

## Acts 25:9-27

### “God Will Do What He Said He Will Do”

James wrote, *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,”*<sup>1</sup> & Surely, at this point in our text, Paul the apostle has had his fair share of “various trials”. Not only circumstantially, & certainly not limited to the undercurrent spiritually, but literally, legally! He’s been undergoing trial after trial for over 2 yrs, being seemingly stuck as a pawn in the political arena. *It started on the temple mount; escalated up on the steps of the Antonia fortress (in Jerusalem), landed him before the Sanhedrin & involved a military escort to Caesarea. He was then heard before Felix, left in prison for 2 yrs & we last left him in yet another hearing before the new governor, Festus. Various trials indeed!*

But God is using him, ministering to & through him, redeeming the time. Listen to me, don’t waste your suffering. Various trials, tough times, tribulations *will* visit our lives. Let’s not waste them, but rather learn *by* them, grow *through* them, allowing God to refine us, mold us, deepen us & make us more like Jesus as the result of them.

To the Corinthians he said it like this, *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,”*<sup>2</sup> Now, when you study Paul’s life, & understand the things he endured, the troubles he persevered up under, we understand that when he uses the words “light affliction” he’s not in any way seeking to diminish or somehow minimize the things we suffer in this world (he was all too familiar). The idea is that if you were to put all our suffering, all our hardship, all of our afflictions, our trials & tribulations on one side of the scale, & on the other side was the eternal weight of glory that God was producing for us as the result of them on the other side... The two wouldn’t even compare!

It’s like this; our suffering is limited, and at best temporary. The weight (the gravity) of glory that God is producing through it is *“far more exceeding & eternal.”* It never ceases. It will honor *you* & glorify *God* forever & ever & ever. It’ll never grow old, never become “familiar” in the sense that it just kind of is what it is. It’ll be radical, incredible, euphoric forever! Praise God...

Well, speaking of trials, let’s get back to Paul’s. There he is; same ol’ song & dance. Accusations, allegations, zero substantiation, zero proof. To which Paul responded, “Look, I’ve not offended the law of the Jews, I’ve not desecrated the temple, nor have I in any way offended Rome.”

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jas 1:2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Co 4:16–17]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 9-12

Do you get the idea that Paul is like, “Look, enough is enough. I’ve been there, now I’m here; I’ve been here for over 2 yrs, no one has brought anything against me that they have any proof of, I’m not going to go back there & I’m obviously not going to obtain justice here. I appeal to Caesar!”

& We see that these Jews were actually seeking the death penalty. Paul says, “Listen, if I’ve done anything deserving of death, I don’t object to dying. But if there’s nothing to all these things they’re accusing me of, I’m not going to go to Jerusalem because they’ll have me put to death for sure! So I appeal to Caesar.”

Now, there are some legal overtones here in that a Roman judge couldn’t legally move a case to another court without the consent of the accused. It’s kind of like trying an accused man in front of people that already think he’s guilty, in placing him before a biased jury. & Paul wasn’t having that... He also realized that he’d probably be there (in Caesarea) the rest of his life if he didn’t do what he did. Which was to invoke the right of every Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar.

If you were a Roman citizen, & you felt like you weren’t getting a fair trial, you could appeal to Caesar. It was kind of like pursuing your case all the way up the chain to the Supreme court.

He knew that to go to Jerusalem would mean his death... Now, it’s not that he was afraid to face the lions (if you will), but he wasn’t just going to put his head in the lion’s mouth either if he could avoid it! In other words, he didn’t have a “martyr’s mentality”. Some people sort of gravitate toward asceticism, it’s like they put themselves in positions where their suffering is likely. That’s not wise. Paul said, “*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*”<sup>3</sup> Don’t purposefully put yourself in a position where harm is likely to find you so that you can say you suffered for Jesus. Paul wasn’t about to be martyred before the Jews... so he took it out of the hands of Festus altogether & said, “I appeal to Caesar.” No doubt that infuriated the Jews in that through the utterance of this one statement they were completely neutralized.

Festus no doubt told them, “Look, there’s nothing I can do about it. As a Roman citizen he has the right to appeal to Caesar & so to Caesar he’s going to go.” He’s headed for Rome.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 12:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now; perhaps you remember that 2 yrs prior to this the Lord had appeared to Paul & had given him the assurance that he was going to testify of Him in Rome (as you've testified of Me in Jerusalem so you also bear witness at Rome). The Lord didn't tell him *when* he would go to Rome, or *how* he would get there. 😊 I have no doubt that this was *not* what Paul envisioned as being the "how/when" he would get to Rome (in chains as a prisoner).

Now; I want to talk to you about something here & that is this. God's word is true. We read in the book of Numbers, *"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"*<sup>4</sup>

& I have discovered (perhaps you have as well) that it's not altogether incredibly uncommon for God to reveal a part of His overall plan to us. (Paul, you're going to bear witness of Me at Rome). But most generally there's an interval of time between the foretelling & the *fulfilling* of said plan.

