

ACTS – Fall 2025 D-Groups

For Wednesday, November 19th

Acts 21:15-28:31



The Big Picture - ACTS as a Whole

Because our fall session of D-groups is drawing to a close, we have an extra-large chunk of Acts to finish up this week. Acts 21–28 marks the dramatic conclusion of the book of Acts and the culmination of Paul’s missionary life. What began years earlier with a calling to carry the name of Jesus “before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15) now finds fulfillment as Paul stands before rulers, testifies in courts, and ultimately carries the gospel to the very heart of the Roman Empire.

These chapters show that **obedience to God’s call often comes at a cost**. Paul’s decision to return to Jerusalem is met with warnings from friends and prophets alike, but he goes anyway—fully aware that suffering awaits him. Paul’s faith in this journey reminds us that faithfulness to Jesus is not about avoiding difficulty but about trusting that God’s purposes will prevail through it. The road to Rome is paved with betrayal, imprisonment, storms, and shipwreck, and yet through every trial, God’s hand is clearly at work.

Luke portrays Paul not as a victim but as a **witness under pressure**. Whether standing before angry mobs, governors like Felix and Festus, or royalty like King Agrippa, Paul’s message remains steady: *Jesus is alive, and He changes everything*. Even when falsely accused and unjustly detained for years, Paul never loses sight of his mission. Every courtroom becomes a congregation, every conversation an opportunity to point to Jesus. The same Spirit who empowered the early church in Jerusalem (1:8) continues to carry along Paul, even in chains—reminding us that the gospel cannot be contained by walls, laws, or circumstances.

The voyage to Rome (Acts 27) becomes a vivid picture of **leadership and faith in crisis**. While others panic, Paul anchors the crew with his confidence in God’s promise. He models calm, courage, and compassion, saving both lives and faith amid the storm. By the time Paul finally reaches Rome, he has endured nearly everything imaginable—but the story doesn’t end in despair, but in simple **gospel triumph**: “He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance” (28:31).

Luke deliberately leaves the story open-ended. Paul’s life and ministry continue, and so does the mission of the church. The book closes where it began—with the unstoppable spread of the gospel. From Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and now to the ends of the earth, God’s Word continues to move forward through ordinary believers who, like Paul, trust the Spirit, proclaim Jesus, and endure faithfully wherever God leads.

The Close-Up for November 19th - Acts 21:15-28:31

Please make sure you read the passage, perhaps even 2-3 times using different versions. We want to provide supplemental material, but what matters most is actually interacting with God’s word.

Some notes on the overall flow of this section:

- **21:15–40** – Paul’s desire to return to Jerusalem despite warnings reveals deep obedience. He purifies himself at the temple to avoid offending Jewish believers, yet is accused of defiling it and seized by a mob. His calm defense and respectful tone toward Roman authority models self-control and confidence in God’s plan.

- **22:1–29** – When given the chance to speak, Paul tells his story—his zeal, encounter with Christ, and calling to reach the Gentiles. His testimony reminds us that personal stories remain powerful tools for sharing the gospel. What’s your story? How can you use your story as a tool for sharing the gospel?
- **23:1–35** – Before the Sanhedrin, Paul divides his accusers by focusing on the resurrection. Later, a conspiracy to kill him is uncovered, and God works through Paul’s nephew and a Roman commander to deliver him safely to Caesarea.
- **24:1–27** – Paul defends himself with integrity, emphasizing faith in Christ and the resurrection. Felix procrastinates, hoping for a bribe, but Paul stays faithful—even in confinement.
- **25:1–26:32** – Paul appeals to Caesar, exercising his rights as a Roman citizen. In his testimony before Agrippa, he boldly proclaims the risen Jesus. Agrippa famously replies, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Paul’s reply captures his heart: *“Short time or long, I pray that all who hear me may become as I am—except for these chains.”*
- **27:1–44** – Paul’s leadership shines during disaster. Though the voyage to Rome faces storms and shipwreck, Paul encourages the sailors and passengers, trusting God’s promise that all will survive. His faith brings calm amid chaos.
- **28:1–31** – Even shipwreck becomes opportunity—Paul heals the sick on Malta and preaches to all. Finally, in Rome, he welcomes visitors and proclaims the kingdom of God *“boldly and without hindrance.”* The book ends not with resolution but with momentum—the gospel advancing through every barrier.

Some of our Key Themes specifically on display in this section:

- **Faithfulness in Suffering** : Paul’s trials show that obedience doesn’t mean ease. God’s presence sustains us through hardship.
- **The Reach of the Gospel/Kingdom Expansion**: From Jerusalem to Rome, nothing can silence God’s Word.
- **Boldness in Witness**: Paul shares his story before crowds, courts, kings and more with clarity and compassion. Every delay and danger functions to further God’s mission.

Some additional questions to reflect on leading-up to next week’s D-Group:

- Paul willingly walked into suffering (21:13). What does his example teach you about obedience and courage?
- How does Paul’s repeated testimony challenge you to share your own story more freely?
- What “chains” in your life could actually become a platform for the gospel?
- How do you see God’s providence working through setbacks or delays in this narrative?
- During the storm in Acts 27, Paul brings calm and hope. Where might God be calling you to do the same?
- Why do you think Luke ends Acts with Paul still under house arrest? What message does that send about the mission of the church?
- How does this final section of Acts encourage perseverance when life/ministry feels discouraging or fruitless?
- What does Paul’s example teach about trusting God’s control when circumstances seem unjust?

A Challenge for this Week: Ask God to help you live with Paul’s perspective—that *every circumstance is an opportunity for the gospel*. Pray for courage to speak with gentleness and conviction, even when it’s uncomfortable. Remember that faithfulness, not comfort, is the measure of success in God’s mission.