

Acts
 “Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”

Chp. 18:22-28 The royal route to Rome (3rd trip)

22:30-23:11

“Failing Successfully”

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 30-5 Paul the prisoner

III.) Vs. 6-11 The best out of a bad situation

I.) Intro.

Paul had been waiting for 17 years for the opportunity to share the truth concerning Jesus to his fellow countrymen, ever sense he was in the Temple praying and was told by Jesus to leave the city because they would not listen to what he said. Paul never lost his desire to share the truth concerning Jesus to the Jews and here it was finally 17 long years later “*his ship has come in*” only to watch it sink. It reminds me of a letter that appeared in “***Christianity Today***” from a distraught pastor who wrote: “*Every program I've started has failed. Our "Evangelism Explosion" didn't explode: it barely "popped" then rolled over and died. I attended a "Church Growth Seminar", and while I was gone, six families left the church. I tried "Dial-a-Prayer" and got a wrong number. I've heard that failure is the back door to success, but the door seems to be locked and I can't find a key.*” This pastor watched *his ship* get close to shore only to see it sink on the reef of disappointment! Folk’s have you ever considered the possibility that the sinking of “*your ship*” was exactly what was supposed to happen? You see God knows what is best for us so much better then we do. **Don’t make the mistake of judging God’s overall plan for your life by the portion of it that happened today. Stop thinking in terms of today’s sinking and start thinking it terms of your future port where we all know is where we are going to spend eternity!**

II.) Vs. 30-5 Paul the prisoner

Vs. 30 Paul was under military arrest, chained to a Roman soldier having already been saved by Claudius Lysias (*Lis-e-us*) twice. From the Roman commanders perspective this was a very frustrating situation as two riots had broken out and he still didn't know why. Under Roman law you could examine the prisoner under torture to find out his crimes, accept for Roman citizens to which Paul informed him he was. So now old Claudius had to find out the truth another way so he decided to call in the Sanhedrin which was the Jewish ruling religious Supreme Court made up of 71 men including the high priest.

The context of this passage indicates that Claudius called the Jewish Supreme Court to where he was at the fortress of Antonia right by the temple on Roman ground and not Jewish as they had done with Jesus. In 21:40 Paul finally got his opportunity to share his testimony of how Jesus had changed his life and he had them hanging on his every word until the word was “*Gentiles*”. So he spends the night chained to a Roman guard no doubt wondering why all this was happening.

Hey, I have a question, “**Where's the Church?**”

- Since he was under military arrest he could have visitors who could come to meet with him but Luke does not record any visitors. Where's James, whose idea it had been to take and pay for a vow in the temple to begin with?
- Further more Luke doesn't record anything like what he said in Acts 12:5 at Peter's imprisonment that “*prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*” In fact the Church makes no attempt to meet with Paul for the next two years while he is imprisoned in Caesarea.

Saints follow me on this one, the body of Christ was not there to help give Paul the right perspective on the events that had just happened hours earlier, he is all alone trying to sift through the reasons for what had happened. The next morning you're brought in before the religious leaders of the nation, many of whom you know personally as 20 years ago you were a part of them. Here's what I'd be thinking, "Lord now I understand why all this has happened to me, you didn't want me to share the truth's about you to the common people you wanted me to talk to the people that I used to be a part of, the religious leaders." **"It all makes since now, you really are in control, and my ship has come in just like I dreamed it would!"**

Vs. 1 Paul is before the religious Supreme Court but not on their home turf but rather on his as he addresses the highest religious organization of the day, **"Men and brethren"**. The customary way of addressing them was the way in which Peter did in Acts 4:8 **"Rulers of the people and elders of Israel"**. To address them this way shows **tremendous confidence** something that is further born out by what Paul says next, *"I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."* The word "lived" is where we get our words "*polite and politics*" from and combined the word "*lived*" in the Greek is "**polite politics**" or "*good citizen*". Paul loved the word "**conscience**" using it some 23 times and in Greek the word means, "*joint knowledge*" and implies that the person has weighed their thoughts and actions to see if they are right or wrong.

Vs. 2 The reaction of the High Priest is a bit puzzling apart from understanding how casual Paul was in addressing this prestigious council. Perhaps Ananias the High Priest understood Paul to say that Paul was claiming he was still a good citizen of the Jews while being a Christian? At any rate the reaction Paul got was quite different then he

must have been expecting. The word “*strike*” here is no mere slaps across the mouth as it is rendered else where to beat, simply put Ananias had someone punch Paul in the mouth.

Ananias was perhaps the most corrupt High Priest in Israel's history. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian who wrote for the Romans, Ananias had gained the position of High Priest through purchasing presents for those in power. He obtained the funds to do this by running with a bad crowd who did his bidding and they started a racket by stealing the tithes of the threshing-floors that belonged to the priests of the temple. It got so bad that some of the priests that were old and dependent upon the tithes died of starvation. He was not liked by the Jews because of his pro-Roman stand in fact the Jews killed him while he was hiding in Herod's aqueduct during the revolt that broke out in A.D. 66.

