

Paul in Rome

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[0 : 00] We can read again from verse 30 and also reading verse 31. So that's the last two verses in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 28 verses 30 and 31.

He, Paul, 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.

We've come here, as I've noted in our reading, and just now as well, to the end of the book of Acts, the last chapter, and in fact, the last two verses. And it brings us, of course, to the end of this book that has covered for us an exciting journey, a journey in which we have seen different activities of the early Christian church engaged in its ministry and it's engaged, too, in the vibrancy of its life, recorded for us here in the Word of God.

And it begins at the beginning of the book of Acts in chapter 1 with the ascension of our Lord, that the Lord is taken up into heaven. And then, of course, we have different activities of the church, beginning, of course, with the day of Pentecost and therein the preaching of Peter as well and the gathering of many people into the church.

The significant act of the conversion of Paul is recorded early in the book of Acts. We follow therein the life of the early Christian church and we see a great deal of the book of Acts taken up with the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul and these journeys that he engages in and the movement of the gospel in that manner and in that way.

[1 : 55] We follow different people and different places and we engage ourselves there, focusing our attention on the main theme of this book, the furtherance of the gospel and the taking of that gospel under the activity of the Great Commission to the peoples and the nations of the world.

The narrative of the book of Acts is, of course, fast-paced and it moves quickly through all of these different activities to bring us therein to the end where we find Paul here imprisoned in Rome.

And yet everything throughout the book of Acts is all about the proclamation of the gospel. And so we have here in the closing words in verse 31, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we come to the end of the book of Acts, we come to the end of not just the book of Acts, but we understand that this is a two-part work of Luke.

Luke accompanies the book of, and precedes really, the book of Acts. And we find for ourselves at the beginning of the book of Acts that there is there that introduction by Luke, that he is here compiling a narrative.

[3 : 21] And he says that he's given an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus. And in the same manner, he introduces the book of Acts like that as well.

He says in the first book of Theophilus, he began to teach about the things that Jesus had done and taught. And so now he follows with these words and with these chapters.

And so chapter 28 of the book of Acts closes both books. And for us, it maybe seems a little unusual that it closes like this.

It seems rather abrupt. An abrupt end to this book, an abrupt end if we read the two books together, one after another, and leaves us with many questions.

Here is Paul in Rome, and he is here because he wants to bring his kiss to Caesar. He has appealed to Caesar, but we don't here find the interview with Caesar.

[4 : 18] And we wonder what happened. What happened to Paul? What happened to Caesar? What happened next? But if the focus of our attention is what Luke has conveyed to us, that he is given an orderly account of the gospel, then we're brought to the end of this book not to ask questions about the book, but to ask questions of ourselves.

To ask questions of our engagement in this same task. Because the church has given us. Because the church has given this great responsibility to continue this work, to continue this activity.

And we engage in it corporately as a church. We engage in it individually as well. That each one of us, you and I, each one of us have a part to play here.

That we are all to be engaged. We are all to be supportive. And we have to ask ourselves, what is our engagement?

Locally in the cause of Christ? Locally in the furtherance of the gospel? Or even further away, as we've just sung together in Psalm 67, let the peoples praise you.

[5 : 40] There is a church throughout the world that needs our support as well. And we can support in many different ways. We just pray together. And part of that prayer was what Jesus called us to pray for.

To pray that the fields are white with harvest. That the Lord would send the workers. Where are the workers? Where are the workers today?

Where is the church praying? That the fields are white with harvest. And not just in our own local situation. But throughout the world. We live in a world that needs the preaching of the gospel.

We live in a world that needs the preacher of the gospel. And we're called to pray. And to support. And to engage.

And here, for a few moments, we're going to consider Paul in Rome. And how the book of Acts ends here. I want to note, first of all, the arrival of the apostle in verse 14.

[6 : 47] It speaks here of his journey in verse 14. We found the brothers and so we came to Rome. Here is Paul arriving in that great city. He comes finally to Rome.

It is the longing and anticipation of his heart for a long time. And it is the climax, really, of the chapters that precede this. That begin with his arrest in Jerusalem.

And then includes all the different hearings that he was engaged in. Between Roman authorities. Between all the different people. Who he gave an answer and account to.

It included his journey to Rome as a prisoner. It even included, at chapter 27, a shipwreck that he was involved in. It included all the plots against his life.

It included the fact that he was imprisoned. That he himself was bound. And now he comes here. Finally. To Rome.

[7 : 48] With the long-held desire he had. And the promise that God had given to him. The promise is repeated in chapter 27. We find it there as he records in verses 21 to 26.

He tells them there that God has said to him that he is going to go to Rome. And this is part of the promise he was given in Acts chapter 23. And he has long held this desire.

And long held this promise of God. That he will stand in Rome and proclaim the gospel to Caesar. And here he is now. In verse 14.

Arriving in Rome. And he arrives in Rome in its great day. If you go to Rome today. You meet with a very beautiful city. It's full of history.

And culture. There are many things to see. But the Rome of this day. Was at its flourishing. Where it gained its reputation.

[8 : 49] Where it was the ancient center. Of the whole empire. And the known world. It was the heart of that empire. It was the seat of Caesar.

