

Current Series: “*The Gospel on Trial*” Acts 21-28

Main Idea: In Acts 28:17-31 we learn that when we’re gripped by the knowledge that our God is unstoppable, it produces three resolves in us.

- I. When obstacles come, we must face them (17-22).
 - A. Paul initiated a meeting (17-20).
 - B. The Jews wanted to hear more (21-22).
- II. When opportunities come, we must present Jesus (23-29).
 - A. Our curriculum is the kingdom of God (23a).
 - B. Our authority is the Word of God (23b).
 - C. Our confidence is the plan of God (24-29).
 1. God predicted Jewish resistance.
 2. God predicted Gentile acceptance.
 3. God’s predictions always come true.
- III. When forced to wait, we must keep the main thing the main thing (30-31).
 - A. Our tendency is to focus on what we can’t do.
 - B. Paul focused on what he could do.
 1. A good minister makes time for people.
 2. A good minister makes sure his message is constant.

The Bottom Line: According to the book of Acts, we can be sure of two realities...

1. God’s work will face opposition.
2. God’s work will not fail.

Unstoppable. I’m not sure that’s an attribute of God that appears in most theology textbooks, but it’s reality. God cannot be stopped.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

We’ve come today to the end of a wonderful journey. Back in 2018 we began to investigate the truth God revealed through Luke in the book we call “Acts of the Apostles.” This morning, after working our way through the text line by line, paragraph by paragraph, we reach the final exposition, message #65 (I believe). It’s been a fascinating trip, that began before COVID and now ends on the tail end of COVID, in which we’ve seen reminder after reminder of the unstoppable nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There’s no way to explain what happened in Acts apart from this. *God* did it. The Lord told a handful of disciples in Acts 1:8, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will be my witnesses, starting in Jerusalem, to the ends of the earth.” And that’s exactly what happened.

At the beginning of Acts we see 120 followers of Jesus meeting in an upper room in Jerusalem. In Acts 2 the number bypassed 3,000. In Acts 5 it reached 5,000. After that, Luke stopped counting. By the time you come to Acts 28 the church numbers in the tens of thousands and its effect has reached such metropolitan centers as Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi, Corinth, and finally the capital city of Rome itself.

If Acts teaches us anything, it’s this. When our God does a work, our God does a work! What He begins, He finishes. That’s why we can entrust our lives to Him, *totally*, for He is true to His promises. That’s also why it’s such a privilege to belong to His

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Acts series preached at WBC in 2003.

church, for He's given us the opportunity to be a part of something with a certain outcome, even if that outcome seems in question to us at times.

This knowledge produces a *humble confidence*. Here's an example of what I mean by humble confidence.

Frank Koch shares a story (*U.S. Navel Institute Proceedings*, the magazine of the Naval Institute) about two battleships that were assigned to a training squadron that had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. He was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow."

"Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out.

The lookout replied, "Steady, Captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: 'We are on a collision course, advise you change course twenty degrees.'"

Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course twenty degrees."

The captain said, "Send: 'I'm a captain, change course twenty degrees.'"

"I'm a seaman second-class," came the reply. "You had better change course twenty degrees."

By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send: 'I'm a battleship. Change course twenty degrees.'"

Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."

We changed course.²

That's humble confidence. The man on the radio in the lighthouse had it, and so can we who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because He is our captain, and nothing stands in His way. He has charted a course for His ship, the church, and where He leads, we will go.

The final episode of the book illustrates this clearly. In Acts 28:17-31 we're confronted with the unstoppable nature of the work of God. Are there implications for us? Indeed, there are. As we'll see today, when we're gripped by the knowledge that our God is unstoppable, it produces three resolves in us.

I. When obstacles come, we must face them (17-22).

And obstacles will come. As our story begins, Paul is in Rome. He's not a tourist. He's a prisoner, living in his own rented house with a soldier chained to his wrist. He has come to appear before Caesar to defend himself against the accusations created by the Jews in Jerusalem. He's been incarcerated for over two years.

Upon arrival he doesn't waste any time in addressing his situation.

A. Paul initiated a meeting (17-20). "After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews." Stop there for a moment. Before we notice what Paul did next, please consider what he *didn't* do. It doesn't say that after three days Paul attempted to assemble a legal team and strategize how to win his court case. That's what we may have done if we knew that our life was on the line in an upcoming trial with Caesar. Not Paul. Paul's number one agenda in Rome wasn't to obtain his freedom. His chief agenda was

² Max Lucado, *In the Eye of the Storm*, Word Publishing, 1991, p. 153.

what it had been since that day on the Damascus Road, to know His Savior better and help others know Him.

