

ACTS

ACTS PART 17 - ACTS 28



ACTS

God's Mission | God's People | God's Power

PLAYING OUR PART

I. The Mission that Draws Us In

Luke has been leading us into the story of the Spirit-empowered work of the church in order that we could step in and take the story forward – **to play our part.**

“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ – with all boldness and without hindrance!”

– Acts 28:30-31

“The ending of Acts is for most readers a puzzle, if not a disappointment. Why does Luke not tell us what happened to Paul, whose career he has traced for more than half of the book?”

– Brian Rosner

This is an intentional move on Luke's part:
In the very last word of Acts [unhindered] Luke converts the reader into an active participant.

By the power of the Spirit, the reader must also add his or her own chapter of bold, unhindered witness to God's unstoppable mission”

– William Larkin

II. The Bible as a Six-Act Story

The Bible is best understood as a story

“It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne – everything – to rescue the one he loves. It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life....It takes the who Bible to tell this story...”

–Sally Lloyd-Jones, The Jesus Storybook Bible

Act I – Creation

Act II – The Fall

Act III – Israel

Act IV – Jesus

Act V – The New People of God

Act VI – The New Creation



We do our part, according to the priorities of Jesus, even in the most challenging moment, and then trust God with the results.

III. How Do We Play Our Part in Act V?

We improvise with innovation and consistency.

Innovation is necessary, since we can't simply 'repeat' the earlier Acts of the story. And consistency is essential, since we are not 'making up' who God is, what God has done, or the direction the story moves toward.

1. Pay Attention to God and the Script(ure)

"The most important thing you can do is to read these Scriptures carefully. God's Spirit uses them actively and powerfully to accomplish his purposes – in you and through you to impact the world."

- Eugene Peterson

In paying attention to the Scriptures we;

- i. Learn who God *really is*,
- ii. We are drawn, through faith in Jesus, *into a love relationship with God*, and
- iii. By the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, *we are directed and enabled to live* in step with God's loving leadership.

Take Home: Find a way to 'read these Scriptures carefully' – perhaps by joining a reading group or through connection with a Life Group.

2. Together

We each need to make a commitment to following Jesus that is deeply personal, but we play our part as a part of the body – a 'team'. And we all have a part to play.

How do you need to be involved?

Take Home: Let's seek to clarify and deepen our

commitment to the most important things. Maybe we need to do less – like, fewer sports or other activities – in order to focus on a few things, and on the most important things.

3. With Jesus at the Centre

Take Home: Like Paul in Acts 28:23, the great theme of our witness to the world isn't to preach a moral code and try and fit our culture into a particular political vision, but to announce that hope has come. He has a name. Jesus is the one who shows us what the loving God is like, and calls us to find forgiveness and life in him.

4. Faithfulness to the Mission – Despite the Results

"Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe."

- Acts 28:24

"In Acts 21:17-28:31....Little progress [of the message of Jesus] is made, to put it bluntly, as Paul and the Jews are depicted wrangling before the Roman legal system."

-Brian Rosner

Take Home: We do our part, according to the priorities of Jesus, even in the most challenging moment, and then trust God with the results.

5. In the Middle of the Challenges

"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear to the whole palace guard and everyone that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become more confident in the Lord and dare

all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear."

- Phil 1:12-14

God, in God's sovereignty, uses Paul's imprisonment to bless the churches he wrote to then, and is still using those 'chains' and the pain associated with his ministry, as we read these letters today.

Take Home: From our perspective, what we suffer might seem pointless, but like Paul is saying here, could it be that God actually wants to work in and through what we suffer?

"We have this treasure in jars of clay" (2 Cor 4:7).

Meaning ordinary men and women like you and me, people who mumble, trip, grieve and laugh, get the flu, forget to floss – we take up our cross daily and follow Him, so that a little more of the treasure spills out, a glimmer more of the glory breaks through. The paradox that God's glory shines brightest in our ordinariness, when we least strive after our usual ideas and ideals about glory – spectacle, pageantry, victory. It shines in our humanity..."

- Mark Buchannan

Reflection and Life Group Discussion:



1. Have you ever played an "improvisation" style drama game? What was it like to take up your part in it? What feelings did it generate in you?
2. **Read Acts 28.** In his message, Pastor Dave noted that the ending of Acts is often unsatisfying, for it doesn't "finish" the story of Paul's ministry. He noted that it is intentional that Luke leaves us with the final word, "unhindered", in order to "convert" the hearers into active participants in the mission of God.



As we finish the book of Acts, how has it helped inspire you and/or prepare you for ministry in your world?

3. The major question we are left with is "How" to play our part. Pastor Dave pointed to the idea of "improvising" with innovation and consistency. *Was that a new thought to you?*
4. The first major point is that "innovation and consistency" require reading and reflecting deeply on the Scriptures, and so trusting the Holy Spirit to help us apply what we read in the earlier Acts in a way that is faithful, and "consistent" in our new situations. Why is reflection on the Scriptures – the "script" – so important?
5. As we move into a new situation, where we will be able to meet again as a church in physical ways, how can you – and your Life Group together – play your part in serving God and his purposes?
6. In Acts 28, Paul shows that Jesus is the central figure in God's work. How does focus on preaching Christ and him crucified best advance the gospel? What happens when the primary focus of a church becomes something other than focusing on Jesus and following him?
7. The final observation in the message is the fact that Paul is doing his work while under house arrest. He is not 'free' to move about, but the gospel is in no way hindered. Pastor Dave ended the message by pointing out that it is in our painful moments, and the ordinariness of our humanity that God's glory is most clearly seen to shine through us.

Reflection and Life Group Discussion:

Read this quote from Mark Buchanan and reflect on it together:

"We have this treasure in jars of clay" (2 Cor 4:7). Meaning ordinary men and women like you and me, people who mumble, trip, grieve and laugh, get the flu, forget to floss – we take up our cross daily and follow Him, so that a little more of the treasure spills out, a glimmer more of the glory breaks through. The paradox that God's glory shines brightest in our ordinariness, when we least strive after our usual ideas and ideals about glory – spectacle, pageantry, victory. It shines in our humanity..."

– Mark Buchannan

Do you see God's glory showing through the 'humanness' of others in your Life Group, or in our community? How?

Do you believe that the same is true for you? Why or why not?

Prayer: Take some time to thank God that he chooses to work through our inadequacies so that others can see it's really God who is working in us. Ask God for guidance and passion as we reengage in physical meeting and in the work God has for us together.

Pastor Dave

