

# Acts 29

Imperial Christianity (AD 312-590)

## Introduction

Prosperity doesn't equal blessing anymore than persecution equals cursing. Yet, the church often defines success by worldly standards. We must let Jesus be our standard and his values be ours if we are to experience true blessing.

## Discussion Questions

- *A Christian Empire*: When the church goes from being the persecuted to the promoted, major temptations come with its power and prosperity. The Scripture directs us on how to live in such circumstances (Gen. 12:2; Luke 3:10-14; Matt. 20:25-28; 1 Tim. 6:8-10). How would you define blessing? What are blessings for? In what ways have you been blessed? How can you bless others?
- *Counsels and Creeds*: There are times when doctrine becomes an issue to be fought over. There are certain things about which we are called to be closed-fisted. Usually, such hostility is directed towards those who identify themselves as Christians (Titus 1:9-16; 1 Tim. 1:3-11). When does doctrine become an issue of division for you? What things are you willing to fight over? Why are those things so important? What difference does it make if certain truths are held or denied?
- *Monks and Monasteries*: Sometimes morality becomes the standard of measuring righteousness. This is understandable because of the clear calling for us to be a holy people (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 1 Thes. 4:7-8; Eph. 4:17-24; 1 Cor. 6:16-7:1). Do you consider holiness as attractive or repulsive? What does holiness look like in your life? How do you balance holiness as separation and holiness as distinction?
- *Hostile Pagans*: Dealing with people who are adversarial in their disposition to you and your beliefs can be challenging. Yet, that is how we once were in relation to God (Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 8:5-9; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 3:10-12). Considering the world in which we live, the opportunity for evangelism becomes apparent. Who are those you find it most difficult to talk to about Jesus? What ways can you be intentional relationally to build bridges for the gospel? How did God use others to bring you to faith? Have you seen him use you to bring others to faith?

## Think About It

Success and blessing must be interpreted not by circumstances but Scripture. We must learn to value what Jesus values. Circumstances being favorably changed can be nice, but lives being changed by Jesus is better. This includes not only your own circumstances, but your own life. Your life continues to require change because Jesus isn't finished with you yet.

## What Will You Do?

Pursue contentment with your own circumstances and discontentment with your own complacency regarding relationships. Be intentional in your relationship with Jesus and be purposeful in telling others about what he has done in your life.

## Renewing Your Mind

*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim. 4:16)*

*Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28)*

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Col. 1:15-16)*

*You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Eph. 2:1-3)*

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ... that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Col. 4:2-6)*

## Prayer Requests

