

The End Of The Beginning - Acts 28:1-31

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[0 : 00] All right, we're going to finish the book of Acts tonight, Lord willing, unless he does something different or he interrupts it with a rapture or something like that. So tonight's message, the title is The End of the Beginning.

Not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning. Acts is the beginning of the church. We're coming to the end of that, but it's just the end of the beginning. There's still the rest of it. I like Narnia a lot, and I just finished listening through some of them again. I just finished The Last Battle, and I love The Last Battle in the end when it says that their life prior to arriving in what is essentially heaven, Aslan's country, was just the first page of the title page of the opening of the book, and now the rest of their life was truly going to begin.

And that's where we are. That's where we live. We live right now at the end of the beginning. All of this is just the beginning. Their true beginning will be when we're in heaven, when we're with him. This is just kind of like finishing up the end of the beginning, but the true start is when we're in his country.

So the end of the beginning, where are we with our friend Paul? So we're about 62-ish AD. Yeah, so we have 75-inch TVs, and I just haven't had the opportunity to put them up.

I can't really do it myself. So sorry, we're working on that. It should be a little more legible. Those are 55, so it'll be much easier to see. But anyway, we're about, it's about 62 AD.

[1 : 29] Paul is on his way to Rome. He just survived the shipwreck, and they just floated to shore, and we left him there for weeks on end. And now we're just getting back. They've been sitting in the Salt Sea.

The journey Paul took, if you remember, he left Jerusalem and bounced around. He got over to Crete, and then when he left Crete, that's not a straight line going to Malta. That's a two-week, 14-day journey all over the Mediterranean.

But as we said before that, no storm or shipwreck would prevent Paul from reaching the shore of God's purpose. And God had a purpose for Paul on the island of Malta. He used a storm, and he used a shipwreck to get him there.

That's where we left him. Romans 8, 28 says, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. All things work together for good.

Always. Always. Always. There's not an exception. There's not a footnote. There's not an asterisk next to that. And Paul's life has been a testimony to that, for sure. Our outline, if you like outlines, verses 1 through 6 is the start of something, where Paul gets a new work, unbeknownst to him.

[2 : 38] In the middle of his trip to Rome, he arrives at Malta, and God does a work there. Verses 7 through 11 is ending well. He ends that work very well after being there for a number of weeks.

12 through 16 is new friends, old loves, where he meets up with some unlooked-for fellowship. New friends, and yet it's that same old love that binds them together.

Verses 17 through 24 is, let's start at the beginning, where Paul gets to Rome, and he's going to talk to the Jews there, and he's going to kind of lay out everything that's happened. But the same old ending, verses 25 through 29, is the same response by the Jews that he encounters most everywhere.

And then verses 30 through 32, the last verses of the chapter, is a new beginning for Paul, a new way to do ministry, but it's the same ministry. It's always the same ministry.

So, verse 43 of chapter 27 says, The purpose was that the soldiers were going to kill all 260-plus prisoners on board this galley ship so that none of them would escape.

[3 : 48] Because under Roman law, if you allowed a prisoner to escape, you took their place. But the centurion, willing to save Paul alive, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they that could swim should cast themselves first into the sea and get to land.

And the rest, some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land. So they all escaped to land for the sake of one man.

One man's faithfulness. One man's obedience to God's word saved over 200-some people alive. And then Luke picks up the narrative in verse 1 of chapter 28, and he says, And when they were escaped, they knew that the island was called, in the King James it says, Melita or Malta. It just means honey. It was a sweet place. Escape. The word escaped means to be preserved through danger. And I understand what Luke is saying. Luke is saying, hey, they were preserved. They made it.

But I also think it's interesting in light of thinking of these men. You're prisoners. You're hard and fast criminals. Whatever. I mean, maybe you heard of Paul, what he said to the centurion, that supposedly we're all going to be saved alive.

[4 : 52] Maybe you didn't. All you know is you're about to be killed, and then you're told to throw yourself in the sea. And you're thinking, oh, I made it. Oh, what a coincidence. I escaped.

And it's always easy, after the fact, to attribute God's deliverance to happenstance. After the fact of God's deliverance, it's easy to look back and go, well, that worked out well.

What a coincidence. That's amazing. But God's deliverance is based upon his word. God's word was spoken to Paul and through Paul to these men, and God fulfilled his word.

But he didn't do it in a way that you might expect. Did a miracle just take place? It did. All 276 were saved alive. That's a miracle. But it didn't happen by Tinkerbell coming and sprinkling fairy dust on them, and they all rose up off the ship and floated in the air to the shore.

It didn't happen with a great flash of light, and they all disappeared and reappeared on the shore. It happened in the most normal, natural, somewhat stressful way. God delivered them.

[5 : 55] It was a straight-up miracle, and yet it looked about as normal as could be. How do we know it was a miracle? Because we have God's word. God's word spoken to the situation, and God's word then fulfills the situation.

So were these men, did they escape? Yes, they did. They were preserved through danger. But man, they were rescued. They were rescued by the Lord. And verse 2, And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness.

