

To the Ends of the Earth, Part 5 – Acts 28:16-31

Main Idea: The Gospel will reach the ends of the earth—regardless of human strategies to advance it and undeterred by any efforts to stop it.

I. The Motivation | Acts 28:16-22

The book of Acts concludes not with a final chapter in God's redemptive plan, but with an open door to the Church's ongoing mission (Matt. 28:19). **Though Luke's historical narrative of the Gospel reaching Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and even Rome concludes in Acts 28, the mission continues across centuries as the risen Christ draws people from every background to Himself (John 12:32).** Over the last year and a half, our study through Acts has unfolded the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit in the first century: convicting hearts, establishing the Church, showcasing God's pattern for missionary efforts, and showing us the purest form of Christianity that the world has ever seen. At the core of this unstoppable movement are five foundational marks of a faithful church, as modeled in Acts: (1) Bible-teaching, (2) Gospel-centeredness, (3) Christ-glorifying worship, (4) intentional disciple-making, and (5) prayerful dependence on God. **The early Church was not a monument but a living movement, rooted in doctrine, empowered by the Spirit, and undistracted by worldly agendas.** The believers' lives reflected daily evangelism, mutual accountability, and humble submission to the authority of Christ.

In the final verses in Acts, as Paul arrives in Rome, Luke shows us that his actions reveal a heart profoundly motivated by the mission of the Gospel. Despite being a prisoner under house arrest, Paul remains laser-focused on his calling to testify about Christ. **His motivation is not dictated by his circumstances or status but by a compelling inner conviction to fulfill the mission God has entrusted to him (Acts 20:24).** In Acts 28:16–22, we see how this motivation shapes his conduct, priorities, and interactions—even in chains. **Paul's imprisonment in Rome did not stifle his zeal for ministry neither did it motivated him to brag about his many accomplishments as an apostle.** Instead, it produced in him a level of humility that caused him to take his eyes off himself and focus his attention in serving the Lord rather than making a name for himself. **Paul's first action in Rome is to summon the local Jewish leaders (v.17).** Despite repeated rejection by Jewish communities throughout his missionary journeys, Paul still carries a deep burden for their salvation (Rom.1:16; 9:1-3). His motivation flows from love and longing for his fellow Israelites to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Even as he explains his imprisonment, he does not express bitterness toward their plain opposition but explains to them the reason why he is bound: "for the hope of Israel" (v. 20)—a reference to the Messianic promises in the OT fulfilled in the risen Christ (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Job 19:26; Acts 23:6; 26:6-8). For Paul, the Gospel wasn't an addition to Judaism—it was the fulfillment of God's promises to His people which culminated with the resurrection of the dead made possible by the resurrection of the Messiah.

Despite his extraordinary accomplishments, Paul never turns the spotlight on himself. Instead of drawing attention to his works, he pointed others to the One working through him. In his flesh, Paul could have easily highlighted his impressive résumé: planting numerous churches across the Roman Empire (Acts 14:21–23), performing miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:11–12), receiving divine visions (2 Cor. 12:1–4), and authoring most of the New Testament. Yet, he consistently refused to boast in anything except in the work Christ (Gal. 6:14). **Paul understood that the ministry was never about personal legacy, influence, or recognition—it was about lifting high the name of Jesus.** This attitude stands in sharp contrast to the culture around him and to our own—one that often exalts charisma over character and platforms over humility. In an age where self-promotion is often mistaken for significance, **Paul's humility is both countercultural and profoundly Christlike.** He lived out the principle Jesus taught in Matthew 18:1-6, where true greatness in the kingdom is not found in status but in the lowliness of a child—marked by humility, dependence, and trust. Paul's motivation in serving Christ challenges the western church to serve under the banner that Christ alone is worthy of all glory.

To Ponder:

1. In what ways are we tempted to seek recognition and status among others, and how does Paul's example challenge that mindset?
2. What drives your service to Christ today, and how can you keep your focus on honoring His name rather than your own?

II. The Message | Acts 28:23-27

The culmination of Paul's ministry in Acts is found in a final appeal to the Jewish leaders in Rome to understand that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah. Consistent with their expressed willingness to hear more about Paul's faith (v.22), the Jewish leaders had set a day to return and hear more from Paul. Now in a much greater number, the Jews return to the house where Paul was kept desiring, and from morning till evening, Paul explained and testified to the kingdom of God from using the Law of Moses and the Prophets as the authority for his beliefs (v.23). Paul's approach highlights a key principle: **the Gospel is not a new invention, but the fulfillment of long-standing promises**. He reasons from the Law and the Prophets, just as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27). **Paul is not offering philosophical speculation but giving a Scripture-saturated proclamation centered on Jesus**. This approach underscores the continuity of God's redemptive plan and reminds believers today that evangelism is not simply about persuasion, but about proclaiming what God has already spoken. Verse 24 reveals the outcome of Paul's efforts: "Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe." This mixed response is consistent throughout Acts (Acts 13:45, 17:32-34), illustrating the hardness of the human heart—The issue is not a lack of evidence or persuasive argument; the problem lies in unregenerate hearts (Eze. 36:26; Jer. 31:33; John 3:3). The difference in responses shows that faith is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:6-8). In verses 25-27, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9–10, a passage describing Israel's spiritual blindness and deafness. **Paul's use of the passage signals that the rejection he faced was not unexpected—it was foretold**. Like the prophet Isaiah, Paul is sent to a people who would "see but never perceive" and "hear but never understand." The warning of Isaiah serves as a mirror for all who hear the message of Christ. **The Gospel demands not only attention, but repentance and faith**.

To Ponder

1. Why do you think people are still drawn to worship false gods rather than the One True God?
2. What are some subtle ways Christians might fall into idolatry today—perhaps even in the name of religion, family, or nation?

III. The Mission | Acts 28:28-31

At the end of his account, Luke describes one of Paul's most climactic statements: "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen" (v.28). **This shift is not a new plan but the unfolding of God's original promise to bless all nations through Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Romans 15:8–12)**. It underscores that God's redemptive mission cannot be thwarted by human stubbornness or unbelief. The phrase "they will listen" is not a guarantee that all Gentiles will believe, but a contrast to the hardened response Paul has just encountered (v. 27). Many Gentiles throughout Acts responded with saving faith—such as Cornelius (Acts 10), Lydia (Acts 16), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16). This highlights the scope of the gospel: Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free—all whom Christ calls to salvation (Gal. 3:28). The Gospel is not limited by ethnicity, culture, or status, but to all to whom sin, righteousness, and judgment are revealed by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8).

Verses 30-31 give us a glimpse of Paul's final years in Rome. Under house arrest, he still welcomes all who come to him and continues "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance." **Though chained, Paul is not silenced. His imprisonment becomes a platform for Gospel preaching (Phil. 1:12-14)**. The phrase "without hindrance" (Greek: *akölytös*) is a powerful conclusion to the book of Acts—it signifies that while the messenger may be bound, the message is not (2 Tim. 2:9). Acts ends not with resolution, but with momentum. There is no dramatic conclusion, nor a report of Paul's death. Instead, Luke leaves us with an open ending to emphasize that the mission had just started. **The mission that started in Acts is still being carried out as the Gospel spreads through Christ's witnesses around the world**. For every believer, this is both a comfort and a commission. We are heirs of this Gospel legacy, called to proclaim Christ boldly and trust that God's Word will not return void (Isa. 55:11). The book of Acts closes, but the mission of the Church remains wide open.

To Ponder:

1. In what ways has your faith in Christ and understanding of the Gospel been deepened through our study of Acts?
2. In what ways has your faith in Christ and understanding of the Gospel been challenged through our study of Acts?