

# Divine Sovereignty - Acts II

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     had been appointed to eternal life, believed. Verse 48, and that is a very key passage because it seems on the surface to buttress the argument that God unconditionally elects or selects certain individuals for salvation completely apart from them having anything to do with it, whatever.

Their will and their choice is not even involved. This is classic Calvinism. And it is a position that I told you I formerly held for a number of years until I became convinced that it just cannot be sustained.

And we will see from this passage in general, particularly here in chapters 13 and 14, how absolutely essential the subject of belief is and how much it comes into play.

We really need to get a handle on this thing that God has imparted to us called human volition. It is that which gives unto us the power, the ability, and the responsibility of making choices.

And you may make almost any choice you wish to make, but you cannot choose the consequences that come from that choice. So we should choose as wisely as possible.

[ 1 : 2 1 ]     And all throughout this passage, and for that matter, all throughout the ministry of the Apostle Paul, such an enormous emphasis is placed upon belief because what this man is going to be devoting his life to in these three missionary journeys that he's going to be taking, which will end with his martyrdom, his being beheaded for his faith, it's all about belief.

It's all about the exercising of volition. Because wherever he goes, he's got a message to deliver. He imparts information. And the information is for people to process and make a decision about.

That's what ministry is all about. That's what evangelism is all about. That's what proclaiming the gospel is all about. And now we have a man who once sought to destroy a faith, being the most avid prosecutor of that faith.

Instead of prosecuting and persecuting Christians, he is going to be prosecuting a cause, that is, moving it and pushing it forward. And that cause has to do with the death, burial, and resurrection and the dynamic that God has built into that so that when a man or woman takes to themselves that truth and absorbs that truth that Jesus Christ died on that cross because of them personally, and in so doing, he balanced the scales of heaven by making it possible for God to forgive you of your sin.

And everyone. That's the significance and the scope of the death of Christ on that cross. You see, it was so comprehensive that it completely canceled out the negative that was induced by Adam in his sin.

[ 3 : 2 2 ]     For as in Adam all die. And that's not only physically, but all die spiritually. And even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

And perhaps we will not get to Romans 7 in this particular session to see how that works out, but it's a fascinating concept. So, once again, as briefly as I can, to reiterate the principle of Calvinism, and we talked about the tulip and the total depravity and the unconditional election, the limited atonement, the irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints.

And acrostically, it all spells out tulip. And it has to do with how man and God connect. And the classic Calvinist position is that God selects, God elects, God chooses certain individuals by what criteria we do not know because it's not revealed.

And these individuals don't even know they've been chosen. And they have no part in it whatever. But whatever rationale God uses for the choices he makes, he keeps to himself and he has not divulged them to us.

But in his wisdom, he makes those choices. And when he does, he makes those objects, he makes those people spiritually alive. He regenerates them and gives them spiritual life.

[ 4 : 42 ] And that is why when they hear the gospel, they are able to believe it. And if you are not elect and not made spiritually alive in advance, not only will you not believe the gospel, you cannot believe the gospel.

And you don't want anything to do with the gospel. That's the classic Calvinist position and it's still defended to this day by a number of leading clergymen throughout the country.

Some of my heroes have adopted this position and that's one of the reasons that I adopted it. Because I considered myself to be in good company. I mean, if John Calvin and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, arguably, a couple of the greatest preachers who ever lived embraced this position and got their ideas largely from Augustine, who am I to say that these guys are wrong?

I couldn't conceive of disagreeing with them for years and years and years. And I just considered myself in good company. But the more we expounded the scriptures to you verse by verse going through the New Testament, I just can't support that.

I just cannot believe it. I do not believe it. So out of the five points of Calvinism, I've got two left. And one is that man is, man is dead in his trespasses and sins and there is nothing that he can do to right himself with God.

[ 6 : 13 ] In other words, there are no deeds that he can perform, no organizations he can join, no amount of money that he can give, no goodness that he can maintain that God could ever accept and be pleased with.

So, I don't have any problem with that. The scriptures really do teach that. And then the last point, the perseverance of the saints, and that is, those who are in Christ are sealed in him and we are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh and we are members of his body, never to be separated.

So, I just want to browse through this passage here in Acts 13 and 14 and show you how dynamic and how important this subject of belief is. And the fact that God does not require us to do anything but just believe.

And I've often said that I want you to consider it from this standpoint that God has done the very most that he could do.

He couldn't do more. He couldn't do more than break into the Trinity and isolate a member of the triune Godhead and enflesh him with humanity and send him to this earth to be the representative of God and man.

