

Rome At Last
Acts 28:7-31
Pastor John Miller

We come to the end of our study in the book of Acts, so I want to remind you in chapter 1, verse 8, that Jesus was meeting with His disciples on the Mount of Olives. He had been resurrected from the dead, the 40 days had expired, and He was going to ascend back to heaven. From the Mount of Olivet Jesus actually would ascend back to heaven, but before He ascended, He actually makes this promise to them: You will receive power. He had talked about going back, and they wanted to know the times and the seasons when the Lord would return. He said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power," the word is *dynamis* in the Greek. It's the word *dynamic*. "...after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." That's the book of Acts.

In the book of Acts, chapters 1-7, we find the witness went out to Jerusalem. In chapters 8-12 it spread out to Judea and Samaria, and in chapters 13-28 it goes to the uttermost parts of the world—it reaches out to Rome. Basically, the book of Acts opens in the city of Jerusalem and ends in the city of Rome. The book of Acts is written by Luke, a first-rate historian, who documents the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church. Jesus said, "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

I want to just outline this closing section of Acts 28. We've already been with Paul in the shipwreck on the island of Malta. He's been bit by the snake. We talked in depth last week about God allowing suffering and why He allows that suffering. We find, first of all, the healing of another man on the island there of Malta. His name was Publius. He was the chief man or the head politician on the island (verses 7-10). Follow with me in your Bible. "In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. 8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of," in the King James, "bloody flux," but it's actually a reference to dysentery, "to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. 9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: 10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary."

Obviously, we're just jumping right into the middle of a story as we're continuing on Wednesday night in the book of Acts. As I said, the first part of chapter 28 Paul is shipwrecked on the island of Malta. He's bitten by the snake. The natives thought that he was a wicked man, that the gods weren't going to allow him to live, and he would fall over dead. When he didn't die, they changed their opinion and figured that he was actually a god. They were wrong in both points. But now they spent some time there on that island before they could make their way to Rome, and so it says that they encountered this man named Publius. He was the chief man of the island, and he received and lodged them (verse 7) for three days courteously. No doubt, this

man was not a Christian (the gospel hadn't come there yet), yet he was showing kindness and taking care of Paul and the other prisoners, which was commendable. It's kind of cool, again, to just see God's providential care of the apostle Paul.

A little footnote, too, by the way, I could bring it out in different places tonight in our text, but all the way through the book of Acts, Luke very accurately mentions not only cities but mentions in great detail the politicians and their names. It's interesting that he mentioned Felix, he mentions Festus, he mentions Agrippa, he mentions Bernice, and tonight he mentions Caesar Nero; so he was indeed an accurate historian, and everything that Luke records in the book of Acts has been supported by archeology and history. They've done a lot of research studying the travels of Paul. A man by the name of William Ramsay has written some real scholarly works set out to disprove the Bible—that it wasn't the Word of God—following the footsteps in the book of Acts of Paul and then came to the conclusion that it was accurate, true, and historically reliable; so the Bible can be trusted as Luke is an accurate historian.

Publius had a father, and this is just an interesting little insight. We're about to wrap up the book of Acts but Luke throws this in. Luke, remember, was a physician. He is known as Dr. Luke, so he mentions specifically that Publius had a father who was sick with dysentery. Again, it's interesting that there was a well-known dysentery that took place on the island of Malta as a result of an infection from goat's milk. It actually became proverbial that on the island of Malta there was this problem with goat's milk and that you could get this infection from it. It's believed that was the case with Publius' father. They prayed for and laid hands on him, and the Lord healed him.

Again, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He healed in the Bible days, He can heal today, but it would be wrong to say that every Christian should expect to be physically healed. I don't believe the Bible teaches that. I believe that we are in unredeemed bodies, and we won't be perfectly whole until we go to heaven. We can pray, we can ask God to heal us, sometimes He does, sometimes He doesn't. Sometimes He delays, sometimes He uses doctors, and sometimes He uses medicines, but no matter how much faith you have, sooner or later, if the Lord tarries, your body will go or give up, right? All the old people say, "Amen! Preach it, Brother." I don't care how much faith you have, your body is unredeemed; and when you are buried, then one day you will be resurrected and you will get a new body, a glorified body—no more sickness, no more suffering, no more sorrow. Jesus does heal and it's fitting and right that we would pray and ask God to heal, but in this case, of course, you have the apostle Paul who could pray for people and see them healed. Verse 9, "So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed," as well. Again, just some insight into the fact that Jesus heals the sick.

"Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary." It's interesting that Luke makes it clear the only hostility that Paul experienced was from his fellow countrymen, the Jews. Even these unbelievers were kind and gracious unto Paul. Again, I see the providential care of God.

Now, we move in verses 11-16 to Paul arriving in Rome. This is the grand arrival and finally the end of this long arduous journey, and they land in Rome. It says, "And after three months," they were on the island of Malta for three months, "we departed in a ship of Alexandria," just like the other ship they had been in that came from Egypt, "which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux," which means twin brothers. It was a mythological figure that many times mariners would name their ships after or they would have them carved on the front of their ship, which was for good luck. It says, "And landing at Syracuse," which is the tip of the island of Sicily, "we tarried there three days. 13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium," which is actually the toe of the little boot of Italy, "and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli," which is a 180-mile trip and that was one of the main ports along the southwest coast of Italy. It's by the Bay of Naples, "Where we found brethren," and I love this. It's so beautiful (verse 14), "we found brethren," in any case, they had to look for them and seek them out, "and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome."

Verse 15, "And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum," way up closer to Rome, some of the Christians heard that Paul was coming and took off walking. They came a great distance, about 30 miles from Rome, to encounter the apostle. "...and The three taverns," again, you can study the geography and the map and see very clearly where Paul traveled, "whom when Paul saw," he saw these believers coming, "he thanked God, and took courage. 16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him."

We're going to see at the end of this chapter that Paul would be under house arrest, that he would be chained to a Roman soldier but would actually be in his own hired house for a period of two years, and I'll talk more about that in just a moment. Again, we won't go to the map, we looked at it last Wednesday night, but if you look at a map in your Bible or a Bible study book you'll see the map of Paul's journey as they came to Malta, and then they went to Sicily, then to the tip of the boot of Italy, up to Puteoli, and from there the trip was by land all the way up to Rome. As Paul was traveling now by land, God sent encouragement to Paul in the form of other Christians.

You know, if you're a Christian, you like other Christians. It's kind of like that birds of a feather flock together, right? Christians should like Christians. If you meet somebody, "Oh, I'm a Christian, but I don't like Christians. I don't go to church. I think Christians are creepy. I don't want to be around them." Now, if you're a child of God, you're going to love the brethren. The Bible says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." By the way, the word "brethren" is including the sistren, too. It's a generic term for the family of God. We love God's people. There's something wrong with a person that says, "I'm a Christian, but I don't want to go to church. There's just a bunch of creepy Christians there, and I don't want to do that." You're going to love other believers, and you'll love to pray and talk and fellowship and share the things of God together and encourage one another. The Bible says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...and so much

the more, as ye see the day approaching.” I really, really encourage you. We have an amazing church, and God has blessed our church. Don’t take it for granted. Take advantage of being here, getting involved, being connected, and being a participant and engaged in body life and fellowship, praying, and getting to know one another and serving in the fellowship.

It’s just so cool. It says, “...we found brethren,” when they came to Puteoli, and stayed with them for seven days. Can you imagine the fellowship and the prayers and the encouragement? Paul had never been to Rome, and they were so excited about Paul coming. There were already Christians there. In verse 15, the brethren in Rome heard about Paul’s coming so they took off walking. They walked about 33 miles just to meet Paul so they could talk, share, pray, and hear what Paul had to say about Jesus and teach them and minister to them as they journeyed and traveled along the way. It kind of reminds me of the Emmaus Road experience when the disciples were walking with Jesus and He was expounding the Scriptures. They said, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” Can you imagine walking down the road with the

Apostle Paul and he giving Bible studies and exposition and preaching and teaching as you walked along? What a glorious thing that must have been.

Paul had expressed his wish in Romans 15:24 that he sometime earlier had written to the Romans. It expressed his wish and desire to come to Rome. God kept His promise to Paul. God told Paul, “You’re going to go to Rome.” Paul wanted to go to Rome, and God kept His promise. Isn’t God faithful? God always keeps His promises, and he did finally show up in Rome. As I’m going to talk about more in a moment, he was able to rent his own house. He was under house arrest awaiting trial before Nero.

In following Paul to Rome, we learn that we can have peace in the midst of the storm. We learned that we can progress in the storm, that God’s will can be fulfilled in our lives and God’s Word, and that there’s purposes in the storm—God had a plan and a purpose for Paul and for the other travelers. So, like Paul, we need to keep our focus and keep our eyes on Jesus Christ. Paul had never been to Rome, yet he was looking forward to the time together there with them and their fellowship.

We move to the third section, the end of the book, verses 17-31, Paul’s ministry in Rome. This is what I wanted to kind of speed up to get to. Beginning in verses 17-22, we see that Paul, after just three days of arriving in Rome and getting his own lodging, that he called all of the Jewish leaders to come to him so that he could talk to them about his case, his situation, his life, share with them the gospel, and talk to them about the things of the kingdom of God. So, if you’re outlining this section, verses 17-22 is Paul’s first meeting with the Jewish leaders or authorities. Paul always took the gospel first to the Jews. Notice verse 17.

“And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from

Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 Who, when they,” that is, the Romans, “had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. 21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect,” that is, referring to Christianity (they called it a sect), “we know that every where it is spoken against.”

Paul finally shows up in Rome. He's there for three days. Paul calls all these Jewish leaders together, and I want you to note three things. First of all, in verse 17, he says, “though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers.” The first thing he wanted them to know is, “Look, I'm not a criminal. I'm not a bad guy.” Again, Luke is actually keeping his character spotless in wanting to show that Christianity isn't against the Roman government. He said, “I haven't done anything. I'm not guilty of any wrong against first the nation of Israel, our Jewish nation.” Then, he said, “The Romans wanted to free me, and I hadn't done anything wrong against Rome, so I had to appeal to Caesar because the Jews wouldn't let it go.” Notice verse 18. It says, “Who, when they,” that is, the Romans, “had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.” In verse 17, “I'm not guilty of any wrong against Israel,” and in verse 18, he says, “The Romans were ready to release me; they found me innocent.” In verse 19, “But when the Jews spake against it,” that is, releasing him, “I was constrained,” I was obligated, “to appeal unto Caesar.” Again, historically there is a reference to Caesar, who was indeed the Caesar of Rome at that time.

Notice what he says at the end of verse 19, “not that I had ought to accuse my nation of,” I would've if I were Paul. I actually would have countersued them or something. I would have been really ticked off. You know, somebody sues you, you countersue them so that they look just as guilty or in error as you are, but Paul says, “I don't have anything against him.” Now, they falsely accused him. He'd been arrested. He could've been let go. It would have been easy for him to have bitterness, anger, hatred, and animosity but he says, “Look, I don't have any vendetta. I don't have anything against my nation.” He says, “For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” Basically, he's saying, “Because I believe in the promises of God made in the Old Testament, that God would send a Messiah, that's why I'm in these chains.” “And they said unto him, We neither received letters,” of complaint, “out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.” It's interesting that they didn't follow up on their accusations against Paul. They just dropped their pursuing the charges against Paul.

I love what they said in verse 22, this is all the opening that Paul needed. They said, “But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest,” like Paul, “Okay. I'll be glad to oblige you.” Paul's passion and heart was to go to Rome, and all he wanted was to be able to tell them about Jesus. Finally he's in Rome and the Jewish leaders come and say, “Well, all we hear is bad

things about this sect of Christianity. We want to know what you think.”

