

Journey Through Acts
“Be Of Good Cheer!”
Acts 23:1-35

Introduction:

1. In December, 2013 - A Christian Missionary Was Gunned Down In The City Of Benghazi, Libya! Now - Today - Unfortunately - This Is Not All That Shocking Of News! But - It Is A Bit More Shocking - When You Think That Just One Year Earlier - On September 11, 2012 - In The Same Country, Libya & In The Same City, Benghazi - A United States Diplomatic Outpost Came Under Attack By A Mob Of Terrorists, Killing 4 Americans! And ***ALL*** Americans Were Urged To Leave Benghazi & Abandon The Failed-State Of Libya! But - Ronnie Smith & And His Wife, Anita, Remained! And In Just 15 Months Time, She Would Leave Herself, Only Without Her Husband! Was This A Fool's Errand? Perhaps You Might Think So! But - Both Ronnie & Anita Believed In Their Hearts That Benghazi Was Where God Wanted Them To Be! Still - Many Think Them To Be Fools - Perhaps Even We Do! In Truth - How Many Others Could We Say This About? Was Jim Eliot A Fool To Try To Contact The Auca Indians In Ecuador, But Was Killed In The Process? Yet - He Anticipated Objections Like This When He Wrote In His Journal These Famous Words - “He Is No Fool, Who Gives What He Cannot Keep To Gain That Which He Cannot Lose!” The World May Think Them To Be Fools - Yet - In The End - They Are The Ones Who Become The True Heroes Of The Faith! And So It Was - In The Final Years Of The Life Of The Apostle Paul! The World May Have Considered Him To Be A Fool - After All He Had Been Through For Preaching The Gospel! But He Knew Better! “He Is No Fool!”
 2. Because - As We Continue Our ***Journey Through Acts:***
 - Tonight - We Will Remain:
 - **In The City Of Jerusalem With The Apostle Paul:**
 - After He Had Been Arrested:
 - And Almost Scourged:
 - For Crimes He Had Not Committed!
 - In Acts 22 - Paul Was Given The Opportunity To Appeal:
 - To The Jewish People:
 - On The Steps Leading Of The Roman Fortress:
 - Just Feet Away From The Temple!
 - But - He Was Silenced!
 - In Acts 23 - Which Is Where We Will Be Tonight:
 - Paul Appeals:
 - To The Jewish Authorities:
 - In The Chambers Of The Sanhedrin!
 - A Group Of Around 70 Prominent Jewish Leaders:
 - Including The High Priest!
 2. And It Is Before:
 - The Great Sanhedrin:
 - Paul Believes He Is Given:
1. ***Fresh Opportunities!***
 - Fresh Opportunities To Tell The Leaders Of His Own People:
 - About The Change That Had Taken Place In His Life Through The Gospel Of Jesus Christ!
 - And So - Beginning In 23:1-5 - We Read About:
 - The First Opportunity!
 - 23:1-5 - “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. / 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. / 3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? / 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? / 5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people!”
 - Now - We Need To Remember That Paul:
 - Was Wounded, Tired, And Likely Very Sad - At His People's Response:
 - But - He Still had A Profound Zeal And Respect For God's Law! We See This:
 - In Paul's Response To Lawless Conduct!
 - When He Was Smitten On The Mouth:
 - I Don't Believe Paul's Response Was One Of An Impulsive Rage - But - Instead:

- Was A Response Of Righteous Anger And Indignation!
 - He Was Smitten Against The Laws Of Jewish Justice - And Paul Knew The Law! (Deuteronomy 25:1-2) & Paul Respected The Law! Also Seen:
- In Paul's Response To Lawful Correction!
 - Because, When He Was Told That The Person To Whom He Had Said Those Harsh Words:
 - Was, In Fact, The High Priest:
 - Paul Was Contrite & Apologized!
 - Because Paul Knew The Law! (Exodus 22:28) & Paul Respected The Law!
 - If Only The Members Of That Jewish Sanhedrin:
 - Had The Eyes To See This:
 - They Would Have Recognized That Paul Loved And Obeyed God's Law!
 - But - Instead - His First Opportunity Was Shut Down!
 - But Then - We Read:
- The Second Opportunity!
 - 23:6-10 - "But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. / 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. / 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. / 9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. / 10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle!"
 - When Paul Proclaims Himself To Be A True Pharisee - I Don't Believe His Primary Purpose:
 - Was To Manipulate The Council To Take Sides - Even Though It Turned Out That Way!
 - He Was Sincerely Looking For Another Way In - To Their Minds & Hearts - With The Gospel!
 - To Share With Them:
 - The Message!
 - 23:6 - "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question!"
 - He Wanted To Tell Them - About Christ!
 - Who Was *His* Hope & Who Is *The* Resurrection!
 - But - Perhaps Even Unexpectedly To Paul:
 - It Brought About:
 - The Mayhem:
 - Between The Pharisees & The Saducees!
 - And At This Point:
 - Paul's Trial Was Over!
 - And His Second Opportunity Was Shut Down As Well!
- But - What Had Paul Achieved?
 - Humanly Speaking - Nothing!
 - He Kept Trying:
 - First - At The Temple - And Now - Before The Council:
 - But - He Failed To Reach His Own People!
 - As It Was Once Said Of Christ:
 - In John 1:11 - "He came unto his own, and his own received him not!"
 - Now - Imagine How Paul Must Have Felt:
 - When He Was Taken "By Force" Back To The Safety:
 - Of The Roman Castle / Fortress!
 - He Probably Felt Dejected!
 - Since - He Failed In All Of His Attempts:
 - To Reach His People:
 - With The Gospel!
 - He Probably Felt Discouraged!
 - Since - He Was Alone - There In The Military Compound Of The Romans!

- Wonder - Where's The Church In All Of This? What Happened To The Four Men Who Went To The Temple With Him?
 - Again - Like Christ:
 - It Seems As If "All The Disciples Forsook Him And Fled!" (Matthew 26:56)
- Was The Church Gathering Together:
 - For Prayer Meetings - As They Did:
 - When Peter Was Imprisoned Earlier In The Book Of Acts?
 - Perhaps - But None Are Mentioned Here!
 - Instead - The Church Is Noticeably Absent!
- Paul Probably Also Felt Defeated!
 - Since - He Was Hurting!
 - Physically - From The Injuries He Sustained In The Temple!
 - Emotionally - From The Energy He Spent To Make His Appeal To His People!
 - And - Likely Even Spiritually!
- He Probably Also Felt Doubtful!
 - Since - He Was Trapped & Unable To Leave The Roman Garrison!
 - Just One Night Before - He Was Free!
 - But Now - He Was Bound!
 - If Not With Chains, Then By The Tall, Thick Walls Of The Fortress!
- The Lord's Words To Him Had Come True!
 - Remember 20:22-23 - "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: / Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me!"
 - But What Next?
 - What A Long & Laborious Day That Turned Out To Be!
- Listen To How G. Campbell Morgan Describes The Scene - "'Let us now look at Paul in the darkness and quietness of the night succeeding this day of strange and perplexing emotions. Let us try and get with him into the prison. The uppermost thought of his mind would inevitably be that of the disastrous failure of the day. His claim of sincerity had been insulted. His passion for righteousness had been frustrated. His purpose of testimony had been frustrated. . . . There settled upon his spirit that night the sense of utter dejection. . . . He was overwhelmed with a sense of his failure in Jerusalem!" (Morgan)
- But - What Happened To Him That Night:
 - Would Turn Everything Around!
 - Because - Into That Darkest Of Nights:
 - Came The Light Of The World!
 - Jesus - In Order To Bring:

2. *Fresh Comforts!*

- Fresh Comforts To The Soul Of Paul!
 - 23:11 - "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome!"
 - Now - We Are Going To Pause Here At This Verse:
 - So That We Can See & Hear:
 - What The Lord Did & Said:
 - To Paul - His Own Suffering & Struggling Servant!
 - First - We See:
- The Special Presence Of The Lord!
 - Because - We Are Told That:
 - "The Night Following The Lord Stood By Him!"
 - Now - Was This Done In A Spiritual Way Or In A Physical Way? Can't Be Certain!
 - But - We **Can** Be Certain That:
 - "He Was There, And Paul Knew It! He Did Speak, And Paul Heard It!" (Morgan)
 - It Certainly Was Not Outside Christ's Ability To Physically & Literally "Stand By Him" Through That Night! I Believe He Was!
 - But - The Point Of The Lord's Presence:
 - With Paul - That Night - Was To:
 - Comfort His Dejected Servant:

- And To Show Him That He Was **Not** Alone!
 - Nor, Would He Ever Be!
- Perhaps Verses Came To Paul's Mind:
 - Like Isaiah 41:10 - Which Promise The Lord's Presence With His People - "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness!"
- Paul Was Given Fresh Comfort:
 - From The Special Presence Of The Lord!
- What About You Tonight?
 - Do You Feel Alone?
 - Alone In Life?
 - Alone In God's Plan?
 - Alone In God's Work?
 - Remember - That In Christ:
 - You Are **Never** Alone!
 - And He Stands By You No Matter How Dark Your Night May Be!
 - But Then, We Also Hear:
- The Special Provision Of The Lord!
 - Because Of The First Words Jesus Says To Paul:
 - 23:11 - "Be Of Good Cheer, Paul!"
 - At This Point - Paul Likely Felt:
 - Very Defeated!
 - Thinking To Himself - "What More Can I Do?"
 - **He Had Failed** To Reach His People!
 - And So - The First Words Jesus Whispers Into Paul's Ears:
 - Are Words Of Cheer & Comfort & Courage!
 - In Fact - This Phrase Can Be Translated:
 - In All Three Of These Ways!
 - And So - Paul Was Given Fresh Comfort:
 - From The Special Provision Of The Lord!
 - A Provision Of His Grace!
 - And This Is Why You - Dear Christian:
 - Don't Have To Be "Weary In Well Doing!"
 - Because - The Lord Himself Comes Beside You To Provide His Own Cheer, His Own Comfort, And His Own Courage!
 - He Says To You & Me - "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but **be of good cheer**; I have overcome the world!" (John 16:33)
 - You Can Be Of Good Cheer:
 - Because - One Day - You Too Will Overcome All Things - In Him!
 - All Of The Pain, All Of The Sorrow, All Of The Rejection, All Of The Sin:
 - Will Be No More!
 - So - Even If Your Life & Service For The Lord:
 - Seems So Little Or So Weak Or So Fruitless:
 - Be Of Good Cheer! Because Of:
- The Special Pleasure Of The Lord!
 - Which He Also Reveal To Paul In 23:11 - When He Says:
 - "For As Thou Hast Testified Of Me In Jerusalem!"
 - The Truth Is - In The Lord's Eyes:
 - Paul Was **Not A Failure!**
 - Not In The Least!
 - Because:
 - Paul Was Faithful!
 - Faithful To The Commission Of The Lord!
 - Acts 9:15 - "To Bear [His] Name Before Gentiles, And Kings, And The Children Of Israel!"
 - Paul Was Faithful!
 - And The Lord Was Pleased!
 - Are You "Testifying" Of The Lord:

