



# TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

ACTS 21-28

LEADERS NOTES

# CONTENTS

<a href="#"><u>3</u></a>	How to use this book
<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>	Recap of Acts 1-20
<a href="#"><u>5</u></a>	Overview of Acts 21-28
<a href="#"><u>7</u></a>	Key Themes
<a href="#"><u>9</u></a>	Helpful Resources
<a href="#"><u>12</u></a>	Study 1 - Acts 21:1-36
<a href="#"><u>16</u></a>	Study 2 - Acts 21:37- 22:29
<a href="#"><u>20</u></a>	Study 3 - Acts 22:30 - 23:35
<a href="#"><u>25</u></a>	Study 4 - Acts 24
<a href="#"><u>29</u></a>	Study 5 - Acts 25:1-22
<a href="#"><u>33</u></a>	Study 6 - Acts 25:23 -26:32
<a href="#"><u>38</u></a>	Study 7 - Acts 27
<a href="#"><u>42</u></a>	Study 8 - Acts 28:1-15
<a href="#"><u>46</u></a>	Study 9 - Acts 28:16-31
<a href="#"><u>51</u></a>	Sermon Notes

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

At St Paul's we are committed to growing as disciples of Jesus, spurring each other on to know and grow in Jesus. We know that God works through His Word powerfully to teach and transform us, and so we know the importance of seeing God's Word regularly sown into our lives and throughout the week.

We do that as we daily personally open God's Word and depend on Him in prayer. We also grow as we meet in our households to read God's Word together.

Over time we've seen that as we study the same passage from God's Word in different layers in our lives, that God builds depth in our understanding, stronger application in our lives, and encouragement in our households and in our church as we learn together.

As we together dig into Acts 21-28 this term, we are doing that in at least three ways...

## CHURCH

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church, or as you watch church online. Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided, ready to reflect on these personally, as you meet with someone 1:21, and as you meet up with your Small Group.

## SMALL GROUPS

Take this guide with you to your Small Group each week. There are Bible studies for each section of Acts 21-28, and space to write down prayer points that come from the study that week as well as prayer requests from the members of your group.

## FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Use the family devotions to open up Acts 21-28 together as a household with devotions suitable for a range of ages. You can open up the passages at breakfast, dinner time, just before bed or as you baby-sit your grandkids.



# SETTING THE SCENE FOR ACTS 21-28

## RECAP OF ACTS 1-20

In Acts 1-8 we saw the power of God's Word, the Gospel, through the power of His Spirit, in the life of the early church, as God's Word began to spread. We saw God's plan for both Jew and Gentile to be brought into His unfolding kingdom, working in and through Jesus' followers:

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Acts 1:8

In these chapters we saw Jesus' commissioning of the disciples to be witnesses to him throughout the world, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the rapid growth of the early church. We also saw the continuing opposition to the spread of the gospel from the religious leaders through the ministry of Peter, John, Stephen and Philip and we were introduced to Saul as he persecuted the church. We saw the Lord taking uneducated men, empowering them with the Spirit and His Word for the task He had given them.

In Acts 9-20 we saw the power of God's Word, the Gospel, as it was taken particularly by Peter and Paul to witness to Jesus to the nations. We saw that God's Word is powerful to change and transform even the hardest hearts, seen in Paul's conversion, and in breaking down walls between Jews and Gentiles. We saw that the Word is relevant and speaks into every situation, and is powerfully at work even in the face of persecution. We saw God answering prayers and fulfilling his redemptive purposes to bring all the nations to himself in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. And we saw clearly that God's Word continues to be powerful today.



## OVERVIEW OF ACTS 21-28

In chapters 21-28 we continue to see the power of God's Word as it goes out to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and now begins its journey to the *"ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

By chapter 21 the attention has shifted solely and particularly to Paul, as he witnesses to the resurrected Jesus in Macedonia, Greece, Jerusalem, Caesarea and then finally in Rome. We see Paul on trial multiple times before crowds, and before Felix (24), Festus (25), and Agrippa (25). And we are reminded of Paul's powerful testimony of meeting Jesus (22:6-21; 26:12-18). We see the fulfilment of Jesus' words that Paul will suffer for his sake (Acts 9:16), encountering opposition and imprisonment, and Jesus' words to his followers about trials and opposition on account of Jesus' name:

*"But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life."* Luke 21:12-19

The word of the Lord continues to grow and go forth, even in the midst of Paul being persecuted and arrested. The gospel is preached even as Paul stands on trial, and under arrest in Rome. It could also be said that the word itself is on trial as it stands up to those who would scrutinise it or be unaware of its power. In Paul's life we see the transformative power of God's saving grace as He takes a former opponent of the gospel and makes him into one of its greatest messengers. And that same grace in our own lives as a holy God rescues us out of sin and rebellion, and shapes us into ambassadors for his kingdom.

Along the way different travelling companions are mentioned and Paul meets different supportive groups of believers on his journey, showing that the word will continue to grow and prevail though people like these, no matter what happens to Paul.

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However, more than anything, we see Acts 21-28 as the continuation of the acts of the risen Lord Jesus. He is the one who continues to work through his disciples, as they witness to his death and resurrection, to the work that Jesus accomplished on the cross. We see this particularly in the parallels between the lives of Paul and Jesus in these chapters...

- Both come to Jerusalem and after a good initial reception are rejected by the people (Luke 19:37-40; Acts 21:17-20)
  - Both visit the temple (Luke 19:45-47; Acts 21:26)
  - Both are opposed by the Sadducees (Luke 20:27ff; Acts 23:6-8)
  - Both are seized by the mob (Luke 22:47-54; Acts 21:30-36)
  - Both are struck by the High Priest's officials (John 18:22; Acts 23:2)
  - Both experience four trials (Luke 22:66; 23:1, 7, 13; Acts 22:30; 24:1; 25:1ff, 23)
- (from "Teaching Acts" by David Cook, p. 28)

Acts 28:31 provides not only the conclusion to the book of Acts, but also a summary of Paul's ministry in Acts 21-28 -

*He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!*

Through Paul's ministry in these chapters, we see that following Jesus often involves opposition, suffering and trials, and that as the kingdom of God advances it often meets growing opposition. However we also see God's provision and encouragement of Paul in these chapters and we are encouraged to take heart.

As we watch Paul living a life of following Jesus, including riots, court rooms, trials and shipwreck, we are left asking: What adventure will Jesus take us on into the world? A life following Jesus is anything but predictable. Reading these passages we are encouraged to trust Jesus' work in our own lives, moving out of our bubble into the world, to share Jesus where he is not known, to the tasks he has given us, and the powerful Word that has been given to us to share.

# KEY THEMES TO LOOK OUT FOR

**In these chapters we see the unfolding of two key verses:**

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

*“He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!” Acts 28:31*

## **This is seen in:**

- Jesus and his message on trial through Paul as he witnesses to Jesus powerfully by the Spirit.
- The centrality of the resurrection to the gospel message (Acts 23:6; 24:15, 21)
- Paul’s response to opposition and God’s provision in Paul’s defense
- God’s redemptive plans in bringing Jew and Gentile into His kingdom
- Parallels between the life of Paul and the life of Jesus

## **What do we know about Luke?**

Little detail is known about the author of Luke-Acts. We know that he was a well-educated doctor (Col 4:14), who had a close relationship with Paul, who described him as ‘beloved’. From Luke 1:1-4 it seems he was a second-generation Christian, not personally involved in the ministry of Jesus, but had contact with the first eye witnesses, and was part of the believing community that formed around the events of Jesus life, death and resurrection. He was a fellow traveller with Paul and saw first-hand the events that he describes, particularly in these later chapters (21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). He is identified in Paul’s letters as being amongst Paul’s companions during his imprisonment (Col 4:14; Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:11).

Luke writes Luke-Acts based on eyewitness accounts, and after careful investigation, so that the readers will know the certainty of the things they have been taught (Luke 1:1-4), motivating and equipping believers to faithfully witness to the gospel.



