READ The BIBLE Together

Acts 21:16 – 28:31
3rd February – 16th March 2013

SHALOM CHURCH, SINGAPORE
(Upholding the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)

Week 1 **[3rd – 9th February 2013]**

Day 1 Summary of ACTS 20:17 – 21:15

ACTS 20:17-38

In his desire to be in Jerusalem as soon as possible, Paul decided not to stop in Ephesus. However, he still wanted to talk with the leaders of the Ephesians Church. Hence he asked for a meeting with them at Miletus.

We note that the leaders of the Ephesians Church were called '*elders*' (verse 17) and '*overseers*' (verse 28), and charged to '*shepherd*' (verse 28) the flock. It follows therefore that elders are overseers and their main role in the local church is to shepherd the flock. We must also note that Paul was speaking to a group of men called elders/overseers, meaning the Ephesians Church was not led by a single man but a team of elders/overseers.

Paul's farewell speech to the leaders of the Ephesians Church can be divided into three parts:

(a) Verses 18b-21 where the emphasis is on "*you know*". Here, Paul appeals to their knowledge of how he had lived his life among them. He would repeat this emphasis in verses 33-35.
(b) Verses 22-27 where the emphasis is on "*I know*". Here, Paul tells them that he knows much sufferings lie ahead of him, but like his Lord, he will press ahead and not turn back.
(c) Verses 28-32 where he exhorts the leaders to fulfill their calling as shepherds, reminding them of who commissioned them (verse 28), to whom the flock belong (verse 28), and from whom they will get the strength to be faithful to their task (verse 32).

Taken as a whole, the message to the Ephesians Church elders would be: *Live a similarly blameless life, be prepared to suffer for Christ, remember that the flock belonged to Christ, that He called you into this ministry and hence you are finally accountable to Him, and look to Him and Him alone for all you need to fulfill your ministry!*

Take time to pray that these will be true, and increasingly true, for your elders.

ACTS 21:1-15

These 15 verses narrate Paul's journey from Miletus to Jerusalem. Along the way, two things happened: (a) Believers tried to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem and (b) believers spent time in fellowship with Paul as he journeyed to Jerusalem.

Concerning (a), 21:4 state that the disciples told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. How should we understand this? Perhaps the more detailed description of a similar event in 21:11-14 can help. In these later 4 verses, we know that Agabus

prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul would suffer in Jerusalem (verse 11). Upon hearing this prophecy, the believers present then sought to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem, but to no avail (verses 12-14). We need not see what the believers did (verses 12-14) as from the Holy Spirit; only the prophecy is from the Spirit. With this understanding, we could see 21:4 as a one-line summary, namely like in 21:11-14, the Spirit told all present what will happen to Paul, and the disciples' response was to try and get Paul to change his mind.

In short, there was no contradictory message from the Holy Spirit. All the Spirit said was that sufferings await Paul in Jerusalem. The attempts to stop Paul going to Jerusalem came from well-meaning but mistaken (?) believers.

We must not miss (b) --- see verse 4, 7, 8 & 10! Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem, never mind what sufferings await him. What steeled him for the sufferings to come was . . . Christian fellowship! Do not underestimate the role of Christian fellowship in helping us walk on in our Christian Life!!

Is there someone that you can extend Christian fellowship today by helping to strengthen him/her to continue his/her walk with the Lord? How will you do it?

Day 2 Read the brief introduction below and ACTS 21:16-25

From ACTS 21:15 & 17, we know that Paul and his travel companions finally arrived in Jerusalem. From this point onwards, Paul's life took an abrupt and dramatic turn! No longer shall we find him travelling to various places to proclaim the Good News, but we shall find him assaulted, arrested, bound and brought to trial (five trials in total) and having to defend himself against his accusers – all these lasting up to 2 years! He will only finally be on the road again in ACTS 27.

1. When Paul and his travel companions arrived in Jerusalem, how were they received?

   Verse 17 ~

   Verses 18-20a ~

2. What problem did James and the elders of the Jerusalem Church highlight to Paul?

3. What solution was proposed to deal with the problem?

Note: The vow mentioned in verse 23 is likely to be the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6). Paul himself carried out the Nazirite vow in ACTS 18:18.

Day 3 Read ACTS 21:26-36

1. (a) To James' proposal (verses 23-24), what was Paul's response?

(b) Do you think Paul was right to do this? Explain your answer.

2. What Paul was asked to do (which he did) was meant to deal with the problem highlighted by James in verses 20-21. However, it apparently did not help.

Using your own words, describe what happened instead? (Verses 27-35)

3. What two accusations were laid against Paul? (Verse 28)

4. The possibility that Paul would be killed in this uproar (verse 31) was very high. Yet he was saved!

(a) Who saved him?

(b) Why, do you think, he saved Paul?

Day 4 Summary Notes for ACTS 21:16-36

Paul, together with his travel companions, came to Jerusalem with a huge sum of money for the Jewish believers. This money came from the Gentile believers. It was a project that Paul had been engaged in for some time, raising money from the Gentile believers to help the Jewish believers in their physical needs. ACTS 24:17 alluded to this.

The initial few days in Jerusalem went well. There were warm greetings and genuine welcome. We assumed that the money was handed over to the leaders of the Jerusalem Church. Paul shared with them the great work that God has done among the Gentiles, resulting in worship and praise to God.

James then raised an issue: *The Jewish believers have a view of Paul that was not helpful. They were told that Paul was teaching and acting against Jewish customs.* This, no doubt, placed a barrier between Paul and them. Was there also an implication that there was also a barrier between the Jewish believers and the Gentile converts that came to faith through the ministry of Paul? If that be so, then this attempt to strengthen the relationship between Jewish Christians and Gentile believers through this financial gift would be undone because of their view of Paul!

Hence, the proposal was for Paul to do something to demonstrate that he was not against the Jewish customs. Paul was assured that this has nothing to do with Gentile believers having to keep the law in order to be saved (verse 25). It mainly has to do with Paul (a Jew) showing to fellow Jews that he does still respect Jewish customs.

Put in this light, Paul accepted the proposal. This is in line with his principle stated elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Whether to Jewish believers or unbelievers, he will do nothing to offend them unnecessarily, but will do what he can so that he can gain a hearing with the Jewish unbelievers and cement his fellowship with Jewish believers. However, if it has to do with observing these customs in order to be saved, then Paul would fight it tooth and nail!

