



From the Dark to the Dawn: A Tale of Ancient Rome

Alicia A. Willis

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Decadent Rome, 61 Anno Domini. The masters of the universe have crushed the Iceni rebellion with an iron hand, slaughtering and enslaving her people.

For Philip, his existence as a captive means living to hatred. He despises his rich, young master, resenting his life of servitude and the wrestling feats Marcus forces him to perform. Bitterness engulfs his soul until he only lives for the day when he will crush the might of Rome.

Then Christianity enters the picture. Taught by a Jewish breadmaker to know the man called Christus, Philip begins the struggle to forgive and honor his master. But forgiveness is not easy towards one who lives for himself.

Marcus Virginius knows nothing but power and pleasure. Destined to a successful career serving Nero in the Praetorian Guard, he wants no part of Christianity. And he is determined to crush Philip's newfound faith – no matter what it takes.

Join Philip and Marcus in their journey of redemption, faith, and forgiveness. Is love enough to conquer hate? And will the light of the gospel ever surmount the darkness of Rome?

Persecution abounds – will the two young men survive its terrors and live to experience the bright hope of a new dawn?

Endorsement

"Alicia Willis sketches a stirring tale that delivers a powerful message of friendship, forgiveness, and God's grace. An authentic period piece, it leaves you with a greater awareness that God's ways are higher than our ways and we are on this earth for His purposes. Anyone with a bend for historical-fiction will thoroughly enjoy this book. Definitely a moving, worthwhile, and edifying read!"

-Josiah Jost, actor/writer with Jostie Flicks.

From the Dark to the Dawn: A Tale of Ancient Rome Details

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From Reader Review From the Dark to the Dawn: A Tale of Ancient Rome for online ebook

Jazzy says

I love, love, love this book! It's fantastically told. A story of FORGIVENESS, LOVE, and GOD'S POWER TO OVER COME!! It's fabulous, I enjoyed it so much, I can't give it to my brother for him to read! It's like my new security book!

It's not the normal book pattern, when the story builds up to one climax. No sir-rey! It goes up, then down, then simmers lower, than jumps up, and so on. It's incredible! I just can't wait to read her other books. She's obviously a talented author, as well as a Christian. I love reading books that I know was written by a God-fearing author. =) <3

Thanks so much for writing this book, Alicia! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!!!!

-Jazzy

Claire Banschbach says

So glad I finally got to read this book! It is an absolutely wonderful and powerful tale of redemption set in ancient Rome.

Once all the characters were set up I could barely put it down. I will admit that I did not like Marcus at all until we got to some important events for him whereupon I think I might have liked him better than Phillip. Blame my flip-flopping on how well Willis wrote the story and all the characters.

I laughed. I cried several times. I was on the edge of my seat more than a few time. I highly recommend this book to anyone who likes historical fiction set in ancient Rome and tales of redemption.

Sarah says

Age Appropriate For: 15 and up for violence
Best for Ages: 15 and up

My Endorsement: From Darkness to the Dawn encouraged me in my own walk with God and touched my heart deeply. It is not easy to read, but hard to put down. Emotionally difficult, yet inspiring. It is a book the reaches down into the depths of pain and climbs to the heights of joy. It is a book that pulls the reader closer to the heart of God.

I regret it has taken me so long to write this review. However, I didn't want to just throw this one together. I wanted to make sure my review was worthy of this incredibly awesome book that I was privileged not only to review, but also endorse.

This is not a typical historical fiction. It does not contain frothy romance, or flawless heroes. This book is not a light afternoon read, nor is it easily discarded. It is hard, gritty, and inspiring tale of faith, true love, and redemption.

This tale starts in Britain as the Roman's finish subduing the Britons under Queen Boudica. Phillip and his father are taken as prisoners and sold to wealthy a Roman. Philip is very bitter and rebellious toward Marcus and his master. He begins to look for ways to escape or even kill Marcus. That all changes when Phillip encounters the new religion of Christianity. Phillip starts to change and his master notices.

I must admit that there were times in this story when I had to take a break. The Romans were a violent people and took pleasure in many pass times that would disgust even many secular American's of today.

However, unlike another book I read not too long ago, this story did not go into so much detail that I wouldn't want to read it. However, It wouldn't be nearly as powerful without the grittiness and the harshness.

