

The End of The Beginning - Acts 29:17-31

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning church. There we go. You guys are acting like summers over. Kind of is. We got adult discipleship happening in two weeks. You have information here. We've got some really outstanding courses, classes that we're going to be offering. I want to exhort each of you along with our pastoral staff. We want you involved. We want you walking with others and and being trained up as soldiers. And so our disciples power 9 a.m. is time to do that. If you have questions on any of the content here or logistics come and talk to me after the service. I would love to interact with you on that with that. Go ahead and turn open to act 28. We're going to be finishing up the book, the study this morning as David just mentioned. We'll be looking at versus 17. Through the end. So let me pray for our time. And then we will dive into our study. Remember this and stand firm. Recall it to mind. You transgressors remember the former things of old for I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done. Lord, we are thankful this morning that your council stands and that you will accomplish all that you have purpose to do. We counted a privilege this morning. Lord Jesus to be here to worship you.

We're thankful that our sins are forgiven that we are called your beloved. And you delight in us. And that is that is a truth Lord that we want to we want to drink of this morning and be refreshed in that the gospel is true for us that indeed we stand here without condemnation because of what you've done.

Jesus. God, thank you that you would love centers. Thank you that you would make it possible to be shielded from your holy wrath in you. And we are here this morning solely because of what you accomplished in our lives. So would you teach us now from your word? We're thankful that it's a lamp to our feet, a light to our path. And Lord, we are not left here to wonder how to live, but you have placed within us your spirit and you've given us your word. And so Lord, we delight to have you speak to us this morning. So Lord, would you fill me with your spirit and unction as as we consider these final words in this story of acts? We love you Jesus. We commit this time to you now. It's in your name. We pray. Amen. So we are in our final morning study of acts. We have seen God empower his people to be able to walk boldly for the sake of the gospel. We've seen sermons that have been preached, people who have repented and found life.

We've even seen good men make the ultimate sacrifice for the name of Jesus. James, Steven and others unnamed. In fact, God has demonstrated that the gospel is for everyone in this story, for the Jew, for the Samaritan, for the Gentile, for the Ethiopian God's heart is for the nations. And the book of Acts declares that God has also demonstrated that no life is too far gone that the long arms of God cannot reach. And we see that most certainly in this person that we have been studying for the last half of the book, Paul, the apostle, saw the rabbi, no life too far gone that God cannot rescue. Paul, the most unlikely of converts, then becomes this incredible missionary for the Lord. I want people to know about Jesus. He has done a work in my life that I can't even fathom and I've got to tell people. And he committed the rest of his life to that task. And we pick up the story this morning as he has now arrived in Rome. This is in fact how his story concludes and ours begins. And in a sobering fashion, really this morning a baton is being passed to us. It's actually already has been passed to us. Some of us maybe have forgotten that we carry the gospel baton with us each and every day of our lives as those in Christ. We get one life and now is our time to run our leg of the relay. And after we run our leg, we then will stand before the Lord. We'll stand at the judgment seat of Christ to receive our commendation for the lives that we lived in here and now for the glory of God.

This judgment seat or known as the Bema seat, it's not for sins that have been committed, but rather for the lives lived to the glory of God. And you can read about this Bema seat judgment in 1

Corinthians 3. The judgment seat, we will be judged based upon good news that we have spoken, intercession prayers that have been made, spiritual leadership that we discharged, sacrifices that we have offered to the Lord of our time, of our talent, of our treasure, all with the aim of conveying the full beauty of the gospel of Christ. And so in these final words that we have in Acts, we will observe three lessons or helps as we consider running this leg well. And I hope that these three helps will do just that because at the end of days when we stand before the Lord, the thing that we want to hear from Him is what? Well done. Well done. Well join me, let's pick up the story here in verse 17. Paul's arrived at Rome, immediately put on home arrest and

[7 : 07] Luke writes, after three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews. And when they had gathered, he said to them, brothers though I have done nothing against our people or 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 in 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. It's interesting, you just want to be acquitted. 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 these chains. 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, that's where we get our word heresy from.