Vs. 3-5 Paul's reaction to his being punched in the mouth was, “*God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!*” It was Pentecost in Jerusalem with graves carved out of stone every where and when they got old you could not tell a tomb from a hill so they would whitewash them so that they would not touch them and become ceremonially unclean. So Paul is calling him a “hypocritical bag of bones”. “*For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?*” What made Paul so mad was not being hit in the mouth rather it was the hypocrisy of being judged by the law by those who broke the law. Paul does not apologize to the High Priest but he does apologize for speaking badly against the office he held.

III.) Vs. 6-11 The best out of a bad situation

Vs. 6-9 This was opportunity which Paul had dreamed about for 17 years and it's not going well at all so he switches gears and decides to try the theological tactic with the

hopes of getting a good discussion about the resurrection going. The Sadducees and Pharisees made up the two parties of the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees did not believe in anything supernatural, they were the religious liberals of the court. The Pharisees, (*of whom Paul and his father once belonged to*) were the fundamentalists of the day. These two groups were bitter enemies of each other unless they both found someone they hated more than each other. Paul was right in that what was behind their arrest of him being the resurrection but this gained him an ally in the Pharisees but further alienated the Sadducees of whom the high priest belonged. Seeing this debate explode around him he must have realized that his opportunity to share Jesus had been lost. Instead of looking at the truth concerning Jesus who both groups so disparately needed, Paul became the rope in a real life tug of war between two groups that hated each other.

Vs. 10 Oh the embarrassment of it all! Claudius Lysias (*Lis-e-us*) has to come down for yet a third time to save Paul from certain death as the soldiers come down by force to bring Paul again to the safety of the barracks.

Vs. 11 Notice that Luke says that the “*following night*” the Lord stood by him, I bet that was one of the darkest nights of Paul’s Christian life. In fact in 2 Tim. 4:16 Paul shares perhaps this night’s experience with a young pastor named Timothy, “*At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.*” I can hear the loneliness and despair in his words. Going through his mind was his failure, which is brought out by the words of Jesus to him, “***Be of good cheer, Paul.***” Jesus would not have said that to him if Paul was singing in prison as he had done in Philippi. The weight of that moment is far worse than being struck in the face. With that as a backdrop listen to **three words of encouragement from Jesus to Paul:**

- a. “*The following night*”: May I suggest to you that the light is always the brightest in darkness. It is in times when everything that you have ever hoped of and dreamed of is vanishing, your “*ship is sinking*” that you realize that you have placed value and worth on things that parish. In the song the “**Heart of worship**” there is a line that goes, “**When all is striped away all I have is You!**” We don’t realize that until, “**All is stripped away!**” As Paul was sitting in the barracks and saw the sinking of “**his ship**” perhaps he realized that this was not the ship he should have been aboard.
- b. “*The Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul*”: The Lord knew right where to find him and what he need. Even when Paul was faithless Jesus was faithful! Paul was not alone as he would later say to Timothy, “*the Lord stood with me and strengthened me*”. Paul was in the midst of two jails, the **barracks** and **the bars of a despairing heart.** **But Jesus chose not to deliver him out of them but rather He broke in to meet him!** Think of that a moment, “*What can break you out of the bars of depression when it’s your own fault that your there*”? JESUS! Now dear saints get this please, **even when you are where you are because of your own self doing Jesus still stands with you and His cross still cleans you up!** If that does not bring a smile to your face then you need a facelift! “**God does not create joy by new surroundings; He creates new surroundings by JOY!**”
- c. “*For as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.*” Saints, **Jesus rewards our obedience not the outcome!** **The ship that sunk was the ship of results which was Paul’s own making.**

Jesus would have us sail on the ship of **obedience**! Paul would say in 2 Tim 4:17-18 that this all happened “*that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.*” Paul is telling Timothy that **just because it didn’t work out the way he thought it should does not mean that it’s not going to work out the way in which He wants it to.** The game is not over, dear ones.

At a Stephen Curtis Chapman concert a Steve Saint came on stage to introduce a special friend. Steve’s dad was part of the missionary team along with Jim Elliot that was killed in the 50’s by the South American Indians that was later made into a movie “*Beyond the Spear*”. Steve was five years old when it happened and it left he confused and in despair. At ten years of age his Aunt asked him to come and live among the very Indians that had been responsible for taking his fathers life. As Steve Saint told this story he paused and said, “*I’d like you introduce to you a very special man in fact he is my adopted Grandfather and one of the leaders of the Church among the Indians that is simply know as “**The God followers**”*. At that moment an elderly Indian came on stage to challenge the crowd to reach out to the community God has placed you in with the transforming power of God’s love. He went on to say, “*You see my life was changed by this same love for I am the very man who killed Steve’s dad!*” As they embraced Steve said, “**Only the first chapter has been written of your life, God is still writing the rest of your story!**”