

Acts 29 - Acts 28:30-31

Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

We come to the end of our journey through the amazing story of Acts. When the story begins there is a small band of nervous Christ-followers waiting in a room in Jerusalem. They had been with Jesus during His ministry, scattered when He died, and were redeemed by the risen Christ. He then told them to wait for the promise, so 120 people gathered, prayed, and waited. Then Pentecost happened, the Spirit fell on the church, and the fire began. It began as a small sect of Jewish people, and in 30 short years the Gospel spread all over the Roman world, crossing every cultural boundary. Acts ends with Paul finally making it to Rome. He was not the first to bring the Gospel here, by the time he arrived, the capital city of the Empire already had a Christian community. But getting to Rome had been his goal for at least four years so that he could preach the Gospel and make much of Jesus there, and with the hopes that the Roman church would send him on to Spain to continue his missionary efforts. But the trip to Rome was anything other than simple, as Paul arrived in chains awaiting a trial, having been imprisoned for over two years. Yet, in the story this represents something significant. The Gospel has come to the seat of power, and therefore in one way, it has reached the ends of the earth. This was the promise of Jesus' words in Acts 1:8. By this time every major city in the Roman Empire had been reached with the Gospel and had a Christian community. It was no longer a Jewish movement, but a world-wide cultural phenomenon that could not be stopped.

Yet, the way Acts ends is frustrating. When we get to the end of chapter 28, and this short declaration that Paul waited under house arrest for two years, we expect to turn the page and find out what happened to Paul. Did he stand before Emperor Nero? What was his defense in that court? What was the verdict? Did he go free, stay in jail, or get executed? Acts answers none of these questions. Furthermore, we get to the end of Acts and know nothing of what happened to the Apostle Peter or any of the other 12, much less the 120 people gathered in the upper room. The story has no resolution, no big ending, no final moment to tie up the loose ends. It just ends abruptly with Paul in prison. How frustrating.

Or is it? I believe the Holy Spirit's inspiration for the ending of Acts is purposeful. From a practical standpoint, it may be that Luke's writing caught up with history. In other words, for Luke and Paul verses 30-31 may represent the situation that was happening "this afternoon". Yet, from the eternal perspective, as Scripture, there is a fabulous purpose for the ending of Acts, to remind us what Acts is really about. When I read Acts, I have to begin by asking who the story is about. If the story is about Peter, Paul, the Apostles, the church, then I will be frustrated because there is no ending to the story. But if I see the first words of the story, that Acts is really about all that Jesus began to do, and understand who this story is really about, then I not only see the beauty of this story, but I can find my place in on His story. The story ends, Paul is in chains, but notice that the Gospel is not! In fact, the last word in Acts is the Greek word *akolutos*, translated "without hindrance" Paul may be in chains, but he keeps preaching and teaching Jesus with boldness, and the Gospel is unhindered. Eventually Paul will die, but the Gospel does not end with his death, it will be unhindered. Acts is not about Paul, it is about the Triune God, His glorious redemptive story, the importance of the church in God's plan, and the promise that the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth like water covers the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). In Acts the divine purpose of gathering a people from the ends of the earth has all kinds of obstacles and opposition. Some of these come from within Christianity, with moral failures of people, potential division in the church, and a major theological controversy. Other pressure comes from without, with incredible persecution. Early Christians die for their faith, are beaten and

abused, and thrown in prison. Yet, none of this can stop the purpose of God as He tells His story in Acts. He is the hero of the story. And while Acts as Scripture may come to an end, leaving us with a final sermon. Acts as a movement in history fulfilling the promise of the Great Commission has not. The story continues! It is "To Be Continued..." The story has continued to be told for the last 2,000 years, as that band of 120 people is now the single most diverse entity on planet earth, reaching all continents, almost all nations, and is moving toward to being proclaimed among every tribe and people group. And we are blessed to be included in this story. We read Acts, not as external observers or historians. We read Acts as soldiers, included in the great mission of God, and promised that our mission cannot fail. We are Acts 29!

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Nehemiah 11	Nehemiah 12	Nehemiah 13	Ecclesiastes 1	Ecclesiastes 2	Ecclesiastes 3	Ecclesiastes 4

Reading from this past week: Acts 28:30-31

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Matthew 16:13-18

Family Worship

Song - *Jesus is Better*

<https://youtu.be/vTewClvR7Og>

Gospel Project

Unit: In the Beginning

Story: Jesus was dedicated

Big Picture Question: What did Jesus do to save us?

Answer: Jesus lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

Scripture: Luke 2

New City Catechism

Question #10: What does God require in the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Commandments?

Answer: Sixth, that we do not hurt or hate our neighbor. Seventh, that we live purely and faithfully. Eighth, that we do not take without permission that which belongs to someone else.

Verse: Romans 13:9

Acts 28:30-31

- What has been your favorite part of our journey through Acts? What do you most like about this book in the Bible?
- Why is it important to remember that the central character of Acts is God, our Triune God, and not Paul, Peter, or the other Apostles?
- Mike said that as Scripture Acts ends, but the story of Acts continues and it includes us. What did he intend to communicate with these words, and what does this mean for you and me? For our church?

Prayer

*Pray that we would continue the story told in Acts, making much of Jesus, sharing the Gospel to all, and finding our purpose in His story.

*Pray for our Community Groups and the leaders.