



Growth Group Curriculum
Week 10 – November 14, 2021 – Acts 28:16-31

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Today we wrap up our sermon series on the book of Acts. The apostle Paul has arrived in Rome to stand trial. As he awaits his trial, which most scholars believe actually never happened, Paul goes and meets with the local Jewish leaders. They are unaware of any of the allegations made against Paul, but they want to hear from him and learn about his thoughts on the kingdom of God, and the Messiah.

As is often the case with the sharing of our faith, some people were persuaded by what Paul had to say and others did not believe what he was preaching and teaching. Paul ends by quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 and telling the Jewish listeners that it had been foretold long ago that they would not all listen or understand the way in which God was working out His kingdom.

As Luke wraps up the book of Acts, he reminds us that the message of Jesus has now gone beyond Jewish believers. Paul proclaims that God's message has been sent to the Gentiles and that they will listen. The Gentiles do not have any preconceived notions about who Jesus is or what the Messiah would look like. They will listen because they are longing to hear a hopeful word and Paul will share that word with them.

For two years Paul met with people. During those two years of house confinement, he also wrote letters to the Colossians, Philippians and Ephesians, as well as Philemon. These are often called the "prison epistles." After those two years, it is believed that Paul was released and he traveled again, possibly making it to Spain. He was rearrested around 64 AD and brought back to Rome. From there he wrote his last letters which are called the "pastoral epistles." These are his letters to Timothy and Titus. At some point during this time he was executed.

The book of Acts ends open-ended. Not everything gets wrapped up. Perhaps Luke is anticipating that believers will see that Acts helps to tell the story of how the church began, but that all of us now have the privilege of continuing to write the story. The story of what it looks like to be "sent" by God into the world to share the message of Jesus Christ.

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Exploring the Text

Acts 28:16-31

¹⁶ When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. ¹⁷ Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸ They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. ¹⁹ The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. ²⁰ For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.” ²¹ They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. ²² But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.” ²³ They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. ²⁴ Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.

²⁵ They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶ “Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.” ²⁷ For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ ²⁸ “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” ²⁹ ³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) As we wrap up this series on Acts, what does it mean for you as a Christian to be “Sent”? What can the Church today learn from the early church?
- 2) Paul was in confinement for two solid years. What do you think kept him going? What kept people coming back to hear what he had to say?
- 3) The guard may have literally been chained to Paul. What effect do you think the experience had on him? How can being in close contact with a strong believer change someone?
- 4) Paul had a radical reinterpretation of the Jewish faith. Are Christians called to “Rock the Boat? What do you do with people who will not, or cannot, believe?
- 5) Due to the pandemic, we have recently experienced an extended period of home confinement. What was that experience like, and how did it affect your faith?



- 6) Some of Paul's visitors were convinced, while others were not. Do you welcome questions about your faith? What do you do when YOU question your own faith?
- 7) Have you ever actually not accepted the truth? Or fought against something that you later found was true?
- 8) How do we as LJPC Christians welcome doubters, and "boldly and without hindrance" proclaim the Kingdom of God?