& That's where the problem comes in for you & me. Because we have a tendency to be strategizers. We're thinkers, we're plotters & planners. & None of those things are wrong given the right context (until you mingle in our impatience). But here's where I'm going w/this.

God's ways are not our ways. We read in the book of *Isaiah*, *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.'"*<sup>5</sup> & His plans for us run as deep as they do wide. He's building *into* us, purifying & *refining* us, shaping & *molding* us throughout our journey. God will always work *in* you before He works *through* you.

& Listen, there's virtually no growth apart from some kind of resistance, some kind of obstacle to overcome or work through. Right? If you lift weights you're always pushing against resistance, why? So you can grow.

If you're an athlete you embrace the fact that your mind will tell you to quit, even though your body still has more to offer (they talk about the "heart" of an athlete, refusing to quit, even when they're exhausted), it makes them better, it puts them into a position to grow.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Nu 23:19] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 55:8-9] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Well, if we embrace this concept *physically*, why then do we kick against this same principle, this same process *spiritually*? We want to go to bed & have some kind of magic pixie dust sprinkled over us & wake up more like Jesus, more patient, more loving, more kind/understanding & compassionate, filled w/more wisdom, it doesn't work like that. Yes, God *can* do those things miraculously, *instantly*. But *generally* His process is to forge these things into us through hardship, trials & tough times that come into our lives. These things can make us better, or bitter, depends on the material, right?

You're going down the road, hit a bump, hot coffee spills out of the cup. Did the bump make the hot coffee, or even place it in the cup? No, it simply revealed what was already in it. We're journeying through life, we hit a trial & we freak out, we get angry or whatever. Listen, that's the "bump" in the road. It didn't make you act that way, it simply revealed the characteristic, the attitude contained w/in you (or me). Shows us the work God is still seeking to accomplish in us.

Listen, it might shock you to hear this, but you & me, we do well to understand it. God's chief aim in our lives isn't to make us *happy*... it's to make us *holy*. You've heard of the "refiner's fire". We're forged (so often) as by fire... God may tell us "what", but there's generally a process of time through which the "how" & "when" is brought to pass. Wait on the Lord, let Him have His perfect work in your life

Perhaps you remember that God told Joseph that he would be a great ruler, that even his father & his older brothers would bow down to him (which in a Patriarchal society is never going to happen). Even in our society, the idea of your dad (or grandad) taking a subservient position to you is virtually unheard of, how much more in a culture like ancient Israel?

What He *didn't tell* Joseph was *how* that was going to come to pass & or *when* it would happen. But so often (like you & me) he grew impatient, put it out there, told his brothers, his father the things God was revealing to him, & his brothers weren't having it. They threw him down into a pit, sold him off into slavery, he was falsely accused, placed in prison... for years! God left those interim details out, but through it all Joseph had hope because God had given him His word. He knew God was going to do something great through his life. But before God did a work *through* him, He had to do a work *in* him. You might write it down & read it later, the Psalmist talks about it in Ps 105:17-20

Moses, had it in his heart that God was going to use him to be a great deliverer of Israel out of Egypt.

So when he was 40... He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew & he looked this way & that, killed the Egyptian & buried him in the sand. He thought the Hebrews would recognize him as their deliverer. But they didn't, it would be another 40 yrs of being developed in the desert. He knew what, but he didn't know how, or when. So like Joseph, he got ahead of God, tried to plot & plan & make it happen.

He didn't wait on the Lord. In his flesh he buried one Egyptian in the sand. When being led by the Spirit, he buried the whole army in the sea. It's so important that we learn to wait on the Lord & allow the Lord to develop us as He so determines.

God told Paul he was going to Rome, he didn't tell him it would be more than 2 yrs prison time, false accusations, interrogations... but God would use his life tremendously in this time.

Maybe God has revealed to *you* what He wants to do. Trust in the Lord, don't try to make it happen, let God have His way in your life. You wait, you watch & you'll see what God will do.

### Vs 13-15

Ok. Quick historical note. This is Herod Agrippa II. It was his Great Granddad who killed the baby boys in Bethlehem trying to murder Jesus. His granddad who had J.B. beheaded, his dad who had the apostle James martyred & Peter placed in prison (whom the angel set free). So his family hasn't had great relations w/the kingdom of God... & Now he's hearing of Paul.

Historically, Agrippa was actually an expert in Jewish customs & religious matter & so it makes sense that Festus would want his take on the matter because as a Roman, he's a pagan who has virtually zero insight on the matter at hand & now that Paul has appealed to Caesar, he needs some kind of charge to anchor to him so he's asking Agrippa to help him w/that.

& Just FYI Bernice was Agrippa's sister. You're thinking, "incest?" Yes. Their other sister was Drusilla (the one who was married to Felix), Drusilla actually died in Pompeii when Mt Vesuvius erupted.

