

Lessons from Acts 15 – 28

Chapter 15

1. Salvation by Grace, Not Works

In Acts 15, certain Jewish believers taught that Gentile converts had to be circumcised to be saved. Peter referred to this as an unbearable "yoke". Seventh-day Adventists understand this as a foundational warning for the remnant church: **justification is strictly by faith in Jesus Christ**, and obedience is the *result* of salvation, not its prerequisite.

2. Unity and Church Structure

The early church faced a divisive issue that could have shattered it into factions. Instead of splitting, they appointed representatives to consult the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. This teaches the remnant the importance of:

- **Respecting church leadership:** Utilizing established councils and conferences to resolve doctrinal disputes.
- **Open discourse:** Taking time to openly discuss and reason together.

3. The Danger of Legalism

Co-founder Ellen G. White noted that some Jewish Christians wanted to incorporate the exact rules and ceremonies of the Mosaic law into the Christian faith. The remnant is cautioned against similar legalism—evaluating a member's spirituality based on cultural traditions or human-made rules rather than God's moral law and Christ's character.

4. Cultural Sensitivity in Evangelism

James ultimately ruled that Gentiles should not be troubled with Jewish customs, but asked them to abstain from idolatry, sexual immorality, and blood. This highlights that while **truth remains absolute, methods and cultural approaches should adapt** to reach diverse populations effectively without causing stumbling blocks.

5. Prophetic Fulfillment and the Remnant Mission

During the council, James quotes Amos 9, noting that God's plan is for the "residue of men" (the remnant) to seek the Lord. This reminds modern-day Adventists that the true "remnant and its mission" are inherently outward-focused, tasked with proclaiming the everlasting gospel of Revelation 14 to the entire world.

Chapter 16

1. The Priority of the Sabbath and House Churches

- **Riverside Worship:** When Paul and his companions arrived in Philippi, they searched for a place of prayer by a river on the Sabbath because there was no established synagogue. This demonstrates the remnant's commitment to **Sabbath observance** and public worship, even when facilities are absent.
- **Open Homes:** The conversion of Lydia and the opening of her home for worship establish the importance of **home groups** and hospitality as central hubs for the church's ongoing mission.

2. Discernment and Conflict

- **Python Spirit:** The slave girl who followed Paul and Silas possessed a "Python spirit" of divination. While she correctly proclaimed them as "servants of the Most High God," Paul discerned that her endorsement compromised the Gospel. The lesson for the remnant is clear: even messages that sound true must be tested against the Scriptures, as Satan often uses partial truths to deceive.

3. Praising in Affliction

- **The Philippian Jail:** Stripped, beaten, and bound in stocks in the inner prison, Paul and Silas didn't complain. Instead, they prayed and sang hymns to God.
- **Enduring Witness:** The remnant is prophesied to face the **time of Jacob's trouble** and the final crises of earth. The story of Paul and Silas serves as a powerful example of remaining steadfast and finding joy in God amidst severe persecution.

4. The Urgent Mission of Salvation

- **The Jailer's Conversion:** The midnight earthquake shook the prison, leading the panicked jailer to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer—"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household"—is the core of the everlasting gospel that the remnant is called to share globally.
- **Reforming and Baptizing:** The immediate baptism of the jailer and his household highlights the urgency and transformative power of the Gospel message.

Chapter 17

1. Scriptural Reasoning (Acts 17:2)

- **The Method:** In the synagogue, Paul reasoned with the people using the scriptures. The Greek word used is *dialogomai* (the root of "dialogue"), demonstrating that effective witness involves opening God's Word and proving from it that Jesus is the Messiah.
- **The Lesson for the Remnant:** The modern remnant is tasked with taking the Everlasting Gospel to the world (Revelation 14:6). Like Paul, the church must engage in intelligent, Bible-based persuasion rather than relying merely on emotion or tradition.

2. The Berean Standard (Acts 17:11)

- **The Characteristic:** The Bereans are praised because they were "more noble"—they received the word with all readiness and **sought the scriptures daily** to verify Paul's teachings.
- **The Lesson for the Remnant:** In an era of religious deception, the remnant must be deeply rooted in the Bible. Adventists believe the **spirit of prophecy** (the writings of Ellen G. White) is given to guide the church back to the Scriptures, which remain the ultimate test of all truth.

