

Acts 27 the worst trip ever...

Rev. Bruce Stanley

www.stphils.org.au

- **The Bystander Effect**

March 13 1964. New York.

Catherine Genovese was walking home after work early in the morning. A man chased her, jumped on her back and stabbed her several times. She screamed for help. Some lights went on in nearby buildings. Someone called out to the attacker. The attacker walked away. Catherine crawled to the side of her building, bleeding badly. No one came to help.

Five minutes later, the attacker returned. He found her and stabbed her again. Again, she cried out. Some lights went on again and some windows opened. No one came to help. He attacker left.

At about 3:25 a.m., Catherine, still bleeding badly, stumbled to the rear of her apartment building. **The attacker returned again**. He found Catherine again, stabbed her again, and killed her.

25 minutes later, a neighbour ***finally*** called the police. A police car arrived within three minutes. They quickly found Catherine's body in the hallway on the first floor. She had been stabbed **17 times**. No one came to help.

One man said he wanted to call the police, but his wife said: *"I didn't let him. I told him there must have been 30 calls already."*

There is a name for when this happens. It's called "***The bystander effect***". The more people there are present in an emergency situation, the less likely it is that ***any*** of them will offer to help.

Because someone else will do it

And I think this is something Christians often suffer from when it comes to the gospel. There are plenty of other Christians around. Do I really need to do anything? There are lots of people in need. Do **I** need to respond? It's very easy for us to be bystanders in this world. It's very easy to convince ourselves that we're not really needed. But actually, we are.

In Acts 27 Paul shows us what it looks like to be involved the world – to NOT be a bystander.

- **Paul – not a bystander**

Paul is on his way to Rome to see Caesar. So he was in custody on this ship that was having the worst journey in the world!

In verse 11, Paul warns them to stop. But they keep going and things get worse with hurricane winds. They wrap ropes around the boat to hold it together. Cargo is thrown overboard.

Then in verse 21-23 Paul says:

“I told you so! You should have listened to me and stopped!”

Then he tells them that God had spoken to him.

They must have thought he was crazy!

But he says: God really wants me to go to Rome to face trial. So that IS going to happen.

God also said that no one on board is going to die.

Maybe they’re starting to believe him.

But things get even worse. In verse 29 they dropped anchor and prayed for daylight. They throw more cargo overboard. They’re hoping to run aground.

Then some sailors try to escape. Paul alerts the soldiers and they stop them are stopped. Paul wants everyone to stay on board because he knows they will be safe.

Finally, the ship runs aground.

- **Paul – working for everyone**

Paul is involved at every point.

He’s involved with the soldiers.

He’s involved with the sailors.

He’s involved with the prisoners.

He’s involved with the Centurion.

Paul is not a bystander. He listens to God and he gets involved in people’s lives.

What is it that makes us bystanders in life?

What stops us getting involved in the world?

- **Anchors**

Anchors stop us.

If you’re on a boat, you use an anchor to stop a boat from moving. If you don’t use an anchor, your boat could just drift away and be lost. Every boat needs an anchor.

But do you know what happens if you put down lots of anchors on a boat? If you put an anchor at the front, and an anchor at the back. Then an anchor on the left and an anchor on the right. What would happen?

As the waves move up and down, the boat would get pulled in every direction until it was pulled apart.

With **one** anchor, it can move around go up and down and left and right with the waves. But with lots of anchors, the boat cannot move at all and gets pulled apart.

And this is what makes us bystanders. When we anchor down every corner of our life. And what are our anchors? They are the things that give us security.

Our job. Our power. Our possessions. Our reputation. When we start anchoring our lives down with these worldly things, we're not able to move with **Jesus**. We become bystanders. And those worldly anchors start tearing us apart.

For Christians, Jesus needs to be our *one* anchor.

This is what Paul does. He is anchored ONLY to Jesus. He moves only in Jesus' direction because there is nothing else tying him down! There is no other security in his life. He's not worried about his career. Or money. Or possessions. Or power. He just follows Jesus.

Anchors stop us being able to move with Jesus.

So what do we do?

Here are 3 ways to not be a bystander as a Christian.

1. Say something.

There may be people in your life who do not know you are a Christian. Say "something".

I buried a man about 10 years ago. During the service people spoke about his involvement in church over many years. As his non-Christian friends left the service many of them said this to me: "I had no idea he went to church!"

Don't let that be you. Do not hide your light. That 's what bystanders do. Find a way to let people know you are a Christian.

2. Get involved.

When bad things are happening in our world, find a way to get involved in just one thing.

Here are some recent examples:

The treatment of refugees on Manus Island and Nauru.

The debate over gay marriage.

The ongoing discussions around abortion.

The problem of pornography in our society.

The ongoing issues of child abuse.

We are bystanders when we stay silent.

As Christians, the world needs to hear God's voice through us.

We can at **least** SPEAK with a small voice. Choose an area that needs more Christian influence. Get involved. Pray about it. Learn about it. Act on it.

You don't have to be involved in everything. You just need to be involved.

3. Cut your anchors.

We all have anchors that are stopping us moving with Jesus.

- When we worry about our worldly reputation, that's an anchor.
- When we're obsessed with our health or our worldly future, that's an anchor.
- When we're concerned about our worldly success, that's an anchor.
- When we're concerned about what other people think about us, that's an anchor.

Maybe you have ten anchors that are simply ten different people's opinions that you care too much about. You spend so much time trying to look good to those people, you forget about how you look to Jesus.

Maybe your anchor is the heaviest anchor of our times: Money. Possessions. Every *dollar* is an anchor. Every *possession* is an anchor. Do not let worldly things anchor you from following Jesus.

Cut the anchors in your life because they are weighing you down and stopping you moving with Jesus. And they will tear you apart.

So close your eyes right now and pray with me. Say "Amen" at any time to agree with these words...

- Lord Jesus, help me to not care what others think about me, but only what you think about me. Amen.
- Lord Jesus, help me to stop worrying about money. Amen
- Lord Jesus, help me cut the anchor of self-image. Amen
- Lord Jesus, help me not to care about worldly success. Amen
- Lord Jesus, help me to anchor only to you. Amen
- Lord Jesus, help me to move with you in your direction. Amen.

Let me finish by telling you what God teaches me personally in this chapter: He's saying to me: Bruce, you've got to move with God. The world is a mess. People don't know what to do without God. And so they buy things. They get powerful jobs. They have families and pets and holidays and careers and they do what everyone else is doing. And you have lots of things in your life. And sometimes they are anchors for you.

The world is falling apart. The world needs Christians like you to care and to get involved in their lives. They need you to put yourself last and talk about God first. The world needs Christians who are not bystanders. So stop weighing yourself down with worldly things and worldly worries and worldly ideals. Anchor yourself to Jesus and follow the direction he is leading. Don't let anything get in the way of that.

Paul got involved with the Centurion, the soldiers, the sailors **and** the prisoners. They were **all** lost. They were **all** in danger. But Paul did not stand by and wait for someone else to do something or say something. He anchored himself to Jesus and he got involved. And he made a difference.

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- The Bystander Effect
“Someone else will do it”

- Paul – not a bystander
Verse 9: “So Paul warned them”

- Paul – working for everyone
Verse 21: “Men, you should have taken my advice”
Verse 31: “Then Paul said to the centurion...”
Verse 33: “Paul urged them all to eat”
Verse 43: “But the centurion wanted to spare Paul’s life”

- Anchors
 - Say something
 - Get involved
 - Cut you anchors