

Victory

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MAIN VERSES

[1 Corinthians 15:57](#) • [1 Corinthians 15:58](#) • [Joshua 1:1](#) • [Joshua 1:6](#) • [Joshua 1:7](#) • [2 Chronicles 14](#) • [Jeremiah 13:23](#) • [Numbers 12:1](#) • [Acts 5](#) • [Acts 21](#) • [2 Samuel 18:21](#)

That's Why You Chose Me

Sometimes I think and I say, God, I have these armies in front of me, and they're oppressing me, and they're mass. They have chariots, God, and they have swords and spears and arrows, and it's just me, and you're supposed to be my God, and you're supposed to protect me, and the Bible says you're supposed to fight for me, but why are they still coming at me? Why are these things hard in my life, God? Why do I still struggle with the things that I'm not supposed to struggle with? Why do I not feel blessed? Why do I not feel equipped with the Spirit? You know what, God? You say in the Bible that you're supposed to destroy all my enemies. And yet there they are, way out there. What am I supposed to do? When are you going to destroy them? When is the oppression going to stop? Can't you give me something? Give me a sign of how you're going to destroy the oppression in my life. What? The what? The sword. Oh! Oh, this is a sword. This is your sword. This is pretty cool, God. So this is what you're going to use to destroy my enemies. It's a heavy sword. It's pretty good. See, I knew you'd come through for me. Yeah, that's a big sword. You're going to chop down all of my oppression in my life. You're going to chop down everything that's wrong in my life. You're going to destroy everything that comes against me with your sword. I'm happy about that, God. I knew you'd come through. Well, thank you for letting me hold it. I appreciate that. This is pretty cool. Oh, the trumpets are sounding. God, the battle is about to begin. Look, my enemy. Look, they're coming. They're coming at me. They're getting closer. You can do that whole thing now where you wipe them all out of my life. You can do that now. They're closer. They threw a spear at me. God, kill them. Kill them. Here, here's your sword back. How are you going to destroy them? What do you mean I'm the one holding the sword? No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. You're supposed to go before me. You're supposed to do everything. It's your sword. It's not for me to hold. You want me to fight with your sword? I can't even lift the sword. God, He's coming at me. I can't use

both hands. That was too close. That was too close. God, this is too hard for me. I am weak. I am weak. You're not supposed to just give me your sword. You're supposed to fight for me. You're supposed to fight through me, but there's so many of them. There's too many of them. I can't do this. I barely got past this one. I can't do this. I cannot defeat everything that's out there coming against me. With your sword, I can. God, you're supposed to give me everything that I need to go to battle. You have given me everything I need. How about the fear that I have, huh? What's with that? Oh, you didn't give me that. You didn't give me that. God, I don't know how to do this. You'll show me. What am I supposed to do? I've never even swung this thing before except for once. Just keep swinging it. You'll train me. You'll show me through your sword. You'll show me how to overcome. God, I'm scared. I'm a weak vessel. I'm not strong. That's why you chose me. So that when I am broken and weak... and the victory that you have for your kingdom is shown through your weak soldiers that fight in your army everyone will know that it's your victory and everyone will know that it's your glory because there's no possible way that weak vessels can produce victory there's no possible way that weak vessels, weak soldiers can win a war it's only if they have the strength of their commander I am a weak soldier but with your sword I think I can do it if you're going to be within me if you're going to be my strength I can do this for you God and I will gain the victory that you have already promised will be gained in your kingdom.

