

*Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.*

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

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First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #253

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### CHAPTER 27

#### **Responses to the Gospel in Chapters 24, 25, and 26**

1. Felix: "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you" (Acts 24:25). PROCRASTINATION: "TODAY is the Day of Salvation, NOW is the accepted time" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:2).

2. Festus: "And as he thus spoke for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning has made you mad" (Acts 26:24). RELYING ON HUMAN WISDOM INSTEAD OF THE WISDOM OF GOD: "For the preaching of the cross is them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God" (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:18).

3. Agrippa: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). ALMOST IS NOT ENOUGH: "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other creation shall be able to separated us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*"

#### **Other Excuses for Not Accepting Christ**

1. ***I am too great a sinner:*** 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:15 tells us that Jesus came to save the chief of sinners, and although their sins "be as scarlet" (Isaiah 1:18), Jesus is able to save to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25) and will not "cast out" any who come to Him (John 6:37).
2. ***I am afraid I can't hold out:*** God will not permit us to be tempted above what we are able to bear (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:13). We are not to keep ourselves but are kept by the Power of God (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:5). Christ is able to keep us (Jude 24), and no one can pluck us out of His hand (John 10:27-29). He who has begun a good work in us will continue it unto the end (Philippians 1:6).
3. ***I will be persecuted:*** Yes, all who live godly will suffer persecution (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:12). Jesus suffered persecution for us (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:20-

21), and we must not let even those of our own household keep us from Christ (Matthew 10:34-39). The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).

4. ***I am seeking but cannot find Him:*** The reason is you do not search for him with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13). As Christ is always seeking you (Luke 19:10), if you are really seeking Him, it won't take long for a seeking Savior and a seeking sinner to find each other.
5. ***I am trying to be a Christian:*** It is not "trying" but "receiving" John 1:12.
6. ***I can't believe:*** In most cases the reason is an unforgiving spirit (Matthew 5:22-24 & 6:15), some consistent sin (Matthew 18:8), love of the world (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15), business or social entanglements (Mark 8:36, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:14-17), being ashamed (Luke 9:26). Isaiah 55:7 will show you what you must do, and Galatians 6:7-8 will show you the consequences if you don't. Romans 10:17 shows you how faith comes.
7. ***It is too late for me:*** Luke 23:39-43 tells us that even a dying thief can be with Jesus in Paradise.
8. ***Inconsistencies of Christian believers:*** Jesus says, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me" (John 21:22). 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:12 shows us that it is not wise to compare ourselves with one another, that we are not to judge one another, that we are not to judge another man's servant (Romans 14:4), that everyone of us shall give a personal account to Christ (Romans 14:10-12). Only Christians can be inconsistent because they are trying to follow Christ and Satan is trying to prevent them (Romans 7:18-25).
9. ***I do believe, but I don't feel saved.*** Feeling is the FRUIT, not the ROOT of salvation (Galatians 5:22, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:8). The Bible nowhere says we are to trust in our "feelings" for salvation. We are to trust in the PROMISES of God.

## ACTS 27

### THE LAST JOURNEY BEGINS

1. And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.

2. So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.
3. And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.
4. When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.
5. And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.
6. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.
7. When we had sailed slowly many days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone.
8. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

This was Paul's last journey. He travels on this journey as a prisoner of Rome. Two things must have brought Paul comfort. One was the kindness of his guard, Julius, who must have been a man of an excellent military record to be in the Augustus Regiment. This was probably a liaison military group that was sent by the Emperor to the provinces and from the provinces to the Emperor.

The second thing that must have comforted Paul was his traveling companions Luke and Aristarchus. I am sure that Luke was able to get on board because he was a physician. Everyone wants a doctor around. It is thought, however, that the only way Aristarchus could have gone with Paul is by enrolling himself as Paul's slave. Aristarchus chose to take this action so that he would not be separated from Paul. It was an act of great love and loyalty.

Strong west winds at that time of the year made this journey very long and followed a zig-zag course. The winds prevented them from taking a direct and shorter route. After many days they arrived at Fair Havens.