[ 7 : 34 ] God could not do more than that. He so loved, he loved in such a way that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever what?

Believes. An exercising of the will. Bringing your volition in line with God's requirement. Whosoever believes should not perish but have everlasting life.

And what's the implication of the opposite? If believing means not perishing, guess what not believing brings? That's not too hard to figure out, is it?

It is an isolation throughout eternity from God. And that's what spiritual death is. Someone said that man may say to God thy will be done and respond to the message that God has given in Christ.

And those who do not, God says to them, thy will be done. And that means they opted to have nothing to do with the deity or with the son or the provision that he has made.

[ 8 : 56 ] They want their will. And do you know what God is going to give them? Their will. He's going to let them have their own way. And their own way will include an utter and total absence of the deity from their life for eternity.

Call it hell. Call it the lake of fire. Call it whatever you want to call it. But it's bad. It is worse than anything I can describe. It is the absolute antithesis of the joy and the peace and the wonder and the glory of heaven.

just put an opposite on every one of those and that's what that eternal state will be apart from what God has revealed and our embracing of it.

So, Saul of Tarsus had some real major decisions to make and he wasn't about to make it on the basis of the testimony that he heard from other apostles and from men like Stephen.

Here was Stephen, the first martyr, willing to give his life for what he believed regarding Jesus Christ and Saul of Tarsus looked on as he saw those stones being rained down on Stephen and Saul of Tarsus was standing there holding in his arms this pile of garments that these men handed him as they disrobed themselves so that they could throw these stones at Stephen and I imagine that Saul of Tarsus stood there looking at Stephen under this hail of stones of all size pelting his bodies and he probably looked at Stephen and thought poor stupid bastard look at him giving his life for nonsense for foolishness like this and being convinced all the while that he was completely in the right after all he was circumcised the eighth day of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of the

[ 11 : 02 ] Hebrews concerning the law tell us all the rest of it and this poor deluded fool Stephen such a shame so it's going to take more than the testimony of those who believed in Christ to convince this hard shell case Saul of Tarsus it's going to take Christ himself and that's exactly what happened on the road to Damascus you're familiar with the account in Acts chapter nine where the risen Christ confronted Saul of Tarsus blinded him with this dazzling light stunned him and he who came to Jerusalem to capture Jews who had fled from Israel out of the country into a foreign land that came to Damascus

Syria to get away and he went up there to get them and bring them back but we all know that Christ confronted him and instead of going triumphantly into that town to round up those renegade Jews who were so stupid as to believe that Jesus was the Messiah instead of his doing that he was struck with blindness and they had to lead him by the hand into the city of Damascus which by the way is the oldest continually inhabited city in the entire world and it's in the hotbed of activity right now as I speak we know what's happening in Syria in the civil war that's going on there now so now he's there in a man's house sitting there at the table blind as a bat not able to eat anything or drink anything and I'm convinced that he's in shock he is traumatized because he has been personally confronted by the one whom he considered to be an imposter a liar a manipulator and he was all wrong he was wrong how could

I have been so wrong how could I have been so blind how could I have not seen it can this be is this real what a shock it was to this man's system and the Lord told Ananias not to be confused with the Ananias of Sapphira but a different Ananias you go to the house called straight and you find Saul of Tarsus there and I want you to lay your hands on him and he might receive his sight and Ananias said excuse me I've heard about this guy frankly I think this is a case of mistaken identity you don't want me to go lay hands on Saul of Tarsus this man's reputation has preceded him he is vicious and the Lord says no he isn't anymore it's okay you go and I can just see this dear old

Saint Ananias come to this house and inquire of Saul yeah yeah he's here come on in you're then and Saul sitting over there and this fellow turns to Saul and says Saul somebody's here to see you huh what who's who's that who's that blind as a bat and Ananias walks over to him I can I can see his hands trembling this man is what you would call a vicious terrorist and he said brother Saul brother Saul the Lord has sent me to lay hands on you that you might receive your sight and I don't know why God is going to use Ananias to do that God could have opened his eyes just like that he didn't need his man but God seems to be so committed to using human instrumentality all through the Bible never because he needs to but because he graciously chooses to and anyone who feels that God is calling them to do anything you ought to jump at it don't hesitate it's an incredible privilege it's not an obligation or a duty or a drudge it's an incredible privilege to be at the service of this one and Ananias responded and Saul received his sight and you know what he did well let's he is in we're in chapter 13 and we're going to fast forward now but he's been preaching all the meanwhile and let's just jump in with verse 42 of chapter 13

