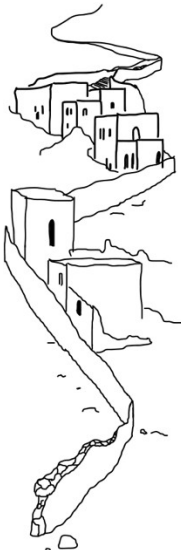




1. Summarize Paul's initial comments to the Jewish leaders in Rome (17-20). How did these leaders respond to Paul's comments (21-23a)?
2. What did Paul mean by "the hope of Israel" (20)? How had Paul emphasized this hope in the previous testimonies he had given since his arrival in Jerusalem in Acts 21:17? (See 23:6; 24:14-15, 20-21; 26:6-8, 22-23)
3. When a large crowd of Jews gathered on the appointed day, how did Paul explain his views to them (23)? What passages from the Old Testament do you think he might have used that day? What can we learn from this about witnessing to Jewish people?
4. What different responses did Paul receive to his witnessing that day (24, 25a, 29)? Would you be tempted to give up if you got responses like these? From what Paul did in verses 30-31, how should we proceed when we receive negative responses like Paul did?
5. The last mention of the Holy Spirit in Acts occurs in verse 25. What does Paul give the Holy Spirit credit for doing here? Think back to other mentions of the Holy Spirit in Acts – which ones stand out to you?
6. Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 here, a passage the Lord Jesus quoted in Matthew 13:14-15. At first reading these verses (26-27) seem confusing, so read them several times and meditate on them. What important lesson is the Holy Spirit trying to teach here?
7. The theme of witnessing to Gentiles came up repeatedly in Acts, starting with 1:8 and ending with 28:28. (See leader notes for more references.) What did Paul usually do in a new city (including Rome) before He witnessed to the Gentiles there? What had the Lord done among the Gentiles through Paul's labors in Acts?
8. Why do you think the book of Acts ends so abruptly (30-31)? What places did Paul express a desire to visit, that he never reached in Acts (Romans 15:24, 28; Titus 3:12)? Where did he go with Timothy and Titus after Acts ended (1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5)? What do these passages tell us about whether he was released from prison in Rome?
9. The book of Acts shows us many different approaches to presenting the gospel. What is one approach that stands out to you as something you could use?
10. Review: Ask each group member to share one thing he/she learned from the book of Acts, related to one of the three themes the elders picked for our study of the book:
- The Holy Spirit - Witnesses - Prayer
What is something you would like to apply to your life from our study of Acts?



Two Full Years in Rome Leader Notes for Acts 28:17-31



Right after Paul arrived in Rome, he approached the Jewish leaders there, probably to seek a hearing for the gospel before his opponents from Jerusalem got to them. He explained why he was imprisoned in Rome and talked to them about the hope of Israel – their resurrected Messiah! They knew he represented the Christian “sect,” which they wanted to learn more about so they could understand why it was being “spoken against everywhere.”

When the big day came, Paul talked about the kingdom of God and about Jesus, using the books of the Law and Prophets from the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament to us). Wouldn't Isaiah 53 have been a great passage to use? How about Psalm 22 or 16:10 to support the idea of Christ's death and resurrection? Paul received mixed responses, with some being persuaded, while others would not believe. As they began leaving, Paul gave them a final warning from the book of Isaiah 6:9-10, telling them they needed to open their eyes and ears, so the message of the gospel could reach their hearts and they could be healed.

As he had done with so many Jewish groups before, Paul then told them the salvation of God they were rejecting was being sent to the Gentiles, who would listen. We see this pattern repeatedly in the book of Acts (1:8; 9:15; 10:42-48; 11:20-21; 13:44-49; 15:7-9, 13-19; 18:5-6; 19:8-10; 21:17-19; 22:17-22; 26:15-23; 28:28-29). Once again in Rome, Paul preached the gospel to Gentiles! He achieved his goal stated a few years earlier in Romans 1:13-15, that he might preach the gospel to those in Rome and obtain some fruit among them.

The book of Acts ends abruptly, with nothing else said after Paul spent two full years ministering in Rome. From other Scriptures we know Paul desired to visit some places he had never been, like Spain (Romans 15:24, 28), and that he desired to re-visit people he wrote the prison epistles to (Philippians 2:24; Philemon 22) – which were probably written during this time in Rome. From 1 Timothy 1:3 and Titus 1:5 it seems he was able to re-visit Ephesus, Macedonia (Philippi), and Crete after his release from Rome. And his plan to spend the winter in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12) on the western shore of Greece, after he had left Titus in Crete, does not fit anywhere in the book of Acts, so must have taken place later.

We now conclude our study of Acts by reviewing the three themes chosen by the elders for the book. The Holy Spirit, our first theme, is working all through the book, including many times He is not even mentioned. How else was Peter able to raise Dorcas from the dead, or Paul able to heal people on the island of Malta? He was also there every time someone witnessed for Christ, convicting people of sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). How have you relied on the Holy Spirit's work in your life during our series on Acts?

Our second theme is “witnesses.” For many that is an uncomfortable idea, yet Christ told His followers that we would “be” His witnesses. I am a witness, whether positively for Christ and His kingdom, or negatively (“Christians are all hypocrites”). Yield to Christ in this area, and allow Him to work in you so you become the kind of witness who glorifies Him in all you do.

Our third and final theme is “prayer.” We will accomplish nothing eternal for Christ without prayer. It isn't magical, but the Lord commands us to do it. We ask in faith, believing He will hear us and do something in response. We pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and work in our lives; we pray for opportunities to witness to others for Him. And He hears us!

Let's move on from our study of Acts filled with the Holy Spirit, going out as Christ's witnesses, and connected to Him continually through prayer.