

## MAIN POINT

Our "Living Sent" study draws to a close this week with Paul's final evangelism attempt in the Book of Acts. While under house arrest in Rome, Paul spoke extensively from morning till night. As he spoke some believed and some did not. We must speak and allow the Holy Spirit to convict and convince. We continue to share and serve regardless of the response. A missional life leaves the results to God.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

**What's the most memorable thing that has ever happened to you while sharing your faith?**

**In what circumstances is it easy for you to share God's love with others? In what circumstances is it difficult?**

**Why might a Christian feel exempt from witnessing to others? Are there any valid reasons for not witnessing? Explain.**

Paul could have easily let his circumstances override his proclamation of the gospel. Not only was he under house arrest in Rome, but plenty of people had rejected his teaching and lashed out against him. Instead of throwing in the towel, he continued to proclaim God's love to all who would listen to him. We should do the same.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Since Paul was not considered a dangerous criminal, he enjoyed limited freedom in Rome while waiting for his case to come up. House arrest permitted him to have visitors. Paul took the initiative to invite the Jewish leaders to meet with him. He probably wanted to learn from these leaders whether his enemies in Judea were planning to make life difficult for him in Rome, but, more than that, wanted to share the gospel with them. Paul demonstrated Jesus was the Messiah, but his message received mixed responses from the Jewish leaders.

**> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 28:23-24.**

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**Do you think people are generally interested in Christianity? Why or why not?**

**Why do most of us fear rejection? In what areas do adults experience rejection? What responses can we make to rejection?**

Not surprisingly, Paul's message received mixed responses from these Jews. Some were persuaded Jesus was the Promised Messiah, but others did not believe. Throughout Paul's ministry, he experienced the truth that the gospel will elicit mixed reactions but some who hear will receive it. That is enough reason to keep sharing.

**> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 28:25-31.**

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**What are the implications of verses 25-28? Why would this have upset the Jewish leaders?**

**How have our lives been impacted by God making the gospel available to the Gentiles?**

**What do you think the religious leaders debated as they left Paul?**

**How can these verses change the way you think about sharing your faith?**

Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10. The words described the Jewish leaders' forefathers, but the prophecy fit the Jews of Paul's time: they were willfully rejecting God's revelation to them in Jesus. God wanted to redeem them, but they refused the salvation He offered in Jesus. In contrast to their rejection of the gospel, pagans were welcoming the message of God's saving love and grace in Jesus, the Lord. Paul contrasted the Jews' rejection of the gospel with the Gentiles' positive response.

**Read Acts 28:31 again. What is the significance of this close to the Book of Acts? How should this verse impact our mission to speak and serve in this world?**

**Would anyone use the terms "boldly" and "without hindrance" to describe your witnessing? If so, what would lead them to say so? If not, how can you develop a bolder witness?**

Acts ends in an unusual way. Paul proclaimed the gospel without hindrance. Literally, the final Greek word is an adverb: "unhinderedly." Not only had the gospel reached Rome, but more importantly it overcame all barriers and was proclaimed freely. Throughout Paul's ministry, his confidence in the gospel and in God's work through him remained steadfast. Read 2 Timothy 4:16-18, at the close of Paul's last letter.

**What can we learn from these final words from Paul, which were penned as he awaited execution for his faith?**

## **NEXT STEPS**

Leave your group with these parting thoughts, designed to put action to the truths learned and re-emphasize the principles from your meeting time.

The Book of Acts closes on a victorious note, but the story goes on today. The church that began as an organism motivated by the gospel in Acts 1 continues on through Acts 28 and to the present. Some have noted that we are living in the 29th chapter of Acts.

**What can you do this week to be reminded of the power of the gospel in your own life?**

**What opportunities to live sent might you be overlooking? What opportunities can you set up this week?**

Together  
Ordinary  
Compassionate  
Bold  
Relevant  
Confident

**What is your biggest takeaway from our “Living Sent” study? Of the six characteristics of a missional life we studied, which do you anticipate will be the most challenging for you to implement? Make notes to pray for each individual regarding the specific area(s) they mention.**

**How has our study changed your perspective on what a life on mission for God looks like?**

## PRAY

Pray that God would give us boldness like Paul to witness regardless of our circumstances. Ask that He would equip us to touch Jacksonville with His love. Close by giving group members the opportunity to voice their personal prayers, highlighting prayers that have surfaced during our “Living Sent” study.

## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up e-mail to your group with some or all of the following information:

- ☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - **Whom do you know in Jacksonville who might be receptive to the gospel? How can you reach out to them this week?**
- ☐ The challenge to memorize Acts 28:29-31.
- ☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

**CHETS CREEK CHURCH****LIVING SENT**

CONFIDENT (ACTS 28:23-30)

**THE RESPONSE TO PAUL'S MESSAGE (ACTS 28:23-30)**

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**28:23** On a prearranged date, a large group of Jews appeared at Paul's house to hear him present the gospel. He preached all day about the kingdom of God, which is God's sovereign rule in the hearts of individuals. He showed how God's rule came to us supremely through Jesus Christ. They were Jewish and would be familiar with the Scriptures. Paul sought to convince them through all the Scripture, both the Law and the Prophets, that Christ is the long-awaited Messiah. This was his usual manner of witnessing to Jews (17:2-3,10).

**28:24** The Jewish response to Paul's testimony was mixed. Some believed, but others rejected the gospel. Paul often experienced divided responses. Frequently his testimony in the synagogues evoked so much controversy that he had to abandon his witness there altogether. In such circumstances, he turned to the Gentile community, where he found people more receptive to his message (13:44-48; 18:5-7; 19:8-10).

**28:25-27** The negative response seemed to dominate among the Roman Jews. Paul shared one final Scripture with them, which applied tragically to themselves. Paul referred to the words that God spoke to Isaiah at the time of his call (Isa. 6:9-10). God warned Isaiah that his task would not be easy. He would be witnessing to a people who had become blind, hard of hearing, and calloused of heart. They would hear the words of the prophet but they would not really hear, because they would not act on the message. They would see the truth, but they actually would be blind, because they would not take the message to heart by changing their will and their deeds. If they truly heard and saw, they would turn to God in genuine repentance.

**28:28** When so many of the Roman Jews failed to accept Paul's witness, Paul responded in a familiar manner: he turned to the Gentiles, to the receptive group—they will listen. Paul was not giving up on his fellow Jews. The question was not one of excluding Jews but rather of including Gentiles. God had shown Paul that He was including the Gentiles in the salvation brought by Christ. He had blessed Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. Throughout his ministry, though, Paul wrestled with his own people's poor response to the gospel. Paul never abandoned his efforts to lead them to Christ, but at the same time he learned to put his energy where he received the greatest response.

**28:30** For two years Paul awaited his trial before Caesar. He probably did not even note the passage of time. He was too busy witnessing to all who came to see him. This had been the story of Paul's entire ministry. He preached to everyone. He adapted his approach to his audience. To the Jews he preached as a Jew; to the Gentiles he became as a Gentile, all with the single goal of leading everyone to Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Paul also adapted his witness to his personal circumstances. For example, he wrote the Philippians how his imprisonment had not been able to hamper his testimony about the gospel. Instead, the gospel flourished as he witnessed even to the prison guards and as his own bold testimony challenged other Christians to greater witnessing (Phil. 1:12-14).