

# The Acts of the Apostles

## Course Description:

The book of Acts is a gripping narrative of journeys fraught with peril and uncertainty, an inspiring record of men defying all odds to bring the good news of Jesus Christ beyond the delineated limits of endurance and imagination. Yet there are underlying principles that characterize the lives and undertakings of these men and women who responded to God's call to be His witnesses to the end of the earth. God's work on earth, though miraculous, is subject to fundamental principles. In this course, as we examine the last eleven chapters of Acts, considered to be a biography of the apostle Paul's life, we will not merely look at the visible results of Paul's labor, but how he labored, not alone, but with companions and teams of brothers and sisters. The burden of preaching the gospel and raising up churches did not rest wholly on Paul, but many brothers and sisters were raised up, with ministries, to spread the gospel and minister to the needs of the churches. We will examine how the apostles fellowshiped together and supported each other, and how they fellowshiped with the elders of different churches. We will see how Paul used every opportunity, whether the exercise of his legal right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar, or imprisonment or shipwreck, to testify and announce the gospel. We will see how people not only believed in Jesus Christ, but broke their idols in pieces to consecrate themselves to the Lord. What can we learn from these characteristics? Even though many of us may not travel the world like the apostles, many of these principles can guide our daily living to be a testimony of Christ to those around us, and to continue the legacy of the book of Acts.

**Instructor:** Antipas Desai

**Time:** Saturdays 12:00 (noon) – 1:00 PM

**Class Size:** No limit

## Syllabus (Week by week)

Following the chapters in the book of Acts:

1. Chapter 18: The gaining of a couple as Paul's companions, becoming a base for Paul's labor in Corinth and the raising up of the church there. Paul worked with his own hands to possibly support his coworkers.
2. Chapter 19: The fruit of Paul's labor: the Ephesian believers not merely believing in the Lord, but breaking their idols in their consecration to the Lord.
3. Chapter 20: Paul's seven traveling companions, raised up to serve the Lord in a full time capacity, and to develop their ministry.
4. Chapter 21: Paul's attempt to fellowship with the elders in Jerusalem concerning the ordinances of the law inundating the churches, yet himself being helplessly swept away in an atmosphere of religious fervor.
5. Chapters 22–23: Paul's defense and testimony before the people in Jerusalem; his defense before the high priest; God's command to him to testify in Rome; the plot to kill Paul and God's sovereign intervention.
6. Chapters 24–25: The mysterious two year period of his imprisonment in Caesarea. Paul's defense before Felix and Festus, and his recourse to his legal right by appealing to Caesar as a means of eventually preaching the gospel in Rome.

7. Chapter 26: Paul's powerful defense and testimony to Agrippa of his conversion and the commitment that God had given him, almost persuading Agrippa to become a Christian.
8. Chapter 27: Paul demonstrates, in adversity, the highest humanity as an occasion for the gospel.
9. Chapter 28: Preaching the word to the end of the earth (Rome, the seat of paganism). Placed under house arrest, yet still seeking ways to preach the gospel, and teach the truth.

#### **Course Objective:**

We would like to learn how to contact people at our job or school, to find companions, even as Paul contacted Aquila and Priscilla when he was working with his hands (chapter 18). When we shepherd people, do they consecrate themselves to the Lord, even to the point that they break their "idols" (chapter 19)? When we serve the Lord, do we serve independently, or do we serve in a team with a view to raising up pillars with a ministry (chapter 20)? In our serving, we need to be aware of the dangers of religious ordinances, forms and rituals inside and outside of us, and how they can frustrate us from following a living Christ (chapter 21). Do we seize every opportunity, whether the environment is positive or negative, to testify our experience of Christ (chapters 22–26)? In adversity, do we have a high humanity to deny ourselves and care for people, making known to them the gospel (chapter 27)? Even if we become weak or limited by our environment, can we still seek ways to preach the gospel and continue the book of Acts (chapter 28)?

#### **Resources:**

- Acts of the Apostles, The Bible
- A Study of Acts, Volumes II & III, Titus Chu
- Life and Epistles of St. Paul, by J. S. Conybeare and J. S. Howson

#### **Structure:**

Lecture with a 10–15 minute question/discussion period

#### **Homework:**

Participants will be expected to invest 30 minutes each week in reading assigned verses and giving short answers to assigned questions. Group work is encouraged. Some questions may ask participants to share their thoughts in the discussion period, thus facilitating group discussion.

*The timing and content of this class has been specially considered in view of participation of saints from Africa. For those from Africa who wish to join, please register through the church in Accra or the church in Kampala. Even though this class has been designed with Africa in view, all saints from everywhere are welcome to join them. All other registration is still through this website.*