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“Stop Listening to the Majority”

Acts 27:1-12

Pastor Gary Hamrick

There is a lot of cultural pressure today to conform to the latest majority opinion. Groupthink can be intimidating, and the “majority consensus” often causes people to either go silent to avoid ridicule or conform to fit in. But Paul said in [Galatians 1:10](#), “*If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.*” In other words, we can’t be a God-pleaser and a man-pleaser at the same time. Godly men and women in the Bible have always been willing to stand alone when necessary. In this study we will discuss how to stop listening to the majority and how to start honoring God.

1. [Acts 27:1-12](#) – *“And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment. So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care. When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board. When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, ‘Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.’ Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.”*

2. After being falsely accused of heresy and spending two years in prison, Paul was transferred from Caesarea to Rome by ship so that he could appeal his case
 - a. During the journey, a typhoon arose, and the ship was tossed around the Mediterranean for two weeks
 - b. In verse 21, Paul stated, *“Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.”*
 - i. Paul had warned the group that it was not safe to sail, but the centurion Julius ignored him in favor of the majority opinion
 - ii. This decision led to disaster as the storm would ultimately wreck the ship completely

3. The fallible majority
 - a. People will often adopt the views of the majority even when they contradict their own senses
 - i. Dr. Solomon Asch, a prominent 20th century psychologist, conducted “conformity” experiments that showed that the desire to be right is not as strong as the desire to be liked
 1. Dr. Asch’s participants were placed in a group that was mostly made up of individuals who were, unknowingly to the participants, “plants,” placed there as part of the experiment
 2. Upon being shown three lines of varying lengths, group members were to state which line was equal in length to a fourth line
 - a. The “plants” went first, and each selected a specific line that was obviously not the correct choice
 - b. When it was time for the participants to choose, they selected the same line as the others in effort to avoid ridicule from the group
 3. In our current culture, it can be even more tempting to compromise truth as online social platforms have unlocked an even larger majority
 - ii. Be willing to stand in the minority or even stand completely alone
 - b. Mark Twain stated, *“Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.”*
 - c. Booker T. Washington said, *“A lie doesn’t become truth, wrong doesn’t become right, and evil doesn’t become good, just because it’s accepted by a majority.”*
 - d. We must become comfortable with being disliked

4. Be a God pleaser, not a man pleaser
 - a. [Galatians 1:10](#) - *“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”* (ESV)

- i. Pleasing God and pleasing the world are not compatible
 - ii. We cannot claim to be servants of Christ if we are not willing in all circumstances to honor Him
- b. There are many examples in the Bible of God's servants facing ridicule and hatred from the tyranny of the majority
 - i. The majority laughed at Noah
 - ii. The majority rebelled against Moses
 - iii. The majority wanted a king instead of God
 - iv. The majority stoned Stephen
 - v. The majority beat Paul
 - vi. The majority killed Jesus
- c. It is better to stand alone with Jesus than to stand with the majority against Him
 - i. **Joshua 5:13-15** - *"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, 'Are You for us or for our adversaries?' So He said, 'No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?' Then the Commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so."*
 - 1. We know the individual Joshua encountered was God because Joshua was allowed to worship Him and because the Man told Joshua a similar message to one God gave Moses at the burning bush: *"Take off your sandals because this is holy ground."*
 - 2. Our question should not be, "Lord, are you with me?" but rather, "Lord, what are you doing and how can I join with You?"

5. Stop listening to the majority

- a. Great men and women of God are willing to go alone when necessary
 - i. Abraham left his country and people to go where God led
 - ii. Noah built an ark while others mocked
 - iii. Daniel defied the king's command not to pray and he prayed to God anyway
 - iv. Esther stood alone in defense of her people
 - v. The prophets spoke God's words when no one would listen
 - vi. Mary gave birth to the Son of God when no one believed her
 - vii. Paul was imprisoned alone
 - viii. John was exiled on the island of Patmos alone
 - ix. The apostles were martyred alone
 - x. Jesus died alone
- b. Two choices

- i. Religious leaders in Jesus' day were condemned because *"They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."* ([John 12:43](#))
- ii. Peter and the other apostles were commended because they said *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* ([Acts 5:29](#))
- c. Trust God more than you fear man
 - i. [Proverbs 29:25](#) - *"The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."*
- d. Draw your strength from the Lord
 - i. [Hebrews 12:2-3](#) - *"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* (1984 NIV)

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Acts 27:1-12](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Paul was a seasoned traveler; why did the centurion Julius not listen to his warning not to sail? What happened as a result? (See #2b above)
3. What do Dr. Solomon Asch's conformity experiments tell us about human nature? (See #3a above)
4. Discuss what the fallible majority looks like in your life. When have you felt the pressure to be liked? (See #3a above)
5. Read [Galatians 1:10](#). Why is being a man-pleaser not compatible with being a God-pleaser? (See #4a-i above)
6. Read [Joshua 5:13-15](#). Why was Joshua's question misguided? What might have been a better question? (See #4c-ii above)
7. We have two choices: to be men-pleasers or God-pleasers. What Bible characters inspire you with their example of enduring persecution to obey the Lord? (See #4b & 5a above)
8. Read [Proverbs 29:25](#). How can you overcome the fear of man and practice trusting the Lord? (See #5c above)
9. Read [Hebrews 12:2-3](#). Who is the source of our boldness? How does this encourage you to be bold for God? (See #5d above)

10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)