

Acts 28:1–31 — The Gospel Unhindered

The final chapter of Acts, and what a fitting ending it is. The book that began in Jerusalem ends in Rome—not because the story is finished, but because the message has reached the heart of the empire. Luke closes with Paul preaching “with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:31). The chains cannot stop the Word.

1. God Can Use a Disaster as a Doorway

After the shipwreck, they discover the island is called Melita, known today as Malta (Acts 28:1). The locals show remarkable kindness. They build a fire because of the rain and cold and receive everyone (Acts 28:2). What looked like catastrophe at sea becomes God’s providence on land. The storm did not cancel God’s plan; it delivered Paul into a new mission field.

Paul, as always, is not waiting to be served. He gathers sticks for the fire—until a viper fastens onto his hand (Acts 28:3). The islanders interpret it through superstition: *he must be a murderer; the sea spared him, but justice will not* (Acts 28:4). Paul simply shakes the snake into the fire and suffers no harm (Acts 28:5). Then the crowd swings to the opposite extreme and calls him a god (Acts 28:6).

That moment exposes how unstable human opinion is. One minute the world condemns; the next minute it flatters. If you live for people’s approval, you will be pulled in a hundred directions. The better aim is to live for God’s pleasure—quiet faithfulness, whether praised or criticized.

2. Ministry Often Begins With Mercy

Publius, the leading man of the island, receives them and hosts them kindly (Acts 28:7). His father lies sick with fever and dysentery, and Paul goes in, prays, lays hands on him, and heals him (Acts 28:8). The result is a ripple of mercy across the island:

“So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed” (Acts 28:9).

They honor them and supply what they need when it is time to depart (Acts 28:10). God turns an unwanted detour into a season of compassion and witness. Often, the Lord opens hearts by opening hands—meeting real needs, then pointing people to the Savior.

3. God Strengthens Us Through Christian Fellowship

After three months they sail again, stopping at Syracuse, Rhegium, and then Puteoli (Acts 28:11–13). There they find believers who urge them to stay seven days (Acts 28:14). As they continue toward Rome, believers travel out to meet them at Appii Forum and Three Inns. Luke records Paul’s response:

“When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage” (Acts 28:15).

Christian fellowship strengthens weary saints. A simple welcome, a shared meal, a prayer, a hand on the shoulder—these are not small things. God uses them to restore courage.

4. The Gospel Goes First to the Jew, Then Out to the Nations

In Rome Paul is allowed to live by himself with a soldier guarding him (Acts 28:16). After three days he calls the Jewish leaders together. He explains that he has done nothing against the people or the customs, but was forced to appeal to Caesar because of opposition in Jerusalem (Acts 28:17–19). Then he states the core issue:

“For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20).

The hope of Israel is the Messiah—God’s promised King and Deliverer. The leaders respond that they have received no official accusations, but they want to hear about “this sect,” because it is spoken against everywhere (Acts 28:21–22).

So Paul sets a day, and from morning until evening he explains and testifies “the kingdom of God,” persuading them “concerning Jesus” from Moses and the Prophets (Acts 28:23). The response is the same pattern seen throughout Acts:

“And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved” (Acts 28:24).

This is where every listener must decide. Neutrality is an illusion. You will either receive Jesus or reject Him.

When they begin to depart in disagreement, Paul quotes Isaiah’s warning about hardened hearts—hearing without understanding, seeing without perceiving (Acts 28:25–27). Then he announces a sober reality:

“Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” (Acts 28:28).

This is not God abandoning Israel, but God extending salvation outward exactly as promised. The message goes to all peoples, and all are called to respond.

5. The Unchained Ending

Luke ends with two final notes. Paul lives two years in a rented house, receiving all who come (Acts 28:30). And he does two things without apology:

“Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:31).

That is the final line of Acts: the Gospel unhindered. Rome may chain the messenger, but it cannot chain the message.

Practical Application

God’s “interruptions” may be assignments

Paul did not plan Malta. He did not schedule a shipwreck. Yet God used it to bless a whole island. Some of your hardest seasons may become someone else’s lifeline through you. Ask the Lord, “Who are You placing in front of me while I’m stuck here?”

Beware the trap of living for people's opinion

The Maltese called Paul a murderer, then a god. Human praise and human scorn are both unstable foundations. Anchor your identity in what God says, not in what crowds feel.

Don't underestimate the power of encouragement

Paul “thanked God and took courage” when he saw believers who came out to meet him (Acts 28:15). Be that person for someone else this week. Show up. Speak life. Pray. Strengthen a tired saint.

A Challenge for Believers

Acts ends with Paul preaching “with all confidence” (Acts 28:31). Here is the challenge: stop letting circumstances set the volume of your witness.

If Paul can preach with a chain on his wrist, you can speak with pressure on your schedule. If Paul can keep receiving people while under guard, you can keep serving while inconvenienced. Ask God to make you steady—faithful in storms, faithful in delays, faithful in the ordinary routines of life.

Invitation to Non-Believers

Acts 28 shows two groups standing in the same room: some believed, and some disbelieved (Acts 28:24). The difference was not access to information. The difference was response.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He is not merely a teacher from history—He is the living King who calls you to repent and believe.

Do not delay. Do not harden your heart by repeated refusal. Come to Him now. Ask Him to forgive your sins, to cleanse you, and to rule your life. The Gospel ends Acts “unhindered,” and it comes to you today with the same power: salvation through Jesus Christ, offered freely, received by faith.