

THE BOOK OF ACTS

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A STUDY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

"To the Ends of the Earth"

A Study of Acts 26–28 | Paul's Testimony, the Storm, and the Gospel Reaches

Rome

"He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ — with all boldness and without hindrance!"

— Acts 28:31 (NIV)

Passage Overview

Acts 26 — Paul's Testimony Before King Agrippa

- Governor Festus invites King Agrippa II to hear Paul, hoping the king can help formulate charges to send to Caesar in Rome.
- Paul delivers one of the most complete and compelling personal testimonies in all

of Scripture — a masterclass in gospel clarity before a royal audience.

- Paul recounts his former life as a zealous Pharisee, his violent persecution of the early church, and his dramatic encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).
- He describes his divine commission: to take the gospel of repentance, faith, and forgiveness to both Jews and Gentiles.
- His central message: *"The Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles."* (Acts 26:23, NIV)
- Festus interrupts: *"Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you insane."* Paul replies with calm, reasoned confidence.
- Paul appeals directly to Agrippa: *"Do you believe the prophets?"* — Agrippa deflects: *"Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"*
- Both Agrippa and Festus agree: Paul is innocent and could have been freed if he had not appealed to Caesar.

Acts 27 — The Voyage and Shipwreck

- Paul, along with other prisoners, sets sail for Rome under the guard of Julius, a Roman centurion of the Imperial Regiment.
- Paul warns the ship's officers that the voyage will be dangerous — his counsel is ignored, and they press on.
- A catastrophic storm called the Northeaster (Euroclydon) strikes; the ship is driven off course and battered for fourteen terrifying days.
- Paul stands before the desperate crew: an angel of God appeared to him, assuring him that all aboard would survive — though the ship would be lost.

- The ship runs aground near Malta. All 276 people aboard reach shore safely — exactly as God had promised.
- **Themes:** God's faithfulness in storms, courage in crisis, Paul's extraordinary servant-leadership.

Acts 28 — Malta, Rome, and the Unhindered Gospel

- On Malta, Paul is bitten by a viper and suffers no harm. The islanders first assume he is a murderer meeting his just end — then conclude he must be a god.
- Paul heals Publius's father of fever and dysentery, then heals many others on the island. The people show Paul's group extraordinary kindness.
- After three months on Malta, they sail on and arrive in Rome.
- Paul meets with Rome's Jewish leaders, presenting the gospel from the Law and the Prophets — some believe; many do not.
- Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9–10 and solemnly declares: the gospel is now going to the Gentiles, who will listen.
- Paul spends two full years in Rome under house arrest — door open, welcoming all who come to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus "without hindrance."

Key Characters

Name	Role	Key Detail
Paul	Apostle & Prisoner	Delivers his testimony with boldness; leads with faith and courage through trial, storm, and house arrest in Rome.

King Agrippa II	Jewish Client-King	Knowledgeable of Jewish customs and prophecy; "almost persuaded"; confirms Paul's innocence alongside Festus.
Festus	Roman Governor	Calls Paul "out of his mind" at the resurrection claim; nevertheless confirms Paul has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment.
Bernice	Agrippa's Sister	Present at Paul's formal defense — part of the royal audience before whom Paul bears witness.
Julius	Roman Centurion	Assigned to guard Paul; shows him kindness; eventually comes to trust Paul's word and judgment during the storm.
Luke	Author & Companion	Present throughout — note the "we" passages in Acts 27–28. A faithful witness who records the journey with vivid detail.
Publius	Chief Official of Malta	Welcomed Paul's group with hospitality; his father was healed by Paul — an act of grace that opened the whole island to the gospel's witness.

Key Themes to Explore

The Power of Personal Testimony. Acts 26 is Paul's third recounting of his Damascus Road conversion in the book of Acts (see also Acts 9 and 22). The repetition is not accidental — it shows how absolutely central the resurrection of Jesus and his own transformed life were to everything Paul said and did. Your story matters too.

God's Sovereignty Over Storms. The shipwreck in Acts 27 is one of the most vivid illustrations of God's providential care anywhere in Scripture. Notice what God does not do:

He does not remove Paul from the storm. He sustains Paul through it — and through Paul, He sustains everyone else on board. 276 lives saved.

Servant Leadership in Crisis. When the Northeaster struck and panic spread across the ship, Paul did not withdraw into his own fears. He encouraged the crew, gave practical instructions, broke bread, and modeled trust in God's word. Authentic leaders bring peace to the storm — not by minimizing the danger, but by pointing to a trustworthy God.

The Unstoppable Gospel. Trace the journey: from Caesarea to shipwreck to Malta to Rome. Chains, violent storms, and snakebites could not silence Paul or stall the Word of God. Each obstacle became a new platform for the gospel. What the enemy intends as a roadblock, God uses as a runway.

The Fulfillment of God's Promise. Jesus appeared to Paul in Jerusalem and said clearly: "You must also testify in Rome." (Acts 23:11). Acts 28 is that promise kept — not through a triumphal procession, but through shipwreck, a snake bite, and house arrest. God always keeps His word. The path may be winding, but the destination is sure.

Digging Deeper — Key Verses

Acts 26:18

"...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Observation: This single verse is one of the most complete summaries of the gospel's purpose in the entire New Testament — illumination, liberation, forgiveness, and belonging.

Acts 26:28–29

"Agrippa said to Paul, 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?' 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.'"

Observation: Paul's prayer is breathtakingly pastoral — he wants for Agrippa what he himself has found, and yet he is gracious enough to wish him free of suffering.

Acts 27:23–25

"For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told."

