



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

God in the Storms of Life Series, Lesson 53

Lesson Title: Paul Escapes Death

Take Home Point: Big problem? We have a bigger God.

Warm-Up:

I grew up in the country and frequently drove on gravel roads in the dark of night. On occasion, a deer would suddenly appear in my headlights not far ahead. As the car's approaching headlights caught the deer's attention, it would stare at the oncoming beams and freeze on the spot. I was fortunate enough never to have actually hit a deer, being able to slow down, stop, or avoid a collision, but I know many people who have run into deer on the road, usually with fatal results to the animal. Why do so many of these incidents result in a dead or injured deer? Because when caught in a light beam such as approaching car headlights, deer only focus on the oncoming danger, not on ways to run to safety. All they see is the "problem," not what can be done to escape it.

Read: Acts 23:1-35; John 16:33

Observation (What happened?):

What caused the uproar between the Saducees and Pharisees?

Who and what means did God use to protect Paul from the murderous plot of some Jews?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why do you think the plotting Jews were so desperate as to want to kill Paul?

How were the Roman soldiers and leaders used by God to achieve his purpose for Paul?

Insight:

Like deer in an approaching car's headlights, many people tend to focus on their problem, not the God who is with them and much greater than any problem. This is often the cause of turmoil, confusion, and depression, even in the lives of Christians. Jesus understood our human frailty in this; that's why he repeatedly told us not to fret, not to be troubled, not to worry. Unlike some unfortunate teaching by some misguided religious leaders, God never promised we would not have difficulties and problems in this life. Quite the contrary, in John 16:33, Jesus assured his disciples that they certainly would have trouble. And, as his modern day disciples, we should expect the same. But he didn't stop there. He also assured his disciples, and us, that he had overcome the world. We can trust him to deliver in his perfect way and timing. He does that no matter how we respond to our problems, but we can save ourselves a lot of unnecessary anxiety and agitation if we will look at our big God instead of only at our big problems.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

What big problem are you facing right now? How are you trusting God to help you in and through your big problem?

Think of a time in the past when God rescued you in an unexpected way. Thank him for his rescue and find a way to tell someone else about it this week.