same Dr. Luke quoted the Apostles as they were praying about these issues all working simultaneously together in **The Acts 4:27-28**:

27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

... so, the men who led the Church during its very first years believed and taught that the evil actions of unsaved and wicked men, *including* the Murder of Jesus Christ, were carried out under the predestined Purpose of God, Who works all things after the Counsel of Him.

So, in reality, "Evil" is *not* a force that roams freely throughout the earth, but it is merely a tool that God uses to further His Own Good Will in both saving all of His elect and damning the non-elect.

Now, over the last several weeks, we have been going over the amazing interchange between this vicious, unmerciful tyrant and the Lord of Glory. And we have now come to the point where Pilate sends Jesus to Herod. So, look again at verses 4-7.

4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."

5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

6 When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

Now verse 4 tells us that, even though Pontius Pilate was a barbaric and cruel man, God has moved him to actually begin to *defend* Jesus. And so, here in verse 4, Pilate says:

"I find no guilt in this man."

And this is the first time that this evil man would say this. In fact, before he sends Him to die, Pontius Pilate will declare the innocence of Jesus three separate times. And in response to Pilate's declaration of Jesus' innocence, the self-righteous, religious hypocrites that instigated this entire show-trial said:

He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place.

Now the only reason these men said this was to goad Pilate to go ahead and condemn Jesus. But, as soon as Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, Dr. Luke tells us:

... when he [Pilate] learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

So, the only reason that Pilate sends Jesus over to Herod is because he is already convinced that Jesus is innocent of what He is being accused of and doesn't want to be the one who condemns Jesus to die.

Now, as we continue to move through Dr. Luke's narrative, as soon as Pilate heard that Jesus was originally from the region of Galilee, he sends Him over to Herod because that was Herod's jurisdiction.

So, who is this man, Herod? Actually, *this* Herod is *not* the man that was called, "Herod the Great". *This* Herod is actually one of the *sons* of Herod the Great. Now Herod the Great ruled over the land of Israel for about 37 years. And he is the man who built the Temple in Jerusalem that the Jews used for their sacrifices until 70 AD. Herod also built the famous port at Caesarea and the fortress at Masada where over a million Jews died in the Roman war. The Apostle Levi tells us that Herod the Great was also the ruler in Judea who ordered the Massacre of the Innocents at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Now Herod died a very horrible and painful death in 4 BC, about the time that Jesus was born (6-4BC). And at his death, the Kingdom of Israel was divided among his sons and his sister. So, Herod the Great had three sons:

- ✓ Herod Archelaus
- ✓ Herod Antipater
- ✓ Herod Philip I

... and Herod's sister was named, Salome. And so, it was Herod Antipater, who was nicknamed "Antipas", who was given authority over

the region of Galilee. When Pilate heard that Jesus came from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod Antipas.

Now Antipas ruled over Galilee from the death of his father in 4 B.C. until about 39 A.D. But he had to go to Rome to get the appointment that his father gave him formally and officially approved. And because Antipas had been formally educated in Rome and was politically connected, his appointment over Galilee was confirmed. And it was at this time that Herod Antipas became the "Herod" that we read about so much in the New Testament.

Now remember that for many years prior to this, Galilee was the place that terrorists and anarchists ran into to hide from the authorities. This was the region where many of the "false messiahs" that Jesus prophesied about came from. And it was the fact that Jesus came from this region as to why many Jews, as well as Romans, thought Jesus was just another one of these false messiahs.

But, just before Antipas assumes power, a massive rebellion broke out in Galilee during the Feast of Passover. And the Roman army almost completely annihilated that entire area. And this takes us back to the context behind what Jesus was talking about in **Luke 21** when He spoke about the many wars and skirmishes and political instability that would bring about a shortage of food and result in many deaths during the 40 years after His Resurrection.

These "false messiahs" were common, and as their appearance accelerated, the Roman authorities eventually saw the need to put them down once for all by sending Titus Vespasian to destroy them in 70 AD, which resulted in the cataclysmic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood, along with animal sacrifices, and the entire Jewish way of life, including bringing a decisive end to the reign of the First Covenant.

So, when Antipas came back from Rome, he had to actually rebuild the entire region of Galilee which had been destroyed. So, he developed a reputation as a great builder. He and his two brothers built twelve different cities all throughout Israel.

Herod started with a city called Sepphoris, which is about four miles northeast from Nazareth. And Sepphoris became the largest city in Galilee. It took over 15 years to build and it was finished in about 10 A.D. Now the reason this is important is that building this great city was a massive undertaking. And during that time, the Romans used

Jewish craftsmen to build it. And many times, they conscripted, which is a fancy word for ordering Jewish laborers to work for them by force. And some were paid and others were not. But no Jew could resist the iron fist of the Romans, and so all Jews in that region from about 4 BC to 10 AD were forced to work on building that city.