Paul and Barnabas were going out they'd been in the synagogue preaching the people began that people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next sabbath when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up and of course this is a fully Jewish assembly this is not first baptist church or congregational church on the corner they didn't even exist this is a Jewish synagogue and these people are all Jews they followed Paul and Barnabas who speaking to them were urging them to continue in the grace of God and the next sabbath verse 44 nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God this just buzz was all throughout the community everybody was talking about these two guys that came to town and they are preaching something and teaching something that nobody has ever heard before I mean this is really wild stuff about this man who was crucified he was supposed to be the son of God and three days later he was raised from the dead and these guys actually believe that and they're teaching that and a lot of people believe that and we need to hear more about this and some are saying ah it's a bunch of baloney I don't buy it just religious malarkey it's just this you know some were dismissing it but all through all of this preaching and teaching there are decisions being made and some are yay and some are nay that's all the communication of the gospel is that's all ministry is that's all preaching is is providing information that enables people to hear it process it and make a decision and that's exactly what's taking place here now all these people come together and they are having a remarkable very controversial and verse 48 is where we kind of camped a couple of times ago the Gentiles heard this now remember the Gentiles are the people who are on the outside they're not Jews but they hear something that applies to them because they are supposed to be recipients of the light that the

[ 18 : 20 ] Jews are to bring but the Jews haven't been all that interested and that's in verse 47 the Lord commanded us I placed you as a light for the Gentiles that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth how are you going to do that how do you bring salvation to the end of the earth you do it by message you do it by communicating information that's the way it pleased God by the foolishness of the thing preached to save them that believe we're told and there's nothing foolish about it but that's often the way men regard it we're told that the gospel is to them that are perishing foolishness so if you ever have opportunity to witness to someone and give them the gospel and they shake their head and say I don't buy that that's ridiculous that's foolish you can tell them well that's what the Bible said you would say and many people find it to be foolish before they find that it makes perfect sense not only that but it enables you to connect the dots when you come to faith in

Jesus Christ you get a new sense of logic and reasoning you get a new perspective this is why Christ referred to it as being born again it's like you're starting your life all over again from square one you have a new value system new attitudes new ideas new agenda everything changes the whole world is different you've got a different pair of spectacles that you never had before and you see the whole world as being different from what you saw before and one thing that will overwhelm you is how did I not see this how did I miss this how did this escape me why didn't I pick up on this earlier and it's all about giving out information assimilating information and people are on both sides of the issue so look at this if you will verse 48 when the

Gentiles heard this they began rejoicing glorifying the word of the Lord and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed and that's the verse of course that we said seems to sustain the idea of Calvinism and election and this is the verse that they use but we dissected it somewhat in the Greek and we won't go to that now but essentially this means as many as were predisposed or as many as had an interest in or as many as were open to the idea of eternal life believed it didn't mean they were hand picked and selected and that's why they believed as our Calvinist friends would have us believe and as I taught myself for a number of years for which I have apologized but what it means is that when you go into an assembly of people whether it's here whether it's at a funeral home as I sometimes have a sad occasion to do and you've got people in the audience out there you have people seated there who have wondered who have wondered for a long time what is life really all about are there any answers is there any way of finding them nothing seems to make sense what is this thing called life anyway these are people who have a predisposition to eternal life they are people who think in terms of I know I am going to die someday then what who knows who can know can anybody know what is it all about where do we go when we leave here these are people who are open to the information they have an interest they have enough depth to them to know that this is a serious issue the most important issue in this life bar none the most important issue in this life bar none is what happens when this one's over you can't think of anything more important than that not where you work who you marry how much money you have or anything else none of those things matter all that matters is what happens after this life is over and the implications whatever your decision is staggering if there is no life if there is no life after this life and you die and you die like an animal and that's the end of it and there's no eternity there's no heaven there's no hell there's no anything then you're just into oblivion but you won't even know it because you won't have a mind that's functioning and everything will be just annihilation nothing but if there is where what how that's really important it is so important that

God has crafted a message and the message is called the gospel and the word gospel means good news I don't know about you but my ears are always perked up to hear good news I get I get my share of bad news sometimes it comes at one or two o'clock in the morning I've never gotten good news from a 2 a.m.

