

Acts 28

The gospel, the church and Jesus are all under attack. Our beliefs are criticized; our values ridiculed. Many believe that a biblical Christian faith has become irrelevant or even a hindrance to a peaceful society. Christian leaders have become lightning rods for scandal, embarrassing themselves and bringing shame upon the whole church and the name of Jesus Christ. What's an honest believer to do?

As the book of Acts comes to a close, we see Paul the Apostle arriving in Rome and carrying out an effective ministry there – while chained to a Roman soldier. The point is this: Jesus said his followers would receive power to be His witnesses. He didn't say that would always be easy.

Message: The spread of the Gospel will not be stopped; the question is, “Will we be faithful?”

- I. We should take advantage of our *divine appointments*. 28:1-10
- II. We can take courage during times of smooth sailing. 28:11-15
- III. We need to persevere regardless of people's response. 28:17-31

- I. We should take advantage of our *divine appointments*. 28:1-10

- A. Divine Appointment: a spontaneous ministry opportunity that we later see the Lord had planned – something providential.

- The Gospels show us that much of Christ's best ministry happened in exactly this way; a random question leads to an important teaching, etc.

- i. A divine appointment can happen during the normal course of life – just because we happen to be there, like Jesus at the synagogue each Sabbath.

- ii. A divine appointment can happen as a result of our schedule being changed by uncontrollable forces. This was the case with Paul on Malta.

- B. Malta was not on the ship's itinerary when they left Crete; they were brought there by means of the storm. As their schedule is now totally up for grabs, this is a perfect place and time for divine appointments. All expectations were thrown overboard along with their gear.

- i. 28:3 Paul didn't force this ministry to happen; he was just willing to serve.

- ii. 28:3-6 An unexpected attack became an opportunity for God to begin moving.

- iii. 28:8-10 A sick man opened the door to an even wider ministry.

Applications:

- If we are simply willing to serve, to gather some sticks, God will open up doors for ministry.
 - How many people have been led to Christ as children by a Sunday School teacher?
 - How many people have been led to Christ by or because of a faithful Christian friend?
 - How much of the spiritual life of any church comes from people doing things for one another or meeting one another's needs?
 - Sharing a meal
 - Giving a ride
 - Lending a hand
 - All of this creates an atmosphere in which lives can be touched.

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II. We can take courage during times of smooth sailing. 28:11-15

A. The most interesting part about this section is its lack of anything interesting. After all the riots, arrests, trials, imprisonments, a severe storm, a shipwreck, snakebite – and a number of near death experiences along the way – this is an unusually peaceful time for Paul.

- It is such a huge blessing when God brings us through a period of trial to a later period of safety and encouragement.

*Psalms 31:7-8 (NKJV) ⁷ I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy,
For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities,*

*⁸And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a wide place.*

B. Paul & Company intentionally sought out fellowship (v.14); other believers intentionally sought out Paul (v.15).

- Like Paul (v.15) we can take courage from times with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Years earlier, writing to these believers in Rome, Paul said the following:

Romans 1:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—¹²that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

- Application: I pray, if you are in a time of trial, that the Lord will bring you through to a time of smooth sailing. You probably need the encouragement.

III. We need to persevere regardless of people's response. 28:16-31

A. 28:16 *with the soldier who guarded him*

“Probably a new soldier every day or night, but always with this soldier chained to his right hand day and night. Now that Paul is in Rome what can he do for Christ while he awaits the outcome of his own appeal to Nero?”

(Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. 3 Acts)

B. 28:24 When Paul spoke, *some were persuaded ... and some disbelieved*. The same thing happens today. It should not surprise us.

C. 28:30-31 Paul's ministry was not inhibited by house arrest or the soldier chained to him.

i. He continued to receive all who came to him.

ii. He also took time to write certain New Testament letters. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon were all written during this time.

iii. Because of this time in Rome the gospel came into the very household of Caesar.

Philippians 4:21-22 (NKJV) ²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

- In short, we can see that the Lord, not the Romans or the Jews, gave Paul this imprisonment. It may be what Paul needed to get him to sit still for a while.
- What do we allow to inhibit our ministry? Riots, arrest, imprisonment, shipwreck, snakebite? Perhaps something less?
 - Reminder: We all have at least one gift, one way that God wants us to serve.

2 Timothy 1:6 (NKJV) Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you ...

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind [discipline].

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D. The Book of Acts ends in an incomplete manner. That's because the Lord is still adding chapters to the book. The church is still on the move and it will be until Jesus comes.

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Conclusion:

Early on in the Book of Acts, the Lord gave the disciples this promise:

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

We've now seen how the Holy Spirit came upon those disciples, that they did receive power and they were Christ's witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem, on through all Judea and Samaria and all the way to Rome, the capital of the world at that time. Those Christians succeeded in an atmosphere of difficulty, opposition, persecution and rejection.

The factors of difficulty, opposition, persecution and rejection remain, but so does the fact that lives are still being radically changed by the awesome power of God. Jesus knew full well the obstacles we would face when He said the following:

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." ...

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In closing, let's once again examine that promise of Jesus and the final verses of Acts:

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 28:30-31 (NKJV) ³⁰Then Paul [who began the book as a persecutor of the church] dwelt two whole years in his own rented house [in Rome, while under house arrest], and received all who came to him, ³¹preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.