

LIFE GROUP LESSON

When God Moves • Week of July 23

Introduction

Have you ever thought about how the book of Acts, especially the latter half regarding Paul's journeys, are still in our rearview mirror? When you stop and think about how 'A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day' (2 Peter 3:8b), Paul's visit to Rome (Acts 28) in a sense was just a couple days ago, right? In all seriousness, the Lord's word – the book of Acts, written by Luke – does not really close with finality. Perhaps these journal entries conclude as they do, because our cue to pick up where Paul, Luke, and others leave off. The ending of Acts is an open-ended invitation for you to join the story of Christ's salvation, the spread of His Gospel in the world. It has been the mission of His Church from the beginning and is still our mission today.

Background

Three months after the shipwreck on the island of Malta, Paul and his traveling companions go aboard an Alexandrian ship headed for Italy. Within probably a couple of weeks, Paul finally makes it to Rome. Scripture says, "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. When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier" (Acts 28:15-16). Paul had longed to share the Good News of Christ in Rome for years! Though the circumstances are perhaps very different from the way Paul may have first envisioned his time in Rome, he finally arrives and is ready to preach. He makes plans to meet with key people as soon as he arrives.

Read Acts 28:17-31

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

Our brother, the apostle Paul, was perhaps one of the smartest, most courageous, focused, energetic and driven men who ever lived. Three days after his arrival, Paul called together the local Jewish leaders and they actually came at his request. He wanted to get acquainted and explain why he was in chains. When Paul says "I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of

Israel—the Messiah—has already come" (v20), they set up a time to hear him speak. Notice their response: "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" (v22). Indeed, history tells us that Rome was hostile toward the 'movement' of Christianity. The world often opposes the Gospel.

2. What are you going to do about it?

God is looking for people who will be persistent. God's plans will not always look like our plans. But as the Holy Spirit had revealed to Paul that he would stand trial before the emperor in Rome, and Paul believed, we too must live into what God's Spirit is speaking to us, no matter the cost. If things, events, circumstances, culture, reactions of people start to work against you in your pursuit of God's call, be encouraged. You are not the first one to suffer for your resolve to be obedient. Christ-followers are a lot like salmon swimming up-stream. Many times, Christ-followers live counter to popular ideology. Yet, our goal is to meet people where they are, just as Paul did. As smart as Paul was and as important as he had once been to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, Paul was willing to appear in humility. No wonder he would later write the words we find in Philippians 2:5-8

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."

3. How can we help you? How can we lift up and encourage one another to live into God's story of redemption?

God is looking for dreamers and risk-takers. Paul envisioned great things for God. He loved his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. After all, Paul had met the risen Christ personally on the road to Damascus! As a result, Paul lived a life of sheer gratitude and great dreams of winning the world to Christ. Because the risen Christ had personally stopped 'Saul of Tarsus' in his tracks on a dead-end path of opposing Christians – Paul's desire became to share God's great mercy and love to others. Paul wanted to tell anyone who would listen that Christ has the power to turn any life in the right direction. By faith in the Lord Jesus, all people can be made right with God and join the Lord in His story of redemption to the nations. Paul did and never looked back.

Close by reading together Paul's words in his letter to the Philippians –

"I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him... For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us" (Philippians 3:7-14).

when GOD moves

Text: Acts 28:17-31

PLAIN TRUTH

Nothing can compare with the _____
when your story _____ Jesus' life
_____ Story.

1. God is looking for people of who will _____ one
_____ towards _____.
2. God is looking for _____.
3. God is looking for those who are _____.

One Year Bible Reading

July 23: 2 Chronicles 8:11-10:19, Romans 8:9-25, Psalm 18:16-36, Proverbs 19:26
July 24: 2 Chronicles 11:1-13:22, Romans 8:26-39, Psalm 18:37-50, Prov. 19:27-29
July 25: 2 Chronicles 14:1-16:14, Romans 9:1-24, Psalm 19:1-14, Proverbs 20:1
July 26: 2 Chronicles 17:1-18:34, Romans 9:25-10:13, Psalm 20:1-9, Prov. 20:2-3
July 27: 2 Chronicles 19:1-20:37, Romans 10:14-11:12, Psalm 21:1-13, Prov. 20:4-6
July 28: 2 Chronicles 21:1-23:21, Romans 11:13-36, Psalm 22:1-18, Proverbs 20:7
July 29: 2 Chronicles 24:1-25:28, Romans 12:1-21, Psalm 22:19-31, Prov. 20:8-10

July 23, 2023