Regarding this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against. So Paul now he is there in Rome. Typically when he would go into a city, what would he do first? He would go to the synagogue. He's on home arrest. He's going nowhere. And so he has to change his approach. He calls an audible and says hey you need to come to me. So he calls the Jewish leaders to come to him and it certainly could have been a large number of them because in this city and scholars and historians believe that Rome could have been upwards of two million people in this day. And it's believed that there were perhaps seven to twelve synagogues in this city. There may have been a number of Jewish leaders that came to hear from Paul. And as Paul gathers these men, he wants to then explain. This is why I'm here. In fact he says I asked to see you and speak to you since it's because of the hope of Israel that I'm wearing these chains. I mean so there's so much irony here. Or we could say insanity. I mean the optics of what we hear from Paul and what we then see. He's like I'm here for the hope of Israel. That's what you're about. That's what I'm about. Why am I in these chains? We are aligned. I'm here. I've been speaking about the deliverer that the prophets have promised.

I just so happened have told you who he is. His name is Jesus. He's our Messiah. And you've been reading about him. You've been waiting for him even as far back as Genesis 3. 15. Where the promise is given that there will be an offspring that will crush the head of the serpent. Well that individual has come and his name is Jesus. But I'm aligned with you. It's for the hope of Israel. We've been waiting for a Messiah and I'm here to tell you who he is. So what's my crime?

And the Roman authorities, they saw Paul as innocent. It's just because of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem that would not let it rest that Paul had to appeal to Caesar and now here he is. And perhaps for Paul he was concerned initially that man these Jewish leaders in Rome are going to align with those Jewish leaders that were against me in Jerusalem and he's ready to make his sixth defense. But shockingly they have a no idea what he's talking about. They're totally unaware of the false charges that were brought against Paul. Which is fascinating to me. If we reflect on our study it was like the governor Festus was so concerned that he write down like what's the crime? I got to get the crime and he consults with the Gripen so that he can have something to send with Paul so that those authorities in Rome would know. Guess what? No letter was delivered.

[11 : 41] They said we have received no letter, verse 21, from Judea about you. In fact no one has said anything evil about you. So here's my question church. There's no letter. How are these Jewish leaders going to find out about why Paul is there?

Where are they going to find that out? From Paul. They have to talk to him. They have to interact with him. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. And it's interesting because without charges brought this trial is not happening anytime soon.

Which actually as we will read through this narrative and we'll get to verse 30 at the end and we're going to find out that two years in there's still been no trial. It's fascinating to me because what this does with no letter Paul has now have opportunity to have this robust ministry in Rome. In fact we

know that during this time he actually writes four epistles. We call them the prison epistles for good reason. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Book of Philemon.

He has a robust ministry because no letter arise. And we know that Paul he's got a guard that's with them and it's believed that he's probably chained to this guard 24-7 and as the Romans carry out their duties there may have been a new guard every four hours which means 24-7 Paul has to do the math simple math six guards with him at all times for two years. Like that is a captive audience. So sorry. So fortunate the letter didn't arrive. So lucky.

Serendipitous. Wasn't luck. Wasn't random. It was Providence. The God of all Providence.

[14:16] God's activity in life. It's his hand. You recall the story of the shipwreck on Malta. A few weeks back Eric shared about that. 276 sailors shipwrecked. How many did God get safely to shore? All of them. All of them. And one letter. It can't even make it. You want to run your leg of the gospel relay well then you need to believe today that God is writing the story now as he did then. And what I'm talking about here is we have to believe that God is active today. That God is the God of all Providence. Providence is how God acts out carries out his sovereign plans in the here and now. And I love the fact the letter didn't get there. One little letter. It's God's hand. It's God's hand. And I would just suggest to us this morning that God is more involved in the details of life than most of us will readily acknowledge or admit. And I get it there's a tension here because we live on a planet that is touched. It's marred by evil by sin. But mark this.

God's fingerprints they're everywhere. And not even evil can usurp God's sovereign plans. Let me remind us God's provident it extends to as big a things as governments. Job said it this way in Job 12:23. He makes nations great.