But Festus fills Agrippa in & Agrippa offers (no doubt it appealed to his pride) to help him out. Of course it won't be a trial (Paul is headed for Rome), but it's a hearing to help Festus figure out a charge. (The Jews were wanting a judgment [a death sentence] but he couldn't even figure out a formal/legal charge).

### Vs 16-22

Up jumps the rabbit in Vs 19. Festus had anticipated some allegation, some accusation concerning a serious charge deserving of death. But instead they had some questions about “their own religion” (listen close) “& about a *certain Jesus* who had died, whom Paul *affirmed* (in the Greek it’s “kept affirming over & over”) to be alive.” Boom, there it is.

“The Jews want me to put this man to death because he declares a Man to be alive whom they say is dead...” That’s what he’s dealing with. They’re protesting the fact that Paul won’t stop talking about J.C. who was crucified & had risen from the dead. Btw, let me take you back & remind you that initially (back in Ch 21) the charge was that he had brought a Gentile into the temple... But now it’s finally been boiled down to the real issue; the resurrection of J.C. The Jews were irate toward Paul because of this proclamation & Festus couldn’t understand why Paul kept insisting on it, even though it made for his detriment.

Now; I want you to observe something here & that is this. The words, “a certain Jesus” show that Festus didn’t really know all that much about Jesus. He had to be told & even at that he was certainly confused as to why this was such a big deal to Paul (he was willing to sit in jail for yrs because of this information). **Here’s the take away. Even though there are churches everywhere & to you, the knowledge of J.C. & Him crucified for our transgression & raised for our justification is almost information that you take for granted; there are a shocking amount of people who know little to nothing about Jesus, right there in your own home town.**

People that maybe know what Christmas is about; but are confused about Easter. Or know that people go to church, but they’ve truly never had anyone share w/them what the gospel even is. You would be stunned to realize the amount of people (many of whom you may even know, nice people, or maybe *not* so nice people) don’t really know what Jesus has done for them. **The concept of eating a little piece of unleavened bread & drinking a little grape juice seems silly to them, they don’t know why you’re doing it, what’s the point of it? No one has shared with them. They believe what others tell them about you Christians, your weird religion, that you’re all stuck up, think you’re better than they are. Don’t be ashamed of the gospel, it’s the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. How will they know, if you don’t tell them? Festus was unfamiliar; Paul was trying to change that.**

**Vs 23**



Again, God's word is true. When Paul was saved, Jesus told him he would stand before kings, before Gentile rulers. He probably didn't envision that this would be "how" but here he is nonetheless.

Now if you've ever seen a B rate old film w/all the Roman fanfare, the crowns, the chariots, the purple robes, the trumpets blowing, all the pomp & grandeur. That's the scene we have here.

More than a gathering of information, they had made this an event. All the commanders, all prominent people & who's who are in the auditorium (you can stand in this auditorium still today), the drama is unfolding in royal regalia, Festus is dressed in scarlet, Agrippa & Bernice are wearing their crowns. The motion is made & Paul is brought in... in rags, chained between 2 soldiers. Can you picture the contrast? From purple to prison garb. From crowns to chains. Agrippa the king; a slave to sin. Paul in chains; free in Christ.

Who really knows true power here? Who understands true freedom here? Who holds the words who truly sets men free? Listen to me, the world likes to glorify the outward *appearance*, but God is searching the inward person of the heart. What's happening in your *heart*? You can have all the pomp & power of this world & be a slave to sin & corruption... Believe me when I tell you, Paul is in the better place in this scene.

What smoke & mirrors. If you could only peel back the curtain. Of all the people in this scene on that day, Paul the prisoner was the one who had the words to pay attention to. The only reason we know their names is because they're a footnote in Paul's story... isn't that interesting?

**Vs 24-27**

Once again Festus affirms, Paul is innocent... We're gonna wrap up & wind down but before we do allow me to draw your attention back to a previous point. God always keeps His word. He will *always do* what He says He will do. We may not know *how*, we may not know *when*, but He will always bring His promise to pass.

Listen, God has made you a promise. The promise of eternal life. When Paul wrote to Titus he said, "*Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,*"<sup>6</sup>

Is there anything God can't do? Sure there is, God can't lie. & He's made you a promise before time ever began & that is this; eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Will there be battles along the way? Absolutely, will the journey go just as you expect, undoubtedly it will not... But God is faithful; & having begun a good work in you, He will *be* faithful to complete it, trust in Him.

& If you've not given your life to Christ, now is the time. The promise is for you. For whoever believes in Him (in J.C.) will never perish but have everlasting life.

Just confess from your heart, "Lord Jesus, I believe in you. Forgive me of my sin & make me new. Fill me w/Your Spirit, change me from the inside out & be glorified in my life."

### Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word today. Forgive us when we get impatient & get out in front of You. Help us to wait upon You, to be led *by* You that we might be set apart *to* You. Thank You for the *promise* of Your word, fill us fresh w/Your Spirit, be glorified in our lives.