Now we have, in verses 23-29, the second meeting of Paul with the Jews. We had the first meeting with them and he just kind of said, “You know, I haven’t done anything against Israel. The Romans wanted to let me go. The Jews freaked out, so I had to appeal to Caesar.” He’s laying down the facts, and they say, “Well, we haven’t heard anything about you, but we do hear things against Christianity and would like to get together and hear what you have to say.” They arranged a time when they would come again to Paul’s lodging—God providentially provided, again, a place where they could come—and Paul was going to speak to them. So he turns his prison into a church and a pulpit to preach, beginning in verse 23.

“And when they had appointed him a day,” so they scheduled a day, “there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded,” we get the idea of exposition or taking the text and explaining or expounding it, “and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets,” and notice, check this out, “from morning till evening.” You think I go long in my preaching. Some of you come on Wednesday nights, “Okay, Lord, we just pray right now before Pastor John starts to speak, just help him not to go too long tonight because I’m really tired.” How bout when Paul was preaching in the upstairs room. He went just so long that someone fell asleep and fell out the window and died! Then, he went down and prayed for him, raised him from the dead, and went up and started again. They went all night until the sun came up the next day! That’s what you call a long-winded preacher.

I wish that Luke had recorded this teaching. Most likely, it wasn’t a monologue. It wasn’t just that they sat and listened to Paul, but that Paul would explain the Scriptures. They would ask a question, and Paul would answer their question. He would explain some more Scriptures. They would ask questions, and he would explain more Scriptures. They would ask more questions, and he would explain more Scriptures, so it went on all day long. It was a whole-day Bible study, and oh how I wish that it would’ve been recorded for us in the Scriptures.

I want you to notice what Paul’s text was. It was (verse 23) “...both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.” That’s basically two categories which are used to describe the Old Testament. The Old Testament was referred to by the Jews as the law and the prophets. The law was the pentateuch. It was the first five books of Moses, and then the prophets. Now, you remember when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain called the Transfiguration? He took with Him three disciples, Peter, James and John, and went up to the mountain where He was transfigured before them. Basically, His inner essence, His deity, was manifested. His glory was manifested, and they saw Him transfigured in His glory. The Father spoke from heaven and the whole episode, but do you remember who else showed up on that mountain? Two people, Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elijah represent these two categories—the law and the prophets. What were they talking about? They were talking with Jesus about His death. They were talking about His crucifixion. In the King James it says His exodus—that would be His death and His departure.

It's interesting that these two represent these two categories—Moses and Elijah. It could be that in the book of Revelation...one of the questions I get asked quite often is, "Who are the two witnesses that come in the book of Revelation that witness before the Second Coming?" It very well could be that they show up again—Moses and Elijah. The Jews are looking for Elijah to come before the great notable day of the Lord, but they represent these two categories—the law and the prophets. What it says to us is that all through the law and in the prophets they predicted and prophesied and pointed to the Cross. They pointed to the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Do you know that Jesus is all through the Bible? Every book of the Bible, almost every chapter, you can find Jesus Christ. Now, He may not be specifically referred to by name but either in type or in picture or in prophecy...there's two kinds of prophecy: verbal predicted prophecy and typical predicted prophecy. They would just speak verbally about Christ and the Messiah or there would be a picture, a type, like all the lambs that were slain in the Levitical priesthood were types or pictures. Every aspect of the tabernacle or the tent and the holy of holies and the ark of the covenant all symbolized and pictured Jesus Christ who would come and suffer and die. All through the Bible you can find Jesus, and no doubt Paul was doing his best to speak to them about the prophecies of Messiah and pointing out that Jesus was indeed the fulfillment of those promises from the Bible.

Notice the response is pretty typical of what happens even today when Christ is preached (verse 24), "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Isn't that the truth? When we go out and tell people about Jesus and preach the good news and talk about Christ, what basically happens? Jesus said, "I came to bring a sword." There's a division—either you believe or you don't believe, either you trust in Jesus or you reject Jesus, either you put your faith in Him or you don't put your faith in Him. When you share the gospel, don't be discouraged. If Paul preached—and I'm sure he did a fantastic job—and some still didn't believe, don't be discouraged if your family isn't believing, repenting, or trusting Jesus. You think, If I could only do a better job. If I were only more knowledgeable. If I only had a little more apologetic information, then I could really razzamatazz them with my knowledge and I could win them to Christ. The Holy Spirit has to open a person's heart and a person's eyes. That's why you need to pray that God would open their eyes, that they would see their need for Jesus Christ.