He destroys them. He enlarges nations and leads them away. God's also involved in the small details. Proverbs 6:33. The lot is cast into the lap but it's every decision is from the Lord. I just ruined the game of Yahtzee forever. Perhaps one of my favorite verses on this subject of God's providential hand and all the Bible and I just I love this. I love this prophecy from Isaiah 41 or 45:1. Isaiah writes thus says the Lord to his anointed to Cyrus. He was a king of Persia. He was an unbeliever. But God's anointed whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings to open doors before him and gates that gates may not be closed. God used this man to deliver Israel from the exile in Babylon after 70 years. It was this king says you can return and God predicted it 150 years before Cyrus is born and scripture names him. Think about his parents. What should we name this kid? I don't know. Hmm.

I came up with it. Let's call him Cyrus. No. Yeah, it's a good one. I mean he's named. He's not even born. It's God's activity. And maybe you're like, Jake, great Cyrus. Okay. I don't feel got at work. I'm not sure I'm there. It just seems like it's quiet a lot. Sometimes I think that maybe he's just sort of forsaken me.

He's forgotten. I don't I can't see God in this kind of that spirit of Cory Tamboom in the concentration camp during World War II. There was there with her sister Betsy and Cory who loved Jesus. We saw sovereignty everywhere was just like I draw the line at the fleas. I can't thank God for the fleas. I don't see God in the fleas. We got fleas and I'm not gonna give thanks for the fleas.

[18:56] And Bethesda you got to give thanks to Jesus for the fleas. It's like I'm not gonna do it. And then later she comes to recognize that God had used the fleas to keep the guards out of the women's barracks so they could actually have a Bible study. I get it sometimes you feel like where's God? Where's God? And we have to guard against this thinking of God's forsaken. God's forgotten. God's at work. Sometimes when we sort of think man it's it's the worst. I can't see God in the today. Not in this. He's forsaken me. This week I got to go make a new friend, visit him in the hospital and just gone through. It's rough and multiple hospital stays and just he's like man Jay like this cross is pretty darn heavy.

I don't know why you carry this. And as we talked I just asked a question. I was like what do you think God's doing here? I don't know. And I said well let me suggest to you and mysterious things belong to the Lord. I don't know all that the Lord's doing here but certainly in these times of like when we are in the places of great scarcity it's God drawing us back into himself and then I was able to encourage him just like man when you think God's least at work he's at work and I shared with him just the example of Christ. When did Jesus feel most forsaken? Well he tells us. He says my God my God why have you forsaken me on the cross? Isolated, feeling all alone and yet it was in that moment that God was doing the most profound miracle this world will ever know. God was at work. It was profound.

God is not forsaken Paul. Even in chains home arrest. It's part of God's plan. Paul saw it because he says later in 2 Timothy 2.10 he says hey I might be chained but the word of God is unchained. And in fact he's in a place here this is God's plan. Folks are interested. In fact they said in verse 22 we desire to hear from you what your views are about this sect. And the Jews in Rome knew about Christianity. They knew about Jesus. We know that because maybe a decade prior Claudius Caesar commanded the Jews. You're done. You're out of Rome.

There was this inner squad scrimmage and there was like this controversy and the historian Satonius talks about it like in the second century he's talked about hey these Jews they were arguing over this individual named Christus.

Claudius had enough. You're out of here. So word was going round and they wanted to hear from Paul. What do you think of this Jesus?

[22 : 32] Well you want to run well? Believe that God is at work. You know why? Because he is. He is. Let's look at verse 23 to 28.

When they had appointed a day for him they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them. Testified to the kingdom of God. 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. Paul now quotes from Isaiah 6. Go to this people and say you will indeed hear but never understand.

You will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull and with their ears they can barely hear and with 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.

Now just as a quick aside some of you guys are like whoa what happened to verse 29? If you have an asv it's not in there don't let it shake you. It's not in the oldest texts the oldest manuscripts. It's believed that it's a later scribal edition written down just simply for clarity sake. It reads let me just tell you so that you're not like well am I missing like a doctrine of God here? No it's just it says and when he had said these words the Jews departed having much dispute among themselves which is just a restatement of verse 25. Okay nothing gained nothing lost by that. Now that said Paul here he's got a large audience. Let me tell you let me tell you what I believe about this Christmas about Jesus about the Christ. Let me tell you and Jesus talks about the Gospel.

