

# ACTS: POWERED FOR PURPOSE

## Week 10 • Series Finale Study Guide

Acts 27:18-26 | "When a Word from God Is All You Have Left"

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### THE FULL SERIES ARC — WHERE WE STARTED AND WHERE WE LAND

*Luke opened Acts with fire, wind, and tongues. He closes it with a storm, a shipwreck, and a prisoner on a deck. And that is not a step down — it is the fullest expression of everything the series has been building toward:*

- **Week 2** Acts 2 — Power: the Spirit fills ordinary people
- **Week 3** Acts 3-4 — Boldness: the Church carries God's presence into the world
- **Week 4** Acts 5-7 — Faithfulness: Stephen finishes well; integrity over performance
- **Week 5** Acts 9 — Sovereignty: God interrupts Saul; new creation, not reformation
- **Week 6** Acts 12 — Deliverance: the new Exodus; God still delivers — FROM, THROUGH, and INTO his presence
- **Week 7** Acts 16 — Worship: singing before the victory; the prison becomes the sanctuary
- **Week 8** Acts 20 — Finishing: the three things that stop called people from finishing well
- **Week 9** Acts 26 — Grace: labels see a chapter; grace sees the story God can still write
- **Week 10** Acts 27 — The Word: everything else goes in the water; the word is the one thing that survives

**The answer to the series question:** What would happen if we truly lived the way they lived? Acts 27 shows us. You might lose the cargo, the tackle, the sky, and the ship. But the word of God — spoken over your life by the God to whom you belong — will still be standing on the deck when everything else has gone into the water.

### THE DEEPER THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

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Acts 27 is not where you would expect Luke to end. After ten weeks of miracles, conversions, and Spirit-empowered boldness, the finale is a storm. No dramatic healing. No prison doors flying open. Just a ship full of desperate men and one prisoner who has a word from God.

But that is exactly the point. Luke has been building to this all along. The storm in Acts 27 does something that no miracle could do: it strips away every human source of confidence until only one thing is left standing. The cargo goes in the water. The tackle goes in the water. The sun and stars disappear. The expertise becomes useless. All hope is gone. And in that vacuum, the prisoner stands up.

The deeper theological question Acts 27 presses is this: When everything you have built, earned, and relied on is gone — what is left? Paul's answer is precise. The God to whom I belong and whom I serve. Not his credentials. Not his history. Not his accomplishments. The word that God spoke to him. And that word, because it came from God, could not be taken by the storm.

### THREE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE STORM

**1. Every expert has an expiration date.** The pilot had the skill. The owner had the money. The centurion had the rank. The majority had the vote. Four kinds of authority, and every one of them was wrong. A storm is not impressed by credentials. It will take a professional and a passenger and put them in the same water. God is not being cruel when He allows the experts to run out of answers — He is clearing the room. Because as long as the experts still had an answer, nobody needed a

word from heaven.

**2. God speaks through overlooked people.** When God was ready to speak on that boat, He did not go to the man with the wheel, the money, or the rank. He went to the man in chains. And the angel stood beside Paul — not above him, not over him. Beside him. God is not embarrassed by where you are. You are not too low, too tired, too overlooked, or too bound for heaven to come stand next to you and give you something to say.

**3. What the water could not take.** Take inventory of that ship: cargo — in the water. Tackle — in the water. Sun and stars — gone. Expertise — useless. Hope — gone. The ship itself — about to break apart. Everything men built ended up in the ocean. One thing stayed on board: what God said. The word came from God, so the water could not have it. The wind could not move it. The majority vote could not cancel it. The chains could not hold it.

### SCRIPTURE THREAD

*Read these in sequence — trace the word that survives everything:*

- Acts 27:1-12 — The harbor decision: expertise, money, rank, and majority all vote against Paul
- Acts 27:13-20 — The storm strips everything; verse 20: all hope was gone
- Acts 27:21-26 — The prisoner stands up; the angel comes beside him
- Acts 27:27-44 — The shipwreck; the word holds even as the ship breaks apart
- Acts 28:30-31 — Luke's final two words: unhindered and boldly
- Isaiah 55:10-11 — God's word does not return empty — the theological anchor for Acts 27
- Hebrews 11:1 — Faith is confidence in what we hope for — Paul on the deck
- Romans 8:35-39 — Nothing can separate us — not storm, not shipwreck, not chains

### The series closes here:

*Luke ends Acts not with a triumphant arrival but with Paul under house arrest in Rome — still in chains, still preaching, still advancing the gospel. The final two words in the Greek are: unhindered and boldly. The mission is still moving.*

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- The storm didn't care about expertise, money, rank, or consensus. It put a professional pilot and a prisoner in the same water. Where in your life has a storm recently leveled the playing field — and what has that revealed about where you were actually placing your trust?
- Paul said the God to whom I belong and whom I serve — not his credentials or accomplishments. When the storm strips everything else away, what is the one thing you reach for to identify yourself? Is it enough?
- God went to the man in chains, and the angel stood beside him — not above him. Where in your life do you feel too low, too overlooked, or too bound for God to show up? What does the beside of Acts 27 say to that feeling?
- Paul said I believe God — and then immediately said we will be shipwrecked. His faith did not claim the wreck would not happen. It claimed that what God said would outlast the wreck. What has God told you that you need to hold onto even though the wreck is still coming?
- At the end of ten weeks in Acts — what is the one thing the Spirit has been saying to you throughout this series that you have not yet acted on? What would it mean to stand up on the deck and say it out loud?