Observation: Paul's confidence is not in favorable weather or a sturdy ship — it is rooted in the character and word of the God he belongs to.

Acts 27:44b

"And so it was that all were brought safely to land."

Observation: Five quiet words carry the full weight of God's faithfulness. What He promised, He delivered — down to the last person on a sinking ship.

Acts 28:5

"But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no ill effect."

Observation: A casual, almost matter-of-fact verse — yet it echoes Jesus' promise in

Luke 10:19 that nothing shall harm those sent in His name.

Acts 28:30–31

"He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."

Observation: The last word of Acts in the Greek is *akolutos* — "unhindered." Chains on the messenger could not chain the message. The book ends not with Paul's release, but with the gospel's advance.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion. Feel free to use the space below each question for notes.

1. In Acts 26, Paul tells his conversion story for the third time in Acts. Why do you think Luke records it again here? What details does Paul emphasize before this particular audience — a Jewish king and a Roman governor?

2. Paul's commission in Acts 26:18 is one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the gospel's purpose in the New Testament. What does God say He is sending Paul to accomplish? How does this commission apply to every believer today?

3. Festus calls Paul "out of his mind" (Acts 26:24). Why does the message of the resurrection still seem foolish to the world? How should we respond — with our attitudes and our words — when our faith is dismissed or ridiculed?

4. Agrippa says, "Do you think in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" What do you imagine was happening in Agrippa's heart in that moment? What does Paul's response reveal about his own heart for people — even those with the power to free or condemn him?

5. Both Agrippa and Festus agree Paul is innocent and could have gone free. What does this tell us about the purpose of Paul's journey to Rome and God's sovereign orchestration of events — even through the decisions of unbelievers?

6. Paul warned the crew not to sail (Acts 27:10) — and they ignored him. Have you ever ignored wise counsel and faced difficult consequences? What does this episode teach us about the value of godly advice, even when it's inconvenient?

7. How does Paul's behavior during the storm (Acts 27:21–26) model Christian leadership? What specific things did he do — and not do — that helped the people around him hold together?

8. In Acts 27:23–25, what is the source of Paul's confidence? He says, "I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told." How can we access that same kind of peace in the middle of our own storms?

9. The people of Malta first concluded Paul was a murderer getting his just punishment — then, after the snake, that he must be a god (Acts 28:4–6). What does this show about our human tendency to interpret circumstances without God's perspective? When have you done the same?

10. Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9–10 in Acts 28:26–27, describing people who hear but refuse to understand. What is the spiritual danger of repeated exposure to the gospel without ever truly responding to it?

11. Acts ends with Paul in house arrest in Rome — not freed, not publicly vindicated, simply preaching. Does this feel like a satisfying ending to you? What does it say about how God defines "success" — and how might that challenge our own definitions?

12. "*Akolutos*" — "without hindrance" — is the final word of Acts in the Greek. What does it mean that the gospel advances without hindrance even when the messenger is chained? How does this truth encourage you personally in your own witness?

Personal Application

Take a few quiet moments with these reflection prompts. Be honest with yourself and with God.

☐ Paul told his story again and again — boldly, clearly, and personally. **Am I ready to share my own story of how Jesus changed my life?** If not, what holds me back?

☐ Is there a **"storm" in my life right now** where I need to stop white-knuckling the wheel and trust that God is still in control — and that His promises still stand?

☐ Do I tend to **withdraw or step up** when those around me are in crisis? What is one concrete way I can grow as a servant-leader — someone who brings peace and points to God?

☐ The book of Acts ends without a neat conclusion — **because the story continues through the church.** Through me. How am I participating in that ongoing, unhindered story right now?

Almost Persuaded

"Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

— King Agrippa (Acts 26:28, NIV)

"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 (Acts 26:29, NIV)

Reflection: Agrippa stood at the threshold — knowledgeable, attentive, and *almost* there. Paul's response was not frustration, not pressure — it was prayer. He wanted for Agrippa what he himself had found: life in Christ. Is there someone in your life who is "almost persuaded"? Someone who knows the gospel, who has heard the truth, who seems close — but has not yet crossed the line of faith?

Pray for them by name this week. Write their name here as a commitment:

Pray for:

Acts Series Wrap-Up

We Did It — We've Read the Book of Acts Together

From the upper room to the ends of the earth — from the day of Pentecost to a rented house in Rome — we have walked through one of the most extraordinary stories ever told. And notice how it ends: not with Paul's chains falling off, not with a triumphant verdict, not with a tidy resolution — but with the gospel going forward, unstoppable, unhindered.

That is intentional. Luke ends Acts this way because *the story isn't over*. It continues in the church. It continues in every believer who carries the good news into their neighborhood, their workplace, their family table, and their community. The story of

Acts continues in *you*.

Go forward with the spirit of Acts: bold in testimony, faithful in storms, generous in welcome, and relentless in love. The same Holy Spirit who filled that upper room — who sustained Paul through shipwreck and chains — dwells in you. The gospel still goes forward, *without hindrance*.

Closing Prayer Focus

As you close your time together, bring these things before the Lord:

- **Boldness** — Pray for the courage to share your personal testimony with clarity and confidence, just as Paul did before kings and governors.
- **Trust in the Storm** — Bring before God any storm you are currently navigating. Ask for the peace that comes not from calm circumstances, but from a God who keeps every promise.
- **The Almost Persuaded** — Pray specifically, by name, for the person you wrote above — and for all in your circle who are near the Kingdom but have not yet stepped in.
- **Unhindered Witness** — Pray that the gospel would go forward through your life this week without hindrance — through your words, your presence, your compassion, and your courage.