



WEEKLY STUDY

The Book of Acts- Week 11

Thanks for joining us in our study of Acts at Providence Church! As we near the end of the year-long study, 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 God's peace to break out around the world.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 26.1-11 (6-8 printed)

And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today.⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me.⁸ Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

- Paul gave a thorough, but seemingly calm defense of his record as a Jew. He carefully began to connect his beliefs in the promises of God to Israel, with a belief that God desires to do even more, and it starts with resurrection. Do you ever find that there is a disconnect between your belief in the promises of God and the idea that God would actually follow through on them? Is there a gap between your hope and your expectation? Lift that up to God.
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- **Prayer Prompt: So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41.10)**
- *Lord God, forgive me for my lack of faith. Increase my expectations that you are bringing new life to me and to your world. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 26.12-32 (29 printed)

Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

- Paul had just given his defense to the king. The king accused him of being insane (so educated that he had gone mad), and laughed at the thought of being converted to a Christian in such a short time. Paul gave this beautiful response in verse 29. Is there someone for whom you have been praying would give their lives to Jesus? Have you ever tried to convince someone to become a Christ-follower? How might Paul’s words here (“short time or long”) inform your approach to these conversations?
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- **Prayer Prompt: I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
¹⁴Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD. (Psalm 27.13-14)**

- *God, please give me a heart of patience and bold words of testimony that you might reach the hearts of others around me. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 27.1-10 (NIV)

When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. ² We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

³ The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. ⁴ From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. ⁵ When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷ We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. ⁸ We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

⁹ Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement.

- Why did Luke give us so much detail about the journey to Rome? It's hard to say for sure but we can get a sense that we are reaching the pinnacle of Paul's story. It was a long and dangerous trip. Rome was an important destination because it is the capital of the empire, a place where the gospel could have a lasting impact. The journey might remind us of Luke's emphasis on Jesus' approach to Jerusalem or Jonah's rough journey to obedience. His mention of the Day of Atonement sets these events in September or October, the start of a typical season of rough weather on the seas. As the "travelogue" portion of Acts begins to wind down, what do these details reveal to you about Paul's passion for the gospel? What do they teach you about your own passion for the good news of Jesus Christ?

- **Prayer Prompt: Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3.5-6)**
- *God, help me to appreciate the journey of faith. You have been with me through every detour and every day of smooth sailing. Make my path a little straighter today. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 27.10-15 (NIV)

Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.”¹¹ But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship.¹² Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

¹³ When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. ¹⁴ Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. ¹⁵ The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along.

- Paul was allowed to speak into the travel decisions because of his vast experience at sea, but his advice was not taken and they sailed into an even more dangerous situation. They headed into winds that left them with no control—they were at the mercy of the sea. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you had lost all control? What does it feel like to recognize that you are not able to change directions and must give in to being “driven along”?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Philippians 4.6)**
- *O God, I admit that I like to be in control of my own life. I don't like storms that change my course. But I do trust in you. Guide me to the people and places you want me to go. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 27.16-20 (NIV)

As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure,¹⁷ so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along.¹⁸ We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard.¹⁹ On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.²⁰ When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

- We can sense the desperation they felt on board the ship. They began to make drastic decisions in hopes of saving their own lives. The mission of carrying grain and prisoners was no longer the priority. And when they couldn't see the sun or stars for days on end, they gave up hope. The sun and the stars were guides for ships at sea. Have you ever lost your form of navigation? Have you ever lost all hope? What helps you to get back on track when that happens?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. (Isaiah 40.30-31)**
 - *God, I am counting on you today. Will you lift me up on wings like eagles and help me to run and not grow weary? Thank you for your faithfulness. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 27.21-37 (33-37 printed)

Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything."³⁴ Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head."³⁵ After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat.³⁶ They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves.³⁷ Altogether there were 276 of us on board.

- What a stressful journey this has been! They couldn't even eat for two weeks. It's notable how much respect Paul elicited from his captors. He was leading from a position of imprisonment, yet his leadership led to a moment of perspective which they would need the next day. Sometimes eating and giving thanks to God seems counterintuitive. There is so much to do in this life that it can be difficult to stop and let God nourish us. How does a good meal and gratitude help you to face the difficulties of life?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. (Psalm 34.8)**
- *God, thank you for providing for me. You give me everything I truly need and I delight in you. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Below is an image of the journey to Rome. You can see that it was anything but a straight line. Many of you

have life maps that would look similar. If you could map out your life, where would you be able to say:

“This is where I was in trouble”,

“This is where I had to throw everything overboard.”.

“This is where God brought me peace.”?