Sometimes We Hold the Sword

Sometimes we like to hold the sword. Sometimes we like to recognize that God has the ability to do anything. Victory is not going to come unless you choose to walk in your life, unless you choose to swing the sword. You might get hurt in battle. You will get hurt in battle. You'll get cut up. You'll get slammed down. But if you're choosing to continue to walk through, victory is already being claimed, guys. God has already said, listen, you are my servant. [1 Corinthians 15:57](#), [Raph Shulz](#) Paul speaking, he says, "But thanks be to God, He gives the victory through our Master, Yeshua the Messiah." And the whole chapter is speaking about sin. Victory over sin, victory over that massive army, elephants, chariots, swords, spears. Verse 58 continues, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm." Doesn't mean hide. Doesn't mean go back in the back and think that God's going to go out there and fight. He's the king. He gives the authority to you to fight under his name. He gives you the banner to carry into battle. He'll equip you to fight. Stand firm. Let nothing move you. In other words, when that elephant comes towards you, I'm going to talk about where elephants came from, the Nubian kingdoms, don't you dare run. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the master, the work of your king that you fight for, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not vain. You know that when

you're fighting, you're fighting for a higher king. Of course, we know as cool as it would be as believers for God to give us a sword like this big, I'd wear it. Hey, Bob! This, in reality, is not going to do a thing in our lives. The sword is always a metaphor for Scripture, for the Word of God, for the Bible. That's what Scripture speaks about. It's important to use the weapons that God has equipped you with in your life. Blessings come to God's kingdom and to those who are in God's kingdom, but the soldiers in God's kingdom have to fight and be prepared to fight. God and they have to be prepared to be viewed as weak vessels until they stand firm and they continue to walk and they continue to fight and the end result won't be your glory. I'll let you know that already. It won't be. How did you do this? It was not me. I just made a decision to walk, swing the sword around.

Joshua

Joshua. Oh, I had that for you to read. Joshua. You guys know who Joshua is, right? Joshua. Joshua literally means salvation in Hebrew. That's what the name means. Or Yahweh is salvation, a shortened form of Yahushua. That's the Hebrew name of Jesus. That's how we get the name Jesus. His name was Yeshua, and it was transliterated to Greek and Latin and translated to English, Jesus. But in reality, when he was born, his name was Joshua. It's Yeshua. Why? What's the angel say? You shall name him Joshua. You shall name him Yeshua, for he will save the people. Because the name means salvation. That's why we call him Yeshua. So Joshua was the protege to Moses. You guys know Moses was, right? Pretty significant figure in history. The alleged writer of the first five books of the Bible. The one who gave the Torah of God, the reign of God. We know how the end of book of Deuteronomy ends. The end of book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy ends with Moses dying, sadly. Ripe old age. It's amazing because God said you're going to go sleep with your fathers. He was buried alone on Mount Nebo. Another message. So Joshua was raised up to carry the children of Israel into the land. And if you turn with me to Joshua chapter 1 verse 1, it says, So God's speaking to Joshua, and he states, To everyone who's in covenant with God. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon and from the great river, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country, to the great sea on the west. No one will be able to stand against you all of the days of your life, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. Get this, verse 6. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Joshua was scared. You know how I know that? Because four times in the same chapter, I was looking at him and I says, hey, be courageous, be strong. Oh, I'm scared. Be courageous, be strong. I don't know, God. I can't do this. Be courageous, be strong. Verse 7 repeats, be strong, be very

courageous. Be careful to obey all of the Torah, all of the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, and you may be successful wherever you go. I love that because God makes a blueprint. He says, listen, if you follow the law code of my kingdom, the Torah, then you will be blessed. You will be successful wherever you go because that's going to be the sign that you are in my kingdom. See, it's interesting because who gave the Torah to Israel? Easy answer. Starts with an M. Moses. Moses gave the Torah to Israel, but Moses did not carry us into the land. Isn't that interesting? Moses told us how to behave once we were in the land. But he was not the one to go into the land. Joshua is the one that led us into the land. I find that amazing because the Messiah's name had to have been Joshua, right? And so there has to be a thematic parallel to being our leader and carrying us into the land of salvation. It wasn't Moses. Moses doesn't get us there. Torah doesn't get us there. It doesn't. That's the protocol of how you act when you're in the land. Crossing over right there, Joshua did it. A couple of interesting things about Joshua. You guys know how old Joshua was when he started leading Israel?