Paul is relentless. He's like a broken record. Why? Because he knows that without Christ there's no salvation. 2,000 years ago and today. The law is not going to declare you righteous. It just heightens the fact that you need a Savior. It just it just confirms you're a lawbreaker and you need a Savior. And so as Paul shares about the Gospel that Jesus is God's perfect sacrifice this message it splits the crowd after a full day of preaching from Paul. And it's interesting because the unbelief here it didn't undermine the truthfulness of what Paul was saying. Didn't undermine the truthfulness of the Gospel. In fact the unbelief of some there it just simply was a fulfillment of prophecy. Paul quotes here Isaiah 6. You hear but never understand. You see but never perceive.

[26 : 19] And recall when Isaiah was given this he was going to fulfill this ministry to God's ancient people and they were a stubborn people. And it described the hardness of their hearts. And it's interesting because this this prophecy it gets a lot of airtime. Jesus quotes it in Matthew 13 when he moves to a parable ministry. You're not listening. You're not you're not receiving. Well I'm gonna change my approach. I'm gonna talk in mysteries to some of you and it's my grace because I'm concealing truth from you so that you're not even more damned because of the fact that you continue to reject. The Apostle John quotes it in John 12 and now Paul quotes the same prophecy in Acts 28. But I want us to notice that the Paul here he's in the Gentile capital of the world at this time but yet he's still offering the Gospel to the Jew first. It's a power of God to the Jew and to the Gentiles. It's a power of God for everyone.

For everyone. Paul's consistent. And Luke records the response says some were convinced but others disbelieved. Others disbelieved. And we could read that phrase church and either be discouraged that those that there were a number that rejected Jesus and go man like the Apostle Paul couldn't convince them. He was preaching all day. Man there's no hope for me. I'm not gonna give this anyone. But then we received the statement but some did believe. Some did believe. And that should be encouragement to us. It's exciting. You want to know who the some were. Some of

the some. Think about that. I'm sure if that's proper English. But some of the some we know about because Paul tells us in

Philippians right it's a prison epistle. He writes Philippians while he's there under home arrest in Rome and this is what he writes to the Philippians. Philippians 1:12. I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served the to advance the Gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole Imperial Guard. So who are the some? It's those guys that are chained to Paul. So cool. He's interacting with all these folks. These guys are like man I'm here. I gotta keep listening to this. Not again. Not again. Not again. I repent. I mean I just love that. Church you want to run your leg the gospel well. You got to rest in the providential hand of God. It's just a restatement of point one but yet directed towards salvation. Some aren't going to respond but some will. Some will. Do you believe that? That's a promise from God that some will respond. You got to rest in that. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:10. Hey I endure everything for the sake of the elect.

Don't got time. We'll touch that on another sermon. We'll give that one to Scott. He'll explain it. You've got. Oh election. Got it.

Doesn't John 6:37 that all that the Father gives me they will respond. God aims to rescue some. We even saw it in our study of Acts back in Acts 13. They're in Pasidian Antioch. Paul and his first missionary journey says in Acts 13:48 and when the Gentiles heard this they began rejoicing glorifying the word of the Lord and as many as were appointed to eternal life they believed. God is purpose to rescue some. And so maybe you're like well I'm off the hook. God's going to do it. Great. Doesn't need me. Yes he does. And that's the mystery.

[31:04] Because God wants to use us. He has made that part of his sovereign will to use. People. Blessed feet to bring. Good news. And it's interesting and we see this because in the next stop in Iconium in Acts 14 verse 1. Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and they spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. And there's mystery.

And I'm not going to untangle it this morning. And even if we were together for a long time I'm still confused. And there's moments in my life when I was a young seminary student where I totally understood it all. And now I don't. And I'm okay with that. There's mystery there. But we got a delight that that God's sovereign hand is at work related to salvation. Because it's what fuels our zeal to proclaim Jesus. That some are going to respond. And I draw on that promise almost weekly when I drive Uber because when I'm out there last week I was discouraged. Because I'm just picking up folks person after person after person. And I'm just seeing the brokenness and the lostness and I'm just saying to myself Lord how can you rescue anyone in Spokane. That's what I would literally find. And so I go back to this promise. The Lord is going to rescue some. No one's too broken. And I think that's the testimony of Paul's life, right?