Brothers and sisters, everything ought to come back to this for us. If something doesn't help us know Christ better or make Christ better known to others, it ought not occupy the high priority status in our lives.

Look at Paul again. Why did he call for this meeting with the Jews? The reason, as we'll see, is that he wanted to remove a potential obstacle, a barrier that was keeping lost people from Jesus. If Paul didn't clear up the confusion concerning his own reputation with the Jews, these Jews would never listen to his message about Jesus.

Let this sink in. If people have a problem with us, they're not open to ministry from us. Unresolved problems hinder future ministry. And it doesn't have to be a legitimate problem, either. A perceived problem can do the same thing.

LaSor says there were eleven synagogues in Rome, with perhaps as many as ten or twenty thousand Jews living in the capital city. That's what this meeting is about.

Just three years prior to this, Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome. In that letter he addressed, amongst other subjects, the importance of evangelism, especially *Jewish* evangelism (for instance, see 9:1-5; 10:1-4, 14-15). Apparently, there was a lack of evangelistic effort by the church in Rome to reach the thousands of Jews living there.

Bruce Shelley offers this perspective, "It is easy to determine when something is aflame. It ignites other material. Any fire that does not spread will eventually go out. A church without evangelism is a contradiction in terms, just as a fire that does not burn is a contradiction."³

So Paul called for the leaders of the Jews, knowing that to gain credibility with the masses, it's important to gain credibility with the leadership. Let's watch how he addressed the dilemma head-on.

We're told in verses 17-20, "After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, 'Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.'¹⁸ When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case.¹⁹ But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation.²⁰ For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.'"

When a misunderstanding exists, we have several options. One, we can ignore it and pretend it doesn't exist. Two, we can attack the person with whom we have the misunderstanding. Or three, we can address the misunderstanding in a Christ-honoring way, selflessly and face to face.

Watch how Paul did the latter. Indeed, he models for us several guidelines we should follow when facing interpersonal problems.

1. *Speak as you would to a family member.* Paul began, "My brothers (NIV)." He's not using this term as he does in his epistles, in a spiritual sense. He's talking blood. These are fellow Jews.

I have one brother, a year and a half younger than me. I have a bond, a connection with my brother that is based on something to which neither of us contributed. We were

³ [Christian Theology in Plain Language](#), p. 162.

born to the same parents. That reality connects us, and affects us, particularly how we talk to each other. I speak to my brother in ways I would not speak to a stranger.

So must we. Address the other person as you would a family member that you care for deeply.

2. *Focus on the facts, not your opinions or feelings.* In Paul's case the facts were clear. He'd been arrested for a crime he hadn't committed. He didn't do anything against the Jews or their customs, and three Roman officials, Claudius Lysias (23:28-29), governor Felix (24:22-27), and governor Festus (25:18-19), as well as Herod Agrippa (26:31-32), all affirmed that he was innocent. Furthermore, in three separate hearings the Jewish Sanhedrin could not prove its case against Paul.

Those were the facts, and he presented them. As must we.

3. *Explain your intentions.* Paul made it clear that he hadn't come to Rome to attack Judaism or the Jews. He was there bound in chains because of what he called "the hope of Israel" (20). It was his belief in this hope that got him in trouble in the first place. It was this hope that prompted him to ask for this meeting.

Just what is this hope? That's the question that Paul wanted the Jewish leaders to ask. And in a roundabout way, they did.

B. The Jews wanted to hear more (21-22). "And they said to him, 'We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. ²² But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.'"

Some find it hard to believe the Jews in Rome hadn't heard any of the bad press about Paul. Surely, if it happened today, with all our technology, they'd have heard! But 1,400 miles was a long way for news to travel in the first century. And if Paul left Israel on one of the last ships of the previous sailing season and arrived in Italy on one of the first ships of the new season, it's no wonder the criticisms from Jerusalem hadn't arrived yet.

But the Roman Jews had heard something. They'd heard about the sect of the Nazarene, and what they heard wasn't good. But this was good. They were teachable. They were willing to hear Paul's thoughts on the subject, and Paul was certainly more than willing to share with them, as we'll see.

This is the first resolve of knowing the unstoppable God. We face our problems. Yes, we know He is sovereign and His work will go forward. But that knowledge doesn't make us passive. It motivates us to participate with Him. When obstacles come, we must face them, and by His grace, seek to make much of Him in them.

II. When opportunities come, we must present Jesus (23-29).

How do we present Jesus? The story is told about a couple planning for their wedding who asked the baker to inscribe the wedding cake with the Scripture text, **1 John 4:18**, which says, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." The baker made a slight blunder. He put the words of **John 4:18** on the cake. It reads, "For you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband."