Philip was easy to like and easy to feel a connection to. You see all he suffers in the beginning and the threats made against him later on because of his faith and yet he stands strong. He is not perfect, even as his faith grows, he has moments of weakness. He was a very real character.

Marcus was equally real, but (as I am sure the author intended) I really disliked him at first. It took me a long time not to hate him, but as I saw change in him, he grew on me.

I have only to complaints about this book. One, I didn't realize that there was a glossy of terms in the back. This would have been helpful as there was a lot of terms and Latin, especially in the beginning that I had no clue what they meant. Two, at one point in the book *everyone* assumes that one of that characters had bad motives for helping a girl. I would have liked at least one character to acknowledged that his faith had changed him and not have assumed the worst.

The romance was good, and wholesome. It didn't dominate the story, and that was just fine with me. It added much to the story without taking over the story.

Faith is not *an* element in this story; it is the thrust of this tale. God's message of redemption, Grace and eternal life is always in the forefront. Some may find this overbearing, but I found it inspiring. There are few authors that have the courage make their entire story about faith, not just had Christianity as an element to the story. I applaud Miss Willis for her courage and I am sure God will bless her and many others for her efforts.

I highly recommend this for older readers who want to be inspired in their faith and read a good story while doing so.

I received this book from Author in exchange for my honest review. I was under no obligation to write a positive review. The opinions in this review are entirely my own.

Mikayla says

This was one of the best books I've read in awhile. At first, I was not captured by the story, but quickly I got pulled in as Phillip had a struggle a tiny bit similar to something I've dealt with; finding a balance between submission to authority and not holding to your principles. Marcus soon got me as well and I found myself having trouble putting the book down.

Every character was amazingly well rounded, the whole plot felt *very* believable, and so did the ending. I loved how much this book really felt like it could happen. The characters that come to Christ are not instantly perfect Christians, they have struggles, and make mistakes. Even to the very end of the book characters were still growing and changing.

Two tiny things irritated me, but they didn't take away much from the story. The first was that four girls are described the exact same way, and (view spoiler)

This book left me crying at the end. I don't think I've ever cried that hard at a book.

Overall, this was an amazing book. I would definitely recommend it to anyone who wants a faith building story.

Michael Camp says

This is by far the most entertaining historical fiction by Alicia Willis. I couldn't put it down. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the multiple stories neatly woven through an incredible tale of God's grace and forgiveness. The amount of historical study that went into this book becomes very evident and simply adds to the pleasure of reading it. Readers will have no choice but to root for young Philip as he faces the brutal Roman persecution for his faith in Christ.

You can't go wrong with this gem of a book. I highly recommend it for young and old readers alike

Alicia Ruggieri says

Where do I begin? From this book's heart-pounding beginning in first-century Roman Britain through its conclusion in the heart of lavish and often-cruel Rome, the story, characters, and life-changing themes arrested me. The author skillfully weaves a tale of heart-rending redemption during a time of intense depravity ... without resorting to sentimentality, dwelling on gross graphic details, or engaging in tedious moralizing. There are few books that move me to tears. *From the Dark to the Dawn: A Tale of Ancient Rome* is one of them.

What did I like, specifically? Well-rounded, defined main characters (particularly the male characters) who act in accord with their time periods and cultures; conversations that seem like they actually could occur; varied point-of-views adding flavor and perspective; historical details that enhance, rather than overwhelm, the story; Christ-centered storytelling that asserts that Jesus is alive indeed and Lord of all; and a satisfying conclusion that fit the story. Some reviewers have asserted that the book doesn't contain enough action. As a fan of historically-based action/war fiction and films, I didn't find this to be the case at all. Indeed, I found that Willis maintained a near-perfect balance in this area.

The only major disappointment? That the author so finally concludes the tale with her epilogue. I would have loved to read a sequel (or several sequels!) after I came to feel so deeply involved in these characters' lives.

Excellent planned, beautifully executed, and never contrived, the story of Marcus and Philip will capture your imagination and your heart ... and will inspire you to greater faithfulness to the Savior of the world.