That's the gift that he is to us. And God's doing it today. Let me tell you about a couple of my friends. Business Insider back in 2015 did an article on the 27 most influential people in America that are defining culture, defining what is in what is cool. And you had guys like the rapper Drake, right? Everybody wants to wear a puffy jacket because this guy wears a puffy jacket. And Jennifer Lawrence is on this, you know, she got a pixie cut. Oh, all the girls got to get a pixie cut and LeBron James and Taylor Swift and Zendaya. I can never say your name correctly. But all these folks are on this list of what's cool in America. Well, a friend of mine was on that list. I know. Makes me nobody. But I do have a friend on that list. And I'm not going to tell you his name because he's very humble. He's kind of embarrassed by this. But he is a fashion designer.

He's an insider in New York. And he's just part of that whole fashion industry. And you may be wearing some of his clothes. I don't know. But within the last 10 years, this individual met Jesus. And his life has never been the same. In fact, he left a long term relationship with another guy who also became a committed believer of Jesus. It's a wild story. You talk to Russell that their friends as well. So they'll they'll confirm. But the two of these individuals, they're still immersed in this fashion industry. They're both at the top of their professional careers. They got movie stars that want them to design clothing lines for them.

They're like, I'll pass. They could they can write their ticket. They can do whatever they want. I'm thinking they need to help me. Coming to Spokane, I am so confused now. Like I never had Carhartt and now it's like it's been injected into my comfort motif. I don't know, at any rate. I'm glad they don't live here. I would be we probably wouldn't be friends anymore. But what's amazing is this

couple, they once lived in this industry as a gay couple. And now they live in the industry as brothers in Christ. And they're lions for the gospel. People just like they are an oddity. And it's just the power of the gospel. God is continuing to rescue centers church today. Today, there's a leading misologist to the Muslim world that estimates that two to seven million people from a Muslim background worldwide now follow Christ.

[35 : 59] There's a missionary to the Middle East. He recently wrote this. He says, you know what? Probably in the last 10 years, more Muslims have come to faith in Christ than in the last 15 centuries of Islam. Don't tell me that God is not rescuing some. God is at work. And you got to believe it. Because when we cease to believe, it just it just kills the zeal. And I can tell you that because I feel it at times. I don't want to get in my car again. I don't want to go pick up people. No good conversations are going to happen. God, how are you going to use any of this? And I go back to the fact that God has promised. God's at work.

Rest in that in order that we might labor hard. Well, let's look at the last section here versus 30 and 31.

Luke writes, 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. I love this phrase with all boldness and without hindrance.

With all boldness. You know what's so cool? This one's for free. I didn't even know this is for free. This is just this is a reminder that we got to be a praying people because prayer got a support in prayer to carry out his works. And you know what? It says that Paul's ministry, it was described as a ministry that was filled with all boldness. That was his prayer request. In fact, he asked in prison to the Ephesians, another prison epistle, says, hey, would you pray for me? Would you pray that I'd open my mouth and I would do it with all boldness? And God heard that prayer, answered that prayer and we see the fulfillment here. This is the description of his ministry while there in Rome on home arrest. You know what is befuddling to me is that Paul has every reason to be a bitter angry man at this point in his life. Life was not working out for Paul. And we know because we have a list of that in 2nd Corinthians chapter 11. We're not going to turn there, but let me highlight. You can read it later, verse 24 to 27, but how is the prosperity gospel working out for Paul?

Well, let's just read. He's been chased out of countless cities. He's been whipped. He's been beaten. He's been stoned. He's been shipwrecked. We have one record three times lost at sea, often cold, often hungry. He's in danger everywhere he goes.

[39 : 12] In the city, in the wilderness, it doesn't matter. He's been battling the judicial system for the last three years now being sent to Rome. Has another two years. No wonder the guy had trouble sleeping. And he says that he did. And now on top of all of this, he's on home arrest. And you'd think the state could pick up the bill. Obviously he's not living in Seattle.

I'm from there. I can say that. He's footing his own bill. He's there at his own expense.

Lesser men. They would begin to hate people at this point. Maybe even begin to think I'm a victim. I am a victim. I committed my life to Jesus. I mean, what was Paul's sort of image of ministry that he would have in Rome? I'm going to preach before masses.