Barbarous, it just means they were not Greek-speaking. So anyone who didn't speak Greek, they said that the way they sounded in their ears was like, bar, bar, bar, bar, bar, bar, bar.

So they called them barbans, or barbarous, or barbarians, as we're going to see. We're going to see barbarian reference. I don't know. That's what the King James says. I don't know what version you have. But it's not.

In my mind, I see barbarian as like some big dude with skins in a club. That's not the island that they arrived at. It just means they were not Greek-speaking here. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness.

[6 : 58] In other words, they showed us a great kindness. For they kindled a fire and received us, everyone, because of the present rain and because of the cold. So obviously the storm is still going. 200-some people coming to shore.

And the people of the island are receiving them. They're just building a fire. It's raining. Maybe they're getting some cloaks to put on them. But the greatest kindnesses often come in the littlest ways in the biggest moments.

The greatest kindnesses often come in the littlest ways in the biggest moments. You just text someone and say, Hey, how are you doing? I'm praying for you. You know, maybe they're struggling. You don't know.

It's something big in their life. You send them a card. Or you just say, Can I pray with you? And they come back and say, That meant so much to me. You're like, I didn't really do anything. That wasn't really much. But okay. Matthew 10, 42.

Jesus says, Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones. The little ones he's referring to were disciples. Those that had given up home and land and family and had been ostracized.

[8 : 00] He says, One of these little ones. Whoever gives a cup to them. A cup of cold water. Only in the name of a disciple. Truly I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. It's like, this is

such a small thing.

It was like, here brother. You know, I'm owning you. Yes. As family. I'm owning you as a brother. You may have been rejected by the world. You may be a disciple of Christ that is right now going through something.

But I'm going to own you as a fellow brother. Here. Here's a cup of cold water. And we get a reward for that. The greatest kindnesses come in the littlest ways.

In the biggest moments. And though they couldn't understand their language. Comfort is a language that we can all understand. Right? We can all comfort. And bring comfort to someone. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks.

So here's Paul. Just shipwrecked. And laid them on the fire. There came out a viper out of the heat. And fastened on his hand. I've never had a viper fasten on my hand.

[8 : 57] But I have had kitty's cat fasten on my hand. With his claws deep. And it hurts. But it's not poisonous. So what's Paul doing here? Paul in the midst of personal distress, discomfort, and trial.

Paul is doing what? He's serving. Paul just continues to serve. That's just the most natural thing for him. Is to serve. In Mark 10 45. Jesus says. For even the son of man came not to be ministered unto.

But to minister. And to give his life a ransom for many. Jesus didn't come to be served. You say. Well wait a minute. Don't we serve Jesus? Yes we do serve Jesus. But do you know the way we serve Jesus?

We serve Jesus by serving other people. That's how we serve Jesus. This can be very profound. Ministry. Is about people. That's what it's about.

So wait. I thought ministry is about glorifying God. I thought ministry is about God's word. I thought. It is. But it's about people. We serve the Lord and we serve God's people. You know.

[9 : 56] We are super blessed that we have a location now. I was talking with Don and saying that. When I sent out an email. I realized I don't have to put an address where everything is anymore. You know.

Midweek study. Sunday morning. Men's study. Lady's study. I realized I had the same address every time. So I just deleted it. And it's like yes. Delete. Delete. Delete. It's great. There's new opportunities that are going to be arising because of that.

With the Fellowship Hall. I mean. We've got new sound equipment. There's new stuff happening. But we don't want to lose sight of the fact that ministry is about people. We're hoping to get some new carpet.

And maybe get rid of the pews and get chairs. Just so we can rearrange things and have some more freedom. But the carpet and the chairs are here to serve people. We're not here to serve the carpet and chairs.

Right. I think the story was Pastor Chuck. They had new carpet in their facility. And they said. Chuck. The hippies are coming in with their bare feet.

[10 : 54] And they're ruining the carpet. And he's like. Well. Tear out the carpet. And it's like. You know what. He didn't keep out the hippies with their bare feet. We're not going to keep out the hipsters with their Starbucks.

Right. Just man. I hope we so trash this carpet. Not by abusing it. But because we're using this place so much. And there's so many people. Then in three years we'll have to replace it again. Lord let it be so.

Right. Ministry is about people. My perspective. You know. If you come and say. What's your opinion? What do you think? I don't want an opinion. I realized I was telling my wife this last night. I don't have an opinion. I do have an opinion. But I want it to be shaped by God's word. I want God's word to shape my opinion. And then I want it to be. How's this going to benefit the body? How's this going to benefit God's people?

How's this going to edify God's people? Whether it's the carpet. Or bulletins. You wouldn't believe the amount of time and thought and effort we put into bulletins. And redo them. And all that Allison has done.

[11 : 51] For these bulletins. You know. Or whether it's sound. Whatever. The mindset always is. Well it's not my preference. It's not my sensibilities. I should be the last.

As we serve one another. Our own personal preference should be the very last thing considered. Right? There's you and you and you and you and you. And then that guy. And then us.

