

Audio Transcript of Sermon
February 20, 2021
Acts-Paul Appears Before King Agrippa

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. Last week we saw how Paul defended himself before the Sanhedrin and was taken to Felix the governor because of a plot to kill him. Paul was imprisoned for two years when Porcius Festus became governor of Judea and this is generally believed to have happened in AD 59 because there was a change in the provincial coin of Judea at that time. Like Felix, his predecessor, Festus had his share of challenges in governing. The locals wanted more autonomy and this had to be balanced with the needs of the Roman Empire, with Jewish hostility growing. He also had to navigate disputes between Agrippa and the priests in Jerusalem.

Upon becoming governor, Festus made a trip from Caesarea, the seat of Roman power, to Jerusalem, the seat of Jewish power. It was while he was there that local leaders complained about Paul and asked that he be brought back to Jerusalem. They had hoped Paul would be killed by a mob. Festus told them that Paul would remain in Caesarea and would soon depart. He asked the locals to return with him so that they might accuse Paul, and after ten days, Festus returned to Caesarea. The next day Paul was brought before him and the locals from Jerusalem came to complain and accuse Paul, though they could not prove their allegations. Paul was able to defend himself against all allegations. Seeing how well the day was going for Paul, Festus asked Paul if he would be willing to voluntarily go up to Jerusalem to answer the charges there. Paul countered that he was already at Caesar's judgment seat where as a Roman citizen, he ought to be judged. He again spoke of his innocence of these charges and explained if anyone was accusing him of anything that could result in his death, he could not be handed over to the Jews and appealed to Caesar. Festus granted Paul's request for appeal and told him he would be sent to Caesar. Acts twenty-five verse one.

Acts 25:1-27

- 1. Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.**
- 2. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,**

3. And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.
4. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.
5. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.
6. And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.
7. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.
8. While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.
9. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?
10. Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.
11. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.
12. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

It would take time to coordinate Paul's trip to Rome, and during that time Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to honor Festus. Agrippa, Marcus Julius Agrippa, was the eighth and last ruler from the Herodian dynasty. While he was known as a king, he did so only at the pleasure of Rome. In AD 66 he was overthrown during a Jewish revolt and would find himself supporting Rome during the first Jewish-Roman war.

Agrippa's sister Drusilla, was wife of the previous governor, Felix. His other siblings included sisters Mariamne and Bernice. Bernice accompanied Agrippa on this trip and their relationship as reported by Flavius Josephus and others at the time suggested an incestuous relationship between the two. Agrippa and Flavius Josephus had a close relationship, and Agrippa is thought to have helped Josephus by providing information for the *Antiquities of the Jews*.

Even during a time of civil unrest, Agrippa spent huge sums of money on public works projects to beautify key cities, including Jerusalem and what today would be known as Beirut. Agrippa was thought to have favored Beirut over Jerusalem and this caused him to lose favor among his people.

Members of the royal family, Agrippa and Bernice traveled to and were in Caesarea for many days. It was during the visit that Festus brought up the circumstances of Paul who was left imprisoned by Felix and how the locals in Jerusalem really wanted Paul to be dead. He shared with Agrippa that even though his accusers sounded like they would come with convincing evidence of Paul's guilt, that during the trial they brought no evidence that would warrant a guilty judgment. Festus shared that the only concerns brought against Paul were debatable issues of faith and religion, involving the resurrection of Jesus. He explained to Agrippa how Paul had appealed to Caesar even though the locals wanted him tried in Jerusalem. The situation was intriguing to Agrippa who requested to have an audience with Paul. Festus told him this would happen the next day. Verse thirteen.

13. And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

14. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15. About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

16. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17. Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19. But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

22. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

The next day, in an elaborate ceremony, Agrippa and Bernice arrived for the audience and were accompanied by senior military officials and city leaders. When everyone was assembled, Paul was brought to them in shackles. Festus introduced everyone to the events of that day explaining that the Jews of Jerusalem desired that Paul no longer be allowed to live, and expressed this desire to Festus both in Jerusalem and in Caesarea. He added that during the trial no evidence could be found that would be worthy of death. Since Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus made the decision to move forward with the appeal. Festus concluded by adding that the purpose of the audience with Agrippa was to give another opportunity to write information about Paul's guilt in the paperwork that would be sent with Paul to Rome, because it would be unreasonable to send Paul as a prisoner if no charges were leveled against him. Verse twenty-three.

23. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24. And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

With the foundation laid for the hearing, Agrippa turned to Paul and told him he could speak for himself. Paul began by exclaiming his happiness that he would be able to answer for the charges that had been leveled against him by the Jews of Jerusalem. Paul confidently explained that since Agrippa had a very good

understanding of the customs and faith of the Jews, he asked for Agrippa to focus his attention on what Paul would say. Acts twenty-six verse one.

Acts 26:1-32

1. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2. I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3. Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

Paul added that since his childhood he himself understood the customs and faith of the Jews and spent some of his years in Jerusalem. He added that those who knew Paul from his youngest years would explain that Paul was a Pharisee, a very conservative sect of Judaism that believed in the resurrection of the dead. Today he felt judged for the promise and hope made by God to the fathers of Israel, the hope of the resurrection. He asked King Agrippa rhetorically if the resurrection of the dead was something incredible for him to believe.

In essence, Paul was asking how he could be condemned for believing the resurrection of the dead when this was central to the faith of many Jews, including the Pharisees, by whom Paul was taught. Paul was being condemned because he believed and taught that Jesus was resurrected, and this condemnation occurred as many of these same Jews hoped for the resurrection that Paul shared had happened for Jesus. Paul was explaining from the beginning of his defense that this inconsistency in the hope of the resurrection would be central to his defense, much like a defense attorney today would show inconsistencies in the prosecutor's case in hopes of getting an acquittal. Verse four.

4. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5. Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7. Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Paul added that initially he too was offended by the thought of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and shared initially he was opposed to the beliefs of this new faith, this new hope. He aggressively opposed everything to do with the idea that Jesus was the Messiah starting in Jerusalem and expanding his attack of the faith to cities beyond. He shared that a result of his actions was the imprisonment of many believers and he had acted on the authority of the senior priests of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Beyond supporting their imprisonment, he enthusiastically supported efforts to have some put to death. Verse nine.

9. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Because Paul was raised a Pharisee and worked closely with the Sanhedrin, he had a good understanding of their methodologies and was sent to Damascus. Paul explained what happened to him on this road as part of his defense. Prior to this time, Paul aggressively pursued followers of Jesus and it was at this point everything changed for Paul. Even though he was blinded by the experience, it was quite eye-opening for Paul. Paul also understood in providing a defense, he needed to explain the sudden change in belief. He shared that while traveling in the middle of the day a light from heaven became very bright around him causing all who were traveling with Paul to fall to the ground.

It was while on the ground that Paul heard a voice speak to him in Hebrew asking why he was persecuting him. Not knowing with whom he was speaking, Paul asked for the name and was told it was Jesus whom Paul was persecuting. Jesus told Paul to arise and told him he would be used to spread the gospel, especially

to the gentiles, to free them of the influence of Satan and help them reconcile with God so that they would have forgiveness of sins and have hope of the resurrection. Verse twelve.

12. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13. At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17. Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Paul then shared with Agrippa that he could not be disobedient to this heavenly vision. Paul had already laid the foundation that many of the Jews including the Pharisees of whom Paul was one believed in the resurrection of the dead. The only logical explanation of this event was that the resurrection of the dead had occurred for Jesus, and this conclusion was not inconsistent with the belief in the resurrection of the dead. Paul no longer was persecuting the church, and preached that Jesus was resurrected of the dead and was Messiah. This encounter on the road to Damascus became the basis for his life up to this moment in time. As a devout man through the blinding of his eyes, Paul's eyes were opened to the truth. Paul explained briefly that he first began teaching about Jesus in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and throughout the coasts of Judea before preaching to the gentiles. To all he taught repentance, turning to God, and doing works worthy of repentance.

Paul pursued his calling and faithfully stuck to what he had been told to do by Jesus on the road to Damascus. His devotion to his calling is what led the persecution by the Jews. His calling completely changed Paul and it also completely changed how he was viewed by the Jews who no longer considered that Paul was once a Pharisee. To the Jews, Paul was their enemy and they claimed he was teaching blasphemy. Beyond the hope of the resurrection which Pharisees believed, Paul believed Jesus to be the Messiah, which to the non-believing Pharisees would be blasphemy and to Paul would be in perfect alignment with his beliefs given the circumstances he faced.