Joshua at 80 Years Old

We picture him as a teenager almost. I've always grown up picturing him as a teenager, maybe as a strapping young 20 or 30-year-old, leading. He was about 80 years old, him and Caleb. All right, Joshua, do what? Joshua, I want you to manage the armies of Israel and just sit back in the tent and make sure that they fight. Joshua, I want you to pick up that sword and I want you to lead the armies of Israel in. 80 years old, God. So? How old is Abraham? I'm not even going to have this conversation with you. You, Moses, all y'all have the same attitude because just because you're older, you think that you've retired from my kingdom. That's not the case. Pick up that sword. Go. Joshua entered in. He led a three-tier assault on the land of Canaan, first in the central, then the southern, then the northern parts of Canaan, and led Israel to inhabit the land of Canaan.

God's Word and Victory

The preceding possession of the land and victory over the inhabitants of Canaan is a direct result of two things: God's word and man. In this case, it was Joshua. Joshua hearing and responding to the word that God gave him. This helps illustrate that there is absolutely no victory or change for us to experience the blessings of our life in Messiah if it is apart from God's word. Believers sometimes get stagnant. We begin to get apathetic about the scriptures, about the sword. Yeah, it's a cool sword that God gave us. But we don't use it. We don't learn

how to swing it. We don't learn how to study it. We don't learn how to pierce through the next chapter of our life. If Joshua did not respond to God's word, his literal word, Israel wouldn't exist today. The land would have existed. We wouldn't have had a prototype of Yeshua. You guys need to get in your scriptures. Whatever the reason, if we refuse to be in the word, we are turning away from God and into defeat in our lives. The victory cannot happen if we refuse to carry the sword around. If we refuse to walk in with the sword, if we refuse to apply the sword to our life.

Three Kings of Israel

When Jason was speaking about houses of Israel, there were only three kings that ruled over all 12 tribes of Israel when they were united. You had Saul, you had David, then you had his son Solomon. There were only three kings that managed the entire nation of Israel before they just couldn't manage it anymore and it all fell apart. Just a tidbit. And we know that Solomon had a son, Rehoboam. He messed everything up. The kingdom of Israel split into two factions, right? If we were going to have a parallel, it would be like the United States being the north and the south, and they ended up fighting against each other a lot. Two different kings of Israel all messed up. Then Abihai was born and his son Esau was born. Now Esau was a great king of Judea, the south. For 41 years he reigned, and he used that time to fortify the cities of Judea and to make sure that he could be prepared to defend against a coming attack. You guys want to talk about a racy issue? I just made a pun, you don't even know it. I want to talk about race in the Bible a little bit.

Race in the Bible

Now, I was going to do a whole message about race in the Bible because it's incredible how much racism is actually in the Bible and then how much racism should not be tolerated in the kingdom. It's fascinating, okay? We're going to talk about races in the Near East because if you turn with me to [2 Chronicles 14](#), we have the instance of Esau, the king of Judea, and he's preparing to fight. He's been at peace for 41 years. He has fortified cities, but then this guy, Zerah the Cushite, is coming to attack him. So we'll read it. Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with an army of thousands of thousands—some translations say millions—and 300 chariots and came as far as Medershah. This is a town south of Jerusalem. Esau went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the valley of Zephathar near Medershah. So you have the king of Judea, the southern Israel, only a few tribes there, and we have this Cushite, Ethiopian thing, the Greeks called them Ethiopians, coming, and he had a massive army. He's

coming to take over, coming to kill them. Alright guys, we've been waiting a generation for this. Let's go. Let's go out to meet them. So they go out to battle and they meet them and they see this huge Ethiopian army ready to attack.

