



**TURNING THE
WORLD UPSIDE DOWN**

ACTS 21-28

LARGE PRINT

Study 1 - Acts 21:1-36

ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

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

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?

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)?

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?

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?

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?

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 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)?

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

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?

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?

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?

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?

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 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?

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?

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?

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

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

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.

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?

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

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

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

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

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

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 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?

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

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)

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

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

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

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.

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)

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?

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?

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

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.

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?

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

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

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?

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

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 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 Publis'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*)

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?

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?

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

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?

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?

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 property, and working to end slavery in our life-time.

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”?

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?

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

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

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

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

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?

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.



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