We assumed that upon the completion of the vow, and his payment for the expenses incurred by those four men, it would have achieved what they (James and Paul) set out to do. However, things turned out very differently. Unbelieving Jews from Asia Minor who were in Jerusalem, saw Paul and seized the opportunity to create trouble for him. They accused him of two things:

(A) "*This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place.*"

Paul was at this time keeping the Jewish customs in the Temple! His very act would have been the best defense against this accusation. In truth, Paul never taught people against the Jews, the law and the Temple. Rather, following Jesus, he taught that the law and the Temple found its glorious fulfillment in the Messiah and God's people are now those who by faith trust in the Messiah, never mind their race. We

note that Stephen taught the same (ACTS 6-7) and when he was stoned to death as a result, Paul was there then, as an unconverted Jew!

In the same way, Christians today can be accused of terrible things because people do not understand the message that we seek to proclaim.

(B) "*He also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place*"

This was of course an untruth, though we need not see it as a deliberate lie. The Jews from Asia Minor saw Paul with some Gentiles in Jerusalem, and they assumed (wrongly) that Paul has also brought them into the Temple, something forbidden.

In the same way, the church today can be accused of terrible things because people jumped to conclusions and do not check the facts!

By a touch of irony, and we must also say, by the good providence of God, Paul was saved from certain death by the Romans! Not that the Romans were sympathetic to Paul or the Gospel at this time, but simply because it is the duty of the Roman officers and soldiers to maintain peace and order. God surely has His ways of rescuing His people!!

What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: _____
(Name)

<u>Day 5 & Day 6</u> Read ACTS 21:37 – 22:21

<u>ACTS 21:37 – 22:2</u>

From 22:38, we are given a glimpse into the rather unstable political and social conditions in Judea at that time, with many revolts and assassinations. The Egyptian and the rebellion he led (21:28) was one such incident. This unstable condition will continue right up to AD 70 when the Romans came and destroy both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in it.

From 21:40 and 22:2, we observe that Paul spoke to the Jews in Hebrew and the fact that he got a hearing from them (at least initially). If Paul were to speak to the Jews in Greek, it was very likely that he would not even get the initial hearing!

From 22:3-21, Paul gave his defense speech to the Jews and it can be divided into 5 sections. Remembering the two charges laid against him, it is clear that each section was said to address the accusations:

(a) Verse 3

What, do you think, was Paul seeking to emphasize here?

(b) Verse 4

What, do you think, was Paul seeking to emphasize here?

(c) Verses 5-11

These verses refer to Paul's conversion. What, do you think, was Paul's emphasis as he narrated his conversion?

(d) Verses 12-16

Here Paul talked about the ministry of Ananias to him after his conversion.

How did he describe Ananias?

What was Ananias' message to Paul?

(e) Verses 17-21

Here, Paul talked about a vision he had.

What did the Lord tell him to do? (Verse 18)

What was his initial response? (Verses 19-20)

He finally left Jerusalem because the Lord insisted that he did (verse 21)!

Take some time to read and ponder the comments of John Stott:

"*It was at this point that Paul was interrupted by the crowd, who found their voices again and loudly demanded his death (22). It is important to understand why. In their eyes proselytism (making Gentiles into Jews) was fine; but evangelism (making Gentiles into Christians without first making them Jews) was an abomination. It was tantamount to saying that Jews and Gentiles were equal, for they both needed to come to God through Christ, and that on identical terms.*

Looking back over Paul's defence, we may perhaps say that he made two major points. The first was that he himself was a loyal Jew, not only by birth and education but still. True, he was now a witness where before he had been a persecutor. But the God of his fathers was his God still. He had not broken away from his ancestral faith, still less apostatized; he stood in direct continuity with it. Jesus of Nazareth was 'the Righteous One' in whom the prophecy had been fulfilled.

And Paul's second point was that those features of his faith which had changed, especially his acknowledgement of Jesus and his Gentile mission, were not his own eccentric ideas. They had been directly revealed to him from heaven, the one truth in Damascus and the other in Jerusalem. Indeed, nothing but such a heavenly intervention could have so completely transformed him."

Day 7 Read ACTS 22:22-29

1. Due to the Jews' violent reactions to Paul, the Roman commander wanted to examine Paul under scourging. However, he changed his mind later on. Why?

Note #1: "*The scourge (Latin: flagellum) was a fearful instrument of torture, consisting of leather thongs, weighted with rough pieces of metal or bone, and attached to a stout wooden handle. If a man did not actually die under the scourge (which frequently happened), he would certainly be crippled for life."*

F. F. Bruce

Note #2: "*The commander of the Roman legions in Jerusalem had obviously decided that he would get to the bottom of the truth about his prisoner. The implication is that he ordered this severe treatment not as a punishment for a crime, for he still did not know what charge was being leveled against Paul, but as an effort to get Paul to confess whatever it was that he had done or been to cause such violent anger and hostility from the mob. Torture for truth seemed to be his method."*

LLoyd J. Ogilvie

2. (a) Why do you think *Luke* included this section of 8 verses here?

(b) What is the relevance of this section of 8 verses to us today?

Week 2 **[10th – 16th February 2013]**

Day 1 Read ACTS 22:30 – 23:10

The Roman commander was determined to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. He tried to get the answer from the crowd but they gave him different answers. He tried to use torture as the means to extract the answer from Paul but Paul's Roman citizenship blocked that path. So now he took the third method: Get Paul to be tried by Jewish Sanhedrin, while he himself would be present to hear and observe.

1. (a) Why was Paul slapped? (Verse 2)

(b) What was Paul's response to being slapped? Do you think he did the right thing?

(c) Upon learning of the identity of the Chairman of the assembly, what did Paul do? (Verse 5)

2. (a) Why was there a division in the assembly (verse 7)?

(b) Do you think it was right for Paul to do what he did that resulted in the great dissension? Explain your answers.

3. What can we learn from this incident?

Day 2 Read ACTS 23:11-22

1. (a) Who appeared to Paul? (Verse 11)

(b) What did He say to Paul? (Verse 11)

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2. Describe the plot to kill Paul. (Verses 14-15)

3. Who heard about the ambush and what did he do? (Verses 16-22)

4. Do you think the plot to kill Paul would succeed? Explain your answer.

Day 3 Read ACTS 23:23-35

1. What did the commander do after learning of the plot? (Verses 23-30)

2. What question did Felix ask upon receiving Paul and the letter?

3. When would Felix agree to hear Paul's case?

4. Where was Paul kept, while waiting for the accusers?

Day 4 and Day 5 Summary Notes for ACTS 21:37 – 23:35

ACTS 21:37 – 22:21

These 25 verses record Paul's speech to the Jerusalem mob. Once again, we note that he spoke to them in their own language (Hebrew). This in itself is significant, for the charge was that Paul has betrayed his Jewish roots! Yet the accused is now speaking to them using the Jewish language, showing immediately that the accusations were flimsy, to say the least.

