

**Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work**  
**Sunday Morning Bible Study**  
**Lesson Eighteen – Acts 27-28**  
**Following God's Lead**

Rome, the largest and most splendid of ancient cities, acted like a magnet to its peoples. Rome, the capital and symbol of the Roman Empire, presided magisterially over the whole known world. Though Paul was a Jew, but having inherited Roman citizenship from his father, he must have dreamed since childhood of visiting the city for himself. Paul must have thought often of what it would be like for this great city to be thoroughly evangelized, and for Rome's church to grow, be consolidated and fired with a missionary vision. What a radiating center for the gospel Rome could become!

**OPEN**

- What dreams do you have concerning taking the gospel to others?

**STUDY**

1. *Read Acts 27.* What did Paul and the others have to go through to get to Rome?

**Paul had to deal with being a prisoner, never being free to do what he wanted. Also, the entire crew went through weeks at sea experiencing the storm, and then the shipwreck and swimming to shore.**

2. How do you see Paul reaching out to those around him while they travel to Rome (vv. 9-10, 21-26, 31-36)?

**He warned the men against traveling during the winter, encouraged the men when the boat was about to sink, and urged the men to eat after they had been without food for a while.**

3. Paul had great confidence in God, and many others were profoundly affected by it. What promises from God were the foundation for Paul's great confidence that they would all arrive safely in Rome (vv. 23-26)?

**Paul said that an angel of the Lord had appeared to him telling him that Paul would stand before Caesar, and that all of the men with him would survive the stormy seas and shipwreck.**

4. What kind of care and respect did Paul receive from Julius the centurion (vv. 3, 43)?

**He was allowed to receive care from his friends, and Julius protected Paul from being killed by the guards when they feared the ship would be wrecked.**

5. What does this relationship with Julius tell you about the apostle Paul?

**I think it says something about his character, that even a Gentile Roman guard admired Paul and believed he was a man of integrity. It also says something about Paul's heart for all people. He didn't care that the man was a Gentile. He valued him and wanted to see him converted.**

**Summary:** Here then are aspects of Paul's character which endear him to us as an integrated Christian, who combined spirituality with sanity and faith with works. He believed that God would keep his promises and had the courage to say grace in the presence of a crowd of hard-bitten pagans. But his trust and godliness did not stop him seeing either that the ship should not take risks with the onset of winter or that the sailors must not be allowed to escape, or that the hungry crew and passengers had to eat to survive. What a man! He was a man of God and of action, a man of the Spirit and of common sense.

6. *Read Acts 28.* Paul dealt with many fickle crowds in his journey. How is the fickleness of this crowd displayed (28:1-6)?

**At first the people think that Paul is a murderer because he gets bit by a viper. However, when he doesn't die from the snake bite, they automatically change their minds and believe that he is a god.**

7. What kindnesses are exchanged between the islanders and Paul (28:2, 10)?

**Paul heals their sick, and they provide Paul with food and supplies for the new ship and journey to Rome.**

8. What do you think it was like for Paul to be met by a delegation of Christians when he finally arrived in Rome (28:14-15)?

**I think he would have been incredibly encouraged. Most places he had been, he was greeted by angry people or indifferent people. Then, after preaching, he was quickly met with angry mobs. To enter a Gentile city like Rome and be greeted by a group of Christians would have been incredibly encouraging.**

9. Paul continued to follow the principle that the gospel is for the Jew first, even in the Gentile capital of Rome. How did the Jews respond?

**Some of them believed and some of them disbelieved. This is exactly what happened every time Jesus preached. What he preached was divisive. Some people would believe but most would reject him.**

10. What do you think it means that “boldly and without hindrance” (28:31) Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ?

**“Boldness” describes his attitude. He was not scared or embarrassed about sharing Jesus with the people. “Without hindrance” refers to his style. He did not let any cultural situation, reservations about the people, or anything else keep him from proclaiming Christ in the scriptures. He was not hindered. He was free.**

*Summary:* What, then, is the major lesson we are intended to learn from Acts 27 and 28? It concerns the providence of God, who “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11). This providential activity of God is seen in these chapters in two complementary ways, first in bringing Paul to Rome, his desired goal, and second in bringing him there as a prisoner, his undesired condition.

It was not so much that Paul had said, “I must visit Rome” (19:21), as that Jesus had said to him, “You must testify in Rome” (23:11). Yet circumstance after circumstance seemed calculated to make this impossible. As the narrative proceeds and the storm becomes ever more violent, until all hope is lost, we wonder how on earth he will be rescued. Will he make it? Yes he will! He does! By God’s providence Paul reached Rome safe and sound.

**APPLY**

- Many were profoundly affected by Paul's confidence in God. When have you been influenced by such confidence in another believer?

What have you learned from the book of Acts that prepares and equips you to be a witness "to the ends of the earth" (1:8)?

Just as Luke's Gospel ended with the prospect of a mission to the nations, so the Acts ends with the prospect of a mission radiating from Rome to the world. Luke's description of Paul preaching "with boldness" and "without hindrance" symbolizes a wide open door, through which we in our day have to pass. The Acts of the Apostles have long ago finished. But the acts of the followers of Jesus will continue until the end of the world, and their words will spread to the ends of the earth.

**PRAY**

- Pray fervently that God will empower you with his Holy Spirit to do his will.

All material taken from:  
John Stott, *Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work*. Downers Grove, IL: IV Press, USA, 1998.