phone call never have always dread those but I'm really eager to hear good news and this is the world's best good news ever millions of people have died given their life to proclaim this news this information Saul of Tarsus became Paul the apostle was one of them so the word verse 49 the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region what was that word of the Lord just what we've been telling you the gospel the good news Christ died for our sins you can put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your personal sin bearer and savior and he will forgive you he will regenerate you he will save you he will make you a member of his spiritual body he will give you eternal life all of these things 33 wonderful things that happen the moment you come to faith in Christ that's what makes the good news the good news and it's no news like it it's incredible the word of the

[ 25 : 07 ] Lord was spread and the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and leading them of the city and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnes and that simply means they are exercising their volition in a negative way so when this good news is preached it almost always sets up a conflict because people are in charge of their own volition and some have got enough information to satisfy them for a positive answer and some say I'm not buying it I don't believe that stuff and they are the negatives and while those who are the positives and receive the information feel an obligation to attempt to convince the others because we care about them and because we know what we have found is so incredibly wonderful and satisfying if you're any kind of a human being at all you want everybody to share that and to have that and to know that and to enjoy that but often those who don't have it don't want it and they rebel against it and they will try to silence those who want to talk about it just shut up

I don't want to hear that stuff that's a very negative response and that's exactly what they're getting look at this this is very enlightening instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas because of what they did no they didn't do anything they were just preaching they were appealing to people but listen they were not coercing they were not threatening they were not intimidating they were pleading they were begging they were entreating they were inviting and all the while they were doing this they were respecting the right of individuals to say no thank you and they never went beyond that there is no indication that Paul the apostle ever twisted anybody's arms ever threatened anybody to withhold anything from them none of this business unless you become a

Christian and join my church we're just going to have to let you go you're going to be fired can't imagine Christians conducting the gospel in a way like that but I'll tell you there are cults and isms and what not and Islam is one of them that thinks nothing at all of coercing intimidating threatening even killing for a negative answer because as an infidel if you reject Muhammad and his prophet you forfeit your right to life and we are justified in killing you you won't find anything close to that in the gospel Paul says we appeal we entreat we beseech we beg of you that's the extent that we can go and we respect people's right to say no they have a volition that God has given them and they are going to be responsible for the decisions they make so we try we try to convince them we try to persuade them look at this if you would their answer instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas drove them out of their district you guys get out of here we don't want to hear this stuff get out of here and they just manhandle them and push them chase them out of town you're not welcome here you don't share our community values get out of here so they do a typical kind of

Jewish response they shook off the dust of their feet Jesus told them to do that when you go to a community and you proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and they reject you and they'll have nothing to do with it what you are supposed to do is let them see you this is a mid-eastern cultural thing everybody's wearing sandals you shake off the dust of your feet in their sight so that they can see and what you're saying in effect is you're writing off that community you have nothing more to do with them you are respecting their answer by departing and they shook the dust of their feet off and they moved on it's kind of like the same same kind of message that Pilate sent when he washed his hands he was saying in effect I'm out of this thing I've got nothing to do with it well in matter of fact he had everything to do with it but he was trying to absolve himself by this washing of hands this is remarkable and his disciples were continually filled with joy and with the

Holy Spirit in the midst of persecution in the midst of maybe having a price put on your head or having a bullseye painted on your back and yet they are filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit and it came about that in Iconium they entered the synagogue and this Iconium by the way this is all in Asia Minor this is present day Turkey present day Turkey was evangelized by the Apostle Paul and Barnabas and Silas when it was Asia Minor now it's Turkey and now it's entirely Muslim the Christian community that remains there after 2000 years is relatively small and insignificant and there's been a huge turning to Islam because when the

[ 31 : 24 ] Muslims came in with their message of Allah and Muhammad they came with a sword and you will submit voluntarily or you will submit by the sword but you will submit that's Islam and the Quran readily justifies it not only justifies it but demands it so here in Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together and keep in mind this is still a Jewish thing here and they spoke oh look at this they spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed what does that mean it means just what it says it means that their message was effective and penetrating and it got through and the people got the message and they believed the message and there was a tremendous response this is this is a revival here I'm confident that that they marshaled their arguments and you can read them in Acts 13 that we've shared earlier about David and about his place of burial and they knowing where it is and the psalmist saying thou wilt not allow thine holy one to see corruption and they're saying you think David was talking about himself no David wasn't talking about himself we know where David's buried we know where his tomb is we can go and locate it and if you dig him up you'll probably see his bones so he wasn't talking about