3. Contextual, Yet Uncompromising Witness (Acts 17:22-31)

- **The Approach:** On Mars Hill (the Areopagus), Paul observed the culture of Athens. He found a point of contact (the altar to "the unknown God") and used their own poets to introduce the Creator God.
- **The Climax:** Despite adapting his initial approach, Paul did not water down the message. He brought them directly to the truth of the resurrection and the reality of a coming judgment.
- **The Lesson for the Remnant:** The remnant must understand the times and cultures they are living in, engaging the community respectfully. However, their primary message must always include the **judgment hour** and the call to repentance, mirroring the **Three Angels' Messages** of Revelation 14.

Chapter 18

1. Lay Ministry & The Sanctuary of Home

Paul lived and worked as a tentmaker alongside Aquila and Priscilla. SDA theology and teachings in the Sabbath School Net highlight this as a model for the remnant. The church is not confined to ordained ministers or an institutional building. Instead, faithful lay members, families, and small groups—like the house of Justus and the ministry of Aquila and Priscilla—serve as the heartbeat of the church's witness.

2. Discerning When to Shift Focus

When the Jewish leaders rejected and blasphemed his message, Paul symbolically shook his garments and declared he would take the gospel to the Gentiles. The Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute emphasizes that the remnant's mission is universal. This action teaches the remnant to discern when a persistent rejection of truth requires moving on to receptive fields without taking on the guilt of those who refuse to hear.

3. Divine Assurance for the "Fear Not" Moment

In Acts 18:9-10, God appears to Paul in a vision, telling him, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace". The remnant church faces periods of intense opposition and spiritual fatigue. This vision reassures God's people that He is actively present and that He has "many people" in unexpected places. It serves as a reminder to the remnant to trust God's protection while proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages.

4. Mentoring and Teachable Spirits

In Acts 18:24-28, Priscilla and Aquila humbly take Apollos aside to explain the "way of God more perfectly". This demonstrates that the remnant must not only preach boldly but also possess the discernment and humility to disciple and guide new or growing believers so they can effectively defend the truth.

Chapter 19

1. The Need for the Holy Spirit and Complete Truth

When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he found disciples who believed in Jesus but had an incomplete understanding, having only received John's baptism.

- **SDA Explanation:** Just as these believers needed to accept the full gospel and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit to be spiritually empowered, the modern

remnant must not be content with partial or "head knowledge." The remnant is defined by the "testimony of Jesus," which Adventists understand as the **Spirit of Prophecy** (Revelation 12:17; 19:10). A dynamic, daily infilling of the Holy Spirit is essential to carry out the end-time mission.

2. Radical Repentance and the Renunciation of Evil

When the seven sons of Sceva tried to use Jesus' name in magic, the demon exposed their lack of genuine faith, resulting in their public defeat. In response, the Ephesians recognized the holiness of God, brought their magical scrolls, and burned them publicly (Acts 19:18-19).

- **SDA Explanation:** The "remnant of her seed" (Revelation 12:17) are called to separate themselves entirely from the influences of the world and the occult. This historical event in Ephesus demonstrates that true revival involves a radical, costly separation from worldly practices and unbiblical traditions.

3. Bold Proclamation Amidst Opposition

Paul preached boldly in the synagogue for three months, and when faced with hardened opposition, he moved to the School of Tyrannus, teaching daily for two years. This ultimately resulted in "all who dwelt in Asia" hearing the Word (Acts 19:8-10).

- **SDA Explanation:** The remnant is entrusted with the **Three Angels' Messages** of Revelation 14, which are to be proclaimed "to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people." Despite facing severe societal pushback and rejection, the remnant is called to fearless, sustained proclamation of present truth, trusting that God will work in the background.

4. Resisting the Demetrius Riot (Spiritual Conflict)

The chapter concludes with Demetrius the silversmith inciting a riot because Paul's preaching threatened their lucrative idol-making business.

- **SDA Explanation:** The remnant church faces the wrath of the dragon (Revelation 12:17). Demetrius's opposition illustrates how earthly and financial powers will align against God's truth when it challenges worldly systems. The remnant must remain steadfast, recognizing that their ultimate defense and vindication rest in God's sovereignty.

Chapter 20

1. Declaring the "Whole Counsel of God"

In Acts 20:20 and 20:27, Paul states he withheld nothing that was helpful and declared the "whole counsel of God." For Adventists, the remnant church must unashamedly proclaim present truth—including the sanctuary doctrine, the state of the dead, and the commandments of God—without diluting the gospel to fit modern culture.

2. Guarding Against Internal Apostasy

In verses 29 and 30, Paul prophesies that "savage wolves" will enter the flock, and men from the church's own ranks will arise teaching "perverse things". The SDA church applies this as a solemn warning to the modern remnant. The church must remain vigilant against

theological compromise, modernism, and deviations from the foundational pillars of the faith established in the writings of Ellen G. White and biblical prophecy.