Last. Right? Ministry is about people. And here you see Paul. The great apostle Paul. He's not going. Luke. Luke. Go. Go get the fire going Luke.

I'm just. I'm wore out. You know. Took a lot out of me. I mean. I just didn't save all those people's lives. No. He's serving. He's serving. And what do we see here? Satan gets desperate. Satan doesn't know the future.

Does he? He doesn't. But he can see future potential. He does not want Paul going to Rome. Paul. How many times has Paul spoken and said to the believers. I need to be in Rome. God has promised he's going to get me to Rome.

[12 : 49] And so Satan's like fine. We're going to take him out in a shipwreck. Well that didn't work. Right? Well the enemy gets desperate. So he's like. Send the snake. And you can just see Paul. The thing bites him.

And he's just like. Because why? Because God has specifically spoken to Paul in Jerusalem. And said. Paul. As you have been faithful to testify of me in Jerusalem. So will you testify of me before. In Rome. So Paul. Like. Do your worst. I'm going to Rome. Because God's word. Said it. I'm probably not going to Rome. But I am going to heaven. I do have the promise.

That Jesus said. That faithful is he who calls you. Who will also do it. That he who began a good work in you. Will complete it. I have that promise. That whatever the enemy latches on to me with. I'm going to make it. So the venomous beast. Grabs on to Paul. Satan gets desperate. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast.

[13 : 45] Hang on his hand. They said among themselves. No doubt. This man is a murderer. Whom though he has escaped the sea. Yet vengeance suffers not to live.

I love how vengeance is just like some esoteric thing. Like what vengeance. It's essentially like karma. Well it just found him out. What found him out. I don't know. But it did.

Natural discernment will always lead to the wrong conclusions. They're just looking at this with their natural discernment. They're looking at this through their own perspective.

In our lives. When there's no word given. When God doesn't give information about a situation. We are never to default to natural discernment. It's always dangerous.

When we see a situation. God's not speaking into it. To default to natural discernment. Will always lead us to a place where we're in trouble. When there's no word given.

[14 : 39] Never resort to sight. Because we walk by faith. Not by sight. 1 Corinthians 2.14. But the natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God.

For they're foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them. Because they're spiritually discerned. And so here are these people. Like well. He must be a murderer. And this is just.

He's getting his just desserts. But Paul what does he do? He shook off the beast into the fire. And he felt no harm. When the enemy attacked. Paul just shook it off. Right?

Where did the enemy attack? What was Paul doing? He was serving. The enemy attacked Paul. He was serving. But where did Paul find deliverance? Deliverance from the enemy. As he continued to serve.

He shook it off into the fire. As he served. He just shook that attack off. James 4.7 says. Submit yourselves. Therefore to God. Resist the devil. And he will flee from you.

[15 : 35] Paul would not let the bite of the enemy. Distract him from serving. So what? The enemy bites. Shake it off and keep serving. Romans 16.20 says.

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Don't focus on the bite of the enemy. Focus on God's grace. Which brings deliverance.

How be it? They looked. So they're all watching him. The barbarians. With all their clubs and their, you know, their knuckles dragging on the ground. Boo. They looked.

And when he would have swollen or fallen down dead suddenly. But after they had looked a great while and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds. And said, oh, he's not a murderer. He's a god. I always get that one wrong. Murderers, gods. It's hard to tell. The word changed there is transform. They transformed their minds.

[16 : 30] Which makes us think of what scripture? That we are to transform our minds, right? But we don't do that with our own natural understanding or perception. Romans 12, verse 1.

Paul would have already written this to the Romans. It says, But they changed their minds.

Not based on God's word. Not based on direction of the Holy Spirit. But just as they were perceiving things. Because the flesh is a fickle thing. And when we base our fickle flesh on feelings, one minute you might think someone's a murderer.

And the next minute you think they're a god. That's what the flesh does. And then in verse 7. And in the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius.

Publius just means popular. Public. Of the people. He's a popular guy. And he received us and lodged us three days courteously. The word courteously just means to be kind or friendly of mind.

[17:53] And so it just meant in that area of the island, he had his home. He had his property. And he brought them in. I think Paul, when he says us, or when Luke says us, I think he means Paul and Luke and those traveling with Paul.

Probably the centurion. I don't think all 260 plus criminals are in there with this guy. 1 Peter 3.8 says, Finally, be you all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, be kind, be of a friendly mind one towards another.

The world should never be more courteous than us, especially towards one another. We should be very courteous to one another. Right? That ministry thing again. Wait, it's not about what I want.

It's not about my preference. And it's not about you getting your way. It's not about me making sure that everybody else gets their way. Right? It's what's going to bring out a vacation. What's going to benefit. And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux.

A bloody flux is not good. It's dysentery. To whom Paul entered in and prayed and laid his hands on him and healed him. And so Paul sees this need.

[19:03] He's brought into the home and here God puts in front of him this need. God never leaves our needs unmet. Never. Philippians 4.19 says that my God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

God never leaves our needs unmet. Paul saw a need. And what did he do? I think we see four things that he did here. The first thing he did. He entered in. Paul approached the need.