David he was talking about David's greater son our Lord Jesus Christ who was a direct descendant of David 2,000 years removed to the tribe of Judah incredible incredible that's who the psalmist was speaking of thou wilt not let his soul seek corruption and all of these kind of arguments taken from the Old Testament that pointed to Christ they are marshaling them here and throwing them into the fray and I can just see some of these learned Jews who'd steeped themselves in the Old Testament for years scratching their heads and saying so wow you know that's is that what that means oh I always wondered about never could make sense of that verse do you suppose these guys are right do you suppose that could really be Jesus of Nazareth do you suppose he could really be the stone that was rejected the same as become the head of the corner could that be him wow and some of them were coming over and saying you know what it fits it all fits it's coming together this is it sure as soon

Jesus was the Messiah and we missed it and we crucified him how could we have been so blind and there were some saying that and coming over to their side and there were others who dug their heels in and said it's all crazy it's crazy I tell you these guys aren't they don't know what they're talking about and they just had a big rip roar going verse 2 says the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren how did they do that spin spin spin you poison the well and you tell lies and you say everything and anything you can to make your case and there are people who believe it it's always been that way there are those so unscrupulous in their efforts to want to sway people to sway people and make them come over to their position they will tell them whatever it takes to get them to do whatever it is they want them to do and it doesn't make any difference whether it's true or not that's beside the point doesn't have to be true you just have to make them think it's true doesn't have to be true question is how many people can you get to believe it and sometimes they spout what they know is a flat out lie and if they had any integrity they wouldn't do it but the name of the game is influence people and get them to do what you want them to do it works that way in religion it works that way in politics and it's reprehensible but it comes out of a fallen nature of humanity therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance on the Lord I got to give these guys credit well they're you know they are they are filled with the spirit of God and they speak boldly and in in the face of this kind of opposition you would think they would at least be driven to timidity and tentativeness to try to defuse the situation and stop making the statements that they are making tone it down can't you water down the gospel so that it's easier for people to believe boy do you do you have to insist on this death burial and resurrection thing can't you can't you smooth that out a little bit can't you make it more palatable can't you make it easier for people to believe and they won't have anything to do with this in the midst of this opposition they say hey the message is the message and we don't have any authority to change the message this is it take it or leave it we're not going to water it down we're not going to change it so it'll be more palatable you've heard the expression the truth hurts well it does if you're on the other side of truth and you hear truth you better believe it's going to hurt causes pain pain's your spirit you don't like it makes you uncomfortable that's the nature of it when we hear things that contradict something we've always believed it it automatically sets up an inner conflict in our mind and we don't like the way that makes us feel sometimes we just want to dismiss it and get away from it and forget it and it keeps coming back and you know the one of the beautiful things about this I just love this is it even though even though our human volition is such that may cause us to take a wrong position it's always subject to more information that can change our minds and many times that's what happened wasn't it Bill Fay that that said the average person needed to hear the gospel 7.2 times before he ever came to a positive decision I think there's a lot of truth in that the people that sell toothpaste on television they know that repetition is the key you got to keep that message out there and keep the product out there and keep talking about it and eventually when they go to the store they'll pick up your product and they'll try it because the message finally got through and the beautiful thing about it is people can hear the gospel and reject it want nothing to do with it today but tomorrow they're near they may enter a crisis in their life I call it God's two-by-four and sometimes a crisis is what is needed to get our attention to what really matters that's what it was for Saul of Tarsus he was in as much a negative rejection mode as you could possibly get as Saul of Tarsus when he witnessed the stoning of Stephen but God didn't get a two-by-four he used Jesus as the two-by-four on the road to



Damascus and that was his two-by-four wasn't it it was an awakening thing someone has said that more people have come to faith in Christ through a crisis than any other time because a crisis the crisis tends to impose something upon you that you can't handle that is overwhelming it reveals your weakness and your inability and most of us here have lived long enough to have experienced sometimes major crises in our lives and you know how much a crisis convinces you you are not in control and you might have thought you were all along but you're not you're not in control at all and a crisis really brings that home it creates a weakness and a dependency and an openness a vulnerability that allows us to consider something that maybe we rejected before that's what this gospel is all about comes to people opportune and inopportune times and sometimes it finds a willing heart one that is predisposed to answers one who is questioning and wondering about life and they are open to the truth and eager for the message and when you preach that message of the gospel of the grace of God they are saying that's it that's what I want that's what I need they are available and ready to maybe last week they weren't but that's the beauty of this therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the

