

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE -

12.14.2025

PART 45 - UNHINDERED

I. INTRODUCTION

- We've all watched a TV series we were totally invested in and the season finale ends on a cliffhanger, "to be continued. And to top it off, the series gets cancelled without closure and a resolution.
- We crave nice, neatly wrapped up endings. And if that's you, the end of the Book of Acts might frustrate you.
- Luke's ending is one massive, "to be continued."

- For the better part of a year we have been on the journey Luke has taken us through 28 chapters, we have followed the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.
- And now we are at the climactic moment. Paul is in Rome! He will stand before Caesar.
- And the story just ends! It ends with Paul in a rented house. Nothing is said about the trial or Caesar or the verdict.
- Why would Luke do that?
- He ends abruptly because the purpose for which he set out was accomplished.
- His purpose was not to write a story about Paul but about the risen King and His unstoppable gospel.
- The hero of the book of Acts is not Peter, it's not Paul, it's Jesus!

- The story of Paul eventually ends with a grave; the story of the Gospel has no end.
- Luke ends his book before the story is finished because the story isn't finished.
- The next chapter isn't written in ink, it's written in your life and mine. We are protagonists in the ongoing story of the Gospel.
- And even though the story in Acts ends with the messenger of the Lord bound, the message of the Lord is unhindered.
- Let's see how that changes everything for us today.

II. THE BOUND MESSENGER

Acts 28:11-16

After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. 12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. 13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them

for seven days. And so we came to Rome. 15 And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

- In God's providence, the journey to Rome is resumed on another ship of Alexandria that had wintered in Malta.
- That ship had "the twin gods as figurehead." The images carved were of Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Zeus and patron gods of sailors.
- We're reminded of the world that Paul was immersed in, a pagan world, full of idolatry and superstition. He was living in and witnessing for Jesus among those who held different beliefs and a different worldview than he did. And so do we.
- The sailors on that ship might have trusted in the protection of idols, Paul knew, and we know, that it was the providence of God and not the twin gods, that brought Paul to Rome by decree of the Most High.

- They travelled up the coast of Italy and arrived in Puteoli.
- V14 There we found some brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days.
- Italy is not without gospel witness. God himself had powerfully advanced the gospel throughout the known world.
- Luke's book details only a small part of the gospel movement.
- And Paul benefits from the hospitality of saints again and again.

- Paul arrived in Rome. Jesus said that he must testify about him in Rome (23:11).
- The goal of his journey is done.
- Christians who had heard of Paul's arrival, travel some 40 miles, to come out to welcome the apostle.
- When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.
- God meets him in his moment of need by providing him strength and comfort in the care of God's people.
- He's not entering this great city alone, God had a people there.
- You may be walking through difficult times; do not neglect the gathering of God's people.
- God uses the physical presence of other believers as his means of grace to strengthen and encourage you.
- And for all us, be like those Roman brothers, who went out of their way, walking forty miles to encourage another brother.
- Who needs you to walk the forty miles to encourage them?
- Call, text, visit, bring a meal, and encourage a weary brother or sister in the Lord.

- In Rome, Paul wasn't put into a prison cell, he was put in military custody and allowed to stay by himself, but under guard of a single Roman soldier.
- It does appear from v30 that Paul lived at his own expense in a type of house arrest.
- He may have resumed tent-making and he was able to welcome visitors.
- In God's providence, throughout all of this, Paul is consistently treated well by Roman officials and soldiers.

III. THE BOLD MESSENGER

- Paul was chained to the soldier for a large portion of the day and probably through the night.
 - But for someone like Paul, that's not being held captive, that's having a captive audience.
 - There was a rotation of soldiers that guarded Paul and they all heard the good news.
 - Philippians 1:12-14 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
 - His bold proclamation of the gospel became the talk of the imperial guards and many others.
 - And Christians were becoming even bolder in their witness as a result of Paul's bold witness.
 - His limitation didn't stop him from having gospel impact.
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- Don't look at your limitations but see them as God strategically positioning you.
 - You're not stuck anywhere, you've been deployed.
 - Use anything and everything as opportunities for ministry.
 - Who's your captive audience?

REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURE

Acts 28:17-28

After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain." 21 And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. 24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. 25 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

26 "Go to this people, and say,

"You will indeed hear but never understand,

and you will indeed see but never perceive."

27 For this people's heart has grown dull,

and with their ears they can barely hear,

and their eyes they have closed;

lest they should see with their eyes

and hear with their ears

and understand with their heart

and turn, and I would heal them.’