He didn't hold back from it. He didn't say, well, you know, ooh, okay, let's go over in the other room and pray. He approached the need. He became familiar with it. He sought God on behalf of the need.

He entered in and he prayed. And third thing is he came in personal contact with the need. He laid his hands on him. You know, think of Jesus when he reached out and touched the lepers and then said, be healed.

Be clean. He touched him first. And last, he trusted God with the need. And he healed him. Well, that's not Paul with his power healing him, right? He's trusting God with the need.

[20:03] He approached the need. He sought God on behalf of the need. He came in personal contact with the need. And he trusted God with that need. God will never leave our needs unmet. And God uses this.

God is using this to open a door for the gospel. Remember, God had a shore of purpose that Paul was sure to get to. No matter what the storm was. No matter the shipwreck. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came and they were healed.

Who also honored us with many honors. And when we departed, they laided us with such things as were necessary. Now we're going to find out they didn't all leave right away.

Paul's going to tell us in verse 11, they stayed for three months. But honored there, they honored us means to value. Who also valued us with many values. So they gave them things.

They honored us. They laden us with such things as were necessary. Well, why? Well, they just had a shipwreck. Everything went down in that ship. They have nothing. Paul says in Romans 15, starting verse 26.

[21:09] He says, And so Paul has just healed Publius, his father.

He healed all these people. He healed all these people. And so they supply his need. Paul, at one point in his ministry, if you remember in Acts, chapter 20, verse 34.

He said, And he also says, And he also says, That I have used none of these things. That is perfectly fine for a man to make his living off the gospel, but I have not used them.

This is 1 Corinthians chapter 9. He said that I should be, that any should say about me that I have used these things and that I don't get the glory. That I give the glory unto a man.

In other words, that I'm doing what I'm doing to get paid. Which Paul didn't do. But here you see Paul accepting that. Now, I don't get paid.

[22 : 28] As a pastor. So I brought a big sack with me and I thought, No. And I'm fine with that. The point is, there was a time for Paul when he said, This is not necessary. And I'm not looking for this. And then there was a time where it was necessary. What I think is interesting, It didn't work. Paul wasn't valued first. And then supplied the need. It was as the need was being supplied, Then they decided to value.

To find value in that. We've been able to plant this church for the last year and a half now. And do what we've been able to do because there's been no financial burden. We've had no financial burden upon the church. It's great.

I have a wonderful job. Well, it pays well. Will there be a day where the ministry will necessitate that? I believe so. Yeah. God knows when that is.

I don't. But he does. Paul would write to Timothy at one point and say, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, Especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

[23 : 28] For the scripture says, Thou shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, And the laborer is worthy of his reward. But the idea there is that comes after the ox is doing its work.

The laborer is doing its work. And then God allows that and brings that in his time and his way. A hireling is one where you go out and you say, I will pay you this much for you to accomplish this work.

That's a hireling. Right? If you go out and say, I'm going to pay you to come in and preach to us. We want it to be where we serve one another. We value one another.

And then we let God take care of that in his time and his way. Here you have Paul who says, Uh-uh, I am going to only supply my needs. And yet he tells us in Philippians that there was a, That they sent an offering to him to help him out.

Here we see here, he's willing to receive one. So God has his timing. I just thought that was interesting how Paul is so emphatic at one point That he's like, These hands have supplied my need.

[24 : 28] And yet when it was appropriate, He was happy to receive what God was willing to give him. And after three months, We departed in a ship of Alexandria, Which had wintered in the isle, Whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

Castor and Pollux were the gods of the sea. They just had a shipwreck. You can see these guys being like, Hey, we're going to take that ship. But we just found out there's only one god of the sea, Didn't we? So they were there for three months.

Paul ministered physical healing in a moment. Right? What was that? Maybe a day? Maybe two days? Maybe over the three months people were coming. But that physical healing is in a moment. Right? The three months.

What was he doing there for three months? We know what he was doing for three months. He was preaching and teaching God's word. He was doing a deeper work than just physical healing. And so now Paul continues on his journey.

I know, that's very small. And landing at Syracuse, We tarried there three days. That's in Sicily. I'm very fond of Sicilians. And from thence we fetched a compass and came to Regium.

[25 : 26] Regium means breach. And it's just a city that was between the passage between the toe of Italy and Sicily. We came to Regium.

And after one day the south wind blew. And we came the next day to Petoli. And Petoli is just a place of mineral springs. And it's kind of like part of the way up between the southern coast of Italy and Rome.

And when they got to Petoli, what did they find there? There we found brethren. And we desired and were desired to tarry with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome. Understand this is not just Paul and Luke and the men traveling with him.

This is the centurion. This is the captains. This is the Romans. This is all of the prisoners. What respect that centurion must have had at this point for Paul. And I think also they've probably seen the care that Paul's fellow believers, that they take with one another.

And so when there's a group of believers there and they say, we want you to stay, that Roman centurion is probably thinking, yeah, okay. I don't mind staying here for a little while. You know, it took Paul two weeks to go from Crete to Malta.