I'm going to be interacting with the intellectual elites. I mean, no, you're on home arrest. You have a guard. But he meets Jesus. I mean, his ministry didn't perhaps look the way that he thought it would. God does that. Scott thought he'd be on the mission field. Nope. He's pastoring in Spokane. What's amazing to me, Paul didn't become bitter. What does it say about him? It says, he welcomed all who came to him. He welcomed all. He offered them life. He's like, let me tell me about Jesus. He's been so good to me. I mean, God forgave me. He can forgive you.

I got to talk about my Savior. And this was the ultimate fuel for Paul. You want to run well? You want to run well? Like Paul, he's like a man on fire church. What was it for him? It was the gospel. It was the gospel. Paul ran hard because he never forgot his own personal experience of God's grace. He didn't forget. He tells us that. 1 Corinthians 15. Verse 9 says, for I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace towards me, oh, it was not in vain.

[42 : 12] Now check this. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them. Speaking about kind of these super apostle folks that are proposing that they're doing more for the kingdom than Paul, though it was not I but the grace of God that is with me. See, for Paul, what was his fuel? What gave him the zeal to run well? He'd been forgiven of much. That's what fueled him. Church, that's what fueled him. The woman at the well, she meets Jesus. She's on like guy number six. She's like,

he didn't condemn me. She goes into town and it's recorded.

I believe it's in John 4. Hey, you got to meet this guy. He told me everything I've done. And in that statement, what is in the context assumed is anything condemned me. She told everyone. Grace, grace. We have been forgiven of much, church. Amen.

Do you believe that? Amen. You know what? I was talking with Scott. Probably a good portion of the pastoral counseling we end up doing is on this subject. Do you remember the Gospel? Do you believe it for you? There's no condemnation on your life. Oh, okay. I don't really. I mean, I take communion and I sing but it halts the zeal and the joy of the Christian life when we forget the Gospel. We've got to go back to it and pray as God this morning, we're going back to it. And we're going to participate in communion because the Lord said, you got to go back and you got to live it and you got to be refreshed in the fact that you are clean, that you are forgiven, that you belong, that you are loved, that my mercy is on you because of Jesus. You know, what's fascinating about the story, church, is that there's not really a conclusion. It's really odd. There's not like, there's a lot of sort of like storylines that we don't see the ending to. We don't really know how it concludes what happens to Paul's case. Luke doesn't record it. I believe that's purposeful. Of course it's purposeful. It's the Word of God. Yes, it's purposeful.

Now we know from church history, it's said of Paul that he was exonerated and he had a short season of freedom after this imprisonment. During that time, we believe that he wrote the books of 1 Timothy and Titus, and tied all together for us. Then he's later incarcerated again in a far worse prison and eventually then he is executed. And during that final imprisonment, it's where he writes 2 Timothy, his final book. But what's fascinating, this story that we get, it doesn't conclude. It appears that it doesn't have an ending. And church, let me tell you this, it doesn't. It doesn't. This story continues. And where does it continue? Us. It continues with us. And now it's our turn. Because Paul said, I finished the race. Kept the faith. And then he passes at the time. And for 2,000 years, right, believers, followers of Christ have been running this relay. I got to live for the glory of God. I've got to make Jesus known. I got to get the gospel out. And guess what? We are breathing. So who carries a baton today?

It's us. It's us. And there's a day coming when we will lay that down. We will pass it on. We get one life. We get one life.

[46 : 53] I believe God's at work. I believe he's calling people to himself here. Yes, even in Spokane. But lest we forget, we have been forgiven much. And that's everything. That's everything. Father, we thank you for this entire study. Lord, thank you for the things that you have taught me through my own study from the other teachers. Lord, would you would you stir in us and plant deep those things that you want us to carry? But Lord, centrally might we carry the fact that we are able love people forgiven of so very much. And that we like Paul could declare that by your grace God, we are who we are. And might it translate then and affect every relationship in our lives at home, in our marriages, with our children, with our friends and Lord, with an unbelieving moral. Lord, we don't want to be a church retreating into a bunker. Want to be your people living out the gospel in our Jerusalem. Would you refresh us now with your grace? In your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen. Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's stand together.