## OUR SERIES: TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

In our series we will see not only Paul's world turned upside down as he follows Jesus, a dramatic transformation in his life from accepted insider and Pharisee, to one who is now violently opposed by the religious leaders, following in the footsteps of Jesus. But we also see the world itself being turned upside down, as the gospel goes forth and as God's plan unfolds of sending out witnesses of Jesus to *"the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

Our hope and prayer is that as we study Acts 21-28 together as a church that the Lord will work through us to continue turning the world upside down. Particularly that we will:

- Be empowered by the Holy Spirit to, like Paul, preach Christ without hindrance and with great boldness
- Have confidence in God's Word as we answer questions and respond to opposition to our faith
- Take the gospel to the ends of the earth, and wherever Christ is not known - in our workplaces, at the school gate, as God brings the nations to the Hills, even perhaps as missionaries to a place where Jesus is not known

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

Bible Project video - Acts 13-28

Click [HERE](#) to watch

## COMMENTARIES

[Acts 13-28 for You](#) - R. Albert Mohler

[Acts - The Bible Speaks Today](#) - John Stott

*Acts - I.* - Howard Marshall (Tyndale Commentary Series)

## MORE TECHNICAL

*The Acts of the Apostles* - David Peterson

## PODCASTS

[Knowing Faith](#) - Episodes # 76, 78, 80

[Help Me Teach the Bible](#) - Episode July 23 2015 - Michael Lawrence on Acts

## APOLOGETICS AND SHARING YOUR FAITH

As you study through Acts 21-28, your small group will hopefully become inspired to witness to Jesus in their own lives, standing firm in the face of opposition. Here are some resources to encourage them:

### [40 rockets by Craig Josling](#)

40 encouragement and tips for turbo charging your evangelism at work.

[Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions by Greg Koukl](#) - Tired of finding yourself flat-footed and intimidated in conversations? Want to increase your confidence and skill in discussions with family, friends, and coworkers? Gregory Koukl offers practical strategies to help you stay in the driver's seat as you maneuver comfortably and graciously in any conversation about your Christian convictions.

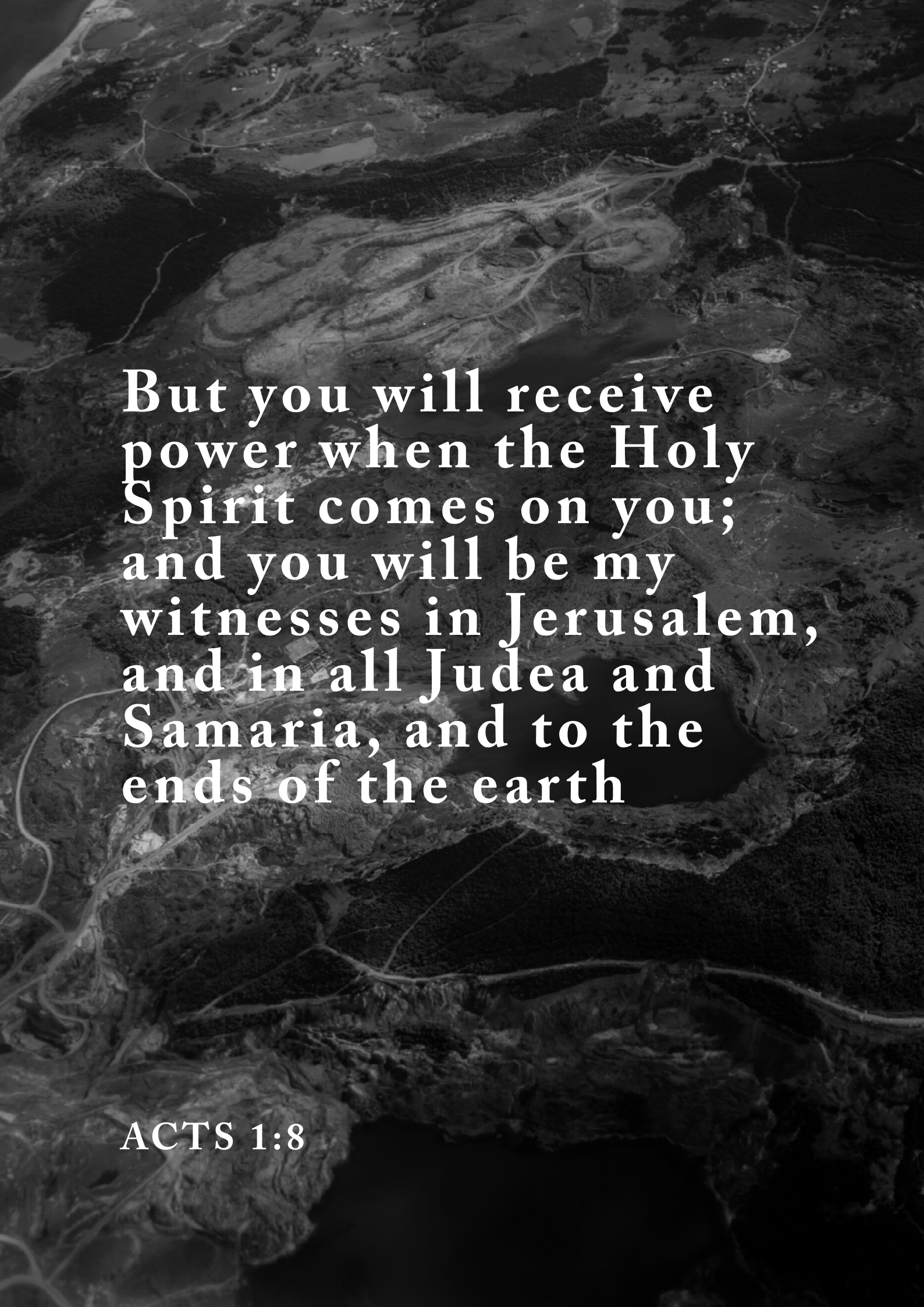
[Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did by Randy Newman](#) - Practical insights to help Christians engage others in meaningful spiritual conversations. He challenges us to examine how we think about people, their questions, and our crucial message.

[Undeceptions Podcast - with John Dickson](#) - Exploring an aspect of life, faith, history, culture, or ethics that is either much misunderstood or mostly forgotten. With the help of people who know what they're talking about, we'll be trying to 'undeceive ourselves', and let the truth 'out'. You might start with episode 24: LGBTI Christian with Rachel Gibson, or episode 17: Hindu Priest with Rahil Patel.

[Three Chords and the Truth Podcast](#) - Timothy Paul Jones and Garrick Bailey join top biblical scholars to explore evidence for the truth of Christianity and to examine the greatest hits in the history of rock and roll from a theological point of view. You might start with episode 12: Avengers: Endgame.

[St Paul's testimonies](#) - Check out the testimonies of Jesus' transformation in their lives from five people at St Paul's.

[I am Second videos](#) - Well-known Christians share their testimony of how Jesus has transformed their life.



But you will receive  
power when the Holy  
Spirit comes on you;  
and you will be my  
witnesses in Jerusalem,  
and in all Judea and  
Samaria, and to the  
ends of the earth

ACTS 1:8



# STUDY ONE

ACTS 21:1-36

ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

## **Study 1 - Acts 21:1-36**

### **ACCORDING TO HIS WILL**

*As we begin this term and our groups are returning to meeting face to face, we encourage you to spend extra time at the start of this study catching up, finding out how people are going, and making sure people are comfortable before the study begins.*

*Be aware that group members will be at different places - some people may be anxious meeting again, while others will be very keen. And please be considerate of the host of your group, helping them meet COVID-19 guidelines in terms of cleaning and physical distancing*

### **Recap of Acts 1-20 and introduction to Acts 21-28**

Spend some time recapping Acts 1-20 by either:

Watching the [\*Bible Project video\*](#) for Acts 13-28 which includes a recap of chapters 1-12

The summary sheet for the video can be found [\*here\*](#)

Sharing passages and highlights from the previous two series as a group

### **Introduction**

At the start of Acts 21 we see the conclusion of Paul's third missionary journey (vv 1-16) and then Paul beginning the final phase of his life and ministry. In this chapter Paul reaches Jerusalem, meets with the local church, and is met by a city in uproar.

### **Questions**

1. **Read 21:1-14** Paul travels through different areas, meeting with the local churches. What warnings (v4, 11-12) and what encouragements do they give to Paul as he heads to Jerusalem (v 5, 13)? How does Paul respond?

*As Paul returns to churches he had visited previously, and believers he had shared the gospel with, he is keen to spend time with the believers there. Their relationship is a close one, with their whole families walking with him as he leaves the city and praying for him (cf we were pleased to share...). They know what opposition awaits Paul, and they plead with him, they weep and "break" his heart. Note that Luke, the author, is also part of the group pleading with Paul not to go to Jerusalem (v 12).*

*You might discuss what it means to be urged "through the Spirit" (v 4) not to go onto Jerusalem. We know that the Spirit is leading Paul to Jerusalem (20:22-23), so you might ask is the Spirit contradicting himself? Or instead that the Spirit reveals the suffering that Paul faces to them (cf 21:11), and they attempt to persuade Paul to avoid the Spirit's leading into suffering. The prophecy from Agabus is clear and specific. He will face opposition from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and be handed over to the Gentiles.*

*Yet Paul is clear in what it means to be a follower of Jesus, that it will involve suffering, imprisonment and he anticipates his own death in Jerusalem (v 13). Paul's primary purpose is never his own safety or comfort, but the preaching of the gospel whatever the cost. The brothers and sisters in the end understand that God's will and plan is greater than their own concerns for Paul (v 14).*

*Note - Stephen was one of the Seven (Acts 6:5). Agabus has prophesied earlier (11:28).*

2. **Read 21:15-26.** Here Paul arrives in Jerusalem and is warmly received by the local believers and gives them a report on God's work amongst the Gentiles. What are the elders concerned about for Paul (vv20-25)? What are Paul's opponents saying about him (v21)?

*The welcome from the leaders of the Jerusalem church is a warm one (v 17), who praise God for His work amongst the Gentiles (v 20).*

*The Jewish Christians have been told by Paul's Jewish opponents that Paul is teaching the Jews living among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, the law and Jewish customs. That Paul is anti-law (v 21). You might want to discuss the purpose of the elders - to create opposition for Paul, or to encourage the Jewish Christians? Understandably the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians at this early stage of the church is fragile, and needs care.*

*You could discuss the role of the law in the life of a new Jewish Christian. Salvation is not found in the law, but Scripture doesn't forbid keeping Jewish customs, which may be an issue of conscience, as long as they are not depending on the law, rather than Christ, for salvation.*

*Notes - James - the half-brother of Jesus, author of the book of James, and became leader of the church in Jerusalem.*

3. Where else in Acts and Paul's writing have we seen similar discussions about the importance of the law in the life of Christians?

*Stephen was similarly accused of speaking against the temple and the law (Acts 6:13-14).*

*The leaders refer in v 25 to the instructions to Gentile believers, which repeat those outlined by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15: 5-11, 19-21). The Council addressed a dispute which arose about whether Gentile Christians had to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses.*

*During this period, Paul is also writing many letters where he addresses this same issue:*

*Ephesians 2:14-18 - Jesus has set aside the law in his flesh to make peace between Jew and Gentile.*

*Philippians 3:8-9 - a righteousness through faith in Christ, not the law. Others might draw from Romans 3:20-22; 27-31; 4:13-15; 8:1-5*

4. How does Paul show his desire to be at one with the Jewish Christians (v 26)? Why did Paul participate in rites of the Jewish law when he was in Jerusalem?

*At the suggestion of the Jerusalem church leaders, Paul in humility sponsors four Christian men under the Nazirite vow (vv 24; cf Num 6:1-13) to deflect the charges of opposing the law.*

*You might want to discuss why Paul decides to do this if he knows that our relationship with God is now based solely on faith in Christ? On what basis does he make decisions about whether to observe customs or to ignore them? Here the unity of the church (between Jew and Gentile) is upheld, and he works to remove an obstacle to the Jews in Jerusalem hearing the gospel. Paul knows his freedom in Christ, but chooses to use his freedom to serve the purposes of the gospel, becoming "all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:22).*

5. Read 21:27-36. What do the Jews from Asia accuse Paul of doing (vv 27-29)? Why is this so controversial? How does the crowd respond?

*The Jews accuse Paul of bringing Trophimus, a Gentile, into the inner-sanctuary of the temple, and thus defiling it, based on seeing Paul with Trophimus earlier in the city (v 29). This allegation was more serious than the previous ones about Paul and if proven was worthy of a death sentence. Even though the accusation wasn't true, it was enough to cause a riot of the whole city (v 30). The gates of the temple are shut (v 30), possibly to avoid further desecration. The crowd's response is violent and angry - they beat Paul (v 32) and try to kill him (v 31), and want to "get rid of him" (v 36).*

*You might want to discuss how Paul's life has changed so dramatically - once a strict Pharisee, part of the religious establishment, now he is dragged from the temple and the Jews try to kill him, then he is arrested and has to defend his Jewishness (v 39-40). What would this have been like for him?*

# MAKING IT STICK

Paul chooses to curb his own freedom and wants for the sake of the gospel. Where might you be tempted to choose your own desires rather than wanting to see others hear the gospel?

As we begin this study, reflect on how you feel about being criticised or suffering for the sake of the gospel? Share stories where this might have happened. Pray for each other as we begin this series, that God will work in and through us as witness to Jesus, in spite of any opposition we might receive.

Paul's relationship with the local churches is close and strong, they are like family. How does this challenge you as a small group as you begin the term?

## PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- St Paul's Children's Ministry: For Linda Stephens and Naomi Pigot as they lead the Ministry.
- For Kids Alive (Sunday morning Kids' program) and KidsConnect (Playgroup) and for the kids and families to be growing in Christ as they study Acts 21-28 together.
- Abby & Rod Bishop (Kayla, Zac and Jayden) - as they serve at the European Christian Mission Head Office in Sydney, with a focus on placing gospel workers in teams to reach every country in Europe. Rod is the Business Manager, and Abby is the Missions Engagement Officer.



# STUDY TWO

ACTS 21:37 - 22:29

TRANSFORMATION

## Study 2 - Acts 21:37 - 22:29

### TRANSFORMATION

#### Introduction

Following on from the riot in Jerusalem we saw in Acts 21, Paul now defends himself before the mob on the steps of the Roman barracks. The basis for Paul's defense are 3 C's - his credentials, his conversion story, and his commissioning to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

#### Questions

1. **Read 21:37-22:2** - In the passage last week we saw Paul treated with violence, a false accusation and wrong evidence. In today's passage the commander accuses him of being a leader of terrorists. How does he respond to all of this (vv 1-2a)?

*Paul responds with grace and truth in the face of serious and violent opposition. In 22:5 he addresses them with respect as "brothers and fathers". He speaks in Aramaic (or Hebrew, see footnote) the language commonly used by his audience, with a concern that they will hear the gospel clearly and relevantly. No matter his circumstances, he is always concerned with preaching Christ. The word 'defense' (v 1) describes not only answers to a charge in court, but also being a witness to Jesus (Luke 12:1 ff).*

2. **Read 22:3-5**. In these verses Paul begins his defense with his credentials. How is this beginning important for persuading his audience

*Even in the midst of a riot and the injustice he has suffered, he is not focused on righting the injustice, but he uses the opportunity to clearly share his testimony, and does everything to enable his hostile audience to hear what he has to say. There are several 'mic drops' in what Paul says that reveal God's careful choice of Paul to witness to Christ -*

*- "born in Tarsus of Cilicia" - described as "no ordinary city" (21:39) - it was an important commercial centre, a university city and an important crossroads for travel - Paul is no country hick.*

*- "brought up in this city" - from an early age he has lived in Jerusalem, he is no outsider.*

*- "studied under Gamaliel" - the most honoured rabbi of the 1st century, a Pharisaic teacher of the law and member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:34-40).*

*- Thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors - The school of the Pharisees.*

*- "Just as zealous for God as any of you are today" - He compares his zeal for God and for the purity of Judaism with his listeners.*

*- "Persecuted the followers of this Way to their death" - A zeal shown in violently persecuting Christians, even as far as Damascus, and even to their death. "The Way" was a common label used of Christians in the early days of the church (Acts 19:9; 22:4; 24:14).*

*- "The high priests and all the Council can themselves testify" - even though the High Priest was different at the time (Caiaphas, now Ananias), this shows that Paul had access to the highest levels of Jewish officialdom, and probably was a member of the Sanhedrin himself, enjoying their confidence and permission for his activities.*

3. **Read 22:6-16.** If Paul had stopped his speech at v5, the crowd would have applauded him. But instead Paul turns his attention to describing his conversion. Why is it important for the audience to hear these details?

*Paul's conversion story with the listing of his credentials including persecution of Christians reminds the listeners then and now of God's incredible grace shown in Paul's conversion. Instead of facing God's wrath, Jesus generously appears and speaks to Paul and arranges for him to be humbly led into Damascus to be met by a devout Jew called Ananias. It is the plan of the 'God of our ancestors' (ie Abraham) who has chosen Paul and revealed Jesus to him. His conversion story shows us that coming to Christ we come with an attitude of humility bringing nothing in our hands, that our salvation is not based on anything we have done, but is solely due to His grace and love. Here salvation and forgiveness in Christ alone is clearly proclaimed in vs 16. Jesus is the Righteous One who was promised who would justify many and bear their iniquities (Isa 53:11).*

*You might also ask why Paul's companions aren't given the ability to understand what was said? Perhaps as Paul's companions were able to see the light but didn't understand its significance, similarly the crowd standing before Paul are shown the light of the gospel but fail to understand its saving power. You also might ask why Paul chooses to focus on his personal experience in his speech, rather than giving a sermon?*

4. **Read 22:17-22.** Here Paul now outlines his commissioning by Jesus to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Which elements would stand out to his Jewish listeners?

*Paul is praying at the temple in Jerusalem as the Lord speaks to him and warns him that people, like the crowd listening to his speech, will not accept his testimony. The trance is a divine encounter (cf Acts 10:10) where God speaks directly to Paul. He postpones as long as possible any mention of Gentiles (v 21), even modifying his words in v 15. But in v 21 Paul declares that Gentiles are now part of God's family, that God's grace and goodness has been extended to them. These are the people the Jews consider unclean, defilers of the Temple, and harsh rulers over them. At this point the crowd erupts, and they renew their demands that Paul should no longer live.*

5. As Paul speaks to the crowd, he seeks to persuade them but also doesn't pull any punches. He allows the offense of the gospel to be heard, and doesn't water it down. How does Paul's response encourage us as we face the temptation to change the gospel to make it less offensive?

*Paul could have chosen to limit what he said - to defend himself against their accusations and provide evidence that he hadn't brought a Gentile into the temple area, or focused on his credentials and the similarity of his background with them, calming the crowd. Instead he uses the speech to declare the gospel and God's heart to see the Gentiles saved.*

6. **Read 22:23-29.** What was the commander's plan for getting to the heart of the situation? What is the final piece revealed about Paul's background that avoids his torture?

*People became Roman citizens either as a reward for outstanding service to Rome, by buying it at a considerable price, or by being born into a family of Roman citizen (v 28). According to Roman law, citizens were excluded from all degrading forms of punishment such as flogging and crucifixion. In future chapters we will see God use Paul's Roman citizenship to protect him and grant a hearing before leaders and officials to proclaim the gospel. You might ask why Paul waits until the last minute to reveal this detail?*

# MAKING IT STICK

In what ways can you see God's hand in the details of your background that are helpful to share the gospel in your life - in your neighbourhood, family, at work, school?

When have you had the opportunity to share your personal testimony with someone, either of your conversion or God's continuing work in your life? Pray for each other for God to provide opportunities this week. You might look at one of the testimonies listed in the resources.

If you had two minutes to explain to someone how your life has been transformed by grace, what would you say?

# PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Youth Ministry - For Pat Jones and Emma Sibley as they lead the ministry of Crossfire, D-teams and Sunday 68.
- Seniors Ministry - For Ken Allen as he leads this ministry, and for the Seniors Friendship Group and Prime Time
- Brendan and Karina (Annabelle), serving in South East Asia with Interserve. Providing sustainable development through an organic fair trade crop to cup coffee business and introducing people to Jesus through relationship.



# STUDY THREE

ACTS 22:30 - 23:35

GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

## Study 3 - Acts 22:30 - 23:35

### GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

#### Introduction

Following his arrest and almost being flogged, Paul now addresses the Sanhedrin, and we continue to see God's hand in Paul's defense. The original accusation of defiling the temple is forgotten for a time. He is struck by the High Priest and an argument breaks out over Paul's hope of the resurrection of the dead. More than forty men take a solemn oath to kill Paul, but Paul's nephew tells the Roman commander, and an escort of soldiers deliver him safely to Caesarea with a letter for Governor Felix.

#### Questions

1. **Read 22:30-23:5.** How does Paul's statement and response here compare with Jesus when on trial (John 18:19-23)? Is Paul's response (v 3,5) justified?

*Paul describes the High Priest as a "whitewashed wall" which means he is hypocritical - whitewashing was covering a flimsy wall with thin paint thinking it will make it strong. The High Priest is claiming to be a judge yet is acting unrighteously. Paul is questioning how a man who gave an order to hit him could be the High Priest. You might ask how Paul's response here compares with 1 Cor 4:12-13 or Jesus' teaching in Matt 5:39. You might want to ask how the actions and attitude of this High Priest compare with Jesus, our great High Priest (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15). Paul's response "God will strike you" may be prophetic as the high priest was later violently assassinated.*

2. **Read 23:6-11.** Paul raises an issue that not only divides the Sadducees and Pharisees, but also is at the heart of the gospel message - the resurrection of the dead. Why is this so important?

*The Sanhedrin was made up of both Sadducees and Pharisees, and was the Jewish court. The Sadducees were sympathisers with Rome who had a conservative theology based only on the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy). The Pharisees were silent protestors against Rome and were the religious progressives, ready to 'modernize' the law by their interpretations of it, and were thus open to teaching about the resurrection.*

*The resurrection is at the heart of the Christian faith. You might ask: What difference would it make to your faith if Christ was not raised from the dead? The resurrection shows that God accepted Christ's sacrifice, that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, and is a guarantee of judgement day to come.*

*Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 - if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, our preaching and faith are useless, our witness to Christ's resurrection is false, we will not be raised ourselves, and we are still caught in our sin.*

*This topic was similarly at the heart of Jesus' conversations with the religious leaders (Luke 20:27ff).*

3. While the message in v11 is spoken specifically to Paul, how does it encourage you to keep sharing the gospel with people around you?

4. **Read 23:12-22.** What do these verses tell you about the level of opposition towards Paul? Where do we see God's hand in what happens?

*The opposition has become even more violent and organised now, with more than 40 men taking an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed Paul. You might ask about whether people can imagine being this extreme in their own views? Where do we see this in the world today? How does this compare with "taking up your cross and following Jesus?" (Luke 9:23).*

*We see God's hand in Paul's nephew foiling their plans, and in God's promise in v 11 being fulfilled, and in what happens next. The Jewish plot doesn't surprise God, and God protects Paul along the way to Rome. Even though following Jesus comes with trials and suffering, He walks along it with*

5. **Read 23:23-35.** What do these verses tell us about the seriousness of the situation?

*A formidable convoy of 470 soldiers is sent to escort him in the middle of the night to deliver him safely to Caesarea. The severity of the situation means that Claudius cannot handle it himself, and must appeal to a higher authority, Governor Felix. The Romans are aware of the simmering tension here and the commander responds appropriately. But this also reminds us that Paul's task here is life and death for himself personally. But his boldness in and faithfulness in witnessing to Christ in the face of danger means that we have now been saved from death ourselves as the Gospel has gone out to the ends of the earth. The way that we respond to persecution and opposition has an impact on those who will hear the gospel because of our faithful witness in future.*

6. As you read Claudius' letter, what is missing?

*Claudius conveniently doesn't mention that he arrested and almost flogged Paul before finding out he was a Roman citizen, which violated his rights. Claudius seeks to put himself in a more favourable light. You might ask how this self-serving soldier and his half-truths compare with Paul putting Christ first, and his fully truthful testimony.*

# MAKING IT STICK

As you consider the worldwide persecuted church, who often face violent opposition for their faith, how are you challenged to pray for and support them?

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean for you? How does it change how you live in light of the resurrection? Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-58 together.

Have you ever been tempted to leave out uncomfortable parts of the truth? What would it look like to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

# PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- For our Parish Council and Wardens
- For the ministry of St James Chapel in the retirement village - For Geoff Deutscher, Karen Staines and Rob Conway
- Norm and Janelle Gorrie serving with CMS in Kenya as they strengthen believers and reach the lost.



I am a Pharisee,  
descended from  
Pharisees.

I stand on trial because  
of the hope of the  
resurrection of the  
dead.

ACTS 23:6



# STUDY FOUR

ACTS 24

FOLLOWERS OF THE WAY

## Study 4 - Acts 24

### FOLLOWERS OF THE WAY

#### Introduction

In Acts 24, Paul stands on trial before Governor Felix, after being safely transported to Caesarea. The Jewish leaders present their case represented by a lawyer named Tertullus, and then, with God's help, Paul capably defends himself against their charges. Felix adjourns the proceedings without making a decision, and meets with Paul several times, where Paul speaks about faith in Christ. Paul is left in prison for two years until Felix is succeeded by Porcius Festus.

#### Questions

1. **Read Acts 24:1-9.** How would you describe Tertullus' arguing of the case? What accusations do the Jewish leaders bring against Paul?

*While Tertullus flatters Felix in the usual style of a defence speech with compliments about peace under his rule, his leadership and reforms, in reality Felix's regime was one of the most corrupt and incompetent to ever rule in the name of Rome. During his time, peace was the last thing Judea enjoyed and every reform he sought seemed to have been aimed at increasing his own personal gain. As Mohler says, "Felix was a spectacularly crooked governor."*

*His emphasis on peace contrasts with the accusations against Paul of "stirring up riots", and being a "troublemaker", perhaps arguing that Felix can continue his good work by dealing with Paul. Three accusations are made of Paul: 1) being a public nuisance spreading trouble throughout the region, 2) "a ringleader of the Nazarene sect" which was describing Christianity not as an orthodox religious faith but as a fanatical political party and 3) a desecrator of the temple. Roman law, more or less, afforded Jews the right to execute someone for desecrating the temple. Tertullus presents the Jewish leaders as the good guys who "seized Paul", who are telling the truth. Note: Some manuscripts include verse 7 which has additional information, but which doesn't contradict the passage.*

2. How do these charges compare to those brought against Jesus in Luke 23:1-5?

*Jesus similarly faces multiple trials as he heads towards the cross, having to stand before both the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities, similarly passed around. He is accused of "subverting our nation", opposing Caesar and claiming to be a king (v 2) and "stirring up the people all over Judea" (v5). We will see that the Roman rulers similarly find no basis for the charges against him (v 4).*

3. In verses 10-21 we read Paul's defense. What are the main points of his defense?

*He speaks to the accusation of stirring up trouble that he was in Jerusalem for only 12 days, too short a time to stir up trouble, and recent enough that evidence would be available. Rather than their claims of violence (v. 18) and desecrating the temple, he went to the temple to worship (v 11). He didn't go to the temple to evangelise or to do anything controversial (v 12), but to bring gifts for the poor and offerings (v. 17), like a pious Jew from the Dispersion. He had brought financial gifts from Gentile Christians to their Jewish brothers and sisters (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; Roman 15:25-27). And he was "ceremonially clean" (v 18), having undergone a purification ceremony (Acts 21:26) and presenting offerings for the men with him.*

*Paul argues that Christianity is not a sect, but rather he worships God properly, in line with their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in accordance with the Law and the Prophets (v 14). That Christians are committed to following the way of the Lord - a way of spiritual reform, not political subversion.*

*Paul then argues that the burden of proof is on the Jewish leaders (v 13), to provide evidence and particularly for the Jews from Asia to appear and speak, as they have brought the charges.*

*Paul once again raises his hope in the resurrection, here speaking of the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (v 15) which raises the issue of future judgement (Rom 2:5; 2 Cor :10), and so he speaks of keeping his "conscience clear before God and man" (v 16).*

4. How does Paul's defense compare to Tertullus' speech?

*In contrast Paul doesn't flatter Felix, but speaks the truth, confidently, as God provides the answers. You might ask how Paul's defense compares with Jesus' promises to his disciples in Luke 21:12-19.*

5. **Read verses 22-27.** What decision does Felix make about the trial? Why do you think he makes this decision?

*Instead of making a decision, Felix adjourns the proceedings, waiting for Lysias the commander to come, but in the end leaves the trial unresolved for the next two years (v 27). He sends for Paul multiple times hoping that Paul will offer him a bribe, perhaps due to Paul's reference to gifts for the poor and offerings (v 17), and thinking that Paul has money to give. It may be that Felix was convinced by Paul's defence but was not willing to displease the Jews, showing a fear of man, in contrast to Paul's fear of God (v 16; Gal 1:10).*

6. How does God use this decision for the growth of his kingdom? Where do we see God's hand in this?

*God uses the opportunity for Paul to witness to Christ (v 24) to both Felix and his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. They speak on multiple occasions, and Paul doesn't pull any punches, talking about tough topics like "righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come" which would have been uncomfortable topics for them. Due to Felix's corrupt administration, and Felix having persuaded Drusilla to leave her first husband. But this is what they need to hear. Felix's conscience is disturbed, he is "afraid" (v 25) but sadly not enough for him to repent.*

*We also see God's hand in Paul being given some freedom and his friends being able to take care of him (v 23)*

# MAKING IT STICK

As we look at how Paul defends himself against false accusations, what can we learn as we might face the same for following Jesus?

When are you tempted to live under the fear of people rather than the fear of God? What would it look like to have the freedom to live only in the fear of God?

Who have you decided in your life would never respond to the gospel, and so you haven't talked to them about Jesus? What encourages you as you look at Felix's response?

# PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Care Ministry at St Paul's and for the Care and Assistant Discipleship Minister Jo Gibbs as she leads the teams. Please be praying for the Sunday Care Teams at each of our services, prayer ministry, practical care, Help at Home Days, and the many teams providing care and support to people across our church
- John & Fiona (Zeke and Clay) - as they serve at the SIM-Australia Head Office, having returned from South Asia, and are now considering opportunities for service overseas in future.



# STUDY FIVE

ACTS 25:1-22

IN GOD WE TRUST

## Study 5 - Acts 25:1-22

### IN GOD WE TRUST

#### Introduction

Paul first testified before the Sanhedrin in Acts 23:1-3. The following night the Lord stood next to Paul and told him that he also must testify in Rome (23:11). Felix is succeeded by Portius Festus (Acts 24:27). In Acts 25:1-22 the Jewish Leaders again lay accusations and charges against Paul before Festus where he conducted a trial. Festus sees no evidence of wrongdoing according to the charges against Paul and consults King Agrippa.

#### Questions

1. **Read 25:1-5.** What do you notice about the requests of the High Priests, and Porcius Festus' response?

*Festus is the newly appointed Governor of the province after succeeding Felix. He takes initiative to introduce himself to the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. Paul is obviously of high priority to deal with as they waste no time in appealing for a favour from the new Governor. The High Priest's request is similar to the Jewish leaders plot to kill Paul in chapter 23:12-15.*

*Festus' reply to the Jewish leaders shows glimpses of wisdom and maturity. He invites the Jewish leaders to come to Caesarea to press charges against Paul. There are 3 important things to note here.*

*A) Festus will have a greater control over the situation in Caesarea than amongst the volatile Jewish Leaders in Jerusalem.*

*B) Festus charges the Jewish leaders to travel to Paul and lay charges there, rather than Paul travel to them. Later we see this allows a fair trial for Paul, in that he has the opportunity to defend himself. (25:8)*

*C) The continuation of a relationship between the Jewish Leaders and the Governing Authority.*

2. **Read 25:6-8.** Why does Paul specifically defend himself against any wrongdoing towards the Jewish Law, the Temple and Caesar?

*This is the third time that religious and political charges against Paul were combined to try and convict Paul of wrongdoing, but it is the first time that some apparent "wrongdoing" against Caesar has been committed. The Roman Governors are reluctant to convict someone purely on Religious grounds, this is why the Jews have pressed charges against the Jewish Law, The temple AND Ceaser. This trial was elongated even more (When Paul stands before Agrippa. Acts 25:23-26:32) when Festus has Paul stand before Agrippa in order to find something "definite to write to His Majesty about him". Essentially, The accusations and charges against Paul are valid charges, however there is no evidence to support that. Paul specifically defends himself against all three charges and gives evidence towards his case that informs the Governors that he hasn't wronged The Jewish Law, the Temple OR Caesar. Therefore he has no reason to be bound in chains.*

3. Considering the relationship between the Jewish Leaders and The Governing Authorities under Festus. Why is it important that Paul stands firm and appeals to Caesar? (v9-12)

*Firstly, when Paul appeals to Caesar, it allows for Him a fair trial in Rome rather than a most likely unfair trial in. Paul has a right as a born Roman Citizen (22:22-29) to stand before the Roman Court where the Roman court would defend Him against the accusations and charges that the Jewish leaders were placing on him. Festus is trying to satisfy the Jews and also protect Paul's right as a citizen of Rome. Secondly Paul's willingness to appeal to Caesar allows for Paul to fulfill God's Apostolic commission He gave to him (23:11) to take the Gospel to Rome. Here we also have God's people witnessing Judea, Samaria and the ends of the Earth. Nothing is stopping the Word of God.*

4. Read **Philippians 1:18-26** and **Acts 25:11**. What do you notice about Paul's commitment to Jesus and the Gospel?

*Prodding Question - What is the central message of Paul's Mission?*

*All Paul is worried about is the Gospel of Jesus Christ going to the ends of the Earth. Perhaps a helpful way to think of the term "ends of the earth" wouldn't be just literal, but also thought of as ANYONE who doesn't know Jesus. Those who don't know Jesus as King are the "ends of the earth" (metaphorically speaking) in distinction to the unity of the Body of Christ (Christians).*

*Paul will gain both in life and death. If he dies for the sake of the Gospel he will be with Christ, yet if he continues to live, he will continue to remain in fruitful labour, preaching THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST. Paul is not bothered as to whether he has done anything deserving of death in the eyes of the Jewish Leaders and Roman Authorities. All Paul is concerned about is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, with boldness and without hindrance. Remember Paul is in this predicament because of the gospel he preaches, particularly the resurrection. (Acts 28:31)*

5. What do you notice about Festus' account of Paul's trial (v16-21)

*Prodding Question - Why consult Agrippa in the First place?*

*The Chief Priests and Elders of the Jews really do want Paul out of sight. This is the third account of Paul having to defend the Good news he is preaching. Festus realises that Paul's so-called "crimes" are only matters of dispute amongst the Jewish leaders. Festus actually gets to hear an account of the Gospel from Paul. Festus talks to King Agrippa about "a dead man named Jesus, who Paul claimed was alive" (25:19). This is significant in that: 1 Corinthians 15:17 - And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*

6. In what way does our culture affect the proclamation of the Gospel? How does the Gospel continue to advance despite these challenges?