[26 : 37] Two weeks. And now we've just read in like two verses. Boom, boom, boom. He's gone Malta, Syracuse, Regium, and Petuli. That's fast. That's fast. Our forward progress is determined by

the Lord.

The Lord determines our forward progress. So what's our part in it? Our part is to be determined to face forward. The Lord determines our forward progress, but our forward facing is determined by us.

In Philippians 3.13, Paul says, Paul's like, I'm going to keep my face forward.

You know what? I can't determine my progress. I don't know how fast or how slow it's going to be. At different times of life, you have different progress. There's times of life where it's like God is moving and you're just like, every day is like, you feel like you're just taking strides in your walk with the Lord.

Sometimes not so much, but always continue to face forward. And as Paul now finds the brethren, he comes into what?

[27 : 43] He comes into fellowship. He finds these men unexpectedly, and women. And I love how scripture calls them brethren.

What does brethren indicate? Man, it indicates familiarity. It indicates a connection that they have. That they're like-minded, and that they care for one another.

They're brethren. You know, when we meet a believer in the wild, or you meet a Christian somewhere that you're not expecting to, man, it's like that. It's like finding family that you haven't seen in a while, but you've never met them before.

Some of you I've known for years, some months, some a couple weeks. But man, the connection, the familiarity, the like-mindedness, and the love and the care we have for one another.

That's why I keep coming back. Because I can't find this anywhere else. I have some people that I'm somewhat close with in my company. But then they go and they do things, and they act like the world.

[28 : 46] It's like, oh, man. They'll do things that are so selfish. They're so backstabbing. That are just so for their own end. And it's just, it's always a little shocking to me.

Because I'm not used to that. This is what I'm used to. I'm used to people who care. And would lay down their life for each other. Not for those who are looking to take advantage of one another. And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, these are the brethren in Rome.

They're now going to travel 40 miles from Rome. They hear Paul's on the way. They came to meet us as far as Apiphorum. Apiphorum is just a location there.

On the way to Rome, it was a postal town. A town where Rome had one of their post offices. And then just up from there was a place called the Three Taverns. Whom when they saw Paul, he thanked God.

Or I'm sorry, whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage. Courage means confidence, boldness, fellowship with believers. Seeing these brothers encouraged confidence and boldness.

[29 : 47] And that's what it does. When we're together, what does this say to me? What does this say to each other? What can we tell each other? Say, man, you're not alone. I'm not alone in this. I can go back out for Thursday and Friday because I know I'll be back here Sunday.

I can handle Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday because we're going to be here Wednesday night. I'm not alone. I know you guys are here. And I can come and I can commiserate and say, man, the world. You can say, yeah, I know. Let me pray for you because Christ has got this.

And so fellowship results in courage. It results in confidence and boldness. I like here too, they traveled 40 miles. Did anybody drive 40 miles tonight? I don't think so.

These guys walked 40 miles. That took a while. But they prioritized fellowship. Neither circumstances nor distance hindered their fellowship. That was their priority.

Paul would write, if you flipped over to Romans chapter 1, he would write in verse 9, he would say, For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son.

[30 : 48] That without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request, if by any means, now at length, I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. And so Paul would have written that to the Romans.

They would have had this letter. And now they hear, Paul's only 40 miles away? Okay, let's go. Only 40 miles. Well, okay. Let's do it. Maybe they waited until the end of their work day and then traveled 40 miles.

Maybe they walked overnight. I don't know. But the sacrifice they made to see Paul is remarkable. 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.

So Paul was with this soldier. There's a soldier there chained to him every day, changing. The guard would change. Be a different guy. But someone was always watching. Someone's always watching. And Paul had that daily reminder.

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 father, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

[31 : 54] So Paul still follows his same pattern. He gets into a new town and he goes to the synagogue. Or in this instance, he had to call them to him, the rulers of the Jews. He says, Men and brethren, I have committed nothing.

That means the author. I was not the author of anything against the people. Who, when they had examined him, that means to scrutinize or to sift. Who, when they had examined me, I'm sorry, they examined me, would have let me go, the Romans.

Because there was no cause of death in me. There was no reason for it. Even they knew there was no reason. They sifted me. They scrutinized me. And there was no reason. But we saw back in chapter 22, envy needs no reason, does it?

And that's what the Jews were, envious of Paul. And then Paul says, But when the Jews spake against it, in other words, they spake against the idea of Paul being released, I was constrained. It was necessary for me to appeal unto Caesar. Not that I ought to accuse my nation of. I'm not here to accuse you. I'm here because I had no other recourse.

[32 : 58] It was necessary. Paul's appeal to Caesar was necessary for the plans of God. It was necessary for Paul to use the means at his disposal to pursue the truth for the sake of the gospel.

He didn't say, No, wait a minute. I'm a Roman here. What can I get out of this? Let's see if I can get some political clout here. Let's see if I can influence these guys. All, everything he did was for the purpose of the gospel, for the sake of the gospel.