It is with this that Paul was taken at the temple and the religious leaders wanted to kill Paul, even though Jesus promised Paul by night that no harm would come to him. Paul would use his Roman citizenship and the Roman legal process to his benefit, and Jesus allowed this to be the fulfillment of His promise to Paul. Jesus could have protected Paul any number of ways and honored Paul's use of his citizenship rights. Paul explained that these events led Paul to teach about Jesus to people both small and great, and in Judea, there would be no greater audience than the one he was before on this day, with King Agrippa and sister Bernice, Governor Porcius Festus, and the prominent people who worked closely with both rulers. Paul emphasized that to all he taught only what was written in the law and prophets about Jesus and how this message was shared with both Jews and gentiles. Verse nineteen.

**19. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:
20. But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.**

21. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

22. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23. That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Festus was listening to Paul's defense and told him that all of Paul's learning had caused him to lose touch with reality. Paul responded that he had not lost touch

with reality and was seriously speaking the truth. He added King Agrippa who understood the Jewish faith would be aware of what Paul was saying. He then turned to King Agrippa and asked if he believed the prophets stating that he knew King Agrippa believed. In response, King Agrippa shared that Paul almost persuaded him to become a Christian. Paul added that he hoped that all who would hear his words would become followers of Jesus. Paul explained the only difference between him and those in the room were the shackles which bound him.

Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, and the prominent people with them gathered together to discuss Paul's fate and agreed that Paul had said nothing worthy of death or imprisonment, and Agrippa pointed out that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar, he would have been released that very day. Verse twenty-four.

24. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

25. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

27. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

29. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

30. And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31. And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

32. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Paul's accusers were people and working behind the scene of situations and confrontations that confound us in life is spiritual warfare, good versus evil, angels versus demons, God the Father and Jesus Christ versus Satan. We know from the Bible that Satan is the accuser of the brethren and that with God all things work together for good confounding Satan.

The earliest reference to Satan in the Bible is when Satan is in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent. How Satan brought Paul's accusers against him was through the same type of trickery used against Eve, by first agreeing with God before disagreeing with what God said. This is a common technique used in sales and to resolve disagreements. Even Paul used this technique when defending himself before the Sanhedrin, Felix, and Festus. By itself, the technique is not evil, but motivations behind why the technique is used can be evil, and in the case of Satan and his demons, the motivations are always evil.

In Genesis, the serpent approached Eve and asked if God did not want them to eat of every tree in the garden, which Eve confirmed. In Eve's mind, the serpent verified what had already been told to Adam and her by God. Satan then planted the seed of doubt and conspiracy in her mind telling her that all that would happen to her would be receiving the knowledge of good and evil, that by eating the fruit, she would not die. The serpent claimed God was withholding this tree from them lest Adam and Eve begin to think like God knowing good and evil.

When Eve ate of the fruit she did not die at that moment. Adam did not die at the moment, and their awareness of good and evil was suddenly increased causing them to make clothes for themselves. Some would say the Serpent told the biggest lie of all time to Eve and others might say what the Serpent said had elements of truth within it. Satan skillfully dresses his lies and deceit with elements of the truth so that the lies and deceit are accepted as truth. Genesis three verse one.

Genesis 3:1-7

1. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

7. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

We don't have a record in Genesis of Satan accusing Adam and Eve. All we know next from the story is an encounter with God in the Garden of Eden where they are kicked out of the garden. We do know from other places in the Bible that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. First, Satan deceives people into sin and then Satan accuses these same people before God. It would be like if today a police officer convinced people to break the law and then went ahead and arrested them. Virtually all people would see this as evil.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren. In the Book of Revelation we read that Satan, that old serpent not only deceives the entire world but is named as the accuser of brethren. Satan first deceives people through temptation as he did Eve with the desire to become incredibly wise, and then goes before God to accuse people of sin. Because Satan knows he is engaged in a spiritual battle, he is most concerned with causing havoc among God's people in a desperate attempt to cause them to voluntarily cede their salvation. Our secret weapon, our super power is Jesus Christ. We overcome Satan not through our own stubborn will and determination but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which makes forgiveness of sin possible. Revelation twelve verse seven.