[ 41 : 09 ] Lord who was bearing witness to the word of his grace granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands but the multitude of the city was divided now I ask you how could the city be divided when there are signs and wonders being done by their hands isn't that compelling isn't that convincing how could there be anybody divided how could there be anybody on the other side when you see signs and wonders and what this tells me is the condition of the human heart is such that if one does not want to believe signs and wonders are not going to persuade him someone has said there's no one so blind as those who will not see and remember when Christ was confronting his own townspeople his own fellow Jews who if anybody should have known better they would and Jesus said to them woe unto you that's woe that's w o e that is bad news if Jesus ever woes you you have been woed woe unto you that's Seda and Capernaum for if the mighty deeds done in you if the mighty deeds done in you that you saw and you witnessed if they had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented but not you not you where was Tyre and

Sidon Tyre and Sidon were Gentiles they were clear out of the country they weren't even Jews they didn't know zilch about the Old Testament and could have cared less but if they had seen the evidence that you've seen they would have believed but not enough for you is it well well show show us show us another sign show us dazzle us some more and he finally Jesus had it up to here with him he said no no no more signs there will be no more signs for you except the sign of the prophet Jonah for as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights even so must the son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights he could have come right out and said well I will give you one more sign and that's it and it's the resurrection but that would not have computed with him but anyway that's yeah that's the only sign that they were going to get and that's the one that he gave and everything I mean everything hangs on the truth and the reality of that did Jesus really come back from the dead or not nothing else matters but that so the city is divided some sided with the Jews some with the apostles when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the

Jews with their rulers to mistreat and to stone them if you can't refute their arguments kill them that's the way the opposition handles it if you can't answer their arguments kill them get rid of them they became aware of it they got word somebody came to them and said hey they're out to get you guys they're coming tonight for you they're going to stone you to death and and Paul says well perhaps it's time we leave they fled to the cities of Lyconia Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding region and as you go on and read this wonderful account about Lystra where this man was lame from his mother's womb and what's this another miracle another occasions reminiscent of Acts 3 and the man by the temple gate beautiful and this fellow had never walked before a day in his life either and why were these individuals selected why were they picked and I'll tell you why they were picked because everybody knew these guys this man was in his 40s had been lame from his mother's womb probably born with a birth defect of some kind that just rendered his limbs inoperable and he'd never walked at all so they knew they had a ready-made case study here because everybody in the community knew this guy knew him well and when he is healed and up walking and prancing around that will get attention but you know it takes more than that it takes more than seemingly undeniable evidence because the real the real reason for human unbelief is not a lack of evidence it's the unwillingness of that volition that God gave us to render a positive answer great philosopher brilliant man name escapes me the fellow who said if he were he was he was well known as an atheist was asked the question what would you tell God if you stood before him and he asked why you didn't believe and Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell what would you tell God if he asked you to give an explanation for your unbelief what would you tell him and Bertrand Russell said I would tell him that he didn't give me enough evidence but you read Romans chapter one and the scripture makes it very clear that man has all the evidence he needs it isn't a lack of evidence it's a lack of will if you don't want to believe the gospel you can find reasons of plenty not to and one of the biggest reasons is you don't want to surrender your autonomy because you want to run the show you want to make the decisions you want to charter your own course you don't want anybody imposing their will on you that's how we value our volition but you know when you come to faith in Jesus Christ you are acknowledging who he is you are acknowledging that he is

God the very God Lord of very Lords and the meaning of the word Lord is the one above whom and beyond whom there is none other and that includes us so you are by virtue of placing yourself in Jesus Christ for his salvation you are submitting to his authority and to his right to rule and reign over you are you willing to do that the payoff is wonderful beyond words but the decision still yours God will not force you into a decision that you don't want to make but he will see to it that you are bombarded with information that will give you reason to believe and accept rather than reject and that's called the dispensation of the grace of God and we are so glad we are in it pray with me please thank you Father for a gospel that we really do not fully understand as much as we would like but we know that it will do the job because you provided it and it's the only thing that will nothing nothing can bring an individual's soul into a right relationship with you apart from the provision that you have made there is nothing that we can make that will do that and we are so grateful that you have been willing to make it it just reflects the kind of God you are full of grace and mercy how ungrateful of us to reject it for a moment thank you for the marvelous provision he who knew he who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him

[ 50 : 11 ] Father we will never get over that and we don't want to thank you for the reality of it if there is anyone here today perhaps is in a crisis doing some serious thinking about these things and you want to talk I would be delighted to talk with you sit down with you and the scriptures your place my place any place and talk about it do my best to answer your questions I want you to know I'm available and interested in you thank you Father for this time to share together and for marvelous truth of this ageless gospel that you've provided for us in Christ's name Amen