Now Nazareth was only four miles away and we know from Scripture that Jesus and his family lived in Nazareth from the time He was 2 until He began His Ministry. And so, it is very possible that Jesus' foster-father, Joseph, had been conscripted to work on that city by the Romans.

Later on, Herod built another city called Tiberius. And that is the city that still sits on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee to this day. And Antipas named it Tiberius in honor of Tiberius Caesar who had replaced Augustus in 14 AD. Eventually Tiberius gave its name to the lake and it became known as the Lake of Tiberius where it had been known before as the Sea of Galilee.

But as Herod Antipas started to build his city, he realized, it soon became obvious, that in digging out the dirt to put the foundations of this great city which was to be his own city, his palace city and the capital city of Galilee, they found they were building on a very large Jewish cemetery. Now this was no problem for Herod, in his pragmatism, he just kept building. Dig out the dirt, get rid of the bones, and keep on building.

However, the Jews were horrified because of the prohibitions of the Old Testament against touching a dead body, so they saw the whole thing as being sinful and unclean and refused to live there.

Now keep in mind that even though the Roman Empire brought many advancements in Medicine and Technology and Culture and Literature and the Building Trades, and even Government, for the most part, the rulers were pagan to the core. And the Roman rulers were not only pagan and barbaric because they worshipped many man-made gods, but they were pagan and barbaric in that they lived morally disgusting lives. And that is what it really means to be "barbaric". The dictionary defines a "barbarian" as:

A person in a crude, savage, or primitive state; an uncivilized person. A person without culture, refinement, or education; a Philistine. A person not living in a Christian country or within a Christian civilization.¹

So, under the First or the Old Covenant, God established *boundaries* and *parameters* and *limitations* on the behavior of His people, so that they would not be “like” the pagans and the barbarians of that region. God said that His people were to be “holy” or “set apart” and “different” and “distinct” from the barbaric pagans of that area. So, being “holy” doesn’t mean you are *better* than other people, but only that you have been called and chosen to live in such a way that glorifies and honors God.

Living according to the dictates of your own heart, without any restraint or limitations on your fallen urges, is what it means to be “barbaric” or “pagan”. So, anyone, in any culture that seeks to behave without restraint or limitations on his urges, especially when it comes to both money and sex, is “pagan” and “barbaric” by definition. And also, by definition, to be “holy” means to live underneath the Divine Limitations on both sexual and financial behavior that have been imposed on Mankind by God in Scripture.

A person *cannot* be “holy” without being restrained and limited in his behavior. And the *absence* of that behavioral restraint and limitations qualifies a person as being a “pagan” and a “barbarian”. So, the more *narrow* a person’s sexual behavior is defined moves him closer to Biblical Holiness, while the *widening* and *broadening* of human sexuality brings him closer to paganism.

Also, please notice that being holy or being pagan has nothing to do with a person’s educational level. It has nothing to do with their financial status or their political connections. Medicinal advancements and technological savvy or the advancement of Government has nothing to do with either being pagan or holy. Being “holy” or being “barbaric” has only to do with behavior. And the Roman authorities, *especially* those of Herod the Great’s House, were pagan and barbaric to the core.

And to illustrate this, at some point around 29 AD, Herod Antipas made a trip to Rome because he wanted to visit his half-brother, Herod Philip I, who was also called “Herod II”. And during his visit, Antipas became very interested in Philip wife, Herodius. Now Herodius was not

¹ Dictionary.com; barbarian

only Philip's wife, she was also Philip's niece. And since Antipas was the half- brother of Herod Philip, Herodius was Antipas' niece as well. So, Philip was in an incestuous relationship with his own niece.

And so, Antipas betrayed his half- brother and had an adulterous and incestuous affair with his half-brother's wife, who was also his niece. I'm telling you, as pagan and barbaric behavior abounds, people's lives get more and more complicated. You really need a spread-sheet to keep track of all the sins.

Now none of these people could have cared less about being pagan or barbaric, but simply because they decided that it would be more politically acceptable for Antipas and the niece to get married rather than just shack up, so both Antipas and Herodius decided to divorce their spouses and marry each other. So, as soon as Herod Antipas came back from his trip, he informs his wife and daughter that they had to leave because he had married his half-brother's wife, who was also his niece. So, this is the kind of man who now sits in judgment of the Son of God.