Warriors of Cush

Cush was located just south of Egypt, if you will. Northern Sudan, Ethiopia, and a little bit of modern day Somalia. That whole section was a Nubian kingdom. It's a black kingdom. We read in [Jeremiah 13:23](#). Can the Ethiopian, can the Nubian, can the Kushite change his skin or the leopard change its spots? Scripture's identifying them as a black kingdom, black individuals from Africa, right? The one thing that we have a problem with in our nation, I'm going to save that. Remind me to come back to that in [Numbers 12](#) when we get there. Kush had one thing that the world desired. They were elites in one thing. They were honored in one thing. They were warriors in battle. Egypt, at one point, tried to take over the kingdom, the Nubian kingdoms, to the south. And they went back and forth, back and forth. This black dynasty almost destroyed Egypt. Until finally they seesawed and Egypt took over. But they didn't slaughter them. They saw how elite their warriors were. Elite in the Near East. This is what they were known for. Run fast, jump high, kill fast and hard. And so they ended up taking and making the Kushite people mercenaries in the Egyptian kingdom. It's amazing. Elite soldiers. Look at this. We have records written about the races he made the recruits run daily. 100 kilometers a day—that's 61 miles a day, 11 kilometers an hour, taking about nine hours to run every day. This is what the soldiers of this Nubian kingdom would run as recruits. That's not what they could do after they get in the military; this is to train them to enter into the elite task force that would be recruited all over the Near East.

See, in America, because of the things we have in our media, because we have predominantly white citizens in the U.S., black culture is looked at as a minority, and therefore, for some reason, looked at as a weaker society. Even in our American history, it's going to mess with how we read scripture. We as an America, what do our history books say about Africans? When they first came to the U.S., what? They were slaves. They were slaves. I dare say that. Because of how our Western mentality is, because of what our history books say, even today we look at the black race as a slave race. When we read scripture, like in Numbers chapter 12, when Moses' sister gets all bent out of shape because Moses marries a Cushite woman, an Ethiopian woman, what do we automatically think? Why was she upset? Oh, he was marrying a slave race. Just because something in our history books portrays someone as a slave race here in the U.S. doesn't mean in the Near East it was different. Before that it was different. Before that their

kingdoms ruled. Check this out. The land of the bow. This is from a book I was reading. Black warriors from antiquity to present. The land of the bow. You see one thing they were really good at? Ethiopians, Kushites, bow and arrows. Amazing, right? They'd talk about how they'd carry bows in their fingers, not in quivers. They'd carry four or five arrows in their fingers so they could pop one up. Incredible, the land of the bow.

Records of Elite Warriors

As Egyptians often referred to Cush, it lay in close proximity to Egypt, and references to Cush soldiers often appear in Egyptian literature. In archaeology, we found models, little models of black elite soldiers, 40 of them lined up to represent the elite guard that the pharaoh would choose to surround him. So elite in their status as warriors that Egyptians wouldn't even be allowed at the innermost circle of Pharaoh. It would be those from the land of Cush. Now, where are you going with all this? I'm getting there. These were elite, esteemed people. We know that in Numbers chapter 12. The story of Numbers chapter 12: Moses marries a Cushite woman, an Ethiopian woman. It's a black woman from south of Egypt, right? His sister and Aaron start mocking him, getting all bent out of shape. What's he doing?

Numbers chapter 12, verse 1. Miriam and Aaron began to talk about Moses because of the Cushite wife. Because of why? The Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. In our society, it would be like we're going to talk about Moses because he married a black woman. Now, don't get me wrong. This is such a broad issue. I should have just focused in on this. Guys, I have to tell you something. Ancient Hebrews weren't white. Not white people. Okay? Yeshua, I know this is going to hurt. Yeshua was not Caucasian. Blonde hair, blue eyes, white pale skin, no. So in Africa, you'd have really dark skin, and then when you moved up to Egypt, from what we know, it would be a lighter, darker skin, still dark skin, and then you move over to Mesopotamia and the land of Canaan, and it's still pretty dark skin.