- In Your Life & Through Your Words?
 - ***If You Are Faithful, You Are Not A Failure!***
 - Even If It Seems Like There Are Little Or No Results!
- And - When You Are Faithful:
 - The Lord Is Pleased!
 - And You Will Hear The Lord Himself Say To You One Day - “Well Done, Thou Good And Faithful Servant!” (Matthew 25:21)
- **IE:** William Carey - Who Left For India As A Missionary Back In 1792 - “Expected Great Things From God” & Was About To “Attempt Great Things For God!” - But - When He Arrived In India - It Was A Much Harder Work Than He Anticipated - And It Took Seven Years Before He Baptized The First Indian Believer! Was He A Fool? Was He A Failure? Perhaps He Felt Like It At Times! But, By God’s Grace & Through His Strength, William Carey Later Wrote, “I Can Plod!” And So, Plod He Did! He Was Faithful! And God Was Pleased!
 - You Too, Like Paul, Like William Carey, Can Take Fresh Comfort In:
 - The Special Pleasure Of The Lord:
 - By Remaining Faithful!
 - Keep On Plodding!
 - Because - You Can Remain Confident In:
 - The Special Plan Of The Lord!
 - Which The Lord Also Shared With Paul In 23:11:
 - “So Must Thou Bear Witness Also At Rome!”
 - How This Must Have Stirred Paul’s Heart!
 - After All - Rome Is Where He Longed To Go! (Acts 19:21)
 - But Now - He Would Go:
 - **To Rome *On* Rome’s Dime!**
 - Not His Own!
 - If Paul Had Any Doubt Before:
 - The Fog Of His Doubt Quickly Burned Away:
 - From The Light Of The Lord’s Illumination:
 - Of His Will!
 - Paul Would Go To Rome:
 - Based On God’s Promise:
 - And Through His Providence!
 - Now - As A Christian:
 - You May Not Have The Same Certainty:
 - About The Specific Plans God Has For Your Life & Your Future!
 - But - You **Can** Be Certain:
 - That A Faithful Christian Is Immortal Until God’s Plan For Him On Earth Is Done! (Whitefield)
 - And - As It Did For Paul - This Will Bring:

3. ***Fresh Perspective!***

- Fresh Perspective In All Of Your Circumstances!
 - Like The Circumstances:
 - We Read About In The Rest Of Acts 23!
 - God Begins His Work Of Providence:
 - To Keep His **Promise To** Paul & Fulfill His **Plan With** Paul:
 - To Have Him “Bear Witness Also At Rome!”
 - God’s Providence Is Displayed:
 - Through Paul’s Protection:
 - In The Face Of Danger!
 - 23:12-22 - “And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. / 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. / 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. / 15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. / 16 And when Paul’s sister’s son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. / 17 Then Paul

called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. / 18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. / 19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? / 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. / 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. / 22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me!”

- The Lord Protected Paul:

- Through The Most Unlikely Of Heroes!

- Paul’s Own Young Nephew & Even The Roman Army!

- God’s Providence Is Further Displayed:

- Through Paul’s Progress!

- 23-23-35 - “And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; / 24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. / 25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: / 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. / 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. / 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: / 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. / 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell. / 31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to **Antipatris**. / 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: / 33 Who, when they came to **Caesarea**, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. / 34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; / 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in **Herod’s judgment hall!**”

- The Lord Is Guiding Paul:

- On His Final Missionary Journey - In The Most Unlikely Of Ways!

- With An Entourage Of 470 Of Rome’s Finest!

- And He Made To Back To Caesarea - In Record Time!

- And Now - Paul Sees All Of These Things:

- With Fresh Eyes & With A Fresh Perspective!

- All Because - In One Of The Longest & Darkest Nights Of His Life - 23:11 - “The Lord Stood By Him!”

Conclusion:

1. And If You Are One Of God’s Children Tonight:

- Through Faith In The Lord Jesus Christ:

- Then - He Stand’s By You As Well!

- But - He’s Not Just **By** You - He’s **With** You!

2. So - “Be Of Good Cheer!”

- When You Are:

- Discouraged:

- Because You Feel Alone! Or:

- Dejected:

- Because You Feel Like A Failure! Or:

- Defeated:

- Because You Feel Weak! Or:

- Even When You Doubt!

- Because A Faithful Christian:

- Is Not A Failure & Is Not A Fool!

- Neither Was Ronnie Smith!

- Show Video!

- Not Fools!

- Not Failures!
- But Faithful!
- So - "Be Of Good Cheer" - Christian!
- In The Fresh Comfort Of The Lord!
 - His Presence With You!
 - His Provision To You!
 - His Pleasure In You!
 - And - His Plan For You!
- ***"Be Of Good Cheer!"***

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