When it comes to communication, it takes more than a sincere heart. The words are important. So, too, when God opens an evangelistic opportunity. *The words are important.* When the door opens before us, we must *present Jesus*.

Like this. Notice verse 23, "When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them,

testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.”

This probably wasn't a monologue, but a day-long teaching session, done in rabbinic style with question-and-answer discussion and even debate. If we look carefully, we can discover from Paul three essentials for presenting Jesus to lost people.

A. Our curriculum is the kingdom of God (23a). “From morning till evening he explained and declared to them *the kingdom of God* (NIV).”

I wish I had a recording or at least a transcript of what Paul taught that day. Talk about a goldmine of truth! Actually, we do have a pretty good idea of what Paul said by examining what he said elsewhere, such as in his sermon to the Jews in Acts 13.

James Boice makes the point, “I think it is not all that difficult to surmise what might have been said since the very next book in the Bible is Romans, which Paul had written just three years earlier to explain the gospel to this very community. We may suppose that he followed the general outline of Romans more or less.”⁴

If that's the case, Paul began this way. He pointed out there is a Creator who made everything, including us. He is the ruler. This is His world, and He deserves the worship of His creatures.

But that's the problem, *our* problem. In Genesis 3, the first man and woman, instead of trusting and obeying God, chose to go their own way and consequently cut off mankind from God. Since that dreadful day, we all enter this world under the wrath of God. We refuse to worship our Loving Creator, foolishly choosing to worship and serve created things instead (Rom 1:25), like carved images, and cars and houses too.

This is a worldwide problem, affecting Jew and Gentile alike as Paul explains in Romans 2-3. Yes, Gentiles have turned from God to pagan idols, that's obvious. But Jews have as well, substituting their own righteousness for God's righteousness. I can just imagine Paul saying, “We've missed it, brethren. We've substituted ceremonies for a heart relationship with God.”

We've all done it, regardless of our nationality. “All have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Rom 3:23).” “There is no one righteous, not even one (Rom 3:10-11).” We're all transgressors, guilty of treason, trespassing in God's world, deserving eternal punishment.

But God. Yes, but God! God has purposed to rescue rebel sinners and reestablish His kingdom on earth. He designed this plan in eternity past, and then entrusted the fulfillment of it to His own dear Son, the King of kings, whom He sent into the world two thousand years ago. This Son is Jesus the Christ, and He is the hope of Israel, indeed, the hope of all mankind.

At this point, Paul would have met resistance. “There's no way the Nazarene could be the Messiah!” the Jews would have responded. “The Messiah is supposed to be a mighty deliverer!”

In response, Paul would have turned to the Old Testament Scriptures, and demonstrated, “Jesus is the mighty deliverer!” God sent Him to make a propitiation, a sacrifice of atonement, to deliver us from sin. It's the sin problem that cut us off from God in the beginning. But through His Son's perfect life, His death as a substitute, and His triumphant resurrection, God delivers a sinner, any sinner, who will repent and believe in His Son.

⁴ James Boice, p. 427.

But Paul would have said more, for there's more to the kingdom of God than rescuing sinners. There's the rescuing of creation itself that's been groaning since Adam's rebellion. And this too is the work of God's Son, which He will accomplish when He comes to earth a second time, not as a sacrificial lamb, but as a Mighty Conqueror who will judge this world, establish His messianic kingdom, and ultimately a new heaven and earth.

This is God's unstoppable plan. Today Messiah Jesus is reclaiming the kingdom of God one life at a time, through the ministry of His church. And when His Father says it's time, when this age of rescuing sinners ends, King Jesus will take His church out of this world and pour out His wrath upon it.

Listen to Paul's explanation of this coming day in 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10, "This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of **the kingdom of God**, for which you are also suffering—⁶ since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,⁷ and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹ They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,¹⁰ when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed."⁵

I want us to notice something. This is how Paul did evangelism. It's quite different from, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," isn't it? Brothers and sisters, our curriculum is the kingdom of God. That's the context for the wonderful plan we share with people. Our message is about God and His rightful rule. This is the first essential for presenting Jesus to lost people.

"But how," you ask, "are we going to convince lost people, rebels, that they need to believe in and give their allegiance to King Jesus?" That's a good question, and it brings us to a second essential for presenting Jesus.

B. Our authority is the Word of God (23b). Luke says that Paul "explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus *from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets* (NIV)." In other words, Paul presented his case about the kingdom and sought to lead people to Jesus by appealing to the authority of the Law and the Prophets, the Hebrew Scriptures.