Miriam and Aaron's Complaint

So we think of—yeah, in white culture, we grow up thinking, oh yeah, he wasn't white, he was like Arabian. And modern-day Arabian is kind of whitish. They were darker 2,000 years ago, guys. Makes everybody uncomfortable when we talk about a subject like this. So Miriam and Aaron are upset that Moses chose a black woman to marry. "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" they ask. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" Yahweh heard this, and then verse 3 puts context on it. What does verse 3 say? Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else in the world. It makes a point to say that.

In white culture, American culture—and maybe this is just how I was grown up, maybe this is just me, guys—I always thought that Miriam and Aaron were upset that Moses was marrying beneath himself. Why would he marry a black woman? Because he was white, right? Why would he marry someone from a slave race? Guys, Miriam, Aaron, and Moses just came out of Egypt where they were slaves. The Ethiopians were not the slave race. The Hebrews were. They were at the bottom of the barrel. They were the slave race. Ethiopians, the Kush, land of Kush—these were esteemed people. These were warriors. These people had honor and class in the sight of Egypt and all the surrounding nations.

The reason scripture says Moses was a very humble man, regardless of who he married, is because Moses was marrying above himself by marrying a black woman. You guys know the rest of the story—God strikes Miriam with leprosy, because she's accusing Moses of being arrogant because of who he's marrying. This isn't a context you'll probably hear taught in most churches today in America, but guys, history states that's most likely what the context was. She was upset—who does he think he is, marrying such an upper-class citizen from the land of Cush?

How Dark Were the Hebrews?

To show you how dark Hebrews were, at least in the first century—Paul, in [Acts 21](#), remember he was participating in that purification rite with the Nazarites, and he probably shaved his head. It's debatable how far he went in that purification rite, but remember he was told to go with the guys and make an offering, and most likely he shaved his head with them. Now, with his head shaved—I'm going to make an assumption that his head was shaved—remember, the Romans looked at him and thought he was Egyptian, probably because of his skin, because he was dark with his head shaved. "Eh, he's probably an Egyptian." Classification.

So this is who the armies of Judah were going up against. They were going up against Egyptian-driven mercenaries from Cush, the top of the barrel. It'd be equivalent to—remember when we were in Iraq? We'd have military soldiers over there fighting for us, but our government also hired contractors, from like Blackwater and all the other private security companies. You guys know about this, right? Research it, it's very interesting. Whenever our officials would actually go to Iraq—top-ranking generals, politicians—our own soldiers would not be the ones protecting them. It would be Blackwater contractors. You could say mercenaries. Paid military contractors, because of their skill levels, and because politically they had a gray area where they could engage without rules of engagement, and so on and so forth. An army of contractors coming up against Judah, who hasn't fought in generations. "I don't know, guys, we've got to go meet him in battle. Oh, this is going to be rough." The elite of the elite.

The Cushite Runner

And Asa called out to the Lord his God. Asa is looking at this elite Ethiopian army—"God, I can't do this. They're slick on the bow, they're fast." Oh, I forgot—I'll come back to that, when I was speaking about the runners of Cush. You guys know when David had Joab out there fighting? Joab, after Absalom died in [2 Samuel 18](#), verse 21 through the rest of chapter, verse 31, he picks a Cushite to be a runner to David. Why? Some commentaries, the King James Version, older commentaries, say, "Oh, he just picked a slave to run." No! Cushites were not slaves. These were elite men, and they could run—hence the training the Egyptians put them through. They were runners. That's why when he sent the other guy out behind him and he passed the Cushite running, it was a big deal. No one can pass the Cushite. What are you talking about? I don't know, it's just cool. I love it, I love it. Stuff that's never taught in American churches.

Then Asa looked at this elite army and cried out to God: "God, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. Lord, you are our God. Do not let mere mortals prevail against you." Why did he say that—mere mortals? Don't let the mere mortals prevail against us, because we are your weak vessels that you filled with your power and strength. "God, I'm checking with you—are you going to help me swing this sword when I go into this battle? Are you going to be there with me when we go into this battle? God, I'm scared, because I don't know if I can face them with the numbers that we have."

