

LIBERATED

A MESSAGE OF FREEDOM

LIBERATED, PART 4: ACTS 28 TO ACTS 2018

Today, we are finishing up the book of Acts. Here we are—2,000 years later—living out the mission of the entire book of Acts: telling others of Jesus Christ. The movement is alive and well, and there is nothing that can stop it.

BIG IDEA: What would it look like for you to follow God boldly unhindered?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As a child, whose visit would you be so excited about that you would wait outside (or by the window) until they arrived? Why?
2. If in jail, what three items would you want most? (*a file, saw, or key is not permitted!*)
3. Review briefly the obstacles Paul had faced since he set out for Rome in Acts 19:21. How long did it take? (*see Acts 20:3, 31:4, 24:27, 27:41, 28:11*) What can we learn from Paul about endurance, faith, courage, patience, and hope as we head toward God's goals for us in our own lives and experience?
4. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Acts 28:11-15.*

It was three months after the shipwreck that we set sail on another ship that had wintered at the island—an Alexandrian ship with the twin go^a as its figurehead. Our first stop was Syracuse, where we stayed three days. From there we sailed across to Rhegium. A day later a south wind began blowing, so the following day we sailed up the coast to Puteoli. There we found some believers, who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. The brothers and sisters in Rome had heard we were coming, and they came to meet us at the Forum on the Appian Way. Others joined us at The Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and thanked God. Acts 28:11-15 (NLT)

5. Arriving in Italy, Paul was greatly encouraged by the believers who come to meet him. How can we as a Christian community be there for each other and encourage one another?
6. What do you think it was like for Paul to be met by a group of Christians when he finally arrived in Rome?
7. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Acts 28:16-31.*

When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier. Three days after Paul's arrival, he called together the local Jewish leaders. He said to them, "Brothers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Roman government, even though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors. The Romans tried me and wanted to release me, because they found no cause for the death sentence. But when the Jewish leaders protested the decision, I felt it necessary to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no desire to press charges against my own people. I asked you to come here today so we could get acquainted and so I could explain to you that I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of Israel—the Messiah—has already come." They replied, "We have had no letters from Judea or reports against you from anyone who has come here. But we want to hear what you believe, for the only thing we know about this movement is that it is denounced everywhere."

So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet, 'Go and say to this people: When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.' So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it." [And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.] For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 28:16-31 (NLT)

8. Paul continued to follow his pattern of presenting Jesus first to the Jew, even in the Gentile capital of Rome. How did the Jews respond?
9. What was the ‘hope of Israel’ (*Acts 28:20*; see also *Acts 26:6-8*)? How central was this to Paul’s message?
10. How did the response of the Jews in Rome to Isaiah’s prophecy typify Jewish response throughout Paul’s ministry? *Acts 28:24-27* summarizes the Jewish response to the message of Jesus. In Paul’s view, what is the consequence of the Jewish response to Jesus? (*Acts 28:28*)
11. Read *Acts 28:30-31* and *Philippians 1:12-14*. According to these verses, how does Paul spend his time while under house arrest?
12. What do you think it means that “boldly and without hindrance?” (*Acts 28:31*)

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 end of 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 (Matthew 24:14).

13. Paul finally set foot in Rome, fulfilling his calling to talk with the people there about Jesus. When have you seen God bring something to completion? When have you seen a person or group set out to accomplish something and then through God’s favor, they completed the task?
14. How can you be bolder with who you invite to church?
15. How can you be bolder with your serving?
16. How can you be bolder with your giving?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Apostle Paul was about 50 years old when he arrived in Rome. With three missionary journeys under his belt, six books of Scripture to his credit, and thousands of people impassioned for God, Paul held quite a portfolio in his hands. If Paul’s career had stopped right there, no one would have protested; everyone would have stood up and applauded. Many would see Paul’s age as about time to start counting the years until retirement. But not Paul. Paul had big dreams. He continued to imagine how he could still do more for Jesus Christ. His dream was to go to the western limit of the Roman Empire. This represented bold and big dreams—audacious some might say! But Paul had a big God. He continued to plan. And he also wrote 7 more New Testament letters.

1. Paul didn’t retire. In fact, nowhere in the Bible do we ever see a man or woman of God retire from the purpose God has for them. So why do you think in our culture retirement is seen as the pinnacle of arriving? **You can retire from a job, but you cannot retire from the calling God has for you.**
2. So, what’s your “Rome”—what’s your passion? Do you have a purpose bigger than yourself? Is that purpose as big as your God?

MOVING FORWARD

Throughout this study of the second half of Acts, we’ve tracked with Paul and others as they have tirelessly carried the good news about Jesus around the world, telling all who would hear the incredible news that salvation is available to all. To whom is God calling you to take this message?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

The church is a big idea . . . that started from one man . . . that spread to many more . . . becoming a movement that continues to grow today. The church is God’s idea. And he invites us to boldly be a part of it for our generation. So what will you do in the coming months to bring the message of Jesus to this person?

WEEKLY READING

This week, spend some time reading and reflecting on *Matthew 24:14*, *Acts 1:8*, *Acts 28:31*, *Matthew 28:18-20*, *John 20:21-22*, *Luke 24:46-49*.