In Paul's preaching, we see these two categories—some believed, some didn't believe. I'm going to focus on that in just a moment. I'm building up to what I really want to say tonight. I haven't even gotten there yet; that is, the book of Acts is all about the promotion, the preaching, the spreading of the gospel, and it's to be done by the church in the power of the Holy Spirit. The development of the church and the spread of the kingdom of God is that we are to go out, filled with the Spirit, being His witnesses, preaching the gospel. Some will believe, some will not believe, but we just go faithfully to preach and proclaim His Word.

In verse 25 it says, "And when they agreed not among themselves," so there was a division among the Jews. Some believed Paul's preaching, some did not. It says, "they departed, after

that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying,” now I want you to note here that Paul is going to quote from the book of Isaiah 6:9-10. It’s believed that the quotation comes from what is called the Septuagint which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It may vary a little bit if you compare it to the passage in Isaiah, but this passage is interesting because it was quoted by Jesus in all the gospels—in Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8, John 12—and now it’s quoted by Paul. In the context when Jesus quoted it, He was quoting it in explaining why He spoke in parables. (In light of our study of the parables on Sunday mornings, which we’re concluding this Sunday with the parable of the ten virgins, we’re going to look at signs of the last times and the meaning in the parable being ready for the Lord’s return.) Jesus said, “...because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not...and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

Notice, as he quotes this from Isaiah 6:9-10, that the Holy Spirit spoke through Isaiah to our fathers, “Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive,” why? Here’s the reason (verse 27), “For the heart of this people is waxed gross,” hard, “and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed,” don’t miss that. They’re the ones that have closed their eyes, closed their ears, and hardened their hearts, “lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and,” God said, “I should heal them.” God wasn’t trying to harden their hearts or hide the truth from them, the responsibility lies squarely on them. When you hear the gospel and you reject the gospel, you have no one to blame but yourself. Knowledge brings responsibility—the more you hear the gospel, the more responsible you are to respond to that gospel. He’s quoting from Isaiah.

In verse 28 he says, “Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles,” notice that, “and that they,” that is, the Gentiles, “will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.” They started to debate and discuss as they departed. Luke wants to make a point very, very clear. This is not just a footnote. It’s essential to understanding the book of Acts; that is, that many Jews rejected the gospel of Jesus. They departed and discussed it among themselves. In light of that statement, it’s interesting, as we come to the end of the book of Acts, it basically says that Paul turns from the Jews unto the Gentiles, and he was the apostle to the Gentiles. You need to understand that in the program, in the purpose, and the plan of God (theologians call it the mega narrative, the big picture) that when God closes one door He opens another, and God closed the door on the Jews because of their rejection of Messiah, but He opened another door to the majority of us tonight (I would assume, not all of us but most of us) are Gentiles and that we become partakers of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I want you to write down a little footnote and want you to read it as some extracurricular homework. Write down Romans 9, 10, and 11. In light of these concluding statements in the book of Acts, three years earlier Paul wrote that book of Romans. In Romans 9 he teaches Israel’s election. In Romans 10 he teaches Israel’s rejection. In Romans 11 he teaches Israel’s restoration. So, even though the Jews didn’t believe the message (the majority of them), God had a purpose, God had a plan, God had a master design. The design basically was that the