Empty Vessels Willing to Fight

The very next few verses speak about how the very small army of Judah annihilated this elite Egyptian-led army of Cush, and they gained all the spoils from it. Oh, so they were good fighters? No, that was a miracle, guys. That was a miracle. More unlikely than David and Goliath—David at least had a sling at the time. More unlikely than that.

When we cry out to God, we're still required to walk. You see, when Asa was crying out to God—"God, how am I going to defeat them? We're your people, go kill them"—God didn't just wipe them out. He said, "Okay, you're going to win. Pick up your sword and walk into battle." Okay, here we go, come on guys, God said he's going to fight with us—we've got to make a choice to continue to walk.

I love this example, and this is what I really wanted to hone in on, because sometimes life gets hard for me, me personally. Sometimes in my own house—maybe it's your marriage, maybe it's

your kids, maybe it's your job, maybe it's something else, maybe it's something you struggle with. Are you still struggling with something? Unforgiveness? Lust? Anger? Are you still struggling with something even though you're supposed to be in the kingdom and be able to fight these things? Yeah, we all do. But we have to make a choice. And that choice is going to be: am I going to pick up the sword that God has given me and walk into battle? Or am I going to stand here and whine because God's not taking care of it for me?

God will take care of it for you when you show yourself to be an empty vessel that he can fill, and you're willing to fight regardless of the odds, regardless of how much you feel like you're fixing to fail, regardless of how inadequate you feel going into battle against whatever it is you're going to battle with. God's waiting for that moment where you empty yourself so he has something to fill. That was Asa. "I got my sword, I got my horse, a thousand men. We're empty, God—send us in so your victory can be seen."

Ananias and Sapphira

You know, in Acts chapter 5—you guys read Acts, right? "Oh, I read Acts." Acts chapter 5. This is after the outpouring of the Spirit has happened. And it starts out with that whole Ananias and Sapphira incident. Because at that time, if you were going to be in the kingdom of the early Christians, first-century Christians, it states that they shared everything. They were in this big commune-like community—it was a cult, I'll just say it. They were living in the same commune. Everyone brought their income in, put it in a pot. No one owned anything. You drive in with your car—"I want to join, I want to join you guys"—put your keys in the pot. It's a communal, very difficult mindset. And so everything that you had went into the community that the apostles were leading.

Ananias and his wife sold some land, private land, got some money. You ever sell land? It's a lot of money—a hundred grand, two hundred grand, depending on how much you have. So they got this money, and they came back in, and the Spirit spoke to the apostles, and they questioned him. "Ananias, don't you have something to give us?" "I don't have nothing." Ananias is struck dead by God. Just falls down dead. "Crap—really? Really? That was a little extreme. All right, guys, we got to go bury him." Drag him outside, bury him.

A couple hours later, after he's buried, his wife walks in. "Hey, Sapphira, did you sell some land? You got some money to give us? Please say yes, please say yes." "No, I don't have any money to give you." God strikes her down. "Go out and bury her." And it says a few verses later that everyone was kind of scared to join the group now—"I won't be a believer now, not if I've got to

go through this." But it says, regardless of the fear that was going on in the community, people still continued to flourish through the gospel and into the kingdom of God.

And so the disciples were going around and they were healing folks—raising from the dead, casting out demons, legs broke, not anymore, right? They completely emptied themselves to be used by God. And I love this, because it made the high priest and all of the Sadducees very jealous. You can imagine—I mean, you're supposed to be the spiritual elite, and you've got these little "nobodies" that you can visibly see God is using, and his power is being fulfilled through them.

The Return to the Temple

So what do they do? They arrested the apostles. That's what you always do, right? Oh, God's using you? We're going to arrest you. And they put them in a public jail. But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. And the angel says, go stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life that you have. What new life? This new life is hard, but you get to experience an intimate relationship with the God of the universe that already has victory in store for his kingdom, and you get to be a part of it. It's only hard because you're in the world. It's only hard because no one else understands your new life and the love that you feel because the spirit is inside of you. It's only hard because you're in a kingdom and you have to dwell in a kingdom that is not of the Father.

