

THE BOOK OF ACTS: WEEK 10 (FINAL)

MAIN SCRIPTURE: Acts 21:8-15 NIV

THE BOOK OF ACTS WAS WRITTEN TO SHOW US THE ONGOING WORK OF JESUS CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH HIS CHURCH

It is fascinating how many times the Holy Spirit spoke directly in the days of the early church. He speaks through dreams, visions, prophecy and inner impressions.

- Paul had heard strongly from the Holy Spirit that he was to return to Jerusalem to meet with the church there face to face and testify to the Jews that Jesus is their Messiah.
- Twice in this chapter, a prophetic word comes to warn of the danger in Jerusalem.
- Before he got to Caesarea, he was in Tyre for 7 days **21:4** *We sought out the disciples there and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.*

IMPORTANT: Paul was not controlled by the prophetic words coming to him from others. He knew how to hear God for himself, and he obeyed the inner voice of the Spirit superseding the prophetic words of others.

The Spirit told him to go to Jerusalem... His people urged him NOT to go to Jerusalem.

In Ephesus - Acts 20:22-24 *"And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, 23 except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. 24 But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus..."*

In Caesarea - v. 12 *When we heard this (prophecy) we (even Luke) and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."*

CHAPTERS 21-28 FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME

1) The Urgency for Jerusalem was two-fold.

- a) Paul loved the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, and he wanted to convince them that Jesus was their Messiah!**
 - i) In the letter to the Romans, Paul said if he could trade his salvation for the salvation of the Jewish people, he would make that trade... WOW!
- b) Paul had been collecting offerings for the persecuted Christians in Jerusalem for several years and He wanted to hand deliver the money to James (the pastor) and the believers in Jerusalem.**
 - i) The Apostle Paul saw the Gentile offering as a unifying gift – that, through Jesus, they were the same!
- c) What Happened in Jerusalem? (21:16-40)**

Note: *all these things happened during the **Feast of Pentecost**.*

- i) Paul gives his Report given to James about the 1000's Gentiles coming to Christ. The church celebrates!
- ii) James tells him about the malicious Rumor.

Accused of teaching the Jews among the Gentiles to reject the laws of Moses and to stop circumcising.

- iii) **RIOT.** Some Jews from Asia recognized him in the temple, and they tried to attack him.

Acts 21:27b-32 NLT They grabbed him, 28 yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles." 29(For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.) 30 The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him.

When they accused Paul of bringing **Greeks into the temple area**, they were assuming a falsehood. Such an act in Jewish eyes would have **defiled** their **holy place**.

So deep was this feeling that the Roman Govt had given legal permission to Jews to fulfill this death sentence... even if the intruder was a Roman citizen.

- iv) **The Roman RESCUE.** *v.31 As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.*
- v) Paul's **REQUEST** (21:37-40). After correcting the Roman commander's mistaken notion that Paul is a former Egyptian rebel, Paul asks and receives permission to address the angry crowd.
- vi) Paul shares his **REVELATION** of the Risen Jesus on the steps of the Temple (**22:1-21**).

Note: Paul speaks in Aramaic and this quiets the crowd.

(1) His background:

- (a) Born in Tarsus.
- (b) Trained as a Pharisee by Gamaliel.

(2) His vision of the risen Jesus.

- (a) He saw a blinding light.
- (b) He heard the voice of Jesus of Nazareth. *"why are you persecuting me"*

Note: the mob that tried to kill him is quiet and listening. An incredible scene.

(3) His calling to the Gentiles.

Acts 22:17-33 NLT "After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. 18 I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me.' 19 " 'But Lord,' I argued, 'they certainly know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And I was in complete agreement when your witness Stephen was killed. I stood by and kept the coats they took off when they stoned him.' 21 "But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!'"

22 The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, "Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!" 23 They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air.

- (a) The Jews were not against preaching to the Gentiles. They wanted to convert the Gentiles to Judaism.
 - (i) But Jesus called Paul into a Law-free Gentile Mission.

He was suggesting that the Gentiles could be made right with God WITHOUT first subscribing to the law of Moses or Jewish circumcision.

Paul was claiming divine approval for the idea that **Jews and Gentiles could have equal standing before God simply by putting their Faith in Jesus of Nazareth.**

This message collided head-on with the blindness, pride, and prejudice of the Jews. The results were explosive.

- (ii) Here's the problem, by rejecting the message they were **rejecting Jesus** and **resisting God**.

This response is important to the purpose of the Book of Acts. **It indicates the Jews in Jerusalem had irrevocably refused the gospel of Jesus Christ and had sealed their fate.**

Remember Jesus wept over Jerusalem because he saw this day coming...

Less than 20 years later - in a.d. 70 the city of Jerusalem was reduced to rubble and ruin. 1 million Jews were slaughtered.