door was shutting to the Jews but opening to the Gentiles. In that passage, he points out that God elected Israel by grace. Israel rejected them, but the rejection was not total or permanent. Blindness, Paul said in Romans, has happened to Israel, but it's only partial and temporary until the fullness of the Gentiles come in, which is the church. Then God will begin to do another work again in restoring Israel. When will that happen? It will happen as Israel passes through the tribulation, which is known as the time of Jacob's trouble, seven years of tribulation, at which the culmination of that will be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Guess when the Jews pretty much are going to know that they were wrong about Jesus? When He comes back in power and great glory. Amen? As King of kings and Lord of Lords. Every eye will see Him, and they that pierced Him will look upon Him and they'll wail. They'll say, "What are the meanings of these wounds in Your hands?" He'll say, "These I received in the house of my friends." They'll realize, "He was our Messiah," that "we rejected Him and we crucified Him," but it's through His death that life came to the Gentiles and to the world. If the church and the Gentiles are saved through their rejection and Christ's crucifixion, how much more when Christ returns and the world will be restored in their restoration. So there'll be the Second Coming, the thousand-year reign of Christ, the millennial, where all things will be restored. There's that imagery in Romans 9, 10, and 11 (I'm trying to resist going into too much detail about Romans 9, 10, and 11) where he gives us this whole picture of what I'm trying to talk about, and I can tell by looking at some of you you're kind of like you can't figure out what I'm talking about. You're kind of bored with tears and you're kind of like freaking out right now, but he gives this image of an olive tree.

This olive tree has roots, and the roots represent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The olive tree represents the nation of Israel, so you have the roots that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob fathers this tree. He said what happens was when the Jews rejected Messiah, the branches of this olive tree were broken off, but God did something. He took a wild olive tree and took the branch and spliced it into the natural olive tree. This wild olive branch that was grafted in became partaker of the roots and the life of that olive tree. It's all a picture of how God saved the Gentiles, grafted them in, and we become recipients of the New Covenant. You know, we don't really think about it, but we're having communion tonight. Do you know when Jesus said, "This is the sign of the New Covenant," do you know that even the New Covenant technically is with Israel, and we as Gentiles get to be grafted in and we get to become partakers of the promises God made to Israel. The New Covenant was made with Israel, but we're grafted in and we become partakers of that.

In this church, this body, this family of God of which Christ is the head, we're all equal—Jew and Gentiles, there's no bond or free, male or female—we're all one in Christ, and Jew and Gentiles are all saved the same right now. There are Jews that believe, that's why their rejection was only partial, Paul was one of them. Thank God there's a revival going on in the world right now—many, many Jews are coming to Messiah, Jesus, Yeshua—trusting and believing Him as their Savior as their Messiah. Yeshua Hamashiach, Jesus is Messiah. He's the Jewish Messiah and they're coming to Him, but the greatest time of evangelism for Israel and for Jews is going to be during the tribulation. One of the chief purposes of that seven-year tribulation is to prepare

Israel for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when they will turn to Him and be fully restored, and the earth will be restored. Just a little insight. I got all that from verses 28 and 29.

Let's close (verses 30-31), "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house," there it is. How did he hire his own house? Loving Christian friends sent him money. They supported him; they took care of him. Thank God for the body of Christ! "...and received all that came in unto him," notice what Paul was doing, "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence," and I love it, "no man forbidding him," or as some translations have, without hindrance. I love that.

Just a couple little footnotes here and then I'll wrap it up. During this two-year period in Paul's life, he wrote his prison epistles. If you want to make a note, this is where Paul, during this two years, wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, which is a cool story, by the way, because while he's in his hired house under arrest in chains, a slave who was a fugitive, a runaway from Colossae, shows up, hears Paul preaching, gets saved, and then tells Paul, "Paul, I have to admit, I'm a fugitive and I've run away from my master. His name was Philemon. I just gotta let you know that." Paul says, "What an awesome coincidence, providential hand of God! I know Philemon. He's one of my converts. I led Philemon to Christ. I'll write a little note for you. You can take it back to Philemon, and I'll ask him to forgive you and to welcome you back." It's just a really cool little story, and you have it as a little postcard epistle in your Bible—the story of Onesimus, the runaway slave, who went to Rome to run away, was found by Jesus Christ, converted, came back to his master, and Paul wrote the letter of Philemon to him. Paul wrote these prison epistles during this time.

