

**Confidence Amid Chaos**  
Acts 21.18-23.11  
**Small Group Guide**

**Opening question:**

- Other than Christ and Christianity, what is one thing that you think you could easily try to convince others of its value? It can be a household product, movie, music, hobby, sport, etc.
- Or, if you plan in advance, have people bring something that represents what they would like to “sell” and try “selling” it to other members in the group.
- Or, even have this same friendly “selling” competition in teams of 2s, 3s, or 4s.

**Reading for Background:** Off and on since September of 2014, we’ve been looking at the story in the book of Acts, which follows the beginnings of the Christian movement. Luke, the writer of Acts, tells the story of how the mission of Jesus—to bring people to new life through faith in him—goes from being a small, Jewish offshoot in one little part of the world to an unstoppable, worldwide movement that has transformed people all over the globe. In today’s reading, Paul goes to Jerusalem, where it has been prophesied that he will suffer.

**Now that you have a grasp of the background, TAKE TURNS READING Acts 21.18-23.11. –OR—break the reading into sections, and then assign pairs of people to read and report on each section, using the questions below.**

1. How would you summarize and outline this story? (Use section headings in your Bible, if necessary.)
  - a. What do you learn about Paul’s relationship with the Jerusalem Christian leaders in Acts 21:17-26?
  - b. What do you learn about the nature of the opposition in Jerusalem from 21:27-36? Describe.
  - c. From Acts 21:37-22:21, what do you learn about the gospel and what do you learn about Paul’s mission?
  - d. In 22:22-29, why is Paul’s citizenship important?
  - e. In 22:30-23:11, Paul is brought before the Jerusalem Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin. What conflict broke out and why?
2. In today’s passage, Pastor Josh points out, “Paul is Exhibit A for the fact that even the most zealous, law-keeping Jewish people needed to be cleansed from their sin.” As such, the first reason you can be confident in the message that you’ve been given to share is that **we have a message that even the most put-together people need.**
  - a. On a scale from 1-10, with 10 being highly confident, how confident are you to share about Jesus with those who seem successful and seem to have their lives all together? If there is any lack of confidence (and/or fear), what causes it?
  - b. Josh received one good piece of advice: “Never forget, no matter how much someone has, they still put their pants on one leg at a time.” What do you think would encourage you to be confident in sharing the message of Christ with “put together” people?

- c. Where might you personally be resisting the gospel by justifying yourself before God with some of your good deeds or character traits?
  - d. How might this self-justification affect our ability to share the gospel with others?
3. Pastor Josh's second reason that you can have great confidence in giving your life to the sharing of the Christian message is that **we have a message that gives insurmountable status to even the worst outsider.**
- a. The above message sounds great for people we know from a distance. But honestly, how would you feel if the greatest antagonist in your life, the person who most makes your life difficult, were to receive a pass to heaven by confessing God on the last day of his or her life like the thief on the cross did?
  - b. How are we like the older brother in the Prodigal Son story who resents the extravagant forgiveness and grace his father gives his younger brother?
  - c. Is there anyone you are having a hard time forgiving (not trusting—which is earned—but forgiving, which is commanded by God)? How might unforgiveness be related to the unmerited, free gift of God's grace?
4. Josh's third point about orienting your life around the mission of Jesus is that **we have a message worth using every tool at our disposal to communicate.**
- a. How do you see Paul doing this in today's passage in Acts?
  - b. Who is someone in your life that seems especially resistant to the gospel or seems like they would be resistant if you tried? Let's have the rest of the group provide suggestions on how you use "every tool at your disposal": looking for common ground with a person or group, using humor, telling our own story, using our money, being strategic, making the environment more receptive, etc.
  - c. What obstacles to the gospel might there be with this person? Is there any way of removing some of them? If you were to invite him/her to a church function, are there any obstacles that you can think of that we, as a church, ought to remove? Again, feel free to have the group chime in.
  - d. From this passage, how might suffering be God's tool to reach a person or people?

5. **Final discussion:** Pastor Josh articulated his big hope for each of us as we go through Acts by saying the following statement. After you read it, answer the question, "Where are you in terms of seeing your life this way, and identifying your place in the unstoppable mission?"

*One of my biggest hopes throughout this series—one of the things that I pray for all of you today—is that as a result of studying Acts you'll come to look at your life differently than you ever have before. My hope is that you'll start to see your entire life through the lenses of this unstoppable mission of Jesus.... And what I so want to see happen among you, men and women of TVC, is for your heart to beat with this question: What is my place in carrying out this unstoppable mission?*

6. **Share and Pray:** Among our other prayer requests, let's pray for specific people or a people group that we want to introduce to the Lord.