- vii) Paul **RELEASED** due to His **Roman Citizenship**. The commander was going to have Paul flogged but dual citizenship.

- viii) **RE-EXAMINED** by the Roman Commander and Sanhedrin. ***Acts 22:30 NIV** The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.*

- (1) This trial was going nowhere so Paul blew it up!

*(a) **23:6,7 NIV** Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." **7** When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.*

***v.10** The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.*

APPLICATION: Paul must be disappointed and discouraged... no doubt, like the rejection of Jesus, he might even feel like he has failed the Lord. Doesn't it break your heart when the people you love reject Jesus... and even reject you?

- (2) Jesus shows up again in the middle of Paul's deep discouragement.

***Verse 11** The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so **you must also testify in Rome.**"*

Luke doesn't give us a lot of details, but it looks like Paul **has finished his assignment in Jerusalem!**

Paul's Journey from Jerusalem to Rome was filled with so many twists and turns. There are so many lessons to learn but here are **5 things to remember on your Life's Journey.**

5 Lessons Learned from Acts – Paul and His team were living as though they were on assignment. This is the BIG PICTURE!

When you are living on Assignment:

- (1) **RECOGNIZE THE PRESENCE OF GOD.** ***v 11** The following night the Lord stood near Paul...*

(2) REST IN THE PROMISES OF GOD.

- a. **The Plot:** 40+ men make a vow to not eat until they kill Paul. Paul has a nephew that heard about the plot and reported it to the Roman Commander of the city.

Paul is transferred to Caesarea to be examined by governor Felix under roman guard... **escort of 470 soldiers:**
200 spearmen, 70 mounted troops

For the next two years, he is kept under Roman guard because, while under trial, Paul makes an appeal to Caesar.

- Paul's trial before Felix in Caesarea.

Acts 24:22-23 NIV Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case." 23 He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

When on assignment:

- (3) **RELY ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD.** ---- The **Team Church** mentality here is so good!

- Paul has so many friends in Caesarea... Phillip lived there. These were the prophetic people that begged him not to go to Jerusalem and during this time, Paul made the most of his opportunities.

Note: Paul being under guard was not a terrible thing... God was in this. He was able to do a lot of disciple-making through visits and letters while under protection.

Felix was afraid of Paul! He was scared of prophetic insight.

- Paul before Festus because Felix lost his position.

Festus reopens the case and ask Paul if He is willing to go to Jerusalem for trial. Paul refuses and because He is a Roman citizen, He make an appeal to Caesar.

- Paul testifies to King Agrippa in Caesarea.

- He is the great grandson of King Herod the Great and the last of Herodian Dynasty. He was ruler over that region and loved his title.
- When he is told of Paul, he decides to hear Paul's testimony himself.

*Acts 26:21-32 NIV That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. 22 But **God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike.** I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen 23 that 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." 2 At this point **Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."** 25 "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable.*

Note: For the unbelievers, the message of a superhuman savior who was dead for 3 days and then came back to life is insane!

Think about it! Nothing comes to you from God except by faith! When I came to faith... I struggled to believe this!

v. 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Note: He has testified to great and small alike among the Jews and the Roman leaders... and not he is released to travel to Rome.

CHAPTERS 27-28 PAUL SAILS FOR ROME

Paul encounters a Storm – a Shipwreck – Snakebite on Malta

When reading through the final chapters I asked **Why was everything so hard?** Have you ever asked yourself this? God I am serving you... why is everything so hard. **God wants to demonstrate his power through our hardships.**

(4) REACH FOR THE POWER OF GOD.

*Acts 28:5-10 NIV But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 6 The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. 7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. 8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. **Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him.** 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. 10 They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.*

As I have been studying the book of Acts, I have concluded.... We have got to learn how to stretch our faith!

Chapter 28:17-31 ESV Paul Preaches at Rome while Under Roman Guard.

- Paul reaches out to the Jewish community in Rome and he tells his story once again. Some believe but most reject the gospel.

23- 24 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. 24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.

*30 He lived there two whole years **at his own expense**, and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and **without hindrance**.*

(5) **REMEMBER THE PURPOSES OF GOD.** The book of Acts has taught me **we are people of purpose...**

That purpose is the testimony of Jesus to both great and small alike, whether they believe or not.

During this two-year period, Paul wrote what are commonly called his “Prison Epistles”—Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians.

Final Thought - All the ministry in Acts was prompted and held together by the Holy Spirit, working in the lives of ordinary people—merchants, travelers, slaves, jailers, church leaders, males, females, Gentiles, Jews, rich, and poor. The book of Acts ends abruptly, showing that the history of the church was not yet complete. Many unsung heroes of the faith would continue the work, through the Holy Spirit, in succeeding generations.

It's our turn now! This is our generation. It's our time to ACT.

The Book of Acts was written for us. It is our time to ACT. We are on assignment, and the Book of Acts is our call to action!