Paul spoke about the kingdom of God in three categories—Jesus came and brought the kingdom, when you're born again you enter into the kingdom, and then when Jesus returns in the Second Coming, He will come and set up His kingdom. He was "teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." In other words, the Word of God is not bound. When you read this you could say, "What a bummer! God, what are You doing? Why would You let Paul get arrested and put into jail?" Paul actually said, "Look," when he wrote to the Philippians, "what happened to me happened for the advancement of the gospel." He said, "These Roman soldiers that are being chained to me one every six hours, I'm telling them about Jesus. They're getting saved! Have you seen the bumper stickers on their chariots? They're getting born again and going back to Caesar's palace," not Las Vegas but Caesar's place, "and they're having a Bible study in Nero's house!" Paul says, "Look, I got arrested, but some of the brothers are more bold to preach the gospel." Here's Paul. He said, "I don't care what happens to me as long as Christ is glorified and the gospel is preached—that's all that matters!"

Oh, that I would have that kind of heart because if I got put in prison and couldn't preach anymore I would sulk and complain and be bummed and be mad. I'd be bitter and just really be upset with God. I'd have a thing or two to say to God about that. Do you know God's ways are perfect? We need to trust Him. Jesus said, "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Let me wrap this up with three quick things. (I wish I had a little more time, but we've gotta get into communion.) As I wrap up this study in the book of Acts, I want to say these three things. First, the gospel Paul preached in Acts 28 is the same gospel Peter preached in Acts 2. You say, "Whoppeedee! What does that mean?" It means the gospel doesn't change. The same gospel you preach now, I preach now, we preach now, Peter preached, Paul preached, and we preach. We open up the book of Acts with Peter preaching; we close the book of Acts with Paul preaching. The gospel hasn't changed. It centers in Jesus Christ who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. The second thing I would say is the results of the preaching of that gospel are the same (verse 24)—some believed, some do not believe. Don't be discouraged. Don't give up. Some will believe, some will not believe. Thirdly, Christ's plan for the church to preach the gospel is the same. It's called the Great Commission. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel." You got that? That is the church's commission, and the church has always failed when we get into other things. God has called us to preach the gospel, and we need to preach the gospel. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) and go in the power of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses.

It's believed Paul was released as he stood trial before Nero and was re-arrested. It's believed he actually had about six years of freedom. There's no record of where he went or what he did. Some believe that he went west to Spain. He was re-arrested under political charges from the Roman government, brought this time in a dungeon—not his own hired house—brought on trial before Nero, and in trial before Nero he was found guilty, taken outside Rome, and his head was severed from his body.

Paul says these words in 2 Timothy 4. I'm kind of racing through this. I wanted to have more time for it, but in 2 Timothy 4 he said, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Amen? Those are Paul's last words, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith...and there's a crown waiting for me." When we end the book of Acts, it's an open book. The story of the church continues even today with us. We need to go out of here and preach the gospel, the kingdom of God, the righteousness of God, and the provision of God in Jesus Christ.

I've gone a little long. We have communion, but I'm going to do something that's pretty abnormal or rare for me to do. I told you last week that my 92-year-old father a week ago Sunday went home to be with Jesus. Yesterday we buried my dad. We had the services at the cemetery, and we put together a little video of his life and things. At the very end of the slide show, a year ago I took my phone and hit video and asked my dad—92, walked with the Lord since he was a young boy—I said, "Dad, what is the most important lesson you ever learned in life?" I want to play the video for you right now before we pray and we share communion.

(Video of Dad)

“What’s the most important thing you’ve ever learned in life?” Dad speaking, “That Jesus died for my sins and for yours and that by me accepting what He’s done and acknowledging it, I have a home in heaven. He’s preparing me a place. He said, ‘I go to prepare a place for you, and that where I am there ye may be also,’ so He wants us to join Him in heaven!”

Amen! What a thrill to know that he is in the presence of the Lord right now. He’s up there with Paul the Apostle. Can you imagine that? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David...David leading worship on his harp—what an awesome thought!