Revelation 12:7-12

7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

The Book of Job gives us one example of how Satan accuses the brethren, and in this example it was God who brought Job to Satan's attention, and God only did this because he knew Job would be able to endure. As a bonus, when all was said and done, God was able to once again confound Satan. Immediately upon hearing God's words of praise for Job, Satan began his attack telling God that Job was only in it for what Job could get. Satan told God if God removed the favor in Job's life, Job would turn from God. God knew better. Job one verse six.

Job 1:6-12

6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

7. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10. Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

12. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

On the one hand we have Satan who is the accuser of the brethren. We also have Jesus Christ who intercedes on our behalf before God. Instead of tearing us down through accusations as Satan does, Jesus Christ makes us look good before God the Father. These are the two spiritual differences and Satan's hatred is fueling

this spiritual war that we cannot see directly, but we can sense through the direction of this world. In writing to Timothy, Paul warned Timothy that in the end times there would be perilous times with self-absorbed people who lack compassion. The compassion that Jesus has for each of us included the purpose to die as a sacrifice so that our sins would be forgiven and to intercede directly with God on our behalf regarding our shortcomings. Today we live in a time when people lack compassion, the ability to forgive sins and trespasses, the ability to go the extra mile to help somebody who is in a bad place. Instead we live in a time where people lie, are defiant, and will distort the truth to make others look bad. They worship themselves instead of God and to some they live a godly life, and they live their life with the inability to forgive. Today we live in the cancel culture which accuses and does not forgive. There is nothing wrong seeing the need for change in society but where there is no forgiveness for wrongs committed against society, there is also no mercy nor for the accused, nor is there any reason to change. The cancel culture may think through intimidation of accusation they force change. Because they have no forgiveness, because they have no mercy, the accused have no reason to change. What divides society becomes wider through their actions. There is no mistaking that Satan is the accuser of the brethren and has created perilous times in these last days. Second Timothy three verse one.

2 Timothy 3:1-13

- 1. This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.**
- 2. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,**
- 3. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,**
- 4. Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;**
- 5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.**
- 6. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,**
- 7. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
- 8. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.**
- 9. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.**

- 10. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,**
- 11. Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.**
- 12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**
- 13. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.**

Paul faced incredible accusations even though what he said he could prove from the scriptures. He wasn't citing the New Testament and was rather using the same verses that would be used by the Pharisees. He was lambasted because he believed Jesus was resurrected from the dead, even though Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. Paul could have been bitter. Paul could have felt betrayed. Satan was coming hard after Paul because without Paul the preaching of the gospel to the gentiles would have to be reworked and that did not fit into what Jesus Christ and God the Father wanted. While at the military garrison in Jerusalem, Paul personally heard from Jesus that he would be protected and eventually go to Rome. Paul understood that all things, including things that look bad work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to God's purpose. Paul knew that if God is for us that nobody can be against us with any meaningful consequences. Paul explained that even though it is Satan who accuses of sin, it is Jesus who pleads our cause before God so that we are found not guilty of sin. Paul concluded by sharing there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Romans eight verse twenty-eight.

Romans 8:28-39

- 28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**
- 29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.**
- 30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**
- 31. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**
- 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?**
- 33. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.**

34. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the Book of Hebrews, we are told that Jesus is our high priest who lived a life without sin, through whom we may obtain mercy and grace in our time of need. How different is that concept than the accusatory concept of Satan? Hebrews four verse fourteen.

Hebrews 4:14-16

14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

We are further told that the new covenant was needed so the laws of God would be written in our hearts, meaning the laws of God would become part of who we are, bringing us close to God who through mercy would not remember our sins and iniquities. Hebrews eight verse seven.

Hebrews 8:7-13

7. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

It was necessary for Jesus to die so that He could bear the sins of many. Beyond this Jesus intercedes on our behalf before God. When Satan accuses us, Jesus defends us so that before God we are justified, not guilty of the accusations leveled against us by Satan, so that we can have eternal life. Hebrews nine verse twenty-three.

Hebrews 9:23-28

23. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Paul faced his accusers and undoubtedly in various ways, we will also face our accusers. These accusers are all symptoms of the spiritual war going on around us all the time, a war that we cannot see, but that we can feel. Paul was delivered from his accusers for the purpose of God's will and so will we. As we face our accusers, we know they are inspired of Satan and we are defended by Jesus Christ with the ultimate purpose of our salvation and place in the Kingdom of God. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.