In each of the 5 sections of his speech (22:1-21), Paul emphasized that his Jewishness was incontrovertible. This can be seen in his birth, upbringing and education, as well as his (mistaken) zeal for God in persecuting Christians in his early years. The fact that he was converted and became a Christian, it was the act of God – the God the Jews worshipped! After he was converted, a devout man according to the law and having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt in Damascus named Ananias, he came to minister to Paul. Finally, it was the Jews who rejected him, while he insisted on remaining in Jerusalem. He left only because the Lord insisted that he leave!

Re-read the comments from John Stott in page 8.

ACTS 22:22 – 23:10

This whole event (up till this point) must be most troubling and perplexing. Paul was only trying to do what James suggested, to demonstrate that he wasn't against the Jewish customs. Yet the whole thing blew up in their faces! The Jews in Jerusalem, together with the Jews from Asia Minor, were in frenzy and crying out for Paul's blood. They clearly rejected him, proclaiming that he was not fit to live (22:22-23).

In response, the Roman commander intended to use torture on Paul to get to the bottom of the case. If Paul were scourged, he would have been maimed for life! At this point, we see God's hand. How?

Years ago, Paul's father became a Roman citizen, perhaps due to some service he rendered to Caesar or the Roman Empire. And he passed on his Roman citizen to his children, among them Paul. And it was this Roman citizen that "saved" Paul from being scourged. God has already put things in place to deliver Paul from this physical harm *decades* before he had to face it. What a marvelous God!

From 22:30 – 23:10, we see Paul standing trial before the Sanhedrin. Paul started by claiming that he had lived in all good conscience before God all his life. In other words, all that he did and whatever he did, it was because he was following his conscience, and his conscience was bounded by God's Word as he understands it. Since Paul's life can be divided into two parts, this would mean:

(a) When he was a Pharisee, he did what he did following his conscience – a conscience bounded by God's Word as he understands it.

(b) Now that he is a Christian, it is the same – he follows his conscience, a conscience bounded by God's Word as he understands it.

To the Jewish religious leaders, they could accept (a) but not (b). This was probably the reason why the high priest commanded Paul to be slapped.

While Paul was right to be angry for unjust treatment (he was assumed guilty and hence punished, without any attempts to verify things), he was probably wrong to have reacted in that manner, especially in saying those disrespectful words to the high priest. Two wrongs do not make one right!

When he was informed that the man who commanded his slapping was the high priest, Paul apologized for his outbursts. He admitted that he should not say disrespectful things to those in authority. However, he did not concede the point that what was done to him was unjust.

Probably realizing that he was not going to get a fair hearing, Paul next stated a truth: *He believed in the resurrection*. By saying this, he knew he would get the Sanhedrin divided as they were made up of Sadducees (who don't believe the resurrection) and Pharisees (who do). In the chaos that ensued, Paul was again rescued by the Roman commander and taken back to the barracks.

<u>ACTS 23:11-35</u>
The appearance of the Lord and His words to Paul was a tonic indeed! From His words, we could perhaps confirm that Paul's insistence in coming to Jerusalem was right. It was the Lord's will that Paul should testify for Him in Jerusalem. It also revealed to Paul what lies ahead – *he shall also go to Rome and there testify for the Lord!*

While no details were given, this is enough to tell us that the plot of the Jews (verses 12 onwards) was sure to fail! There is no way they would be able to kill him because he would be in Rome! And one of the ways the Lord would use to accomplish this was the 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen (verse 23) arranged by the Roman commander to protect Paul and bring him safely to Caesarea. Another means the Lord would use is the nephew of Paul – he would overhear the plot, and be brave enough to report it!

Theophilus (original reader) and all subsequent Christian readers of ACTS should be greatly encouraged to see how the Lord would stand by His servant and protect him . . .

And though this world with devils filled, should threaten to undo;
We will not fear, for God hath willed, His truth to triumph through us!

Take time to worship your Lord and your God!!

Day 6 Read ACTS 24:1-9

In ACTS 23:34-35 we read that Felix the governor kept Paul in Herod's Praetorium while waiting for his accusers (the Jewish religious leaders) to arrive in Caesarea. He will commence the trial once they have arrived.

In ACTS 24:1, we read that the high priest with the elders and an orator named Tertullus arrived. Tertullus would be representing the Jewish leaders to accuse Paul at the trial.

1. Read the words of Tertullus in verses 2-4. What do you think he was doing here?

2. Tertullus accused Paul of being a plague. In particular, three charges were laid against Paul. What were they?

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   Look closely at the three charges. Were they absolutely true, partially true or totally false?

3. Tertullus also made an accusation against the Roman commander Lysias. What was it and was it true?

Day 7 Read ACTS 24:10-21

Paul made a reply to each of the three charges laid against him.

1. In verses 10-13, we have Paul responding to the charge that he was a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world. What did he say?

2. In verses 14-16, we have Paul responding to the charge of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. What did he say?

3. In verses 17-21 we have Paul responding to the charge that he tried to profane the Temple. What did he say?

Week 3 **[17th – 23rd February 2013]**

Day 1 Read ACTS 24:22-27

The trial appeared to have ended without any proper conclusions. In verse 22, we read that Felix adjourned the trial and the reason was to wait for the Roman commander Lysias to come to Caesarea. Verse 27 tells us that this adjournment was to last for 2 years!

1. These six verses give us a glimpse into Felix the Roman governor. Write down everything you can know about this man from these 6 verses:

2. When he had the opportunity to talk with Felix, what subjects did Paul raise with him? Why do you think Paul would talk about these subjects with Felix?

3. Verse 27 informs us that two years have passed without any proper resolution to the matter. This means that from the time Paul arrived in Jerusalem (21:17) until now, more than 2 years have passed.

   Would you view these 2 years as wasted years? (Paul could have gone to more places to preach the Gospel and plant more churches, instead of being held in Caesarea as a prisoner!)

   Do you think Paul would view them as wasted years? Explain your answers.

Day 2 Summary Notes for ACTS 24:1-27

Paul and Tertullus

ACTS 24 narrates the trial of Paul before Felix. Tertullus, representing the Jewish religious leaders, spoke in verses 2-8. He started off with flattery, calling Felix '*most noble*' and '*a man of foresight*', and saying that the Jews '*accepted his rule always and in every place with thankfulness*'. In truth, the Jews never liked Felix!

Tertullus then proceeded to accuse Paul the plague of three things: (i) creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, (ii) a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes and (iii) attempted to profane the temple.

Paul's reply to the charges can be found in verses 10-21:

To (i), he said that he did not do those things and they can't prove it (verses 10-13).

To (ii), he somewhat accepted the charge, saying that he indeed followed the Way but it was not a sect. In fact, the teachings of the Way were fully in accord with the Old Testament Scriptures. Indeed it was the glorious fulfillment of it -- the climax being the resurrection!

To (iii), he denied he was seeking to profane the temple, stating instead the real reason why he was in Jerusalem (verse 17) and in the temple (verse 18).

We note that while Paul sought to reply to the charges, he would at the same thing use the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. We can see this clearly in his reply to (ii).

Paul and Felix

Some background information concerning Felix is helpful:

"*He was a complicated, strange mixture of Roman training and spiritual inquisitiveness. His brother Pallos was a favourite of Nero. Through his family influence, Felix had risen from being slave to becoming a Roman governor. He never outgrew his humble beginning, however. Tacitus, the Roman historian, paints a strange word portrait of him: 'He exercised the prerogatives of a king with the spirit of a slave.' His quest for power was never completely satisfied. It had propelled him through three social and political-climbing marriages. At the time of his encounter with Paul, he was married to Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Intrigue, greed and unscrupulous lust for advancement had made him a feared and formidable foe of any who got in his way.*"

Lloyd J. Ogilvie

Do your answers to Day 1 Question 1 match the above description of Felix?

See also Day 1 Question 2. Can you now understand why Paul talked about 'righteousness, self-control and judgment to come' with Felix?

Day 3 Read ACTS 25:1-12

This is more than 2 years after Paul's arrest in Jerusalem. The governor is no longer Felix. He has been replaced by Festus.

1. Based on the description of him and his actions in these 12 verses, what kind of a person do you think Festus was?

2. Verse 7 says that the Jews laid many serious complaints against Paul. What would they be? (Verse 8)

3. Why do you think Paul requested to be tried in Caesar's court? (Verses 10-11)

Day 4 Read ACTS 25:13-22

1. Verse 13 tells us that Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. After they had been there many days, what did Festus tell Agrippa? (Verses 14-15)

2. How did Festus describe his response to the Jew's request? (Verse16)

3. What questions was Festus uncertain about? (Verses 18-20)

4. What was Agrippa's response to Festus? (Verse 22)

Day 5 Summary Notes for ACTS 25:1-22

ACTS 25:1-12

The new Roman governor Festus appeared to be a better man than Felix. From these 12 verses, we can see that his main concern was to ensure that Roman law and justice be followed. Still, being a fallen man, and a man in politics, we see him trying to maneuver his way in the sticky situation to get for himself the greatest gain possible (verse 9). This led Paul to finally exercise his right as Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar.

While we cannot be exactly sure why Paul did this, the following two reasons are possible factors in his consideration:

(a) The Jews had previously tried to get him moved from Caesarea to Jerusalem so that they could set up an ambush to kill him along the way. This could be a reason why Paul refused to be moved to Jerusalem.

(b) The Lord has said to him that he will testify for Him in Rome (ACTS 23:11). Appealing to Caesar would mean that he would have to go to Rome!

ACTS 25:13-22

Take time to read the commentary by John Stott on this passage:

"*Herod Agrippa II was the son of Herod Agrippa I of Acts 12 and the great grandson of Herod the Great. Bernice was his sister, and rumours were rife that their relationship was incestuous. Because he had been only seventeen years old when his father died, he was considered too young to assume the kingdom of Judea, which therefore reverted to rule by procurator. Instead, he was given a tiny and insignificant northern kingdom within what is now Lebanon, and this was later augmented by territory in Galilee. He was nevertheless influential in Jewry because the Emperor Claudius had committed to him both the care of the temple and the appointment of the high priest. He and Bernice came to Caesarea to pay their respects to the new procurator, and during their stay Festus raised Paul's case, which he had inherited from Felix. He told the king three things he had done.*

First, on his visit to Jerusalem, he had heard the Jewish leaders accuse Paul and request his condemnation, but had insisted that according to Roman custom the accused must be allowed to face his accusers and defend himself against them (15-16). Secondly, when the Jewish leaders came to Caesarea, Festus had immediately convened the court, only to discover that Paul was not being charged with crimes against the state, but with religious offences, and with the claim that 'a dead man named Jesus . . . was alive' (17-19). Thirdly, because Festus felt out of his depth in religious questions like these, he had asked Paul if he was willing to be tried in Jerusalem, but instead he appealed to Caesar, and Festus had

granted his appeal (20-21).

Intrigued by Festus' summary of the case, Agrippa said he would like to hear Paul himself, and Festus agreed (22). Paul had aroused his curiosity, much as Jesus has aroused the curiosity of his great-uncle, Herod Antipas."
What have you learnt from the Summary Notes above?

Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: _____
(Name)

Day 6 Read ACTS 25:23-27

1. From the words of Festus, what was the real reason why Paul is now standing trial before King Agrippa and the commanders and prominent men of the city? (Verse 26-27)

2. From the words of Festus, was Paul innocent or guilty of the accusations made against him? (Verse 25)

   Since that was Festus' own verdict, what should he have done to Paul?

Note: Do not miss the similarities between Paul's trials and Jesus' trials:

(i) He first stood trial before the Jews and then the Romans, just like Jesus.
(ii) He was repeatedly declared (by the Romans) to be innocent of the charges, just like Jesus.
(iii) He was not released despite being innocent, because of the personal agenda of the Roman governors, just like Jesus.

Day 7 Introduction to ACTS 26:1-32

ACTS 26 narrates the apostle Paul standing trial before King Agrippa. Here we have a prisoner (dressed in prison clothes?) standing before a king dressed in great pomp. More than that, here is a follower of Jesus before a man who belonged to a family with a history of opposition to truth and righteousness!

Herod the Great had tried to destroy the infant Jesus (Matthew 2). His son Herod Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist (Mark 6). Herod Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great, killed James the son of Zebedee with the sword (Acts 12). Now Herod Agrippa II is seated on the judgment seat with Paul before him!

We could also see this moment as the fulfillment of the words of Jesus in ACTS 9:15 ~ *Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*

In verses 1-23 we have Paul speaking to defend himself, telling King Agrippa his personal story in three phases, portraying himself (i) as the strict Pharisee (verses 1-8), (ii) as the fanatical persecutor (verses 9-11), and (iii) as the commissioned apostle (verses 12-18). He ended his speech by giving a summary of his response to the vision he had on the road to Damascus (verses 19-23).