### **IN PERILS OF THE SEA**

9. Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was not dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,
10. Saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

11. Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.
12. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.
13. When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.
14. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.
15. So when the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.
16. And running under the shelter of an island called Claudia, we secured the skiff with difficulty.
17. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.
18. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.
19. On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.
20. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

This fast was the Jewish Day of Atonement and fell in the first half of October that year. Sailing after September was considered dangerous and sailing after November was considered impossible. The ships had no compass or way to tell where they were in stormy weather. The ship was full of grain from Egypt and was being sent to Rome.

The fact that Paul was able to express his opinion about the situation—he strongly advised against leaving Fair Haven until after winter—overlooks the respect the centurion had for him. However, the owner of the ship and cargo insisted on sailing on. Fair Haven was not a very good harbor and was not near a sizeable town where the sailors and passengers could find accommodations, and I am sure the owner wanted to get to Rome as soon as possible so that he could sell his grain. The centurion took the owner's advice and decided to sail on.

Things started out well. An unexpected south wind blew in making the sailing smooth. But then a northeaster blew in causing gale type conditions. Because of the cloudy and stormy sky they did not know where they were, and there was a lot of fear that they would be blown on

the Syrtis Sands off North Africa and dashed to pieces. They threw overboard all the spare gear in hopes of lightening the load.

### **BE OF GOOD CHEER**

21. But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

22. "And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

23. "For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,

24. "saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

25. "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

26. "However, we must run aground on a certain island."

Now the situation was desperate. This cargo ship was a big ship and very difficult to maneuver in a storm. Then an amazing thing happens. Paul, the prisoner, after telling the men, "I told you so!," takes over the ship and tells the men that no one will be lost, but the ship will be destroyed.

### **HOPING FOR THE DAY**

27. Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.

28. And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms.

29. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.

30. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow,

31. Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

32. Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.

33. And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food and eaten nothing.
34. "Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you."
35. And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.
36. Then they were all encouraged and also took food themselves.
37. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.
38. So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.

The sailors hear the waves breaking and realize they are getting into shallow waters. Paul again takes over, preventing the sailors from abandoning ship in the skiff and urging all to eat food. There were 276 men on board. The Feast of Passover took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> day and at the Midnight Hour. This whole chapter is pointing to the End of the Age. Like Paul and the ship's crew and passengers, deliverance will come to all on board the ship at the midnight hour. When the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat, they have no one to trust except God's Word through Paul for their own salvation.

### **ESCAPE FROM THE DEEP**

39. When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible.
  40. And when they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore.
  41. But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground, and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.
  42. And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.
  43. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,
  44. And the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.
- There was a law that if a prisoner escaped, the guards must undergo the penalty intended for the prisoner. This usually meant death. So the soldiers

wanted to kill all the prisoners so they could not escape, but the centurion prevent this because he wanted to save Paul's life. Thus, just as the Lord had spoken to Paul, it came to pass and no one was killed. Even those who could not swim were able to float to safety on boards and parts of the ship.

Kevin Conner says this whole chapter is a type of the World, "The World-system is like this old ship and is in the greatest storm of history as the End of the Age comes upon the earth. There is no hope of saving the ship (the World-system); but God has His Witnesses in the winds and of the storms who believe God and the only hope of escape and salvation from the wreck of the World-system is to believe God and the witness of His Servants. The crash comes at the Midnight Hour, but those who trust God and the Word will be safe."

**SOMETIMES ALLELUIA  
CHUCK GIRARD**

**CHORUS**

Sometimes Alleluia  
Sometimes Praise the Lord  
Sometimes Gently Singing  
Our Hearts in One Accord

Oh let us lift our voices  
Look toward the sky and start to sing  
Oh let us now return His love  
Just let our voices ring  
Oh let us feel His presence  
Let the sound of praises fill the air  
Oh let us sing the song of Jesus' love,  
To people everywhere.

Oh let our joy be unconfined  
Let us sing with freedom unrestrained  
Let's take this feeling that we're feeling now  
Outside these walls and let it rain.  
Oh let the Spirit overflow  
As we are filled from head to toe.  
We love you Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
And we want this world to know.