



WEEKLY STUDY

The Book of Acts- Week 10

As we near the end of the year-long study of Acts, we are going to speed up a bit. So the weekly study will include passages that were not addressed on Sunday morning. The whole story matters, so spend time with us as we move towards the conclusion of Acts.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for all those who have an opportunity to speak up about the goodness of God in the face of war and strife.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 22:1-23 (1-13 printed)

“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.”

² *When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.*

Then Paul said:³ “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.⁴ I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,⁵ as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

⁶ “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me.⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

⁸ “‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied.⁹ My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

¹⁰ “‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’¹¹ My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

¹² “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.¹³ He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

- “Listen to my defense.” Sometimes silence is not an option...you have to share about what God has done. Paul laid out his defense in three parts. First, he described who he was before his conversion. Then he described his conversion. Third, he laid out his clear call to ministry. It’s a simple yet proud kind of defense. What radical transformation sits at the heart of your defense before those who question your faith? How can your own testimony become an invitation for others to encounter Jesus?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Come and hear, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.**
¹⁷ **I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue. (Psalm 66.16-17)**
- *God, I will proclaim with my lips and my life the great works you have done. You have saved me O Lord, through the grace of your Son Jesus. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 22.25-30 (NIV)

As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"

²⁶ *When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen."*

²⁷ *The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"*

"Yes, I am," he answered.

²⁸ *Then the commander said, "I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship."*

"But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.

²⁹ *Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.*

³⁰ *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.*

- The case against Paul would have been open and shut had he not brought up the question of his citizenship. His identity as a Roman citizen kept him from becoming just a footnote in history. He would have become like so many others who had dared to speak up only to be silenced. Even in tumultuous times, identity as an American brings with it certain advantages. They may not be earned or even deserved, but we bear them nonetheless. How does your earthly citizenship help or hinder your witness to your heavenly citizenship?
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- **Prayer Prompt: But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3.20-21)**
- *Lord God, Thank you for placing me in the time and place you have. I believe that I am here on purpose. Let me cling first to my heavenly citizenship as I live on this earth. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 23.1-11 (NIV)

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."² At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the

mouth.³ Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!”

⁴ Those who were standing near Paul said, “How dare you insult God’s high priest!”

⁵ Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”

⁶ 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.⁸ (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

⁹ There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?”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.

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.”

- Paul understood the thinking of his accusers, because he used to stand in their shoes! He knew how to expose the fragile unity between Sadducees and Pharisees. By bringing up the resurrection (a clear dispute between the parties) Paul caused enough discord that they had to imprison him to let the dust settle. That’s when Paul heard directly from God. “Take courage, you have testified, and you will testify again.” Have you ever had a sense that God is with you? Is God preserving your life so that you might testify to his goodness yet again?

- **Prayer Prompt: He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. (2 Timothy 1.9)**
- *God, even when I was not aware that you were working, you have used my life for your glory. Use me again today. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 23.12-35 (22.31-35 printed)

So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris.³² The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks.³³ When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.³⁴ The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia,³⁵ he said, “I

will hear your case when your accusers get here.” Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.

- If you can imagine, Paul’s case was caught up in legal maneuvering. Caesarea was an acceptable place for the trial to occur, but the witnesses would still have to show up. What Paul’s story reveals is that no matter where your trials take you, when God has promised you a future, God will make a way. Are you waiting for resolution in some area of your life? What unresolved tensions are weighing on you today? Is there a promise from God that outweighs them all?

- **Prayer Prompt: For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. (Jeremiah 29.11-12)**
- *Your plans, O God, are far greater than the challenges I face today. Will you show me the path (or even the next step) to get from here to there? Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 24.1-16 (14-16 printed)

However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets,¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

- The lawyer hired by the religious authorities had accused Paul of stirring up trouble everywhere he went, leading a sect, and desecrating the temple. The authorities of any time in history have struggled with those who cause a scene. Anyone who speaks against the ruling party was a “problem” and Paul was a problem. His defense was truthful. He was a follower of the Way of Jesus, but that did not put him at odds with his accusers, as they worshiped the same God. Is there a difference between those who claim God’s authority for their earthly reign, and those who submit to the Way of Jesus? How is your life pointing to the truth of the Gospel?

- **Prayer Prompt: Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4.7)**
- *God, I submit to your higher purposes today. Let me not become distracted by the status quo of this age, but focus on the Way of Jesus. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 25.1-27 (25.1-12 printed)

Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem,² where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul.³ They requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way.⁴ Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon.⁵ Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there."

⁶ After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him.⁷ When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.

⁸ Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar."

⁹ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

¹⁰ Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well.¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

¹² After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

- Paul proclaimed his innocence, but said he would willingly die if he was guilty of offense. It seems that the offense would be worth it. He stuck with his conviction, but was also wise to appeal to Caesar. He was planning on going to Rome anyway! There are certain things that any one of us would lay our lives down for. What is on that list for you?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11.1)**
- *God, let me be so compelled by the Gospel that I would willingly testify to your goodness regardless of the consequences. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

In Sunday's message from Pastor Gary we heard:

"Testimony is simply telling your story of what God has done."

"The power is God's, the telling is ours."

He helped us to frame our testimony with the following questions. Answer them together. What stories do they bring to mind?

- Do you have a story of PRESENCE?
- Do you have a story of POWER?
- Do you have a story of PROVISION?
- Do you have a story of DOUBT?
- Do you have a story of DISSAPOINTMENT?
- Do you have a story of DESPAIR?