This is critical to see. Paul didn't share his opinions. He certainly didn't tell emotional stories. He shared the Scriptures. He carefully demonstrated what the Bible had to say about God, man, sin, and most importantly, *Jesus*. He tried to "convince them about Jesus" by using the Bible.

Why? What present the Bible? Because faith comes by hearing *the Word of Christ* (Rom 10:17). Lost people are as we once were. In bondage. Blind. Dead. What can set

⁵ Another important "kingdom" text for Paul is 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the **kingdom of God**? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the **kingdom of God**. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

them free, cause them to see, raise them from death to life? Only the Spirit of God can perform that miracle, and He does it through His Word. As Paul explains in Ephesians 1:13, “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”

So how do we present Jesus to lost people? Our curriculum is the kingdom of God. Our authority is the Word of God. One more essential...

C. Our confidence is the plan of God (24-29). In other words, the reason we can witness with assurance is because we know that God has a plan to save people. It’s a good plan, a plan He designed in eternity past, as Paul himself explains in passages like Ephesians 1 and Romans 8. It’s this plan that motivates us to do evangelism. It certainly did Paul.

Watch what happened in verse 24, “And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.” There will be a mixed response to nearly every gospel presentation. There was for Paul. Some were convinced. Others weren’t.

So how did Paul handle this mixed response? Notice verses 25-27, “And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: ‘The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶ ‘Go to this people, and say, ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’ ²⁷ For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’”

There are three truths regarding God’s plan that Paul highlights here.

1. *God predicted Jewish resistance.* Did the rejection of the Messiah by the majority of the Jews catch God off guard? No. He predicted it. In fact, Paul says that the Holy Spirit predicted their rejection through Isaiah nearly eight hundred years ahead of time.

Paul identifies three reasons why the Jews wouldn’t accept God’s message. They had a heart problem (the heart is “waxed gross,” AV), a hearing problem (“ears are dull of hearing”), and a vision problem (their eyes are “closed,” and therefore they “can’t see”).

Paul knew that God had predicted the very response he was now experiencing. Jewish resistance. He also knew there’s something God predicted.

2. *God predicted Gentile acceptance.* Listen to how Paul ended his gospel presentation in verse 28, “Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”⁶

What was God’s plan? For the gospel to go to the Gentiles. What did Paul say the Gentiles would do? They will *listen*.

How did Paul know the Gentiles would listen? Was it because Gentiles have better hearts, ears, and eyes, than the Jews? No. They won’t seek God on their own either. Romans 3:11 says, “No one seeks for God,” including Gentiles. The reason Paul knew Gentiles would respond is because he knew God’s plan. In the plan of God, this present age is the age of the Gentiles.

Some people have the notion that God is a frustrated God who is in heaven waiting for people to respond. That’s not the biblical picture of God. The Bible teaches that God is actively seeking and saving lost people. Listen to Paul again. “*God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!*”

⁶ There is no verse 29 in the oldest manuscripts.

Does that mean that God is done with Israel? Is Israel's rejection final? No. Paul had this to say in Romans 11:1-2 (NIV), "I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew."

So, God isn't done with Israel. Indeed, His intent for saving Gentiles is to provoke jealousy in the Jews. Paul elaborates in Romans 11:25-26, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved."

So God predicted both Jewish resistance *and* Gentile acceptance. Third...

3. *God's predictions always come true.* Always. In his time.

One day George Muller began praying for five of his friends. After many months, one of them came to the Lord. Ten years later, two others were converted. It took 25 years before the fourth man was saved. Muller persevered in prayer until his death for the fifth friend, and throughout those 52 years he never gave up hoping that he would accept Christ! His faith was rewarded, for soon after Muller's funeral the last one was saved.⁷

What kept Muller praying? The same thing that kept Paul preaching Jesus to Jew and Gentile alike. He knew that God has a plan to save a people for His glory, and God's predictions always come true.

So, when we're gripped by the knowledge that our God is unstoppable, it produces three resolves in us. One, when obstacles come, we must face them. Two, when opportunities come, we must present Jesus. Now the third...

III. When forced to wait, we must keep the main thing the main thing (30-31).

Notice what Paul experienced next, in the first part of verse 30, "He lived there two whole years at his own expense." For two years Paul waited on Caesar to resolve his case. That's two years of being sidelined from front line ministry. Most of us struggle with waiting. I see a contrast here.

A. Our tendency is to focus on what we can't do. We get frustrated because of what we want to do, yet can't do. "God, why did you let me get sick? There's so much I want to do for you!" That's how we tend to think. Not Paul.