28 Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

- Paul’s first ministry priority was to bring the gospel to the Jews first.
- Because he is under house arrest he can’t go to the synagogue, so he asks the local Jewish leaders to come to him.
- Paul emphasized three points in his initial discourse with them:
 - First, he was innocent of the charges that the Jews had brought against him.
 - Second, he had no charges to bring against his people.
 - Third, the reason he is in chains is because of the “hope of Israel.”
- Their response is to claim ignorance.
- They had no knowledge of his trial, or any charges, and had received no official letters from Judea concerning Paul.
- But they also expressed interest.
- They wanted to know more about Christianity. They called it a sect that is not spoken about favorably.
- The first meeting by invitation of Paul sets up the next meeting at their request.
- The Jewish leaders set a day and they came in greater numbers to hear from Paul.
- And Paul didn't waste time, from morning till evening he expounded from the Scriptures, persuading them from the Law and the Prophets, that Jesus is the Hope of Israel.
- He wasn’t trying to give a short gospel presentation.
- His aim was to teach, persuade, and exhort from God’s Word.
- He testified to them of the kingdom of God, explaining the character and coming of God’s kingdom inaugurated in Jesus Christ.
- He took time to explain the plan of God within the context of the redemptive history of Israel.
- We need to remember that oftentimes, explaining the gospel to unbelievers, especially those with no church or religious background, may take a considerable amount of time.
- We must be willing to engage in pre-evangelism with unbelievers.
- Are you able to share the essential truths of the gospel and explain the storyline of Scripture as it relates to Christ?
- Like Paul, we want to show from God’s Word that Jesus is the hero of Scripture.
- We want every believer to be able to speak with gospel fluency and biblical insight about the Kingdom of God and how people can enter into it through Christ.
- We want to be persuasive while at the same time recognizing our persuasiveness alone does not save, is a work of the Spirit.
- He must open the heart and open the spiritual eyes and ears.

RECKONING WITH THE RESULTS

- Paul’s day-long exposition of Scripture split his audience.
- Some were persuaded but others disbelieved.
- Now, those who were persuaded may not necessarily have repented and were converted. Maybe some were.

- There are many people today who are convinced of the truthfulness of the gospel but remain unconverted.
 - Salvation is not by mental assent alone but by saving faith in Christ alone, that is what is required.
 - Nevertheless, Paul's preaching divided the listeners.
 - We have seen throughout Acts, the tragedy of Jewish rejection of the gospel.
 - But what is remarkable in this passage is that Paul uses a familiar text to explain why some hear the gospel and respond with faith and others hear the same gospel and harden.
 - Paul quotes from Isaiah 6, and he attributes those words to the Holy Spirit, though they were spoken through the prophet Isaiah.
 - V28 Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive."
 - The Jewish rejection was not a failure of Paul's preaching but the fulfillment of prophecy.
 - Jesus himself quoted these same words to the unbelieving Jews in his time.
- Here is a mystery that we do not fully comprehend, but it is disclosed in Scripture.
 - If we were to ask why people do not understand, and believe, and turn to God, their unbelief and rejection could be simultaneously attributed to:
 - Resistance to the evangelist's preaching
 - The judgment of God
 - And hardness of heart
 - No one can listen to the gospel and remain neutral to it.
 - We must warn unbelievers that they must respond positively to God's word, or the Lord may give them what they want, eternal separation from him and from his grace.
 - God's plan hasn't failed. The rejection of the gospel by the majority of Israel became the occasion for the gospel to flood the nations.
 - Paul says that their deliberate rejection has served for the salvation of God to be sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen.
 - If you are here today and hear the Gospel, that Christ died for sinners and rose again, and that you must turn to him, in repentance and faith, do not harden your heart.
 - God in his grace is giving you an opportunity to hear and respond to the good news.

IV. THE BOUNDLESS MESSAGE

Acts 28:30-31

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

- Luke abruptly concludes his book.
- The story ends with Paul's bold proclamation of the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus unhindered.
- Paul is chained but the word of God is not!
- The adverb, "with all boldness" has characterized the spread of the Gospel through Christ's witnesses.
- Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, prayed that his ministry would bear the same mark while he was in chains. He asked for more boldness! (Eph 6:19-20)

- The Romans didn't seem to be in a hurry to deal with Paul.
- For two whole years his home was open to all who wanted to talk and listen to him.
- The last phrase of the book, "without hindrance," confirms there were no restraints on Paul's preaching or ability to share the good news with others.
- We've seen all throughout Acts, how the gospel has overcome and transcended geographic boundaries, social differences, ethnic diversity, human prejudices, legal obstacles, and theological barriers.
- The gospel is unstoppable. God's Word is unchained. The word of God increased, multiplied, and prevailed mightily, and so did the disciples and the church. (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20)
- And chains did not hinder Paul.
- From Rome, under house arrest, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.
- Many of the brothers mentioned in Paul's letters came to him during this time, to be taught by the apostle, were encouraged by Paul's boldness, and were sent out on new missions.
- Two years waiting, but they were some of the most fruitful of Paul's ministry.
- Paul didn't waste his shipwreck and he didn't waste his imprisonment.

CONCLUSION

- Many of you might be wondering, What happened to Paul?
- Most scholars believe Paul was released, traveled to Spain and revisited areas where he had established churches.
- But he was eventually arrested again during Nero's persecution.
- But the second time, there was no rented house. There was a cold, dark dungeon.
- Around 66 AD, Paul was beheaded on the Ostian Road outside Rome.
- The powerful voice that boldly proclaimed Christ was silenced.
- But the gospel was not silenced!
- You can chain the messenger, you can kill the preacher, but you cannot stop the Word of God.
- Luke ends his book abruptly, and we are meant to feel the weight of the baton being pressed into our hands, to run our race.
- There are millions of verses following the end of Acts 28 that will only be read and known in eternity.
- The next chapter is you!
- It's you ministering to others despite your own chains.
- The Word of God is not bound!
- May God grant us the strength, the boldness, the courage to stand in the long line of faithful, Spirit-empowered witnesses, to proclaim Christ and his kingdom, to anyone, anywhere, at anytime—unhindered.
- Church, how will you write the next verse?

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?