

**Refuge City Church — November 27, 2022**  
**“The Ellipsis of the Church...” [Acts 28]**

***Introduction***

- **Last Week:** Paul & his team traversed stormy seas & shipwrecked, but all made it safely to shore, all because of God’s promises, faithfulness, & provision.
- **Today:** In the conclusion to the Book of Acts, Paul finally arrives in Rome!

***Verses 1-10 [Read]***

“After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.” He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him. And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.”

- A 3 month respite on the island of Malta [60 miles south of Sicily]; how appropriate that Malta means “refuge”.
- 2 events occur that provide us lessons for life & ministry.
  1. After a tumultuous journey and shipwreck, Paul continues to serve [gathering wood & healing the sick]. There is no expectation of being served, or taking time off from what God has called him to do.
    - **Mark 10:45**, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
    - **2 Thessalonians 3:7-9**, “For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.”
  2. The snake bite is just one more example of God’s provision & promise that Paul would get to Rome.
- Other people’s viewpoint of you will only be determined by what they experience [outsider’s perspective]; Paul was either a criminal or a god.
  - God’s perspective of us is what ultimately matters. You are a child of God, so operate that way. Not by the opinion of others who don’t know you or the depth of your relationship with the Lord.

- **1 Samuel 16:7**, “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”
- Don’t get caught off guard! The enemy/serpent is constantly seeking who he can devour.
  - **1 Peter 5:8**, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

### **Verses 11-16 [summary]**

- Paul arrives in Rome [verse 14]; greeted by members of a church!
- What a joy it must have been to see God’s promise finally fulfilled!

### **Verses 17-29 [Read]**

“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. When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 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.” 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. 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.” 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. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. 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: *“Go to this people, and say, “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” 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.’ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.* [When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]” (verse 29 not included in some early manuscripts.)

- Per his usual ministry routine, Paul meets with the Jewish leadership in Rome.
  - They are unfamiliar with Paul as no report was made to Rome from Jerusalem or Caesarea.
  - Paul tells them of his trials and outcomes before the Jewish & Roman authorities.
- They hadn’t heard about Paul, but they were well aware of Christianity.
  - That’s how it should be! “You we don’t know, but we’ve heard about Jesus.”
  - Possibly dating back to Pentecost [Acts 2], did some from Rome believe and bring *The Way* back home; 3,000 people saved after Peter’s Pentecost sermon [Acts 2:10, “...and visitors from Rome”.]

- Or... reports from all around Asia Minor & Greece from previous missionary journeys and church plants. [regardless, some were fulfilling the great commission!]
- Paul makes it abundantly clear why he is in chains.
  - **Verse 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.”; it’s all about Jesus!
- Paul reasons with them from the law of Moses and the Prophets concerning Jesus.
  - Some believed. Some did not.
  - The scripture used in Isaiah 6:9-10 is not necessarily a statement of hopelessness. If they would turn [repent], God would deliver them [salvation].
    - **Romans 11:23-25 NLT**, “And if the people of Israel turn from their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God has the power to graft them back into the tree. You, by nature, were a branch cut from a wild olive tree. So if God was willing to do something contrary to nature by grafting you into his cultivated tree, he will be far more eager to graft the original branches back into the tree where they belong...Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ.”
    - **2 Chronicles 7:14**, “if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and *turn* from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

### **Verses 30-31**

“He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”

- The bookend to the book of Acts: The Kingdom of God.
  - **Acts 1:6**, “[The disciples] asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’”
- To start, what is a kingdom?
  - A realm/area, ruled and reigned over with specified laws to govern it’s inhabitants.
  - By who? = Royalty
  - When we speak of the kingdom of God, over what realm does God rule?
    - [Paul speaking to the Athenians] **Acts 17:24-25**, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”
    - **Psalms 103:19**, “The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”
- In God’s Word, Jesus is defined as Prince of peace [Isaiah 9:6], Sovereign [1 Timothy 6:15], King of kings and Lord of lords [Revelation 19:16]
- **Parable of the weeds** [Matthew 13:24-30]
 

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it

have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."'”

- *The sower* = Jesus — *The good seed* = True Christians — *The field* = The world — *The weeds* = Unbelievers/'counterfeit Christians'
- How we operate in this world is of utmost importance!
- The devil [*snake in the sticks*] will provide every distraction known to man to cause us to fail. [1 **Peter 5:9**, "...resist him, firm in your faith"]
  - **John 17:15**, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."
- As Christians planted in a world infested with evil, sin, and the like, we are to pursue our purpose: "bear fruit and so prove to be disciples of Jesus." [John 15:8]
- Our job is not to root out/judge those around us. That's God's job, and will be done in the last days.
  - Just do what you've been planted to do. Love God. Love others. Share the gospel. Make disciples. Repeat.
  - **Matthew 5:16**, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."
- The Kingdom of God
  - *What it is*: Overall, *it is Jesus* and His gospel of salvation. And God's placement of us in His kingdom for kingdom work.
  - *Our role in it*: Having accepted His Word, we are then to be an example to those around us that we begin to emulate our King here on earth. He planted you for a purpose...live it! ["Life's a garden...dig it!"]

### ***Ellipsis [Conclusion]***

- **Verses 30 & 31**: The purpose of the church until Jesus returns!
  - **QUOTE**: "With this expression [i.e., without hindrance], which is literally Luke's last word in Acts, he is saying that largely through Paul's activities, the Church is now on the march, and nothing can stop it. Paul has built the vital bridge from Jerusalem to Rome. The Cross is in the field." [William Neil]
- The ellipsis of Paul's life and ministry [dot dot dot]
  - According to early Christian-Historian Eusebius, "After pleading his cause, he is said to have been sent again upon the ministry of preaching, and after a second visit to the city [Rome], that he finished his life with martyrdom."
  - Church history records a year or so [maybe 4 or 5] of ministry prior to returning to Rome and his martyrdom [beheaded] under Emperor Nero in A.D. 68.
  - During this time in Rome, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
    - 1 Timothy and Titus written after leaving, and 2 Timothy upon returning, just prior to his death.

- **2 Timothy 4:6-7**, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”
- This is the ellipsis of the Church: The story continues...
  - **2 Timothy 2:8-9**, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. *But the word of God is not bound!*”
  - **Philippians 1:12**, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to *advance the gospel,*”
- And so here we are today. What are we going to do with what God has given us?
  - Let’s “Act”! Amen.