3. Emphasizing Pastoral Shepherding

Paul commands the elders to "pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock" (v. 28). This mirrors the Adventist belief that church leaders have a heavy responsibility to care for the physical and spiritual needs of the congregation, protecting members from spiritual deception and leading them into a deeper, character-transforming relationship with Christ.

4. A Deep Reliance on the Holy Spirit

Throughout chapter 20, Paul is "bound by the Spirit" (v. 22) as he travels to Jerusalem, despite knowing that trials await him. The remnant church is instructed to rely wholly on the guidance and outpouring of the Holy Spirit to accomplish its global mission, especially during the final trials and the approaching "time of trouble".

Chapter 21

1. The Will of God Over Personal Comfort

Throughout his journey, Paul received repeated warnings from well-meaning believers that suffering and imprisonment awaited him in Jerusalem. In the SDA perspective, this mirrors the final trials and the "Time of Jacob's Trouble" that the remnant church will face. Just as Paul submitted to the Holy Spirit's leading—declaring, "*The will of the Lord be done*" (Acts 21:14)—the remnant must prioritize God's divine mission over earthly safety.

2. Faithfulness in the Midst of Apostasy

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he was met by church leaders who were concerned about false rumors being spread against his ministry and their Jewish-Christian traditions. In response, Paul underwent a seven-day ritual purification in the temple to show respect for the law and ease the tensions of the Jewish believers. This highlights the remnant principle of maintaining steadfast, unifying faith even in an environment fractured by cultural division and religious apostasy.

3. Turning Trials into Triumphs

Paul's obedience ultimately led to a violent riot and his arrest by Roman authorities. Yet, this seeming disaster was simply God's way of advancing the gospel. SDA scholars emphasize that the remnant's ultimate purpose is to "bear witness" in the most difficult arenas, knowing that trials only serve to hasten the fulfillment of the church's worldwide mission.

4. Upholding God's Commandments

A core characteristic of the remnant is the testimony of Jesus and keeping God's commandments. Paul's defense in subsequent chapters demonstrates a lifelong commitment to the law of God and the gospel of grace, setting an example for the end-time church to faithfully preserve biblical truths.

Chapter 22

1. The Power of Personal Testimony

- **The Principle:** Paul was a former persecutor who was radically transformed by an encounter with the living Christ.

- **The Lesson:** The most effective weapon of the end-time remnant is a lived, personal testimony. When defending his faith to a violent mob (Acts 22:1-21), Paul didn't just rely on theology; he shared his "Damascus Road" experience. The remnant is called to share exactly what Christ has done for them—a witness that cannot be easily refuted.

2. Radical Conversion and Heart Cleansing

- **The Principle:** Following his blindness, Ananias told Paul, *"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name"* (Acts 22:16).
- **The Lesson:** For SDAs, baptism is a public declaration of a transformed heart and a symbol of God's cleansing power. The remnant must demonstrate a clear contrast between their past lives and their present walk with the Holy Spirit.

3. Fulfilling the Global Mission (The Three Angels' Messages)

- **The Principle:** In Acts 22:17-21, Paul recounts receiving a vision directing him to take the gospel beyond Jerusalem to the Gentiles, which ultimately caused the mob to riot.
- **The Lesson:** The remnant church is entrusted with the Three Angels' Messages (Revelation 14:6-12), a universal warning and invitation to "every nation, tribe, language, and people." Like Paul, the remnant must be willing to fulfill this global mission, even when it is met with rejection or hostility.

4. Faithfulness in the Face of Persecution

- **The Principle:** Jesus told Paul to leave Jerusalem because the people there would not accept his testimony (Acts 22:18).
- **The Lesson:** The SDA church teaches that the remnant will face fierce opposition from the enemy as the second coming approaches. Acts 22 shows that followers of Jesus are to boldly speak the truth, but leave the results and their ultimate protection in God's hands.

Chapter 23

1. Divine Assurance in the Midst of Persecution

- **The Promise:** When Paul was overwhelmed, Jesus stood by him and said, *"Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome"* (Acts 23:11).
- **SDA Application:** The remnant is promised a global mission in the last days (Revelation 12:17). Like Paul, modern believers can trust that God's mission cannot be thwarted by human enemies. If God has a work for His people to do, He will provide the necessary strength and protection to accomplish it.

2. Standing Firm on Foundational Truths

- **The Strategy:** While on trial, Paul recognized the Sanhedrin was split between Pharisees and Sadducees. He appealed to the core doctrine of the resurrection—a belief the Pharisees shared.

- **SDA Application:** Seventh-day Adventists are known for emphasizing foundational biblical truths (e.g., the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the literal second coming). Acts 23 teaches the importance of knowing what you believe and courageously defending the foundational truths of Scripture, even when it causes disruption among opposing groups.

3. God Uses Every Circumstance for His Glory

- **The Plot:** Over forty men swore an oath to assassinate Paul. Yet, God used Paul's nephew to uncover the plot, the Roman commander to provide heavy military protection, and Governor Felix to keep Paul safely in Roman custody.
- **SDA Application:** The remnant church faces prophetic warnings of coming distress and hostility. Acts 23 illustrates that even the most malicious plots of the enemy will ultimately be used by God to advance the gospel and protect His servants until their work is complete.

4. Respect for Leadership and Authority

- **The Mistake:** When Paul unknowingly rebuked the High Priest, he immediately cited scripture and apologized (*"You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people,"* Acts 23:5).
- **SDA Application:** This highlights the biblical principle of respecting leadership and maintaining proper order in the church, even when individual leaders are flawed or act improperly. The remnant is called to maintain integrity and order, relying on God's justice rather than reviling leaders.

Chapter 24

1. Boldly Defending the Truth

In Acts 24, Paul is brought before Governor Felix, falsely accused of being a ringleader of a sect and stirring up riots. Rather than cowering or employing the flattering lies of his accusers, Paul:

- **Speaks confidently:** He respectfully but firmly declares his faith, clarifying that he serves the God of his fathers and believes the law and the prophets.
- **Lesson:** The remnant church (often viewed as a "heresy" or fringe group by the secular world) must always be prepared to **give a reason for the hope within them**.

2. The Power of a Clear Conscience

During his defense, Paul states: *"I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men"* (Acts 24:16).

- As the remnant prepares for the Second Coming, the Seventh-day Adventist church emphasizes character development and the sanctifying power of truth. A blameless life silences critics and provides spiritual endurance during times of crisis and persecution.

3. Conviction vs. Conversion (The Felix Warning)

Paul uses his trial as an opportunity to preach righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

- Upon hearing this, the corrupt Governor Felix is **terrified** but procrastinates, saying, *"Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for you"* (Acts 24:25).
- **Lesson:** The remnant is called to warn the world that the hour of God's judgment has arrived, but must learn from Felix's tragedy. Procrastinating on accepting the gospel or holding onto earthly interests (like Felix's love for bribes) keeps a person spiritually lost despite possessing intellectual understanding.

4. Faithfulness in Seemingly Wasted Time

Because Felix was looking for a bribe and wanted to appease the Jews, he left Paul in prison for **two years** (Acts 24:26, 27).

- To the early church, this may have seemed like a delay in spreading the gospel. Yet, Paul used these periods of confinement to write epistles, minister to his guards, and maintain his spiritual focus. The modern remnant is called to remain faithful to Christ, even during long periods of waiting, trials, or seeming setbacks.

Chapter 25

1. Unwavering Witness to Leadership

When Paul was taken before Governor Festus and King Agrippa in Caesarea, he faced tremendous hostility. Instead of focusing on his own defense, Paul used the opportunity to witness to high-ranking civil officials and kings. The lesson for the remnant is clear: no matter the political or social climate, God's people are called to be faithful witnesses to those in power, recognizing that civic platforms can serve as pulpits for the gospel.

2. Divine Purpose in Hardships

Paul's imprisonment meant his ministry took a drastically different direction than he initially planned. However, his famous declaration—*"I appeal to Caesar"* [Acts 25:11]—demonstrated how he used the legal system of the Roman Empire to advance God's mission. The remnant learns that God's providential guidance works through our seemingly unfair trials. Delays, detentions, and oppositions are often transformed into strategic avenues for spreading the message.

3. The Centrality of the Gospel over Arguments

During the trials in Acts 25, the religious leaders presented no real legal proof of crimes; instead, they argued over their religion and a "dead man named Jesus" whom Paul boldly asserted was alive. The remnant is taught to avoid getting bogged down in endless theological debates and focus entirely on the core of the gospel: the death, resurrection, and saving power of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 26

1. The Power of Personal Testimony

- **Sharing the Story:** Just as Paul recounted his life—from a persecutor of Christians to a zealous apostle—Adventist teachings emphasize that the remnant's most

effective witnessing tool is their **personal testimony**. It is the story of where Christ found you, how He transformed your life, and the hope of the resurrection you now possess.

