

## 5. Fulfilment

Read Acts 1:8. What is the big mission that Jesus gave the disciples at the beginning of Acts?

If the mission was ultimately to take the gospel 'to the ends of the earth', it had to get to Rome. Paul faced many hurdles, but eventually he arrived. Share examples that you can remember from anywhere in the story of Acts, that demonstrate how God was at work to see his loving mission purposes fulfilled?

Nothing can stop Jesus' ongoing mission of love to the world by his Spirit through his people.

What are your thoughts on the implications for us as we seek to be and make disciples today?

### Close in prayer

We started this study by thinking about our dreams and especially Paul's big dream of taking the gospel to Rome. Jesus' mission hasn't finished yet! As we close this series on Acts, let's dream big dreams of being used by God to take his message of love and life to others. Let's pray for the same passion and commitment – the same kind of dream – that drove Paul across the known world and finally to Rome...



# Acts: Go

## Growth Group Study Guide

### Week 13

### 15 May 2022

### Rome

### Acts 28: 16-31

#### 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.

Most of us have dreams – things we yearn for – that we would like to own, do or experience.

If you wish, share in 2s or 3s, a dream you may have had over the years, or still have.

The apostle Paul had a dream. And we find it by reading from his letter to the Roman believers. He probably wrote this from Corinth during his 3rd Missionary Journey, as he headed to Jerusalem from Ephesus.

Read Romans 1:8-15. What did Paul dream of doing?

We noticed in an earlier study, Paul's mission strategy was to invest into major city centres where people would pass through and take the gospel out through the provinces. Of course his eyes were set on Rome – the largest of all and the centre of pretty much everything in the Roman Empire. All roads (literally!) led to Rome!

Read Romans 15:20-29. Why hadn't Paul headed to Rome earlier? And what was his plan now as he wrote this letter?

Paul is hoping to visit Rome on the way to Spain, but only after delivering an offering to the church in Jerusalem where, as we saw last week, he was arrested and faced a series of trials over at least 2 years. Eventually he appeals to Caesar and is sent to Rome. Paul is on his way to his dream destination!

Read Acts 27:1 – 28:16. The journey wasn't exactly smooth sailing. How would you describe it?

Read Acts 28:17 – 31. On finally arriving in Rome, Paul follows his usual pattern of first trying to persuade the Jews about Jesus, but then sharing the gospel with all who will listen – which he does boldly and without hindrance over 2 years.

Consider the following 5 reflections offered during the sermon, and the implications for us today as we seek to grow individually and as a community in being and making disciples.

### **1. Obedience sometimes brings troubles**

Do we always expect this? Share your thoughts.

We've just seen that Paul endured all kinds of hardships precisely because of his obedience, in this case seeking to take the gospel to Rome.

What are your thoughts on the implications for us as we seek to be and make disciples today?

### **2. God's sovereignty doesn't remove human responsibility**

Have you ever asked: 'If God is sovereign, why does it matter what I do?' Share examples where you think people today sometimes struggle with this question today.

When we read Acts 23:11 and 27:23-24, we see that at least twice God promised Paul he'd preach the gospel in Rome. But Paul didn't just sit back and passively wait for God to keep his promise: he did things like warn against taking the risk of sailing on once winter set in; he took action to prevent the sailors abandoning ship; he encouraged the passengers to eat to survive. We can only be impressed by the combination of his deep faith and trust in the promises of God, hand in hand with his willingness to act. Paul demonstrates that God's sovereignty and human responsibility are not mutually exclusive – such is the wonder of God and the sovereign way he works in and through us.

What are your thoughts on the implications for us as we seek to be and make disciples today?

### **3. Encouragement matters**

Read Acts 28:14-15. Why do you think the brothers and sisters from Rome travelled maybe 80 or 90km to meet Paul on his way? What effect did it have?

Encouraging each other is so important – with our words but also through our actions.

What are your thoughts on how we can encourage each other today, as we seek to be and make disciples?

### **4. Different responses to the gospel**

What do you notice here, and from the whole story of Acts, about how people respond to Paul's message about Jesus?

It's the 'hardness of heart' towards the gospel amongst many of the Jews, that led to Paul taking the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 28:25-28). While many Gentiles believed, clearly there were also many who didn't. Conversely, while many Jews refused to believe, James speaks of thousands who did (Acts 21:20).

What are your thoughts on the implications for us today, as we pray and seek to see people come to faith in Jesus?