1. Read the Introduction above. Write down one thing you've learnt:

2. Read ACTS 26:1-8 where Paul portrayed himself as a strict Pharisee.

   What do you think are Paul's main points here?

Week 4 **[24th February – 2nd March 2013]**

Day 1 Read ACTS 26:9-18

1. List some of the things Paul did "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (verses 10-12):

2. Why did Paul change from a persecutor of Christians to become a preacher of Christ?

3. According to verse 16, what roles did Jesus assign to Paul?

4. According to verse 17, what was the promise that Jesus gave to Paul?

5. According to verse 18, what was the task that Jesus sent Paul to accomplish?

Day 2 Read ACTS 26:19-23

"*I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision . . .*" says Paul in verse 19. These five verses show us how he was obedient to it.

1. In ACTS 26:16 Jesus assigned Paul a specific role. How can we see Paul faithfully carrying out this role in these 5 verses?

2. In ACTS 26:18 Jesus assigned Paul a task to accomplish. How can we see Paul faithfully accomplishing this task in these 5 verses?

3. In ACTS 26:17 Jesus gave Paul a promise. How can we see this promise being kept in these 5 verses?

Day 3 Summary Notes for ACTS 26:1-23

When we survey Paul's defense speech before King Agrippa, we are led to see once more of just how Christ-centered the apostle is. Yes, it was his defense speech and so in one sense, he has to talk about himself; but no, he will not stop with himself but will

always find ways to point people to Jesus and talk about the Gospel.

He started by talking about his days as a strict Pharisee. He could appeal to the common knowledge that all Jews in Jerusalem had: *He had lived as a Pharisee. Concerning the law, he was blameless.* He could also appeal to a common belief he shared with all Jews, especially with the Pharisees: *He believed in the resurrection, like them!* God has demonstrated His power by raising Jesus from the dead, and so Paul is now preaching it. Why are they so upset? Who is being inconsistent – they or him?

Next, Paul talked about his days as a fanatical persecutor of Christians. Again, he could appeal to the Jews in Jerusalem who were still alive then. Surely they could testify to his zeal! In fact, he exceeded all of them in his zeal to stamp out Christianity. Yet now he is preaching Christ with all his might. Why the change? Surely they should at least try to find out.

The change came about on the road to Damascus. He had a vision of Jesus. In telling of his Damascus road experience to King Agrippa, Paul was not focusing on his conversion to be a disciple of Jesus, but his commissioning to be an apostle of Christ. His words from verses 16-18 were cast in the way Old Testament prophets were commissioned.

First of all, he was told to get up! Next, he was assigned the role as a witness. This immediately puts Paul in the same position as the other apostles (see ACTS 1:8, 1:22). We note that Paul was obedient to this heavenly vision when he carried out his role as summarily depicted it in verses 22-23. He was given a specific task (verse 18) and that was what he had been doing ever since – verse 20. His faithfulness to the role and task assigned to him by Jesus got him these violent persecutions from the Jews. Yet he was kept safe till now (verse 21-22a). This has to do with the promise of Jesus to him in verse 17!

The argument from Paul was clear: *Why was he being accused and attacked by the Jews, when all that he was doing was simply to obey what God has told him to do!*

The persuasion from Paul was also clear: *The fact that he could stand before Agrippa now and not be harmed, despite the many attempts by the Jews to kill him, it is because Jesus has kept him! Jesus could keep him safe because Jesus is alive! He has risen from the dead, and the belief in the resurrection is orthodox Jewish belief. So shouldn't you also come to believe in Jesus?*

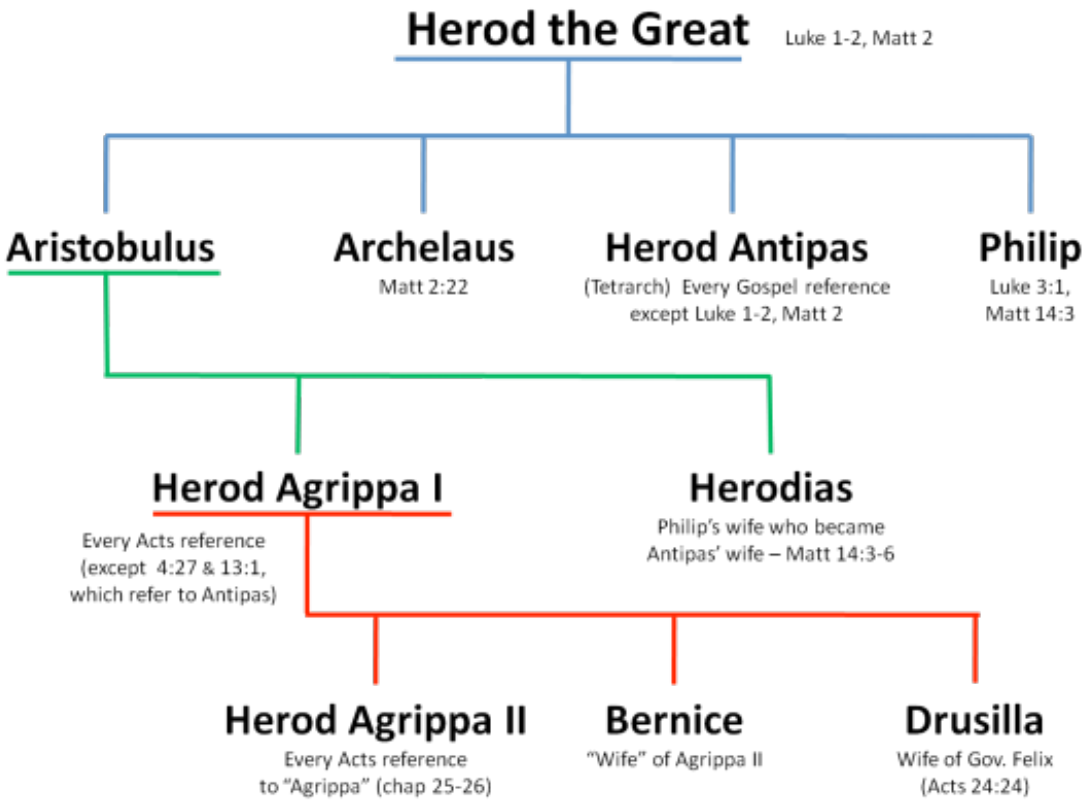
In ACTS 26:24-32 we shall see Paul proceeding to call his hearers to believe in Jesus Christ

1. What new truths have you learnt from the Summary Notes, and how has it impacted your life?

2. What old truths were you reminded of from the Summary Notes? How can you live out these truths you've re-learnt in your life right now?

3. Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: _____
(Name)

Family Tree of the Herod Family



Day 4 Read ACTS 26:24-32

In the place of an orderly summing up to conclude the trial, *Luke* records a most unorthodox altercation between the bench and the dock. Let's see what happened.

1. (a) What did Festus say to Paul and what was Paul's response? (Verse 24, 26)

(b) What do you think motivated Festus to say these words?

2. Paul next turned his attention to King Agrippa.

   (a) What did Paul ask King Agrippa? (Verse 27)

   (b) What do you think Paul was seeking to achieve by this question? (Verse 29 may provide the clue here)

   (c) What did King Agrippa say in response to Paul? (Verse 28)

3. (a) What did Agrippa, Festus and the others say among themselves? (Verse 31)

   (b) What is the significance of this?

4. (a) What were Agrippa's final words to Festus? (Verse 32)

   (b) In the light of these words, do you think that Paul should not have appealed to Caesar in the first place? Explain your answer.

5. What have you learnt from this passage of Scripture?

Day 5 Review of ACTS 24-26

In ACTS 24-26, we see Paul standing trial before Felix, Festus and Agrippa. Paul was accused of some very serious charges, and he had to defend himself. But *Luke's* purpose in describing these three trials was not just apologetic but evangelistic. Paul seized upon every opportunity to preach the Gospel, as seen in his private interview with Felix and his public trial before Agrippa.

If you were standing in the shoes of Paul, would you do the same – besides defending yourself, grasp every opportunity to preach the Gospel?

If "Yes", please share with your RTBT group the last time you did it.

If "No", why not?

Both Felix and Agrippa came face to face with the Gospel. Felix's final reply was "*Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you.*" It was an act of procrastination and the "convenient time" never came for him! Agrippa's final response was "*You almost persuaded me to become a Christian"* and then walked away. To be almost persuaded is not the same as truly persuaded! Both never became disciples of Jesus.

What about you?

Have you procrastinated in the matters of your soul, and are you still waiting for a convenient time like Felix?

Are you an almost Christian like Agrippa, or have you become a true Christian by God's grace?

Heed the exhortation of **Isaiah 55:6-7** today*:*

Seek the Lord while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the Lord,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

Day 6 Read ACTS 27:1-12

After a delay of over two years and 5 chapters (ACTS 22-26), Paul was on the road again! As he had desired, he would be heading to Rome. However, he most certainly did not expect to go there as a prisoner! The year would be AD 59.

Though the decision was made to transport Paul and other prisoners to Rome (verse 1), yet apparently no ship was available. This is probably due to the fact that by then (October), it was not safe to sail.

In consequence, the voyage from Caesarea to Malta took place in two stages and in two ships (one from Adramyttium and the other from Alexandria).

1. Besides the other prisoners and the Roman soldiers, there were at least two other Christians who travelled with Paul the prisoner on this journey.

   (a) Who were they? (Verse 2)

   (b) How was it that they could travel with Paul since they themselves were not prisoners?

   (c) ACTS 20:4-5 informed us that these two men travelled with Paul on his journey to Jerusalem. This meant that they were with Paul during the period of ACTS 22-26 (more than two years). What does this tell you about their relationships?

2. What did Paul do when they had a stopover in Sidon? (Verse 3)

3. (a) What was Paul's counsel in verse 10?

   (b) What was the reason for this counsel? (Verse 9)

(c) Why was his counsel rejected? (Verse 11-12)

Day 7 Summary Notes for ACTS 27:1-12

These 12 verses give us two precious glimpses into Paul the apostle besides the common view we have of him as a powerful preacher, zealous church-planter and clear-minded theologian.

(A) He believed in the communion of the saints!

It is most touching to read of two believers (Aristarchus and Luke) spending so much time with him, from the time they all travelled to Jerusalem until now. They must surely have been a great encouragement to him during his trials. In ACTS 23:11, we read of the Lord Jesus appearing in a vision to strengthen him. We must now add to that by saying that the Lord Jesus also used other believers to strengthen Paul.

Paul did not reject their friendship and fellowship, and from the Sidon-stopover account, we have to say that Paul actively sought out friendships and fellowship with believers whenever he can!

We do not know for sure how is it that Luke and Aristarchus could travel with Paul on this journey, since he was now a prisoner of Caesar. Perhaps they made themselves prisoners, or offered to be his slaves? If this is so, then it is yet another glimpse into just how deep is their fellowship!

Do you believe in the communion of the saints like Paul?

(B) He believed in human responsibility!

The Lord Jesus has clearly told Paul in ACTS 23:11 that he must bear witness for Him in Rome. This means that Paul would not die until he reached Rome. Yet re-read what he said in verse 10! He could read his calendar and the weather (verse 9), and he knew that it was a dangerous time to sail.

Paul believed in divine sovereignty (God has decreed that he will be in Rome and he shall surely be there) and human responsibility (since this is a dangerous time to sail, then we should not; else we will die!)

Do you have problems believing in divine sovereignty and human responsibility at the same time?

Week 5 **[3rd – 9th March 2013]**

Day 1 Read ACTS 27:13-26

Having rejected Paul's counsel not to sail (27:10), the ship was now caught in a most terrible storm (verse 14).

"*In an effort to save the ship, cargo was thrown overboard. Cables were drawn under the hull of the ship and tightened to keep the vessel from breaking under the tempestuous winds and waves. The great fear was that they would be carried into the Syrtis Sands, off the coast of North Africa. That had been the fate of many ships caught by the Euroclydon. Terror gripped all on board the ship. All hope was abandoned."* (Lloyd J. Ogilvie)

Into this dark and grim situation, Paul told the people to take heart, assuring them that there will be no loss of life among them.

1. How could Paul be so sure?

2. Note the phrase "*God has granted you*" in verse 24. What does this mean?

3. What have you learnt from Paul here?

Day 2 Read ACTS 27:27-38

While verses 27 & 33 tell us that the storm lasted 2 weeks, verse 37 tell us that there were 276 people on board. We have already noted in verse 20 that the people have lost all hope of being saved. Now we are told in verse 33 that in their despair, the people have not been eating.

In this dark and gloomy scene, Paul stood up as a leader. He has already assured all of them that they would not die (verses 22-25). Now in verses 27-38, we shall find him speaking up again twice.

1. (a) What did he say in verse 31?

   (b) What, do you think, is the relation between the sailors remaining on board and all of them being saved?

2. (a) What did he call the people to do in verses 33-34?