Five out of five stars. Highly recommended for ages 15+ due to authentic slave/soldier punishment/abuse; as well as minor, undetailed scenes involving realistic temptations in the Roman world (debauchery, etc.). I applaud the author for handling these themes purposefully and unflinchingly in a God-honoring way. (If used for family reading, parents could use these scenes as a jumping-off point for discussing genuine Christianity

and what following Christ truly entails.)

Kelsey Bryant says

Wow! I loved this book! I am not fond of stories about ancient Rome, so at first I had a slightly hard time getting into it; but when Christianity entered the story, I was hooked. It was beautiful—the complex but fast-moving plot, the interwoven journeys of Philip and Marcus and the others, the faith-building prayers and teachings of the characters. This is a glorious example of how fiction inspires people's lives. Each time I picked it up to read, I was encouraged in my faith and in my desire to give my all to God. The best kinds of books are the ones that strengthen your walk with the Lord and that you hate to put down! Miss Willis writes with such passion and maturity; every Christian should read this (maybe teens and older, though, due to content). Reading about how our brethren stood despite persecution is something we today need to ponder. The historic details were interesting and ample (I think if more had been included, it might have detracted a bit from the plot), and the characters felt completely realistic for their time.

If you like historical fiction, do yourself a favor and read *From the Dark to the Dawn*!

John Horn says

Long story short: You should read this book.

From the Dark to the Dawn begins in 60 A.D. just after the rebelling Britons under Queen Boudica are defeated by Roman legionaries. Philip, the central character, is the young son of a chieftain who is sold into slavery with the remnants of his tribe. His passionate nature utterly rejects his lot, but he finds his match in Marcus, his young Roman master who will brook no nonsense from his slaves.

When Philip meets a Christian in Rome he learns of a powerful concept: Forgiveness. Could he ever learn to forgive his master for his cruelty and submit himself contentedly as a slave? Can he survive the battle of wills within his own soul? And, could the love of Christ ever touch someone as hardened as Marcus?

What stands out the most to me in this story is Alicia Willis's understanding of human nature. Her characters are intensely relatable - sometimes scarily so. Philip and Marcus feel and act like real flesh and blood people, with flaws, ups and downs, and moments of heroism that captured my imagination.

The best part of *From the Dark to the Dawn* is its unapologetic Christian message. I think it portrays a very accurate picture of Christianity under Nero's reign, when persecution was intense, but the gospel spread rapidly through every class and station. Thumbs up to Alicia for crafting a tale which is both enjoyable and God-glorifying.

The story evidences meticulous research and gives a great feel for life during this time period. I would have liked to see a little bit more action, but the action sequences that do exist were well-written. I laughed and teared up multiple times while reading, which is not a common occurrence. I definitely recommend this book.

Olivia says

Ever since I first saw the cover of this book, I've been dying to read this! Probably about a year later I've officially read it and while it was hard to wait, I'm so glad I saved such a good book :) It is as good as I expected and more!

First, I want to mention the spiritual aspect of this book. It is just the type of Christian fiction I wish to have in every Christian book I read. I believe more authors should be striving to feel their books with God honoring lessons and characters. I was extremely blessed by this; by the struggle shown through Phillip and Marcus, and yet, their faithful stand for God.

I'm certainly not a historical genius or anything, but the author certainly seemed to depict the time setting very well and I could picture everything perfectly. I can't say 61 A.D. in Rome would be my favorite time in history, but it is extremely fascinating to me with the growth of the New Testament church.

Oh...and the romance! I am so glad to find such sweet, non-lustful romance in a book.

The ending. I will not give it away :) It was wonderful in a sense, while deeply emotional for me. Actually, the whole book brought forth many tears for me. I was greatly moved by Phillips stand for the Lord, and for Marcus as he struggled with the past that wished to control him. Sometimes I got a little annoyed by his constant thinking of things "that were before", but he was very human. How often we forget that when Jesus washes us with His blood, our slate is clean!

This book isn't extremely violent, although there were a couple scenes that a slave was flogged that made me feel his pain. Including this and cleverly handled situations concerning a woman's purity, I'd say this book is best for 16/17+ readers.

You will not be disappointed by this book....if you are, I'm very sorry!

Bethany says

Oh, this book was wonderful, exciting, amazing, inspiring, and beautiful, all wrapped up into one powerful story! I've just discovered a new favorite book as well as a new favorite author!