Now it wasn't long before Antipas had a very important dinner for his military commanders and other high profile dignitaries. And he had just captured an itinerate preacher who was wild and uncontrollable. And so, let's pick up on this important dinner from John Mark's Gospel Record, so please go there with me:

Mark 6:21-29

21 A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee;

22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you."

23 And he swore to her, "Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom."

24 And she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist."

25 Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

26 And although the king was very sorry, *yet* because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.

27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded *him* to bring *back* his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison,
28 and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.
29 When his disciples heard *about this*, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

So, this is the "Herod" that had John Baptist martyred. And John was killed because of the Gospel, but very specifically John was murdered because he cried out against the immorality of the leader of the secular Government.

Herod Antipas was not saved, he made no pretense of being a believer, and he was not a part of John's group. He was simply the secular ruler of the country. And yet, John cried out against Herod's own *personal* immorality. And this is instructive to give us insight as to how we, as believers, are to view secular Government, and what our role is to its leaders. We are to be unattached to Government so that we may cry out against any immorality in our leaders. And we are to hold our leaders accountable to render justice to the weak and poor.

But, to get an even deeper insight, I want you to look at the verses that came just before this, **Mark 6:12-20**:

12 They went out and preached that *men* should repent.

13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

14 And King Herod heard *of it*, for His name had become well known; and *people* were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him."

15 But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "*He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.*"

16 But when Herod heard *of it*, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"

17 For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her.

18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

19 Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*;

20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

Now look again at verses 17-20:

17 ... Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her.

18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

19 Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*;

20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

John Mark tells us that Herod Antipas was afraid of John Baptist because he knew that John was a righteous man. And so, Herod worked to keep John safe. Then Mark says that when Herod heard John speak:

... he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.

Now it is possible that Herod had heard John speak *outside* the prison, in the community, and had worked to keep him safe to continue his ministry. But the more likely scenario was that Herod worked to keep John safe while John was in prison.

And the last part of this verse tells us that Herod enjoyed listening to John, even though what John taught perplexed him. And that tells us that *part* of the reason why John was in jail and *part* of the reason why Jesus never even visited him was so that John could preach the Gospel to Herod. And this is very common. Many times, God allows His Own people to be persecuted and even imprisoned so that we may preach the Gospel to other prisoners and to the jailers, and even the authorities that put us in prison.

And that means Herod had heard as much of the Gospel as John knew, even though he was confused by it. And that means John had told Herod to repent and be baptized. So, just like Pilate, Herod's position and his power and the prestige that came with that position, and his love of the world, illustrated his lost condition, and the fact that God the Father had not set His Love on Herod. And so, in his emasculated cowardice and his own unbridled lust, Herod kills the greatest Prophet born of woman.

And this is the man who now stands in judgment of Jesus. And notice what Dr. Luke tells us about this moment:

7 And when he [Pilate] learned that He [Jesus] belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.

Now notice that unlike His time with Pilate, Jesus never utters a single word to Herod. There is no attempt by Jesus at all to reason with this man; no attempt at reaching his heart to convince him to repent. And even though the chief priests were there screaming at Him, Jesus never opens His Mouth.

Now we would view this as strange. And we would *not* follow Jesus' lead here. Jesus Himself commanded us to preach the Gospel to every creature. And so, our example here is John, not Jesus. We have no idea who is chosen for Salvation and who isn't, so we must work with *everybody* in the hope that they will repent and believe. But Jesus doesn't, because, very narrowly, Jesus was there to die for our sins. And so, we must understand that Jesus was not wrong to never attempt to reach Herod, because Jesus knew every man and what was in them. We don't have that Power, so we work with everybody.

And Dr. Luke gives us a hint in verse 8 that Herod's curiosity about Jesus had nothing to do with him being under conviction to repent of his wickedness and be saved when he wrote:

Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

So, all Herod was interested in was to see some miracle or sign or wonder performed by Jesus. And this, too, is a characteristic of being pagan. Pagans have no desire to love and worship the miracle-Maker, they simply want to see something new. And so, Luke tells us:

And he [Herod] questioned Him [Jesus] at some length; but He answered him nothing

So, because Herod was irritated with Jesus, Luke tells us:

Luke 23:11b

... after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate

So, Herod mocked Jesus and had Him beaten again, and dressed the Lord of Glory in a gorgeous robe to insult the fact that Jesus was a King. But look at the very next verse:

Luke 23:12

Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

So, the catalyst for the friendship between Pilate and Herod Antipas was their rejection of Jesus. And that common trait that these men shared actually forged their union that had been broken years ago due to politics. So, now Jesus is being sent back again to Pilate for the final condemnation.