B. Paul focused on what he could do. Notice the "and" in verse 30 (ESV). "He lived there two whole years at his own expense, *and*." Paul didn't just endure the two years. He did something with it. What?

Verses 30b, "And welcomed all who came to him." Paul didn't waste these two years by focusing on what he *couldn't* do. He poured his energy into what he *could* do.

"Like what?" you ask. For starters, it was during this time that he wrote four New Testament letters: Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon around AD 60, and Philippians around AD 61.

We learn a lot about Paul's perspective during this incarceration from comments he wrote to the Philippian believers (in Phil 1:12-14): "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly."

⁷ *Our Daily Bread.*

During those two years, Paul had a lot of soldiers chained to his wrist. And they all heard about Jesus from him. Barclay comments, “In two years many of them must have spent long days and nights with Paul; and many a man must have gone from his guard duty with Christ in his heart.”⁸

In the final verses of Acts 28, we see two characteristics of a good minister.

1. *A good minister makes time for people.* “For two whole years Paul...welcomed all who came to him.” Many people did just that. They came to see the apostle. Paul mentions them in his letters. In Colossians Paul states that Aristarchus and Luke were with him, as well as Mark, Jesus Justus, Epaphras, and Demas (Col 4:10-14). Tychicus actually came to Rome to bring Paul news about the church in Colossae.

Another person who visited Paul was Onesimus, a runaway slave who converted to Christ under Paul’s influence in Rome. Paul sent him back to his master, Philemon, with a letter that mentions Timothy, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (Phile 23-24).

In the letter to the Philippians Paul said thank you to the believers there for their gifts sent to him. Epaphroditus brought the gifts to Paul, then got sick and nearly died in Rome. Also, in the same letter Paul said he hoped to send Timothy to Philippi to let them know how his trial turned out (2:25), sharing this uncertainty in Philippians 1:20-21, “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

It’s obvious Paul didn’t sit around waiting for his trial date. When visitors came, he talked to them about Christ. When no visitors came, he talked to his guards about Christ, or wrote letters to care for the churches. That’s the mark of a good minister. He makes time for people. As is this...

2. *A good minister makes sure his message is constant.* Verse 31 tells us what Paul had to say to those who came to see him. “Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” The NIV says, “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What message did Paul preach during the two years? The same message he preached the day the Jewish leaders came. It was the same message he preached everywhere and at all times. The kingdom of God, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I don’t think we talk about the kingdom of God as much as we ought. It may be an indication we’re too preoccupied building our own kingdoms. But Jesus is a King, and not a Genie, indeed, He is the King of kings.

Just think. We have a King who died to save us. And now He invites us to cooperate with Him in telling the world about His kingdom, and inviting them to enter it. The unstoppable King, and His unstoppable kingdom.

So what happened to Paul? Tradition says that Paul was eventually set free, perhaps because the Jewish prosecution never showed up and the statute of limitations passed (which helps explain the two years of waiting). After this Paul launched his fourth missionary journey all the way to Spain. During this period (from AD 63-66) he wrote letters to Timothy and Titus. Eventually, he returned to Rome, was arrested again, and

⁸ Barclay, p. 193.

imprisoned, this time in a brutal dungeon. He never left. After writing his second letter to Timothy, Paul was beheaded around the year 67.

Perhaps you're wondering, "If that's what happened to Paul, why doesn't Luke tell us?"

It's because he's not writing a biography about Paul. This is a book about the unstoppable Christ, and how He's working in this world through His church. In Acts he shows us that what the Lord commanded, the early church accomplished by His enabling. In less than 30 years, they took the gospel from Jerusalem to the center of the world in Rome. And as Acts ends Luke makes it clear that the unstoppable work of God was still moving ahead full steam, *with all boldness and without hindrance*.

The Bottom Line: According to the book of Acts, we can be sure of two realities...

1. *God's work will face opposition.* It's inevitable. But so is this.
2. *God's work will not fail.*

Closing Song: #404 "*The Solid Rock*" (all four verses)

Community Group Discussion:

1. How does the book of Acts begin? Look back at Acts chapter 1 and summarize how Luke begins this important book.
2. This morning we looked at how the book ends in Acts 28:17-31. Take time to re-read this final passage, and then discuss why the book of Acts ends the way it does.
3. In this final scene we see Paul interacting with the Jews in Rome. How would you summarize their attitude towards Paul? What message does Paul present to them, and why is that significant (see particularly verses 23 & 31)?
4. Notice the final words of the book: "with all boldness and without hindrance" (ESV). In one sense, those words seem out of place. How so? Those words are actually very hope-giving. How so?
5. What encourages you most from this passage? What challenges you most?