Suzannah says

Since posting my original review, I've come (perhaps belatedly, for which I would like to offer sincere apologies) to exercise a little more restraint in how and when I review books by other Christian authors. Accordingly, I'm withdrawing this review. Feel free to contact me personally if you would like my honest opinion on this story; I'd be happy to chat :).

Amanda Tero says

I was so sad to read "the end" of "From the Dark to the Dawn." If I had a choice, I would not have put it down from start to finish. While a gripping tale, "From the Dark to the Dawn" is a very realistic story of Christian persecution and those who stayed faithful to God even when circumstances were tough and life-threatening. I appreciated the use of Scripture and the demonstration of how vital it is for our everyday life.

Rome was a very adulterous, hedonistic society and Alicia did a very careful, tactful job of depicting this. While I would not recommend this book to children because of the violence, Alicia was discreet in description, following Ephesians 5:12, "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

I realize that all praise goes to the Lord and am thankful for the talent that He bestows upon His children to serve Him in various ways - including writing.

C.R. Hedgcock says

This is a remarkable tale of Christianity in the midst of oppressive Ancient Rome. Fiery British slave Philip and his Roman master Marcus are catapulted into the perils of serving Christ in Nero's reign amidst much suspense and emotion.

The story opens with young Philip being taken as a captive to Rome. He is the son of a chieftain, with untamed British blood in his veins, and we sympathize with his indignation at being made a slave. Then, as he goes through a change of heart and starts seeking to obey God, persecution mounts, and we sympathize again. All the way through, in fact, the author has done an excellent job of leading readers along, subtly prompting what we should think and feel, changing our perspectives right along with the characters.

The story is brimming with emotions that are difficult to put down on paper, and the author has successfully enabled us to feel the pain, the sorrow, the fury, and the peace the characters experience, rather than just being told about them.

The characters themselves are realistic in their struggles with sin, not saintly saccharine, and thus are both relatable and inspiring.

Historical detail and vivid descriptions transport the reader back to Ancient Rome, with all of its sights, sounds, and smells, its idolatries, grandeur, and temptations, returning us back to real life with the glow of Italy and a mental sun-tan.

The Christian witness is very strong, drawing the reader in before giving him a front-row Gospel message as Philip experiences the truth of redemption. References to Roman immorality and cruelty have been handled well, but I would still advise discretion for younger teens.

Bittersweet twists keep the story in line with the theme of the entire book, that God's ways are not our ways, and He can use painful events for good. The simultaneous joy and sorrow presented rang true to the kind of thing that would happen in real life.

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would highly recommend it as a realistic portrayal of the struggles and joys of living as a Christian.

Reeda Booke says

This is the story of Phillip, a 13 year old Icenii warrior who has just seen his tribe wiped out by Suetonius in the battle against Boudicca. He is taken to Rome and sold as a slave to the house of Marcus Virginius, a wealthy senator's son who enjoys the decadent life that his status affords. It is a battle of wills. Phillip hates

his life as a slave and struggles with his intense hatred of all Rome stands for. Marcus is a hard, loyal and spoiled son who intends on teaching Phillip who is master.

And then in a chance meeting, while Phillip is on the run, he meets Daniel who tells him about Jesus. What follows is life changing, and in a time when Nero rules and Christianity is anathema, Phillip must balance his new life against the dangers that he would certainly face if he were caught. His witness will have an impact on those who know him.

This book is about faith and it is the main theme of this book along with love and redemption and the ability to endure in the face of persecution.

The witness for Christianity was strong and the Gospel message was accurately and powerfully written. I cried several times while reading it. It was a very poignant and touching story. The pacing was perfect, the characters fleshed out and the historical information of the time was spot on. This one comes highly recommended!

Josh says

An amazing book! Alicia A. Willis has a warm, uplifting style coupled with an inspirational plot. Many times I was encouraged and even admonished by the example her characters set of courage in the face of persecution in ancient Rome.

The research is truly impressive, the characters feel as real as friends by the end of the book and although I feel the tone is slightly too descriptive and emotions maybe portrayed a little exaggeratedly from time to time, it certainly only added to the depth of the narrative and allowed you to really feel what the characters are experiencing.

I certainly hope I would be able to write something approaching this for my own project! A.A.W. has joined my list of inspirational authors, which includes C.R. Hedgcock and others.

Josh