*Remember Festus seems to be standing in the Middle of both Paul and the Jewish leaders. He wants to maintain a good relationship with the Jewish Leaders. Without any convincing evidence to convict Paul, Festus allows Paul to appeal to Caesar. Before this point of appeal, Paul should have been set free, even Agrippa agrees! (26:32) Even though Paul is not set free, he is still granted the opportunity to a fair trial in Rome.*

# MAKING IT STICK

Discuss what characteristics of God that you may have little trust in when confronted with opposition to the Gospel?

What reasons do people oppose the gospel today? How do people respond to the idea of the resurrection?

What would it look like for you to proclaim the kingdom of God and Preach the Gospel with boldness and without hindrance?

(May be an opportunity to evaluate one's commitment to sharing The Good News)

Discuss what boldness looks like in this era.

What causes hindrance in our preaching of the gospel / In what ways do you doubt the power of the word?

When was the last time you told someone about the hope you have in Jesus? If it's been a while, assess why? (May be helpful to share tips as to what someone found helpful and what was hard going in the process)

# PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- The Young Adults ministry and Sam Haywood as he leads the Young Adults team.
- Scripture teaching in local primary and high schools.
- Graeme and Susan Liersch, serving with Bush Church Aid in Longreach / Barcaldine - Graeme has oversight of the parishes of Barcaldine and Longreach, and Susan is a part-time chaplain at Longreach High School.



# STUDY SIX

ACTS 25:23 - 26:32

WHO IS ON TRIAL

## Study 6 - Acts 25:23-26:32

### WHO IS ON TRIAL

#### Introduction

This Passage leads us to see Paul yet again defending the Good News he is preaching, this time in front of King Agrippa. Paul is given permission to speak and gives his defence in a different manner to Felix and Festus. Instead of presenting his defence in a political way, he shares his testimony of the Damascus road to Agrippa and makes his defence on religious grounds. Agrippa finds Paul innocent of any wrongdoing.

#### Questions

1. *Read Acts 25:23-27.* What do you notice about Festus' introduction and account of Paul's previous trial?

*Prodding Questions - Was everything Festus said true?, Did Festus lack anything "definite to write to His Majesty about"? Should Paul have been declared innocent before he pleads his case to King Agrippa?*

*It is true that the Jewish leaders had put Paul on trial twice before, however Festus did not lack anything in regards to specific charges against Paul. His reasoning to find "something definite to write to His Majesty about him" is invalid. Festus does not lack specific charges, he lacks convincing evidence, which means that Festus should have had the courage to declare Paul free from any wrongdoing.*

2. What message do you think Paul is trying to communicate to King Agrippa in his opportunity to defend himself? (Acts 26:4-18)

*Prodding Questions - What are the three phases of Paul's life that he uses to defend himself? In what ways would Paul be different if Jesus had not confronted him on the Road to Damascus?*

*Paul is preaching the Good News through the telling of his story. He is trying to help King Agrippa (King of Judea) to understand the work of Jesus. Agrippa was well acquainted with the Jewish Law and way of living. He would have been able to understand the significance of who Paul was (Pharisee) and who he is now (Christian). You could say that Agrippa is somewhat "equal ground" as he is Jewish, but also part of the Roman Rulership. There is equal ground in this trial as Agrippa understands both the Theological and Legal aspects of Paul's case.*

*Paul goes on in His testimony to talk about three key phases of his life.*

- a) His time as a Pharisee (v4-8)*
- b) His time as a Persecutor (v9-11)*
- c) His time as an Apostle Commissioned by Jesus. (v12-18)*

*The combination of these three major life stages communicates that Paul indeed should not be the man who he is today. It would take a work of God (which is exactly what it was) to change Paul's view on Jesus Christ the Messiah.*

3. What similarities are there between Paul's commissioning and God's call on His appointed leaders in the Old Testament? (Moses - Exodus 3, Joshua - Joshua 1:1-9, Isaiah - Isaiah 6:1-13)

*There are three parts to Paul's commissioning in Acts 26:17-18.*

- 1. "To Appoint you as a servant and as a witness"*
- 2. "I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles"*
- 3. "I am sending You"*

*God sent his prophets to make known His words to His people / Jesus sent his Apostles to Preach and teach his name. Do you know that we have the very same commission on our lives as the Apostles and Prophets did? We have a responsibility, only by the power of the Holy spirit, to preach, teach and make known the name of Jesus.*

4. What was Paul sent to do (Acts 26:18)? Is there a difference to what Paul was sent to do, and what Jesus did?

*Yes there is a big difference in what Paul was sent to do and what Jesus did.*

*Paul was sent to preach and teach and make known the name of Jesus. Jesus did the salvation part. Doesn't this take a load off your shoulders? Knowing that the Holy spirit empowers you to preach and teach the name of Jesus, without the responsibility of making salvation possible for someone! It also means that the word of God can stand on its own feet.*

5. How did Festus and Agrippa respond to Paul's testimony and defense (Acts 26:24-32)?

Have you ever been told that you sound "insane" when talking to someone about the Gospel? Is our attitude the same as Paul's in Acts 26:29? What can hinder us from this conviction?

*Festus interrupts Paul's testimony and states that Paul's increasing knowledge of and conviction from the Gospel is driving him "Insane". This doesn't come as a surprise as Festus is a Gentile, most likely unfamiliar with the Jewish traditions and beliefs let alone the beliefs that Paul is expressing. Notice how Agrippa pays close attention to Paul's case though. Agrippa was reasonably in touch with the Jewish customs as he was in fact Jewish. This may resemble some conversations between people of different beliefs today. Those of similar beliefs (Jewish, Jehovah's Witness, Mormons etc...) may be more inclined to listen to your testimony (like Agrippa did) and consider it, without calling you out as Festus did to Paul. You may find that sharing your testimony with someone of a completely different faith or no faith (Islamic, Buddhist, Atheist etc...) is harder in that they are set in their ways to what they believe. In saying this, testimony sharing can be both daunting and degrading as well as beneficial and uplifting regardless of who you may be sharing it with. However, we should have the same mindset as Paul in that each opportunity to share our testimony and the Gospel (whether it be more difficult or quite comfortable) we should do so with "all boldness and without hindrance" (28:31). As witnesses to Christ we must take the Gospel to the end of the earth.*

6. What parallels can you see between Paul's Trial and Jesus Trial?

Innocence - Luke 23:4,14-15,22,41.

Righteousness - Luke 23:47

*Paul is innocent in not having any evidence to convict him. Jesus' innocence is pure innocence, God in nature, man in stature. There was no wrong in him at all; he was completely innocent of sin. There is a parallel between Paul and the Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus and Agrippa and Jesus and the Wrath of God. In that both Paul and Jesus stood before their opposition blameless. There is another similarity that both the Manifested Word (being Jesus) and the literary Word (The Gospel) are both on trial. Yet there is a massive difference between the outcome of Jesus trials and Paul's trials. Paul was later in chains for his faith in Rome, whereas Jesus was crucified on a cross. What is on trial in Acts is the word that Paul speaks.*

# MAKING IT STICK

How often do you intentionally speak and act in a way that sticks out as different to those around you?

Do you often look at other Christians around you and base what witnessing is of their words and actions, rather than what the Bible teaches you?