At daybreak, they entered the temple courts as they had been told and began to teach the people. They did what? Now let's try to put this in real life. It's all fun and games to read the scriptures and to read stuff like miracles and think, okay, yeah, he healed the sick and all this stuff. You got arrested right now for being a believer. You went to jail. In the middle of the night, door opens, angel's standing there. Hey, hi. Guards are there. They're threatening to kill you if you keep doing this. All right, you're going to be free from prison. I'm free? Hallelujah. That is good. Here come the blessings. Now go back to teach in the temple courts. What? That's not much of a blessing. It will be a blessing. God's going to manifest through you and you're going to be the messenger for his kingdom. So they go back and they start yakking to people about the gospel.

Arrested Again

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Jerusalem, the full assembly of elders of Israel, and they sent to the jail for

the apostles. So the high priest came and got the Supreme Court together and they said, okay, we need to go get these apostles and figure out what we're going to do with them. Go get them out of the jail. Okay? But upon arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported. They said, hey, we went back to the jail just like you asked us to and the jail is empty. Crap, I guess they escaped. And then one of them looks out the window and sees all the apostles witnessing to everyone right outside. Hey, they're out there doing the thing that we arrested them for. Go get them. Now, send the guards to go get them. So the Romans go and get them, and they don't make a big scene. They're like, come on, come on, we got to go. And of course, you're like, ah, you got me. He's just going to pop the lock on the door again. Let's go get this over with. Come on.

And so they go back in, and having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. We're going to keep doing this because God told us so. You remember when we did the God and the Silence message and we were talking about family deities? That's outlined right here. God exalted him to the right hand as prince and savior, that he might give repentance. So they're sitting in front of the Sanhedrin saying all this stuff. And guys, it's not very popular because you want these guys just to shut up. You want these guys to get out. You killed an innocent man. You're trying to sweep it up under the rug. Quit yakking about this. You need to go away. We're going to kill you if you don't go away. Can we just stone them, guys? Can we just do this? I mean, we do it all the time, right? Let's do this.

Gamaliel's Counsel

Do you guys know who Gamaliel is? Gamaliel was a great rabbi in the first century. He was an edgy revolutionary just like Yeshua. The Pharisees had problems with him at times, and the house of Shemaiah had problems with him at times, but he was one of the leaders in the Sanhedrin. So you have the leader of this court, old rabbi. Paul says that he studied at the feet of this rabbi, Gamaliel, big time. Okay?

Verse 34: All this is going on, but a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Torah who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a while. "Guys, go outside. Stand out for a second." Then he addressed them and he said, "Men of Israel, we got a problem here, and I understand you're frustrated with these guys. But consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago there appeared a man claiming to be somebody, and about 400 men rallied against him. There was this guy, Theudas. He rebelled against the Roman Empire and he had a couple hundred people that rallied behind

him. But remember what happened to him? He was killed by the Romans and his following dispersed.

Then he says, "And after him, there was a guy by the name of Judas the Galilean. Now Judas the Galilean was very interesting. He rebelled against the tax system of the Romans and he started his revolution around 4 or 5 AD when a census was conducted over the land. Probably around the time when Yeshua was born. Judas the Galilean stood up and said, all right, we need to go again. Shh, we ain't paying tax. We're not going to your census. And he rallied up a huge group of men. And after him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. And he too was killed and all of his followers were scattered.

See, Judas the Galilean, he proclaimed that the Jewish state was a republic recognizing God alone as his king and ruler and all of his laws of Torah as supreme. Very similar message that Yeshua taught. But he wasn't the one that was supposed to give it. Yeshua was. Many, many, many messiahs in the first century. We've only documented, I think, jeez, what, five, six, something like that. Guys who stood up and said, "I'm the messiah, follow me," or at least were recognized as such, had great followings.