### GOING DEEPER: THE FAITH PAUL MODELS IN ACTS 27

Paul's declaration in verse 25 — I believe God; it will be exactly as I was told — is one of the most

theologically precise statements of faith in the entire New Testament. Notice what it does and does not claim:

- It does NOT claim the storm will stop
- It does NOT claim the ship will survive
- It does NOT claim circumstances will improve
- The very next sentence is: but we will be shipwrecked on an island

Paul's faith is not the faith that says nothing will break. It is the faith that says: I know what breaks, I know what does not break, and I know which one God promised. That distinction is critical for the life of the Spirit-filled believer. We are not promised smooth sailing. We are promised that the word of God will outlast the storm.

**The final image of Acts:** Paul reaches Rome. Not the way he planned. Not on the ship he boarded. Not on his own timeline. But he gets there. And Luke closes the whole book with Paul in Rome, still in custody, preaching the Kingdom of God with all boldness — unhindered. Persecution could not stop it. Prison could not stop it. Politics could not stop it. The storm could not stop it. The shipwreck could not stop it. And 2,000 years later, the mission is still moving.

## RESOURCES FOR DEEPER STUDY

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### BOOKS

- A Long Obedience in the Same Direction — Eugene Peterson | The definitive treatment of persevering faith — the theology Paul lives out on the deck of that ship.
- It's Not Supposed to Be This Way — Lysa TerKeurst | Pastoral and personal treatment of what faith looks like when the ship is breaking apart and God has not changed the circumstances.
- Acts: An Exegetical Commentary (Vol. 4) — Craig Keener | Thorough historical treatment of Acts 27 including the seamanship details Luke uses and their theological significance.
- God Is Closer Than You Think — John Ortberg | Addresses the beside of Acts 27 — the God who comes to stand next to people in their lowest places.
- The Insanity of God — Nik Ripken | Modern accounts of believers who held a word from God through imprisonment, persecution, and loss — the living continuation of Acts 27.

### PODCASTS & SERMONS

- "Acts 27-28" — The Bible Project podcast | Excellent treatment of Luke's deliberate ending and why the storm is the perfect theological conclusion to the book.
- "When God Seems Silent" — John Bevere (messengerinternational.org) | AG-aligned treatment of holding a word from God when circumstances contradict it.
- "Still Standing" — TD Jakes (YouTube) | Directly addresses the Acts 27 moment — when everyone else has sat down and God needs somebody to stand up on the deck.
- "The Word of God Will Not Return Void" — Assemblies of God sermon resources (ag.org) | AG-grounded treatment of Isaiah 55:10-11 and its application to seasons of storm.
- "Unhindered" — Craig Groeschel / Life.Church (open.life.church) | Addresses the final word of Acts and what it means for the mission of the church today.

### ARTICLES & ONLINE RESOURCES

- "The Shipwreck in Acts 27: History and Theology" — Bible History Daily (biblicalarchaeology.org) | Archaeological and historical background on Paul's voyage and the accuracy of Luke's navigational details.
- "What Does It Mean That God's Word Does Not Return Void?" — Christianity.com | Accessible treatment of Isaiah 55:10-11 as the theological foundation for Acts 27.
- "Perseverance of the Saints" — Assemblies of God position paper (ag.org) | AG-grounded framework for understanding the enduring faithfulness of God toward His people through storms.

- "How to Hold On When You Want to Let Go" — Crosswalk.com | Practical devotional treatment of Acts 27 faith — believing God when the ship is still sinking.

### **SERIES FINALE CHALLENGE — YOUR RESPONSE TO TEN WEEKS IN ACTS**

*Acts ends with the mission still moving — unhindered and boldly. The story does not close. It continues through you. Here is how to carry this series forward:*

- Read Acts 27:18-26 and Acts 28:30-31 back to back. Let the storm and the finale sit together. What does it say that Luke ends the book not with a resolution but with a man still in custody, still preaching?
- Write down the word God has spoken over your life — a promise, a calling, a Scripture that has anchored you. Date it. Put it somewhere the storm cannot reach it. Say it out loud this week, especially on the days when the sky goes dark.
- Identify your deck moment — the place in your life where God is calling you to stand up and speak, even though you have not been given the vote, the credential, or the platform. What is stopping you?
- The three things to carry from Acts 27: Stop waiting for the room to validate you. Keep your word from God where the water cannot reach it. When the experts run out — stand up.

**The series question — one final time:** *What would happen if we truly lived the way they lived? In our homes, our families, our city, our church — if Christianity became more than something we believe and became something we actually experience?*

***Whatever God told you is going to outlast whatever is happening to you.***