Now *part* of the reason that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod was because Pilate despised the Sanhedrin and doesn't want to be used by them to get what they want. That part is because, as we have already discovered, during his interrogation of Jesus, Pilate has already begun to be very intrigued with Jesus and is genuinely impressed with Him. And the fact that Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate signifies that Herod

also thought Jesus was innocent or he would have condemned Jesus to die right then. And Pilate knew that, and he said so in **Luke 23:15**:

No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.

... and yet, Jesus is not intimidated by either Pilate or Herod.

So, what we have to try to grasp is that both Pilate's and Herod's authority to crucify Jesus did not intimidate the Lord. And my question is, "*Why not?*" And I think the answer to that question is very important for us today as we face an ever-growing hostility to the Gospel from our own nation. Over in **John 19:10**, Pilate told Jesus:

... You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

... but, Jesus answered:

You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin.

So, my question is, "*Why was Jesus not intimidated as He stood before Pilate and Herod?*" Now some would say that Jesus was brave or courageous, but this is far more than human bravery or courage. But what I want you to see is that it also *wasn't* because Pilate and Herod were lying about their authority, because both Pilate and Herod *absolutely* had the authority to crucify Jesus.

No, the authority that these wicked men had to torture Jesus unmercifully and kill Him did not intimidate Jesus, because Jesus knew that their authority was "derivative". Jesus said,

"[Your authority] was given to you from above."

... which means that the authority that both Pilate and Herod had to torture and kill Jesus came from God the Father, *not* from Rome. And that means that these men actually had *more* power, not less. What we have to understand is that the authority that these wicked men had to

act brutally toward Jesus had the stamp of Divine Approval on it. 500 years earlier the Prophet Isaiah had said:

Isaiah 53:10b

... the Lord was pleased To crush Him ...

So, if we are to be biblical, we must come to the conclusion that Jesus being tortured and dying by the single most painful way imaginable was not only God's *Will*, it was not only God's *Decree*, it was God's *Desire*. It was God's *Delight*. The Holy Bible teaches that God was *pleased* for Jesus to be crushed. And so, it was the Father Who gave Pilate the authority to torture and kill Jesus.

But, if that is true, then how is this not even *more* intimidating? Both Pilate and Herod not only have the authority to kill Jesus, they have God the Father's *approval* to kill Him. And yet, this does not intimidate Jesus. And there is only one reason. This does not intimidate Jesus because their authority over Jesus is *subordinate* to God's Authority over both Herod and Pilate.

And this is proven in the fact that God sovereignly *prevented* Herod from exercising his authority to kill Jesus, and at the same time, God eventually *allowed* Pilate to do so. So, Jesus gets His Comfort at this moment-, *not* because either Herod's or Pilate's will is powerless, but because their will is *not* "autonomous". Neither Herod nor Pilate were acting alone. The will of both of these evil and cruel men is *guided* and *shaped*. And the will of one is sovereignly *prevented* while the will of the other is sovereignly *allowed*. Jesus is not intimidated here because Jesus is *not* simply in the hands of either one of them, but because He knew and trusted that both Pilate and Herod are in the Hands of Jesus' Father. And so, as Herod is sovereignly *prevented* and as Pilate is *allowed* to carry out his own desire to condemn the only sinless Man Who ever lived, God's perfect Will to provide a sinless Lamb for the slaughter was accomplished. And this is what Dr. Luke meant when he quoted the Apostles in **The Acts 4:27-28**:

27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

So, even though Herod lets Jesus go, he, too, was only doing what the Father's Hand and Purpose predestined to occur. And that fact has enormous benefit for us today. Because that means that our comfort on this earth, at this moment in history, comes *not* from the fact that our enemies are powerless against us, because they're not. Our enemies absolutely do have power, they have authority to hurt us and to hinder our work and to act against us, unless God chooses to stop them. And God may choose to sovereignly prevent them. But God may also choose to sovereignly allow them to carry out the evil that is in their hearts against us.

But, in either case, we are not intimidated by our enemies and whatever authority they may have, because whatever authority our enemies may have to hurt us or hinder us or kill us, that authority is *derivative*. Whatever power our enemies may exercise against us is derived, it flows out from our Father's sovereign Rule over them. And so, whether we are sovereignly delivered, or whether it is God's Will for us to perish at the hands of our enemies, two things are guaranteed:

1. Our greater Good will be manifested.
2. God will get Himself Glory.

And this is the point that the Apostle Paul was making in **Romans 8:25–39**, please go there with me and read that Passage:

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His purpose*.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

- 30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.
- 31** What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?
- 32** He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?
- 33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;
- 34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
- 35** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
- 36** Just as it is written, "*FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.*"
- 37** But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.
- 38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
- 39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Truth is that tribulation and distress and persecution and famine and nakedness and peril and sword separate people from Jesus all the time. These are the very things that have come upon people all over the world for over two thousand years that has successfully triumphed over their faith. And the *reason* that these evil things triumphs over people's faith is because they do not understand the dynamic that is going on here with both Pilate and Herod and Jesus.