And what Gamaliel is saying, he's saying, "Listen, guys, you can kill these guys and you can make this whole scenario worse, but look what's happened to every other messianic figure that's happened so far. He's come up, he became famous, he died, his followers mourned his death for a few years, and then they scattered, they moved on. Yeshua's dead. He died. His followers are mourning; they're doing their thing, but they're gonna scatter too because there's no one that can fill the place of their rabbi.

Therefore, in this present case, I advise you: leave these men alone. Let them go. For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, they'll fail. They're gonna fail. But if their mission is from God, you will not be able to stop these men. You will only find yourselves fighting against the Almighty Himself." Sound wisdom. Sound wisdom. His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in, ended up having them flogged. "Don't talk about this anymore. Go on, get out of our house." And the gospel continued to walk.

Faith That Endures

Remember, they had it made. I mean, we know who Messiah is. We've seen him. We got the spirit. Let's just sit at home and wait to go to heaven. It's too scary to go out there and talk about the kingdom. They continued to walk. I read a lot of Near Eastern books. I read a lot of

stuff that talks about other faiths. Any of you guys ever dabbled in Near Eastern theology, talking about Babylonian origins or creation epics or all those kind of books?

When you start studying these things, see, kids that go to college, they take philosophy courses and they take history courses and then they no longer believe in God because they take these courses and they see that the flood account from Israel is almost identical to flood accounts from other kingdoms that are outside of Israel. There are law codes that Moses gave that are a lot like law codes from other kingdoms. There are stories that are almost identical to other kingdoms. The Adam and Eve story. There are other stories, other kingdoms that had this in their creation and flood accounts. Everybody has a flood story with an ark. It's intimidating. It gets intimidating for me to study these things because I'm like, how do I know that my faith is the right one? How do we know?

I mean, we have all this other evidence that says that, no, it's just like all the other ones. Ancient Babylon, Mesopotamia, the Assyrian Empire, Egypt, the Akkadians all had similar stories to what we have in our Bible. And we claim that ours is right. Do you want to know how I know that my faith is right? Because today 2.2 billion people in the world, 32% of the world's population, believe in the Messiah, the Son of God that was crucified in the first century and that rose from the dead. And they learned it from the apostles that Gamaliel advised. Listen, if this guy's not real, then this will never go into any other generations except for this one. We are still here! And that's exciting because that means we're legitimate, guys.

The spirit that dwells within you isn't just gas. Does anyone ever think that? "Oh, I gotta, oh, you know, I gotta pray for this person. It must have been that spicy Mexican." No, it's alive within you. That's the promise. The God that has a hold of your life and is guiding you. You remember that battle I was scared to go into with that sword? Do you know who put that battle in my life? My God. Why would you do that? Why would you make it hard? So that you can taste the blessing and the victory that I have for you in your life.

A Weak Vessel Holding Pure Gold

Life gets hard. But just like the apostles, gate unlocks, go back out to your mission. Be a good soldier. Just like Esau, God, you sent him here. What are we going to do? What's your plan? I know you have a plan. You never tell us what your plan is for some reason, but I know you have a plan. Is your plan for us to prosper just like your Torah says? Yes. What do I have to do? Walk. Make a choice to walk into battle. It's supposed to be hard because it's supposed to be a refining

process, because God's supposed to tell you how weak you are and how strong he is. And the end result is supposed to be a weak vessel holding pure gold. That's the end result.

Swing the Sword

Don't be discouraged if life gets hard. It was hard for everybody in Scripture. It was hard for the apostles. It was hard for the kings of Israel. Hard for the prophets. No one ever retired in a mansion. It was hard for Yeshua. That's a characteristic of being in the kingdom. That is what was on my mind this week when I got stressed out about stuff. Even this morning I stressed out. But I know I'm in battle. Swing the sword. Just keep swinging the sword. Man, it's so hard. Keep swinging the sword. Don't give up on victory.

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