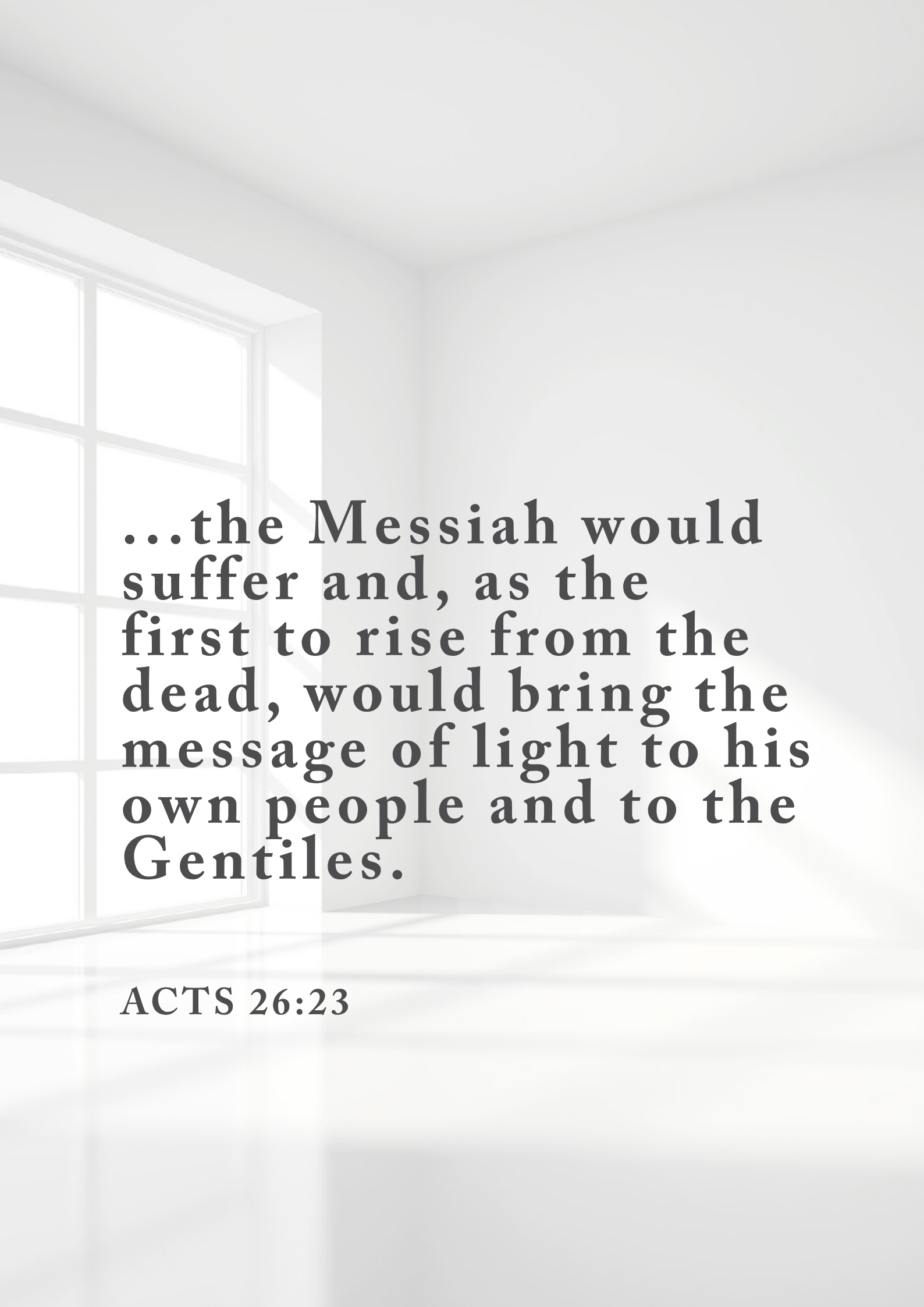
Has the opportunity to remain comfortable ever stopped you from sharing your testimony? If so why do you think that someone may shy away from an opportunity to share their testimony?

Discuss how you have / witnessed someone talk about their own relationship with Christ before.

# PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- Discipleship ministry at church and Paul Lucas as he leads the Discipleship Team
- For small group leaders across the church, for their encouragement and growth and the raising up of new leaders.
- For those involved in reading the Bible 121 with others and for the growth of this ministry for sharing the gospel and growth as disciples.



**...the Messiah would  
suffer and, as the  
first to rise from the  
dead, would bring the  
message of light to his  
own people and to the  
Gentiles.**

**ACTS 26:23**



# STUDY SEVEN

ACTS 27

TRUST GOD AT HIS WORD

## Study 7 - Acts 27

### TRUST GOD AT HIS WORD

#### Introduction

This passage brings us to Paul's journey to Rome where he was sent by Festus to stand before Caesar after Paul appealed to Caesar and commissioned by God to bear witness to the gentiles and authorities (Luke 12:11-12). On the way to Rome, Paul and other prisoners enter a storm and end up shipwrecked on the Island of Malta. While working through this passage, we see a common theme of God's sovereignty over all situations and providence as He protects Paul. We see that the Gospel is moving at full steam ahead to reach "the ends of the earth" despite any 'speed bumps' along the way!

#### Questions

1. Considering the collective party language used by Luke in this section ("we", naming followers of Jesus that were with them on the Journey) what can we see about the character traits of Luke, and Aristarchus? What can we take away from knowing these things?

*We know for certain that both Luke and Aristarchus have been changed by the Word of God being preached and we see the importance they place on paying that forward to the nations. Aristarchus has been alongside Paul since the riot in Ephesus (19:23-31) and continues to stay by Paul's side in Gospel partnership during his Roman imprisonment. Both Luke and Aristarchus are determined to see the Gospel progress, regardless of how hard it is, how much money or possessions they have and despite the constant injustice towards them.*

2. What similarities can you see between Paul's Journey to Rome and Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem? Why is this important?

*Jesus' mission was from Galilee to Jerusalem and Paul's mission was from Jerusalem to Rome. This is the continuation of the Word of God, both metaphorically (in Jesus, John 1:1) and literally (the witness of Christ through the telling of testimony and teaching of scripture). Paul's journey and Jesus' journey are quite different in that their destination and direction were different. However they were similar in that both were arrested, both faced a series of trials in Jewish and Roman courts and eventually death for the very thing they testified about. Jesus and Paul shared a common goal yet their responsibilities were totally different.*

3. **Read 27:21-38.** What can we learn from Paul about the way he addresses the situations?

*Paul urges the men aboard the ship to take courage twice (v22-25). There are two promises from God here.*

*a) Paul must stand trial before Caesar*

*b) God will look after all the lives that sail with you.*

*God cannot promise one thing and then back out on another. Therefore, Paul is assured that both His trial before Caesar AND the sparing of lives on board the ship will come to pass. That is why Paul can say in v25 “Fi have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me”.*

*We can now gather that Paul addresses the situation with great faith and certainty that the God who met him on the Road to Damascus, the God who provided for Paul's needs as an Apostle is the same God that will progress the Gospel to Rome and uphold the people on board the boat.*

4. Upon who does Paul base his encouragement to the fellow travellers? What would it mean for you if you were the only one in a room who had faith that God was going to deliver you from a situation like Paul's?

*Paul bases his encouragement on God delivering both him to Rome and the rest of the men to safety. Even though Paul has come to the conclusion that eventually they will have to run aground somewhere, he has Faith that God is sovereign and what he says will happen . will surely come to pass. You may be the only person that someone knows and trusts. This may be an opportunity for you to ultimately surrender all control and show this person that you do trust God's sovereignty. This would be an example of you taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth, as you surrender to God knowing full well you can't save yourself or help yourself.*

5. Why do you think Paul is able to stand spiritually and mentally strong in Chapter 27?

*Festus interrupts Paul's testimony and states that Paul's increasing knowledge of and conviction from the Gospel is driving him “Insane”. This doesn't come as a surprise as Festus is a Gentile, most likely unfamiliar with the Jewish traditions and beliefs let alone the beliefs that Paul is expressing. Notice how Agrippa pays close attention to Paul's case though. Agrippa was reasonably in touch with the Jewish customs as he was in fact Jewish. This may resemble some conversations between people of different beliefs today. Those of similar beliefs (Jewish, Jehovah's Witness, Mormons etc...) may be more inclined to listen to your testimony ( like Agrippa did) and consider it, without calling you out as Festus did to Paul. You may find that sharing your testimony with someone of a completely different faith or no faith ( Islamic, Buddhist, Atheist etc...) is harder in that they are set in their ways to what they believe. In saying this, testimony sharing can be both daunting and degrading as well as beneficial and uplifting regardless of who you may be sharing it with. However, we should have the same mindset as Paul in that each opportunity to share our testimony and the Gospel (whether it be more difficult or quite comfortable) we should do so with “all boldness and without hindrance” (28:31). As witnesses to Christ we must take the Gospel to the end of the earth.*

# MAKING IT STICK

What would it look like for you to progress the Gospel even if it meant you had to leave things behind? If you were persecuted? If justice did not come your way? Would you still be up for taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth? Do you have the same convictions about the gospel as Paul has even in the midst of hardship?

Discuss ways to stand strong with one another as you partner in the going out of the Gospel.

In what ways could you be encouraging those around you the same way that Paul encouraged those around him during the storm?

# PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- The St Paul's Staff team - particularly working in finance, managing and maintaining the property, administration and their hard work behind the scenes.
- Nairobi Chapel & Compassion - our Link church in Kenya. Pray for Nairobi Chapel and her daughter churches – that may they serve the urban church well, proclaiming Christ's love and equipping the community to sustain physical needs. Pray also for our link with Lifespring Chapel and Compassion where we have built an HIV Clinic and many of our sponsor kids from St Paul's attend that church. Prayer for our Compassion sponsor kids in Kenya and the Philippines, that God will protect and sustain them, that they will grow in love and knowledge of Jesus, and that their families may benefit from our sponsorship.



# STUDY EIGHT

ACTS 28:1-15

PATTERN OF THE WORD

## Study 8 - Acts 28:1-15

### PATTERN OF THE WORD

#### Introduction

This passage walks us through Paul's time on the Island of Malta and his arrival at Rome. Again the theme of God's provision and protection are present as a snake bites Paul, but he is not effected. God's provision is then seen again in the healing of Publius's Father and those who were sick on the Island. Upon reaching Rome Paul is greeted by believers from Puteoli and Rome. This is a sign that the gospel has even reached Rome!