He used the means God gave him. Yes, it was political. Yes, it was his Roman citizenship. But what was the point of it? It was pursuing the truth for the sake of the gospel. Not for his own ends or any other means.

And for this cause, therefore, have I called you, he says to the Jews, to see you and to speak with you. Think of where Jesus says, you know, as he's overlooked Jerusalem.

He said, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets. How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks? But you would not. You see that heart here as Paul says, And I've called you to see you.

[33 : 58] I want to see you. I want to speak with you. My heart is for you. Because that for the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain. And there's the guard sitting there. It's kind of awkwardly, you know, scrolling through his Twitter or whatever.

As Paul holds up his chain. Clang, clang, clang, clang. For the hope of Israel, I'm bound with this chain. Paul was bound by hope. Israel was bound by sin. Paul had a chain.

Paul had a chain. But Israel was the one who was bound by their sin. And they said unto him, Look it. We have neither received letters out of Judea concerning you. Neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of you.

We haven't heard anything about you. Why not? Because there was absolutely no substance to the argument against him. Remember when the Jews, they hired Triple Hardened.

I can't remember his name, but I remember that the lawyer's name meant Mr. Triple Hardened. They hired him to come and speak against Paul. And he didn't have anything. Proverbs 12, 19 says, The lip of truth shall be established forever.

[35 : 02] But a lying tongue is but for a moment. It's a vapor. Just poof. And it's gone. But we haven't heard anything. That's because there's nothing to hear. And here Paul, he stands in the truth. And what is he saying?

I don't need to put down the Jews. I don't need to put down the nation. The truth doesn't need to put anything down to stand up. The truth stands alone. A lie has to put the truth down to try and get above it.

Whenever someone has to try and put you down to raise themselves up, they're not standing in truth. So now they say, But we do desire to hear of you. We desire to hear of you what thou thinkest.

For as concerning the sect, concerning the Christians, we know that everywhere it's spoken against. Yes, everywhere it's spoken against, but obviously without evidence. Because here is the guy.

Here is number one in the Christian sect. Here is their leader. Here is the guy who's been tested, tried, and sifted. And they found nothing. So obviously without evidence.

[36 : 01] We've heard that everywhere it's spoken against, but without evidence. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging. So Paul's like, this is different.

Usually I'm having to go out. But now they're all coming to me. To whom he expounded. Expounds means he's set forth. And testified. That's a solemn testimony.

It has to do with something you do before God. It almost has like a religious connotation to it. A solemn testimony before God. He set forth and testified the kingdom of God.

Persuading them concerning Jesus. Persuading is to win by favor with words. Persuading them concerning Jesus. Both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets.

From morning till evening. This was a very reasoned and rational response by the Jews. Paul just encountered the same thing when he went to Berea in Acts 17.

[36 : 58] It says, These Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica. In that they received the word with all readiness of mind. And searched the scriptures daily. Whether those things were so. So this is a very reasoned response.

A very rational response by these Jews. To appoint a day. To ordain a day. Say, let's all get together and hear about this. We're not going to just have a knee-jerk reaction to this. And then Paul begins to set forth the truths regarding God's kingdom.

You know, there are people today that say, We don't need the Old Testament. All we need is the New Testament. There's no reason for the Old Testament. Because we have the Gospels contained in the New Testament. The New Testament tells us how to live a Christian life.

We don't need the Old Testament. But Paul here expounded to them, Out of the prophets and out of the law of Moses, From morning till evening. And he wasn't just teaching them about the Old Testament.

It says specifically, Concerning Jesus. That means those things that are touching Jesus. The things that have to do with Jesus. He found them in the law of Moses, And in the prophets.

[37 : 57] You know, we're almost done with the book of Genesis. I can't believe how much Jesus is in there. He's everywhere. I think almost sometimes, It feels like Genesis is more Jesus than the Gospels.

And the Gospels is all about Jesus. They're just so emphatic. And they pack such a punch. These pictures and these types of when you see Jesus in the Old Testament. Paul didn't say, Hang on guys.

In my bag here, Thankfully I rescued my bag when we had the shipwreck. I had it on me. And I got a letter here that I wrote to the Corinthians. And a second letter. Let me read those to you. Because that's the New Testament now.

We don't need this Old Testament stuff. Let's pull out that letter I wrote to you. The letter to the Romans. Find that, guys. No, he went to the Old Testament. From morning till evening.

How remarkable that the things of eternity are to be conveyed by words and time. Isn't that crazy? The things of eternity are conveyed through words. And constrained by time.

[38 : 54] That's remarkable. And the Jews, as they are wont to do. And some believed, in verse 24. The things which were spoken and some believed not. Maybe Paul should have used a different approach.

Maybe he should have had more jokes. Maybe a few more illustrations. Maybe some better PowerPoint. You know. I don't know. Maybe he should have Give away prizes.

But why didn't some believe? And why did some believe? It is not the speaker or the material that determines the response to God's word. But the heart. The material is definitely not deficient.

