



# THEMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

## WEEK NINE: SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

**Matthew 28:19-20** *“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Remember in **Acts 9:15-16** when God spoke to Ananias: *“Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.”*

### **Acts 23**

It is by now, about 20 years since Paul’s conversion and although we have not covered all the events in his life, we see how God’s words spoken to Ananias have come to pass. In this chapter we see how God used Paul to bring His truth to religious leaders and then deliver Paul again from those who plotted against his life.

- When you read verse 11 what are your thoughts?
- The Lord told Paul, he must witness for him in Rome, and Paul would understand this would entail imprisonment. And yet, the Lord tells him to be of good cheer! Why do you think Paul was prepared to welcome this?
- Following a visit from Paul’s sister, the commander of the barracks went out of his way to protect Paul. He had no idea that he was enabling God’s will in Paul’s life, to come to pass. Have you ever experienced someone helping you in an unexpected way? Are there times when you have helped someone, not fully understanding why you were doing it?
- Pray that God will give you opportunities to help other people and in doing so you will be blessed, and God’s name praised.

### **Acts 24**

Reading the account of Paul coming before the Governor, Felix, we see a man who is only concerned for his interests. His response was to procrastinate so that Paul was kept two years, whilst Felix hoped someone would offer money for his release. *“After two year went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favour with the Jewish people, he left Paul in prison.”*

- There is an important lesson here which we need to learn. If we want to please God, we cannot be people pleasers. There is a maxim: *“Integrity is who you are when no one is looking.”* Felix was a people pleaser, a man without integrity. He was also afraid.
- How far would you be prepared to go in taking a stand for the Gospel? For some people it could cost them their job, others their life. Have there been times when you have had to stand up and be counted as a Christian? Remember what Jesus said ([Luke 9:62](#)) *“But Jesus told him, “Anyone who puts a hand to the plough and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.”* As the gospel song says: *“I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back”*.

### [Acts 25:1-12](#)

Paul was never one to take the easy way out. Not prepared to help the new Governor, Festus, please the Jews by returning him to Jerusalem, he appealed to Caesar. The response was: *“Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!”* Remember Acts 9:15-16? Paul had stood before Jews, Gentiles, Governors, and now he was to stand before a king.

### [Acts 25:13-27, 26:1-31](#)

In these verses, Paul sets out a powerful case for Christianity by sharing his experiences about his upbringing and dramatic conversion: *“And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven. I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do.”*

- Do we share our experiences with those who don't know Jesus? Psalm 107:2 says: *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so”*, and Romans 10:9 *“.. if you **confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ... for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”*** There are no get out clauses!

King Agrippa had a Jewish heritage which created for him, a problem. To agree with Paul, he would inevitably lose credibility with Festus. If he renounced the prophets, he would lose favour with the Jews. His response, agreed by most interpreters, was a cynical, and insincere comment: *“You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”* (v.28). Having decided amongst themselves that Paul had done nothing that was

deserving of death, or of being chained in custody, they granted him his request. Agrippa's final word on the matter: *"This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar"*.

So, at last, Paul was to have the opportunity to preach the gospel in Rome, the centre of the great, but corrupt empire. It was to be a journey full of incident and drama.

- Have you ever been convinced that God had told you to do something, only for everything to seemingly, go wrong? Paul knew he was fulfilling what the Lord had told him about going to Rome despite the great obstacles along the way. It is a lesson for all of us in faith and trust.

## **Acts 27 and 28**

Luke, the writer of Acts, is very precise and gives a detailed description of this amazing journey.

Paul never missed an opportunity to talk about his faith. In chapter 27 we read they sailed slowly because of strong winds until Paul told them the voyage would end in disaster with much loss, not only of the cargo and ship but also their lives. However, Paul had not only been praying, but also fasting.

- Fasting along with prayer, shows God how serious we are. In difficult times, it maybe that God is nudging you to show total commitment.
- Paul saw an angel of God during the night who told him not to be afraid because Paul must stand before Caesar and consequently not only him, but everyone on board would be spared.

God had not finished with miracles. Having hit a reef, they had arrived at Malta and were shown great kindness. However, we read how when Paul gathered a bundle of sticks and placed them on the fire, a viper came and bit him. He shook off the snake and was in no way harmed. This gave further opportunity for God to show his power in healing. Three months later, they finally sailed and disembarked at Puteoli from where Paul was taken to Rome. Here the authorities allowed him to live by himself with a soldier to guard him. We will give final words to Paul: **Acts 28:28: *"So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it."***

**2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.**

**Prayer: Father God, I thank you for those who were willing to give everything for the sake of the gospel. Help me to be a part of that ongoing work of sharing your love, so that others will hear the good news.**