- **Witnessing is About God:** Paul's testimony focused entirely on Jesus. The remnant is reminded that witnessing is not about intellectual debate, but about sharing the story of God's amazing grace and the power of the Holy Spirit to turn men from "darkness to light".

2. Obedience to the Heavenly Vision

- **Fulfilling the Commission:** Jesus commissioned Paul on the Damascus road to open the eyes of the Gentiles and turn them to God. The SDA Church views Acts 26:16-18 as a parallel to the **Three Angels' Messages** of Revelation 14—a mandate for the remnant to call the world out of spiritual Babylon, restore true worship of the Creator, and prepare the world for the Second Coming.
- **Unwavering Loyalty:** When facing trial, Paul stated, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). The remnant is challenged to stand just as firmly for biblical truths—such as the **Bible Sabbath** and the **Spirit of Prophecy**—regardless of the cost or persecution.

3. God's Sustaining Grace in Persecution

- **Divine Help:** Paul declared, "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day" (Acts 26:22). The remnant draws great assurance from this. In SDA eschatology, the final generation will face intense challenges and a time of trouble prior to Christ's return, but they can rely entirely on God's sustaining grace, just as Paul did.

4. The Urgency of Appeal

- **Almost Persuaded:** Paul's witness moved King Agrippa to the point of nearly converting, asking, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). The lesson for the remnant is clear: every witness must aim to make a direct appeal to the hearer's heart. The remnant's message of judgment and salvation demands an urgent, personal decision today.

Chapter 27

1. The Call to "Remain in the Ship"

When the sailors attempted to abandon ship, Paul warned the centurion: "*Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved*" (Acts 27:31).

- **SDA Application:** The ship represents the remnant church, God's organized body of believers in the last days. Even when the church goes through severe "storms" (apostasy, persecution, and shaking), God's faithful are to remain united within the church rather than abandoning it or trying to establish independent, self-reliant movements.

2. Unseen Celestial Bodies = The Word of God

For fourteen days, the sun and stars were entirely hidden, leaving the crew without a compass or means of direction (Acts 27:20).

- **SDA Application:** This mirrors a time when God's guiding light may seem obscured, and believers are tempted to lose hope. For the remnant, this is a lesson to rely solely on the written Word of God and the **Spirit of Prophecy** (the testimony of Jesus) to light their path, trusting His promises even in the darkest circumstances.

3. Faithful Leadership and Calm Amidst the Shaking

While the sailors panicked and lost all hope, Paul remained anchored in his divine mission, ultimately bringing calm and offering bread (representing communion and reliance on God) to the 276 passengers.

- **SDA Application:** The remnant is called to be a steady, calming presence in a confused world. Like Paul, they are to witness to those in authority, pointing hardened hearts to God's mercy and reminding them that no harm will come to the faithful if they keep their eyes on Him.

4. Divine Providence Requires Human Action

Even though an angel had explicitly promised Paul that everyone would survive, Paul still insisted that they take necessary survival measures, such as eating food and casting anchors.

- **SDA Application:** The remnant church teaches **reliance on God** but condemns fatalism. Believers must actively fulfill their daily duties and exercise practical preparation (such as guarding their health and preparing for the end times) while trusting entirely in God's providence to deliver them safely to their ultimate destination.

Chapter 28

1. Boldness in the Face of Trials

- **The Viper and the Fire:** Just as Paul was bitten by a viper but remained unharmed (Acts 28:3-6), the remnant faces unexpected trials and spiritual attacks. The lesson is that God preserves His people to fulfill their mission, and adversity becomes a platform to reveal His power.
- **No Compromise:** In SDA tradition, holding fast to the "testimony of Jesus" and the commandments means standing firm in truth, much like Paul boldly shaking the snake into the fire.

2. The Mission is "Unhindered"

- **Ministry in Chains:** Paul didn't wait for ideal circumstances to share the Gospel. Under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30-31), he turned his rented home into a mission outpost.
- **The Remnant Mandate:** This models the SDA belief that the remnant's mission to spread the Three Angels' Messages (Revelation 14) continues "without hindrance" despite worldly opposition, legal limitations, or geopolitical distress.

3. Faithfulness in Preaching

- **Paul's Pivot to the Gentiles:** In Acts 28:25-28, Paul boldly quotes Isaiah, confronting the Jewish leaders with their rejection of the Gospel and announcing the turning of the message to the Gentiles.
- **Warning and Grace:** For the remnant, this is a lesson in faithfulness. God's people are tasked with warning the world and presenting truth. Like Paul, the remnant must stay true to the Scriptures (the Law and the Prophets) without watering down the message to appease public opinion.