The speaker is. But God's grace isn't. It's not the speaker or the material that will determine the response to God's word. But the heart. And Jesus kind of said as much in the parable to the sower.

When he describes what the seed is. And what the soil is. He says in Matthew 13. He says, Hear you therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and understands it not.

[39 : 56] Then comes the wicked one. And catches away that which was sown in his heart. The seed is the word. The soil is the heart. The condition of the heart determines the receptability of the word.

This is he which received seed by the wayside. There's no condition of sin or of heart that God cannot correct. But what's the condition? You got to give him a chance.

We have to be willing. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed. Agreed not means no harmony. You know, we just heard Lily and Kitty harmonize. It's harmony.

And there's that which isn't harmony. Right? Harmony. Working together. Complimenting one another. There was no harmony. There was no working together here. They agreed not. There was no harmony. And therefore they departed.

There was disagreement. There was division. And there was departure. They wouldn't agree. They divided. And they departure. By definition, to reject the good news means you embrace what?

[40 : 57] The bad news. Just like by definition, if you turn off the lights, you are now in darkness. You can't still be in light without light. Truth stands alone.

But if you remove truth, you're now in a lie. By definition, to reject the good news is to embrace the bad news. And Paul now has to give them the bad news.

When they agreed not among themselves, they departed. After that, Paul had spoken one word.

He's been going from morning till evening. Wait, wait, wait. I've got one more thing to say. Just one more. Just one more. You'll like this.

Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers. He's quoting Isaiah chapter 6, beginning in verse 9. Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing, you shall hear and shall not understand.

And seeing, you shall see and not perceive. What does that mean? Hearing, you shall hear. Jesus quotes the same thing to the disciples when they ask, Why do you teach the people in parables?

[42 : 03] So what do we see? There's capacity. Hearing, you shall hear and not understand.

Seeing, you shall see. They have the capacity to hear and they have the capacity to see. They also have the opportunity.

There's capacity and there's opportunity. And God gives capacity and opportunity to every single soul that comes into this world. They all have the capacity to see and to hear. And they all are given that opportunity.

For the heart of this people is waxed gross. It doesn't mean it got yicky. Waxed gross just means make thick or hard or stiff. It's like calluses. Right? It's like, oh, the calluses on my hands doth wax gross.

Just means your, you know, the skin on your hand is getting thicker. It just means thicker. For the heart of this people is waxed gross. It's thick, it's hard, it's stiff. And their ears are dull of hearing. They're heavy. The things they hear, it's difficult. And their eyes they have closed by choice. Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and should be converted.

[43 : 03] And I should heal them. Make whole and I should make them whole. There was capacity and there was opportunity. But without willingness, there can be no wholeness.

See, they could hear. They could see. And they could understand. But it got to the point where they didn't want to hear anymore. Like, oh, it's just such a heavy thing. It's just so difficult.

Oh, I don't really want to hear that anymore. And so they stopped their ears. They could see, but then they closed their eyes. They said, I don't want to see that anymore. And their hearts could understand at one point.

But now they said, I don't want to know anything more about that. The word converted there means to turn. How hard is it to open your eyes?

How hard is it to take your fingers out of your ears? How hard is it to stop for a moment and use your heart to ponder something? Say, all right, I'm going to think about this. Those aren't too hard. And what happens there?

[44 : 08] And should be converted. And should be turned. And I should make them whole. They knew it. They saw it. They heard it. But they wouldn't do it.

But willingness. If they were willing just to turn. Then God would make them whole. How easy it is. It's as easy as opening our eyes. Opening our ears. And understanding. God can deal with any sin. That's not an issue for him. Sin was dealt with on the cross. God can deal with any sin in a moment. Right? Because he said, if you're converted, if you turn, I'll make you whole.

If any man believe in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Sin's not the issue. God can deal with sin in a moment. God can deal with your past. God can deal with your present. Your future. Your guilt. Anything. But what he will not do.

Is he won't open your eyes for you. He won't force you to be willing. He can't. He's not going to force me. To do his bidding. He will give me opportunity. And he will give me capacity. But I have to be willing.

[45 : 08] Be it known, therefore, unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. Paul in Romans 11, he says, For I would not, brethren, that you be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

So all Israel shall be saved. As it is written, there shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. So yes, Paul is saying, salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, but only for a time. Israel is rejected so that the Gentiles might be brought in, but know that God will again turn to Israel, that Israel might be saved.

Today, we live in the truth of what Paul just said. We live in the truth of God's salvation being sent to the Gentiles. We're living proof that what Paul said came to pass. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had great reasoning among themselves.

That means disputing and discussion. You think, well, okay, they're discussing the scripture, but it's not the idea of, like, discussing it positively. The idea is discussing it in a disputing way. Just like, it's another philosophy, another thing to ponder.

[46 : 27] But God's truth is never just another topic or philosophy to be disputed or discussed. God's truth is to be accepted and believed. Then we can discuss it, for sure.

We can discuss the finer points of it, and that's what we're doing here. But it's not something just that, oh, this is just something interesting. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came in unto him.