   (b) What, do you think, is his reason for telling to do this?

   (c) What did he next do? (Verse 35)

3. What have you learnt from Paul here?

Day 3 Summary Notes for ACTS 27:13-38

While it was a curse to have Jonah on board (see Jonah 1), it was a blessing to have Paul travelling with you!

Before this voyage, Paul had sailed many times and so he was not a novice when it comes to sailing. He was right to counsel 'no sailing' (verse 10) but it was foolish of the ship captain and the Roman centurion to ignore his counsel. As we have already noted, before long, they were caught in a most terrible storm!

The storm reveals the character of Paul! As always, he was a blessing to people around him, by the grace of God! Other than helping to secure the ship with the other people on board, what else was he doing during the 1st 14 days of the storm? He was praying! This is how we should understand the phrase in verse 24: *God has granted you all those who sail with you*. He had been praying for the safety of all 276 people on board!

Besides assuring the people that they would suffer no loss of life because God has said so (verse 25), Paul gave the people practical directives as well:

(A) The sailors must not leave the ship! (Verse 30-31)

Yes, God did promise that all of them would be saved. Yet they would need the sailors' expertise, if they were to make it safely to shore. So they must stay or we cannot be saved! The God who ordained the end (salvation of all on board) has also ordained the means to the end (sailors' expertise needed).

(B) Everyone on board the ship must eat! (Verse 34-38)

Note the reason Paul gave for urging them to eat: *this is for your survival!* (Verse 34) Could they continue after no input of food for 14 days? Would they have the strength to do what they needed to do afterwards (verses 39-44), if they have no input of food? So unless they eat, they would die! Once again, the God who ordained the end (salvation of all on board) has also ordained the means to the end (take nourishment now).

John Stott's summary of Paul's conduct here is so apt:

"*Here then are aspects of Paul's character which endear him to us as an integrated Christian, who combined spirituality with sanity and faith with works. He believed that God would keep his promises and had the courage to say grace in the presence of a crowd*

of hard-bitten pagans. But his trust and godliness did not stop him seeing either that the ship should not take risks with the onset of winter or that the sailors must not be allowed to escape, or that the hungry crew and passengers had to eat to survive. What a man! He was a man of God and of action, a man of the Spirit and of common sense."

1. What new truths have you learnt from the Summary Notes, and how has it impacted your life?

2. What old truths were you reminded of from the Summary Notes? How can you live out these truths you've re-learnt in your life right now?

3. Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: _____
(Name)

Day 4 Read ACTS 27:39-44

1. These six verses describe how they finally got onto the island of Malta. Refer to the map on page 27. Note that Malta is Melita. They also gave two instances of how the prophetic words of Paul came to pass exactly. How?

   (a)

   (b)

2. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners. If they did, then 27:24 would not come to pass!

   (a) What prevented the soldiers from carrying out their plan?

   (b) What lesson can we learn from this?

3. Imagine that you were one of the 276 people on board that ship, and now safe and sound on the island of Malta.

   (a) Would you view Paul differently from now on?

   (b) Would you give more attention to Paul's message after what you had experienced?

Day 5 Read ACTS 28:1-6

1. How did the natives treat the shipwrecked travelers? (Verse 2)

2. (a) What happened to Paul while laying sticks on the fire? (Verse 3)

   (b) What did the natives say to one another? (Verse 4)

   (c) What did Paul do to the creature and what happened to Paul subsequently? (Verse 5)

   (d) Seeing that Paul suffered no harm, what did the natives think of him? (Verse 6)

3. What do you think *Luke* wants us to learn from this passage of Scripture?

Day 6 Read ACTS 28:7-10

The stay on the island of Malta lasted 3 months (verse 11). During this time, *Luke* wanted us to know of a particular incident that took place.

1. Who was Publius and what did he do for the travelers? (Verse 7)

2. What was wrong with Publius' father and what did Paul do? (Verse 8)

3. What happened afterwards?

   Verse 9:

   Verse 10:

4. What do you think *Luke* wants us to learn from this passage of Scripture?

Day 7 Summary Notes for ACTS 27:39 – 28:10

<u>ACTS 27:39-44</u>
By verse 40, everyone on board that ship knew that Paul was (at least) a prophet! What he had said came to pass exactly:

(a) He had said that there would be no loss of life among them. Verse 44 gave the report that '*they **<u>all</u>** escaped safely to land.*"

(b) He had said that the ship would run aground on a certain island. It happened exactly (verse 41)!

Luke did not tell us the reaction of the rescued people to Paul. Were they grateful to him? Would they now treat him with respect? Would they listen to his message? How we wish *Luke* would say something! Given the silence, the spotlight is then turned on us. What would we do if we were one of those rescued people?

These 6 verses also showed us that the God who said that all of them would be saved and not perish in the storm, He also worked in the heart of a Roman centurion so that he stopped the soldiers from killing the prisoners. Christians, behold your God!

<u>ACTS 28:1-10</u>
The 'servant-hood' mindset of Paul shines forth here. He has just been proven right while the majority of the soldiers and crew were shown to be woefully wrong! He has

just been the instrument of their deliverance! Though a prisoner, he was still an apostle of Christ!

So he could have just sit down to rest, and let the rest of the people gather sticks for the fire! Why, he could have left such dirty jobs to Aristarchus and Luke! But he didn't! How humbling to see him gathering sticks and laying them on the fire! And how encouraging to read that though he was bitten by a snake as a result of this, God kept him safe!!

Did Christ say he would be in Rome and appear before Caesar? Then no storm or snake would end his life before that happens!

The thrust of Paul being a blessing to others continued in these 10 verses. Because Paul was in Malta, Publius' father was healed! Because Paul was in Malta, many natives with diseases were healed!

Remember ACTS 1:1-3?

The ascended Christ would continue to do and teach what He has done while on earth. He would do it from heaven, through the Holy Spirit and by His apostles. This is how we should understand this episode on the island and the previous one out in the sea! The focus must not be on Paul ultimately, but on Christ! Wherever Jesus is, there blessings abound!!

1. What new truths have you learnt from the Summary Notes, and how has it impacted your life?

2. What old truths were you reminded of from the Summary Notes? How can you live out these truths you've re-learnt in your life right now?

3. Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: _____
(Name)

Week 6 **[10th – 16th March 2013]**

Day 1 Read ACTS 28:11-16

These 6 verses describe the journey from Malta to Rome.

1. What happened in Puteoli?

2. (a) What happened in Appii Forum and then at Three Inns?

   (b) What effect did this have on Paul?

