



STUDY 5

Acts 27-28

Unstoppable Message, Unstoppable Messenger

Review

Paul could have been a free man - but he chose instead to appeal his case to Caesar, because that's where he knew he had been commissioned to preach the gospel. He also knew that his trials and appeals gave him a great opportunity to speak to the leaders and rulers of the Empire.

In Acts 27, Paul is again joined by Luke (the writer of Acts), and also Aristarchus (from Thessalonica, who we first met back in Acts 19). Under the authority of Julius, a Roman Centurion, they set out on a sea voyage filled with danger and adventure.

It's a story that really NEEDS TO BE READ IN A SINGLE SITTING. It would be best if you could READ ACTS 27-28:10 before your group meets.

As you read, notice the account is full of the sort of small details that make you realise it's REAL HISTORY...

- people, places, one night stop-overs - complete with accurate travel times
- technical boat-stuff that only boat types will really appreciate; securing the lifeboats, binding under the ship with ropes, lowering the sea anchor, jettisoning cargo, depth soundings, dropping four anchors from the stern, rudders, foresails... every detail of every sandbar and windgust seems to be recorded!

A Few Points to Notice...

1. From the following verses, who is really "in charge" on the ship?
 - v9-10
 - v21-26
 - v31
 - v33
2. Why do you think Paul can exercise such confident leadership?
3. Whose interests does Paul take into account at every point?
4. From verse 24, what is it that keeps Paul and the others on the ship safe from harm?
5. Ashore on Malta, Paul is bitten by a deadly snake. Why isn't he harmed?

Read about Paul's arrival in Rome from Acts 28:11-16.

6. Paul has travelled halfway around the known world. But his departure and his arrival have one thing in common. What do you notice in 27:3, 28:13-14 and 28:15?

7. Why do you think Paul was encouraged by the men he meets in 28:15?

Already, the gospel is spreading all over the world! From one side of the empire to the other, Paul links up with Christian brothers who are able to encourage and support him. It's clear evidence that the task Jesus gave his apostles at the beginning of Acts is being carried out successfully - thanks to the power of God's Spirit, who has very effectively prepared the way. More and more Gentiles have responded to the gospel, as well as plenty of Jews. But the situation with the Jews who DON'T accept that Jesus is their Messiah is still tense.

Read the concluding section of Acts, from 28:17-31.

8. From verse 18, how does Paul view himself, and his gospel?

9. How does he describe the reason for his chains?

10. What is the basis of Paul's message to the Roman Jews?

As usual, some of Paul's hearers are convinced, while others are angry. Maybe Paul's final Old Testament quotation (Isaiah 6:9-10) in verse 26-27 isn't very tactful!

11. What do you see as the significance of the passage Paul quotes in these verses?

Why do you think Luke chooses to leave us with these words (and verse 28)?

What significance would this have had when Acts was first written?

As Paul said in verse 28, God's word HAS been sent to the Gentiles. Paul stayed in Rome in a rented house, boldly preaching the Kingdom of God, teaching that Jesus Christ, who died for our sin and rose as eternal King, is Lord of everyone - Jew and Gentile alike. Paul said, "God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, AND THEY WILL LISTEN."

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Paul said the Gentiles would listen. So are YOU listening? Read verses 26 and 27 again.

Is there a danger that we could make the same mistakes as the people described here?

How do we avoid having “calloused hearts”?

What should the result be of our hearing and seeing of God's word?

What practical steps should we be taking to encourage one another in this?