This was a new season for Paul, but the same work. The same work. Preaching the kingdom of God. I love this is the last verse of Acts. And look what it says. Preaching the kingdom of God. Preaching means to publish, to proclaim, to herald. Teaching means to instruct, discharge, and deliver.

Concerning the things touching Jesus. Or concerning the things of the Lord. Literally the things that touch Jesus. What touched Jesus? What were the things that were to touch his heart? As we preach and teach.

[47 : 29] There are those today that say we shouldn't have preaching and teaching. That's the problem with the church today. Well, we need more discussion. We need more time for groups to be together.

This whole idea of preaching and teaching. There's studies that show that's not the best way to learn. Well, the Bible doesn't know anything about the best way to learn. But it does know what's best for us.

Preaching and teaching is spiritual. It's not about what works best for the natural and for our minds. God knows what's best. Preaching, to proclaim, to herald. It's not something you kind of do in a group.

It's something that a person does. Teach, to instruct, to discharge, to deliver. You can't really do that very well in a group. We're to go and disciple one another. We can in a group in the sense that we each are doing that in each other's lives.

But God has so ordained that the work he continues in the body is through preaching and teaching. That we have all confidence, no man forbidding.

[48 : 30] That means freedom to speak without hindrance. Paul was under the custody and protection of Rome. God had taken Paul and placed him under the custody and protection of Rome. The law was behind him.

He could preach and he could teach without anyone hindering him. So the last verse in Acts, as we approach the beginning, the end of the beginning.

Not the end of the beginning of the end. The beginning is coming to the end, but it's ongoing. That hasn't changed. Preaching the kingdom of God, teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus. With all confidence, no man forbidding us.

There's no man that can forbid us today. It doesn't matter what they say. Has it ever stopped the gospel from moving forward? No, it hasn't. Paul doesn't. The Acts ends here, but Paul doesn't. Ten years from now, about 80, 70, Jerusalem will fall to Titus Vespasian. The temple will fall. Paul, maybe anywhere from three, four, five years before that, will be put to death.

[49 : 32] He'll be beheaded in Rome. He goes to Rome. He's at Rome. He'll go before Caesar. And he'll be released. And then he will travel some more, people think, you know, into Spain.

And then he'll be brought back. And Caesar will behead him. But before that, one of the last things he would write in 2 Timothy, Paul would write to Timothy and say, 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. And when he appears, that's the beginning. We're just right now in the end of the beginning.

That is the true beginning. We're just finishing up the title page, just waiting for him to come and start the real adventure. Acts, we just covered 30 to 33 years in the life of the church.

[50 : 42] So as long as we might have taken to go through Acts, that was 30 to 33 years. All right, guys, that was pretty good. Might have taken two and a half years to do it. Paul traveled over 10,000 miles in his missionary journeys.

He visited over 60 cities. Acts is transitional. We saw how we transitioned from the ministry of Jesus on earth to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church.

We are still in that. We transitioned from Peter, being the kind of head of, de facto head of the church, to Paul, which is the next point. Peter, the apostle to the Jews, and then Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

We transitioned throughout Acts until now we end, focused on the Gentiles. And we transitioned where the epicenter of the church was Jerusalem to now it's the world. All of these things were reversed.

Eventually, God will refocus upon Jerusalem. That the work God is doing, the epicenter will be Jerusalem, not the world. He will turn from the Gentiles and he will focus again on the Jews.

[51 : 49] His ministry won't be so much to the Gentiles through Paul as it will go back to ministering to Israel that they may be saved. And we'll see again where instead of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles into the world, we're going to see Jesus directly, the lamb slain before the foundation of the world, the lion of the tribe of Judah.

We're going to see him directly intervening again in the affairs of this world, bringing judgment to this world. Remarkably, all of these things we are witnessing. Work backwards. We are witnessing God turning from the world to refocus upon Jerusalem.

We're witnessing God turning from the Gentiles to focus on the Jews. We're witnessing this work that God is doing in the hearts of his people. And we're witnessing where once again, Israel will be the epicenter of God's work.

It's a remarkable time to be alive. The acts of the apostles have ended, but the acts of the Holy Spirit continue.

And here we are. And here we are. Father, thank you, Lord. What a blessing. To make it. To make it to the end.

[53 : 02] To only find that when we get to the end, we're just at the beginning. It was the end of the book of Acts, which is the beginning of the church age. And we're still living in it. And Lord, we're watching the world around us.

And we're looking, Lord, as you are beginning to shift and turn away, Lord, from a ministry to the world to prepare for a ministry that will be focused upon Israel.

Before that happens, though, Lord, you will wrap up the times of the Gentiles. They will come to a close. At the culmination of that, the rapture will take place.

The true beginning. The resurrection out from among the dead. Lord, we pray you come quickly. That that day would be soon. And Lord, until then, may we live empowered by the Holy Spirit. Continuing to live out through our own lives the acts of the Holy Spirit. We love you, Lord, and thank you for the blessing of studying your word and finishing another book.
[54 : 04] We thank you, and in Jesus' name, amen.