#### Questions

1. Why do you think Luke included the story of Paul being bitten by the snake? What does that tell us about God (**Read v1-6**)

*Luke includes this story of Paul and the snake to show God's sovereignty, power and protection. God's sovereignty is seen through the healing power from the snake bite and protection from the deadly bite that could have well ended Paul's life. This miraculous healing sees Paul being thought of as a god by the pagans in Malta. Jesus' promise to give power and protection to his disciples, as promised in Luke 10:19 comes true here. It is not Paul that heals himself, it is the power and protection of the Holy spirit that Jesus had promised that heals Paul.*

2. Interestingly the local people in Malta go from calling Paul a murderer to calling Paul a god. Knowing what you do now about Paul and his Journey. What would you tell these locals?

*Could be mentions of: The Gospel still advancing through Paul, That Jesus handing over authoritative power and protection isn't just over sickness or health but He has power over our sin and will protect us from the evil one.*

3. **Read v7-10.** The Gospel is the reason both Jesus and Paul are on mission. Jesus' mission was to seek and save the Lost, and Paul's mission is to tell people about the one who seeks and saves the lost. Both Jesus and Paul did not solely set out to heal people of sickness, yet they do along the way. What do you think Luke is trying to remind us of about the Gospel in light of v8-9. What part do you think healing plays in the spread of the Word? Does the word have validity without healing?

*Luke is trying to remind us that the Word of God, whether in the form of Man or literal scripture, is unstoppable. Death could not stop the mission of Jesus and at this point in the passage, death cannot stop Paul taking the Word of God to the ends of the earth. Another thing that Luke is reminding us off is the transformative power of the Gospel that changes people's lives completely ( Paul = Exhibit A)*

4. Have you ever considered Jesus and the scripture as unstoppable? Discuss your thoughts.

*We may often link Jesus as being unstoppable due to his dominion over death and sin by his crucifixion and resurrection but play off the fact that His word is just as unstoppable. The point of this discussion is to reveal and push group members towards proclaiming the Good news with Boldness and without hindrance. After all, we are only the broken vessels in which God uses to reveal himself to other people by declaring the Good News of Jesus Christ. There is no need to rest in our ability because our words hold no power, but the One who sends us to say those words does.*

5. **Read v11-15 and Romans 1:8-16.** What do you notice that is common between Paul and those who came to meet him in Rome? How can they be “united” as Paul has not yet ministered in Rome?

*A crowd of members of the Church in Rome had gathered to meet Paul. How special and encouraging this would be for both parties. Both united under Christ, on the same mission (preaching the Gospel with boldness and without hindrance) and for the same reasons (taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth).*

6. How do you view your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you see each other purely as just friends? Or do you consider them partners in the Gospel? What difference does it make to you knowing that Jesus creates and builds his church giving support for the growth of the word?

*Discuss these questions in light of Acts 1:8 and 28:31. Knowing that Jesus has not just commissioned you to proclaim the Gospel by yourself, but he has also equipped your brothers and sister to do so alongside you should take a large weight off your shoulders!*

# MAKING IT STICK

Discuss God's Sovereignty, power and protection in regards to the advancement of the Gospel and how that affects the Church.

Knowing that the Gospel itself is unstoppable, what can you do to make sure you don't get in the way of the Gospel being preached? What can you do to ensure the Gospel is reaching the ends of the earth.

# PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

- The Production Team and Communications ministries at St Pauls. For our music teams, tech teams and for the ministry of City Alight.
- International Justice Mission - A global organisation partnering with local justice systems to end violence against people living in poverty, and working to end slavery in our lifetime.



# STUDY NINE

ACTS 28:16-31

MY KINGDOM RULES

## Study 9 - Acts 28:16-31

### MY KINGDOM RULES

#### Introduction

In this section we see Paul preaching in Rome under guard. Paul is under house arrest and Luke tells us in v30 that Paul ministered for two whole years from his rented house. This is significant because:

- a) The gospel is reaching “the ends of the earth” by being preached in the centre of the Roman Empire.
- b) We now see that salvation is offered to both Jew AND Gentile
- c) We see how unstoppable the Word of God is in reaching Rome.

The ending leaves open the continued journey of the word and its power to save.

#### Questions

1. **Read 28:17-20.** Who is “the hope of Israel? And why does Paul use the language of “bound by this chain”?

*The Hope of Israel is the coming of the Messiah and especially the resurrection of the dead that this messiah would bring. Paul is bound in chains because the Jewish Leaders do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, contrary to Paul's belief. The word “bound” (v20) implies Paul's commitment to the Work of Christ. This isn't an unpleasant binding but a joyful voluntary attitude.*

2. What do you notice about the attitude of the Jews towards Paul and the Gospel in v21-22? Do you think some people in our culture have the same response about the true gospel nowadays?

*The Jews state that they have no hostility towards Paul and what he has said in Jerusalem and on trial before Felix, Festus and Agrippa. Instead they are open to what Paul has to say. Notice this is the first time Paul can be listened to under a fair hearing, with no opposition directly around him. The Theme of God's provision is evident again in that it has provided Paul with another opportunity to tell of the true Gospel.*

3. How does the Law of Moses and the Prophets relate to the Kingdom of God and Jesus?

*Paul's message to the Jews was about the Kingdom of God, accessed only through the messiah. This Messiah being Jesus, was the one true Messiah just as the Old Testament Prophets had prophesied that The Messiah would indeed come. Paul is trying to convince the Jews that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets. (Mat 5:17)*

4. **Read v24-27.** What similarities can you see throughout these passages about Israel?

*Read Acts 2:41 and 47, 5:14 and 17, 6:7, 8:1, 13:43 and 45, 14:1 and 4, 17:4-5, 19:8-10.*

*Israel is constantly divided by the teaching of Jesus as the Messiah. This is why we see some who believe what Paul is saying and those who turn away with hard hearts.*

5. How do you think v26-27 relate to our culture and yourself today?

*Today's society is divided when hearing about the Gospel. Some hear of the Good News and are changed, but some turn away with hard hearts. However just because some turn away does not mean that there are none who will repent and believe. We must do our part to advance the Gospel by the power of the holy spirit, because there will be those whose lives are changed by the Good news.*

6. What have you noticed about the Gospel throughout the book of Acts?

*Self Reflection question.*

7. What are you going to take away from the story of The Apostle Paul and his relentless pursuit to take the Gospel to the ends of the Earth?

*Self Reflection question.*

# MAKING IT STICK

Are you bound to the work of Christ, or is it a small side project in your life?

## PRAYER

In addition to responding to today's passage and praying for your group members, please be praying for:

For our whole St Paul's church community, that we would have God's heart and compassion for the lost, being witnesses to Jesus wherever he has placed us, preaching Jesus boldly and without hindrance, and with a heart to see the whole world come to know Jesus.

**He proclaimed the  
kingdom of God and  
taught about the Lord  
Jesus Christ—with all  
boldness and without  
hindrance!**

**ACTS 28:31**



# SERMON NOTES

**SERMON 1: 26TH JULY**  
**ACTS 21:1-36 - ACCORDING TO HIS WILL**

**Sermon Notes**

**Personal Application**

## **SERMON 2: 2ND AUGUST**

### **ACTS 21:37-22:29 - TRANSFORMATION**

#### **Sermon Notes**

#### **Personal Application**

**SERMON 3: 9TH AUGUST**  
**ACTS 22:30-23:35 - GRACE UNDER PRESSURE**

**Sermon Notes**

**Personal Application**

## **SERMON 4: 16TH AUGUST**

### **ACTS 24 - FOLLOWERS OF THE WAY**

#### **Sermon Notes**

#### **Personal Application**

# **SERMON 5: 23RD AUGUST**

## **ACTS 25:1-22 - IN GOD WE TRUST**

### **Sermon Notes**

### **Personal Application**

# **SERMON 6: 30TH AUGUST**

## **ACTS 25:23-26:32 - WHO IS ON TRIAL**

### **Sermon Notes**

### **Personal Application**

# **SERMON 7: 6TH SEPTEMBER**

## **ACTS 27 - TRUST GOD AT HIS WORD**

### **Sermon Notes**

### **Personal Application**

# **SERMON 8: 13TH SEPTEMBER**

## **ACTS 28:1-15 - PATTERN OF THE WORD**

### **Sermon Notes**

### **Personal Application**

## **SERMON 9: 20TH SEPTEMBER**

### **ACTS 28:16-31 - MY KINGDOM RULES**

#### **Sermon Notes**

#### **Personal Application**

