

Acts 26

The central tenet of Paul's faith, and one that continually causes trouble throughout Acts, is Christ's resurrection. It was scorned in Athens (17:32) and frequently called into question by the Jews. But Paul recognizes that the resurrection is the hope for which all of the Old Testament prophets waited and watched (Heb. 11:13, 39).

God has always been about the business of bringing life from the dead, whether by creating life out of nothing (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3), by giving children to barren women (Gen. 21:1; 25:21; 1 Sam. 2:21; Heb. 11:12), or by using his prophets to literally raise the dead (1 Kings 17:19–22; 2 Kings 4:34–35). Why, Paul asks, is it thought incredible that God raises the dead, when he has always had the power to do so? In the resurrection of Christ, God's power to raise the dead has been clearly manifested. And by believing in him, we can share in his resurrection (Rom. 6:5; Phil. 3:10). This reality gives us a sure hope for eternity and therefore should permeate our lives even today.

Acts 26:12–18: Here Paul relates additional details about his conversion on the Damascus road. He recalls Jesus expressing the gospel message as a call to turn from darkness and the power of Satan to the light of God. God's light has overcome Satan's darkness (see John 1:5), even that darkness which inhabits each one of us. God offers defeat of the powers of darkness to those still under their control. He offers not merely self-help but the washing away of sins to all who will trust in him.

Acts 26:22–23: Paul bases his hope on God's raising of Jesus, which he sees as the culminating fulfillment of God's promises through the Law and the Prophets (see also vv. 6–8). For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus both confirms God's faithfulness and power to fulfill his promises, and provides the impetus for the spread of God's gospel and Spirit to Jews and Gentiles over all the earth (v. 23; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1–28).

Acts 27

Compared to other parts of Paul's journeys in Acts, Luke goes into great detail about the storm at sea. This journey shows God's sovereign purposes and underscores that God can be trusted to fulfill his promises: God not only led and called Paul but protected him and was indeed an intricate part of every step of Paul's voyage. Paul announces to the other sailors and prisoners what was revealed to him, that despite an imminent shipwreck, they will reach Rome without loss of life (vv. 21–26). Sure enough, the ship crashes against an island, but no one dies (vv. 39–44). Paul had taken God at his word, even as the storm dragged on and the professional sailors despaired.

God is the true actor behind the scenes. Paul acts as a messenger of God's promise, but he displays no power to quiet the storm, as Jesus did (Luke 8:22–25). Paul was first a recipient of God's grace, and now is an agent of grace to others, but God is the ultimate deliverer.

Acts 28

As in John 5:39–47 and Luke 24:25–27, 44, we are once again encouraged to see that the entire Bible, even the parts that come before Christ's birth, are about Christ himself. He is the point of

the Bible. The Bible is fundamentally a single book with a single message of God's redemption through his Son of lost and rebellious sinners. Everything in Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, contributes to this overarching message. Luke ends his account on a note of triumph, showing Paul in the capital of the world as he preaches the gospel "without hindrance" to all who will hear it.

Luke and Paul both knew that the mission that Christ had laid out was not fully accomplished. Paul mentions in his letters that he intended to travel beyond Rome to even more distant Spain (Rom. 15:24). In its early form, however, Jesus has fulfilled his promise (Acts 1:8): the message of salvation has begun to reach the "end of the earth," and because God has proven faithful to bring his gospel to Rome, we can trust that he will continue to spread it abroad. Acts is intentionally open-ended, inviting our participation in God's mission, as he overcomes opposition to bring his word of forgiveness to all people.

The book ends with Paul preaching the kingdom of God with "boldness and without hindrance." This is a fitting summary and conclusion to the book. The gospel of Jesus Christ goes from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, not without trouble, but without hindrance. God's purposes will have their way. The book of Acts tells the story of Jesus building his church by his grace and gives us confidence that he will continue so to build it until he returns.

Questions for Group Discussion

1. Re-read Acts 26. In his commentary, Al Mohler says the following: "*The king's response to Paul reminds us that in our evangelism we may not always or ever see a revival break out when we proclaim God's word. Evangelism takes time. Christians cast out gospel seeds. God gives the growth. God has called us to faithfulness; and he will tend to the rest.*" How does this view of witnessing keep us both patient and persistent?
2. Read Acts 27:22-25 - What (if anything) holds you back from having the same confidence in the Lord that Paul expresses in verses 22-25? Are you praying for that kind of calm trust? What will it mean for your life today to live truly believing that God's promises are true?
3. The book of Acts has taken us from a few dozen believers in a single city to a multitude of churches throughout the Mediterranean—all in one generation. How does this excite you about your opportunity to share the gospel today?
4. In what way(s) has the Holy Spirit been changing you through this study/reading through the book of Acts? What have you gotten excited about? What action steps do you want to take?