People of the modern Church are being fed a false narrative that says that if you come to Jesus and trust in Him, then your life down here on earth will get measurably better. You will make more money and have more stuff and be healed every time you get sick. The glorious Gospel that says that Jesus went through all the He suffered so that wicked rebels may be rescued from eternal damnation has been watered down to being nothing more than a temporal panacea, and that is blasphemy.

No, the reason that the Biblical Gospel is called "Good News" is because there is some very "Bad News". And the "Bad News" is that

every human on earth is a sinner who *deserves* the Wrath of God. And the "Bad News" goes on to say that not only do we *deserve* eternal Damnation, but we are *guaranteed* to receive it, and there is *nothing* we can do about it in and of ourselves.

And it is this horrific "Bad News" that makes the "Good News" of Salvation in Jesus to be very Good indeed. And the "Good News" of having all of our sins forgiven and being imputed the very Righteousness of Jesus makes anything that we have to go through here on this earth pale in comparison.

And so, the Truth is that your life may get measurably *worse* down here when you are saved. And your enemies may be granted the authority to do terrible things to you. But these things are written in the Bible so that we will know that their authority is not decisive, it is derivative. And so, *whatever* authority your enemies may have to inflict on you tribulation and distress and persecution and famine and nakedness and peril and sword, that authority has been granted to them by your heavenly Father, Who cannot lie and Who has promised to work all things for your Good and His Glory. And that makes what Paul said in verses 31-32 to begin to make sense:

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

So, facing our enemies without being intimidated is not about us exercising human bravery or courage. And it isn't in the fact that our enemies don't have the authority to hurt us, because they do. No, we are not intimidated by the authority of our enemies any more than Jesus was not intimidated by either Herod or Pilate's authority because we believe what Paul said here in verse 37:

... in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

So, the only reason that we are not intimidated by the authority that our enemies may have over us to bring forth tribulation and distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword is because we believe that their authority is completely *subordinate* to the Father's Will.

So, both Pilate and Herod and the Sanhedrin and all of Jesus' adversaries 2,000 years ago, as well as all of our enemies today, mean what they bring upon us for Jesus' and our destruction. They are exercising their derivative authority to hurt us or hinder us or even kill us. But the Bible says that their authority is *not* decisive. Their authority is *not* sovereign. Their authority is derivative, and is completely and totally subservient to God's Authority. And what they mean for our harm, God means for our Good and His Glory.

And this is where knowing and understanding Who God is is invaluable. Because those of us who have submitted ourselves to what the Bible actually says about God, we know that God is not merely Omnipotent, but we know that God is also Good. And that means that *everything* that God either sovereignly and actively *causes* to come to His children, or everything that He sovereignly and passively *allows* to come to us, is the very *best thing* that God could do to us and for us and in us at that moment. And we also know that whether we are delivered or whether we perish, what God has either caused or allowed is designed on purpose to do nothing but mold us and shape us and form us so that we may be changed by that fire, so we may share in His Holiness. And *that* is why we are no more intimidated than Jesus was because we know, we trust, we believe, we confess, we proclaim to our enemies:

... You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above ...

And that is why Jesus was not intimidated by these evil rulers. Dr. Luke tells us that all of Jesus' enemies were gathered together with their God-given authority in all their wicked fury...

The Acts 4:28
to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

Now make no mistake about it, every single one of these evil men sinned. And those who sinned were damned by God. But as you get that, please get this, that through their willful sinning, God saved.

And that is why it is so important that we are not intimidated by our adversaries, who, at best, can only kill our bodies one time. Not

only because this is all they can do (**Luke 12:4**), but also because it is done under the watchful Hand of your Father. Jesus said:

Luke 12:6-7

6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? *Yet not one of them is forgotten before God.*

7 "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Yes, Pilate had authority. Yes, Herod had authority. Yes, the soldiers had authority. Yes, satan has authority. But none of their authority is independent. None of their authority is final. None of their authority is decisive. And none of their authority is sovereign. All their authority is *derivative*, all of it, every bit of their authority and power is completely *subordinate* to God's Will. And *that* is why we do not fear. Jesus said we are precious to our sovereign Father. And we are far more precious than the unforgotten birds. So, when trouble comes your way, do not be brave, be trusting and believe.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.