

4. Fully vindicated

The Jewish rejection of Paul and the gospel he preached through these trials, vindicated Paul's policy of taking the gospel to the Gentiles. This rejection was powerfully symbolised by the shutting of the gates when the Jewish crowd dragged Paul from the Temple (21:30).

Also, John Stott in his Acts commentary in the *Bible Speaks Today* series, highlights the parallel Luke seems determined to draw between the sufferings of Paul and Jesus. There are similarities in their journeys to Jerusalem. Then on arrival both Jesus and Paul: "(1) were rejected by their own people, arrested without cause, and imprisoned; (2) were unjustly accused and wilfully misrepresented by false witnesses; (3) were slapped in the face in court (23:2); (4) were the hapless victims of secret Jewish plots (23:12ff.); (5) heard the terrifying noise of a frenzied mob screaming 'Away with him' (21:36; cf. 22:22); and (6) were subjected to a series of five trials—Jesus by Annas, the Sanhedrin, King Herod Antipas and twice by Pilate; Paul by the crowd, the Sanhedrin, King Herod Agrippa II and by the two procurators, Felix and Festus" (page unknown as this was taken from a digital copy).

Surely Luke wants us to see that opening up the way of faith to Gentiles isn't some strange idea of Paul's, but is completely true to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Reflect together on the implications for us today:

5. FREE!

Paul looked like a prisoner, but really he was free. He was free to fulfil God's call on his life, to proclaim the name of Jesus to the Gentiles, their kings and to the people of Israel (Acts 9:15). He was free from his own bondage to sin, and the useless '*kicking against the goads*' that characterised his life before Christ intervened (26:14). Not only that, but those who had the opportunity to respond to the good news of Jesus, because of Paul's message and ministry, themselves found true freedom.

Finish your time together in **prayer**, thanking God for the freedom we can find even today, because of who Jesus is, and the forgiveness and new life available to every person on the planet because of him. Reflect on the different encouragements and challenges you have noticed from Paul as he faced these 5 trials and bring to God any areas where you believe he wants you to grow in your faith and witness.



Acts: Go

Growth Group Study Guide

Week 12

8 May 2022

Acts 21:17 - 26:32

(Reading: Acts 25:23 - 26:32)

Series Overview:

The Book of Acts is the second part of the writing from Luke (the first part was the Gospel of Luke). Acts is a dynamic book detailing the beginning of Christ's Church, as the good news of Jesus Christ spread from 120 ordinary people, to the worldwide movement we see today. In Matthew 28: 18-20, we read how Jesus commissioned His followers to "Go", and in the book of Acts we see the outworking of that commission. As we spend a few weeks digesting the stories and truths from Acts, our desire and prayer is that we will discover afresh, the hope, passion and dynamic of a small group of people, transformed by the love of Christ and empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit to witness to God's great plan for all people.

Imagine you're the Apostle Paul, 3 missionary journeys behind you, approaching Jerusalem. What emotions are you experiencing? In every town the Jews have opposed you; you're heading into the Jewish heartland; you've heard prophetic warnings along the way about what will happen to you there; Jesus was killed in Jerusalem...

Today we look at what happened to Paul once he finally arrived in Jerusalem.

Read Acts 21:17-40

What do you notice that is positive when Paul arrives in Jerusalem?

What do you make of Paul's participation in Jewish participation rites?

Any reflections on how it turned ugly?

This leads into FIVE trials for Paul, over 5 chapters, 22 – 26. As you review each chapter, fill in the following table. Perhaps 1 or 2 people can do a chapter (trial) each, and then share your findings.

	Trial 1 Ch.22	Trial 2 Ch.23	Trial 3 Ch.24	Trial 4 Ch.25	Trial 5 Ch.26
Context:					
Elements of Paul's Defense:					
Outcome(s):					

In the sermon on Sunday, Steve suggested FIVE 'F's that represent what we might learn from these 5 trials.

1. Fitting in

On arriving in Jerusalem, Paul participated in Jewish purification rites (21:20-26). Even though Paul knew it wasn't necessary to follow Jewish laws to be accepted by God, he shows his willingness to fit in and follow Jewish religious practices out of love and respect for his Jewish brothers and sisters, and for the sake of fellowship with them.

Reflect together on the implications for us today:

2. Fearlessly witnessing

What parts of Paul's defense in these trials do you think would have been most challenging or even offensive to the Jews?

Though Paul did everything he could to 'fit in', he never compromised his message, even though that resulted in violence and imprisonment for him.

Reflect together on the implications for us today:

3. Found innocent

List some examples of how Roman justice, and/or Paul's Roman citizenship, benefits Paul through these chapters:

Clearly, Paul hadn't broken any Roman laws and was generally an honourable, law-abiding citizen.

Reflect together on the implications for us today: