

## **Acts 28:17-31**

## **Without Hindrance**

**12/11/16**

*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.<sup>18</sup> When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. <sup>19</sup> But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. <sup>20</sup> 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.” <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. <sup>25</sup> 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:*

*<sup>26</sup> “Go to this people, and say,  
“You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”*

*<sup>27</sup> 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.'*

*<sup>28</sup> Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."*

*<sup>30</sup> He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.*

*(Pastor prays)*

I've titled this message today, "Without Hindrance." Those are the last two words in the book of Acts. They are meant to describe how Paul was living, even in prison. When we leave him today, we never hear from him again and, in some ways, it's frustrating not to know how things turn out.

When G. Campbell Morgan looked at this passage he said, "What we have here is the last page of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Christian history." Let's get the setting.

Paul has been bound for Rome. He's going there because he appealed to Caesar. When he gets there, we know from history, Rome was in dark days. A young Emperor named Nemo had ascended the throne. The year before Paul landed in Rome, Nero had his mother Agrippa and his wife Octavia killed. Nero was cruel and perverted, weak and insane. Later in his reign, Nero will do all kinds of horrible things to Christians (but that's down the road).

When we find Paul, he's not yet gone before Caesar. In fact, V. 30 tells us he spends two years in a Roman jail chained to a centurion. And yet, this terrible time, in this terrible place, chained to a guard, waiting to stand before this terrible emperor, became some of the most fruitful days of his ministry. Just sitting in a Roman prison, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. He wrote the little book Philemon.

He also wrote 2 Timothy. And in 2 Timothy 2:9, Paul told Timothy: *for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!* If you couple that with the way Luke describes Paul at the end of Acts, *teaching about the Lord*

*Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.* If you take all of that into account, you realize God did great things with Paul while he was in prison.

I point that out to you because it's so easy sometimes to feel like your life is on hold until you can get ahead financially or until you can get married. Or your life is on hold until you have children or until you get healthy. That doesn't seem to be the way God works, as proven in Paul's life and a host of others. Like Paul said earlier, "God's power is made perfect in your weakness." In your issues. Paul told the church in Corinth, "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."

Paul's in prison and maybe you're in pain. I want to end this long series with some Gospel encouragement.

## **God Is Not Done Using You For His Glory**

Here are some lessons about living in Christ from looking at Paul's life.

### **In Christ, We Live Hopefully**

You can see Paul's hopeful life as soon as the story begins in V. 17...all of that travel and peril and shipwreck. He finally gets to Rome. You'd think he would relax a little, but not Paul. In V. 17, *After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews*, and he starts sharing Christ.

Paul was so convinced that God had him where God wanted him, Paul just started sharing. In fact, as part of his message down in V. 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.*

Don't you find it remarkable that in spite of all he'd been through, Paul gave himself just three days before he got cranked up again? That happens when you see the hand of providence in your every situation in life. Sometimes it's a smiling providence and everything is great. Sometimes it is a bad providence. It's a hard thing the Lord has put you in. And that's your opportunity to show that the Gospel works. It has power to heal

and forgive and soften hearts. The Gospel will save your marriage, change your outlook and strengthen you for the battle.

Why is there such hope in what Paul's opponents will call a "sect" down in V. 22? Here's a good place for me to explain what gave Paul such strength. (*Pastor shares the Gospel*). And when you are surrendered by faith to Christ, your life is now His and entrusted into His care. And because Paul trusted this, he could live dangerously and recklessly and joyfully for Christ. This is how he encouraged the church at Corinth. 2 Corinthians 4:16-17, *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,*

After the Jews accused Paul of heresy in V. 22, Paul gets into the thick of it. Look at V. 23-24. *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. <sup>24</sup> And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.* Do you see the 3 descriptions in V. 23? Look at how Luke describes Paul's intensity:

1. He expounded to them.
2. 2. He testified to the kingdom of God.
3. 3. He's trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

Expounded – He made a logical argument that made sense.

Testified – He told of his own personal conversion experience and the dramatic change Christ made in his life.

And he used the Bible to try to persuade his hearers. With all he had, he threw himself into sharing Christ and in V. 29 said "Some were convinced."

In fact, that gives me my second point. In Christ, we live hopefully.

**In Christ We Live Usefully**

You may never know how God is using your quiet unseen faithfulness. Paul did this evangelistic effort but, honestly, he spent most of his time chained to a guard who would be there for a 12-hour shift. So, in the course of a week, he would have 10-12 imperial guards chained to him.

It sounds terrible, but he used it for the Lord. He wrote Philippians from prison. This is what he told them about being chained to the guards: Philippians 1:12-13, *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.*

Each shift change brought a new guard to be shackled to Paul. It must have worked because when he closed the letter to the Philippians he said, in Philippians 4:22, *All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.*

Paul's life and witness started affecting those working close to the emperor. God did tremendous things with Paul while he was in prison. When we leave him in V. 30-31, God was not done. In Christ, he was living hopefully and he was living usefully.

Where you are, who you are, is *on purpose* so that you can see the redeeming power of the cross and to live your days standing in the shadow and serving its Savior Jesus Christ.

God is not done. Jesus Christ is the perfect son of God. He was crucified in the place of sinners, raised victoriously and is now Lord of all. Let Paul's life be an example. Come to Christ.

(Pastor prays)