3. What do you think *Luke* wants us to see and learn from this passage of Scripture?

Day 2 Read ACTS 28:17-22

These 6 verses tell us one of the first things Paul did when he was in Rome.

1. (a) <u>What</u> did Paul do?

   (b) <u>When</u> did Paul do it?

2. In his speech to them, he emphasized three points. What are they?

   Verse 17:

   Verse 18:

   Verse 19:

3. Why do you think Paul did what he did here?

Day 3 Summary Notes for ACTS 28:11-22

The fact that Paul found believers in Puteoli and took time to fellowship with them, and the fact that he was so encouraged when he saw believers coming to meet him in Appii Forum and Three Inns, these remind us that Paul was human!

We may have mistakenly thought he was more than human, after all that happened in the storm and on the island. No, he was flesh and blood! Though an apostle of Christ, he was nevertheless a believer still on earth. He needed Christian fellowship!

We have seen this in ACTS 27 and we are reminded of this here in ACTS 28. *Luke* wants us to know that even the great apostle Paul needed the communion of the saints. Hence it would be the height of folly if we seek to live our Christian Life without our fellow believers. **How much do you value the communion of the saints?**

When the Christians from Rome learnt of Paul's arrival, they did not wait in the city but travelled some 30 to 40 miles to meet him. This was how much they wanted to encourage Paul, how much they valued the communion of saints! **Is there someone in this fellowship whom you can go 'the extra mile' to encourage?**

From verses 17-22, we see the intense love Paul had for his fellow Jews! It was just three days after arriving in Rome and after such a difficult journey. Yet as soon as he could, he would ask to see them! He had suffered tremendously from the hands of the Jews. In fact, all the painful experiences of ACTS 22-27 were the result of the hostility of the Jews! Nevertheless, he continued to reach out to the Jews!

How could Paul love people in this way?

Where did he get that kind of love?

How can we do the same?

Day 4 Read ACTS 28:23-29

After the initial meeting (verses 17-22), another appointment was made whereby Paul would speak in greater details to them. These six verses tell us what happened at this second appointment.

1. What did Paul speak to them at this meeting? (Verse 23)

2. What was the response of the people? (Verse 24)

3. What was Paul's assessment of the situation?

Day 5 Read ACTS 28:30-31

These last 2 verses tell us what Paul did for the next two years while in Rome waiting for his trial before Caesar.

1. What did he do?

2. How did he do it?

3. When it was said that he received all who came to him, who do you think the 'all' refers to?

4. Why do you think *Luke* ends the book of ACTS in this way?

Day 6 Summary Notes for ACTS 28:23-31

Note that the message Paul preached to the Jews (verse 23) was similar to the message he preached to all who came to him (verse 31).

Verse 24 tells us that some of the Jews believed while some disbelieved. The next 5 verses (verses 25-29) are probably talking about those who disbelieved. To them, Paul quoted and applied Isaiah 6:9-10.

"*This quotation draws a distinction between hearing and understanding, seeing and perceiving (26), and goes on to attribute people's non-comprehension to their deliberately hard hearts, deaf ears and closed eyes, for otherwise they might see, hear, understand, turn and be saved (27).*

'In this fearful process,' wrote J. A. Alexander, 'there are three distinguishable agencies expressly or implicitly described, the ministerial agency of the prophet, the judicial agency of God, and the suicidal agency of the people themselves.'

In other words, if we ask why people do not understand and turn to God, their unbelief could be attributed (in fact, is attributed in Scripture) now to the evangelist's preaching, now to the judgment of God, and now to the obstinacy of the people.

Alexander goes on to point out that in the Isaiah verses the first of these is the most prominent, in John 12:40 the second, and in the Matthew and Mark passages, as here in Acts 28, the third.

Although our mind finds it hard to reconcile these perspectives with each other, since it is difficult to ascribe the same situation to three agencies simultaneously, yet all three are true and must be held fast with equal tenacity."

John Stott

Since the Jews (as a whole) rejected the Gospel, Paul now turns to the Gentiles (verse 28). Yet this does not mean that he would reject any Jews who may come to hear him preach. Hence the 'all' in verse 30, while it is likely that the majority would be Gentiles, it is possible that some individual Jews are included.

The way ACTS ended is most interesting. It ended with a picture of an apostle in chains but Word of God unchained! The last four words literally meant '*boldly and without restraint*'. These four words are meant to echo in our ears as we close the book of ACTS. The word of God will continue to spread and the kingdom of God will continue to grow – *boldly and without restraint!*

Write down one lesson you've learnt from the Summary Notes above.

Day 7 A Final Note

Did Paul finally appear before Caesar and testify for Christ? Since Christ said he would (ACTS 27:24), we can be sure that he did! Just like the Lord has explicitly told Paul that he would be in Rome (ACTS 23:11), and he did arrive there safe and sound, despite the malice of the Jews and the fierceness of the storm!

We were told that Paul stayed on in Rome for two full years. This was probably the length of time before he finally appeared before Caesar.

Were those two years wasted years?

Not if we read ACTS 28:30-31 again! There we read of many people coming to him and hearing the gospel from his lips. Yes, he may be confined in Rome, but many people in that city got to hear the Gospel as a result! (Read also Philippians 1:12-14)

Not if we remember that the epistles to Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon were all written during this time!

Not if we recall that Onesimus was converted while Paul was in Rome!

Was Paul finally found 'not guilty' and released?

From Paul's epistle to Philippians and Philemon, it appeared that Paul was confident that he would be released. From Paul's first epistle to Timothy as well as his letter to Titus, again the answer appears to be a 'Yes'. 2 Timothy would tell us that he was subsequently arrested again, and this time he was executed by Nero, according to tradition.

With the death of the apostle Paul, and the death of the other apostles, the Christian church would have left the apostolic age and enter the post-apostolic age. This is the age where we live today. But the truth of ACTS 1:1-3 remains true: *Our ascended Lord is still working, by His Spirit and through His church, to open the eyes of sinners, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Him.*

1. What have you learnt from **A Final Note** above? Write it down and share it with someone.

2. We have spent almost 6 months reading ACTS. Take some time to review what you have learnt.

   What are the THREE most important lessons you have learnt from ACTS?

   (a)

   (b)

   (c)

   Go look for someone to share what you have learnt: _____
   (Name)

Acknowledgement

Whatever the weaknesses of this Read-The-Bible-Together guide, they would have been far greater without the kind help of brother Paul PHUA in giving his time and energy to review the entire guide, asking questions all the way and giving many valuable suggestions.

Thank you, brother!

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another! (Proverbs 27:17, ESV)