The Caesar here is none other than Nero. Who was infamous in history. And who was brutal in his behavior. But this is prior to that awful persecution.

That he engaged in. What Paul is coming to. Is the center of the power of the world. The center of influence. The center of the empire.

The very heart. Of the known world. And he has spent his time. In missionary journeys. Around the Mediterranean. And everywhere he has gone. The influence of Rome is known.

The power and authority of Rome. And now he comes to Rome. In this moment. And in this place. A busy city. An influential city.

[9 : 47] An affluent city. A powerful city. The population in Rome. It's estimated that this time. Would be somewhere between. One to two million people. And that's a huge population.

In the ancient world. And this is where people wanted to be. It became overcrowded. The affluent of the city.

Were well off. And comfortable. But most of the people. Were in poverty. The city was known too. Because of all the different vices. That were there in Rome.

Paul arrives here in Rome. Under arrest. He is the prisoner. And the apostle. He has come here under arrest.

After the riot in Jerusalem. The soldiers arrested him. Took him into custody. For his safety. And to interrogate him. And in chapter 25.

[10:43] We find him making an appeal. He says he wants to make his appeal. As a Roman citizen. To be heard by Caesar. The one who is.

The highest of the officials. Of the judiciary. He is tried by Felix. By Festus. He is even heard by Agrippa. But it's Rome he wants to go to.

And it's Caesar he wants to stand before. Paul arrives in Rome. Secondly. He abides in Rome. We find this in our text in verse 30.

Two whole years. He is there. And he has to make his own arrangements. As we find in verse 16. Paul was allowed to stay.

By himself with the soldier. That guarded him. Verse 30 tells us. That he is staying there at his own expense. And welcomed all who came to him. And we find here.

[11:40] That there is a concession of Rome. That Paul is as it were under a kind of house arrest. He's able to have his own accommodation. But he always has a soldier.

In which he himself. Is bound up with. And chained to. He is able to receive visitors. And there are many visitors. Probably the house wouldn't hold the visitors.

But outside the house. He could engage with the people. Who came to see him. And to speak with him. And he is here. Under concession from Rome. Because the charges.

Are felt to be non-threatening to Rome. And the case. Has no real urgency. Two whole years. He is waiting there. He comes himself.

Accompanied by the letters. And the report. Of his charge. Festus speaks of. Writing the report. And the letter. In chapter 25. And chapter 26.

[12:36] And also there is a good report. Given from. Julius in chapter 27. That would also. Accompany Paul. He is here. As a prisoner. In this accommodation.

That he has arranged himself. With his charges. And with his chains. And he is here in verse 30. At his own expense. Now some people think that.

It is because he was a tent maker. And we have in Acts chapter 18. That he engages in this activity. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4. He speaks of working with his own hands. So that he is not a burden to the church.

So some people think. Well maybe. He was making tents. But this is highly unlikely. Not least because. He was chained up. To the Roman guard.

God. And he speaks of this. In Ephesians. And in Colossians as well. Most likely. He is paying rent. Through a couple of different. Socios.

[13:36] One would be. Whatever financial resources. He had himself. He would use them. For the good of the gospel. He would use them. For what he is engaged in here. Everything Paul is.

Everything Paul has. Is for the gospel. He pours himself out. He holds. Nothing back.

Because of the one. Who apprehended him. The one. Who changed his life. The one. Who gave him life. The one. Who gave himself.

For Paul. Paul now. Responds. By giving. All that he has. Including his personal finance.

Everything. For the furtherance of the gospel.

Everything. For the glory. Of God. We are also conscious. Of another stream. That he has. Even in verse 14. We have there. Those who support him. Coming to accompany him.

[14:35] And we know that Paul. Has supporters. And we believe. That many of these supporters. Were cheerful. Givers. Who were willing. To contribute. And support.

The ministry of Paul. And the ministry. Of the gospel. Who understood. That this was part. Of their Christian. Stewardship. Part of.

What they did. Of all the resources. And finances. That they had themselves. They recognized.

That they were all. Given by God. And that they had.

A responsibility. As stewards. And a responsibility. To the gospel. And for the furtherance. Of the gospel. When Paul.

Commends. Christian giving. In 2nd Corinthians. Chapter 9. He speaks of. The heart being moved. By the gospel. He speaks of. The cheerful giver. And as Paul.

[15:33] Uses this language. We find ourselves. In a very different world. That we're looking at. In a very different. Kind of congregation. Where the congregations.

In the early. Christian church. Where. Of a large extent. People who were slaves. And servants. People who were poor. And yet.

Here we have. Paul commending them. In 2nd Corinthians. Of their willingness. To give. They've been humbled. By the extravagance.

Of grace. Their lives. Have been moved. By the mercy. Of God. And by the one. Who was rich. Who became poor.

For them. And they gave. Willingly. To the cause. Of Christ. It's not under. Compulsion. They're not giving. Off their own. Finances.

[16:28] For the cause. Of Christ. Because they feel. That this is just. Something they have. To do. In some kind. Of grudging manner. Or counting. The percentage. With some kind.

Of legalism. Does this. Fit in. Can I get away. With this. It's quite challenging. For you and I. That we're.

Far better off. Than they were. In fact. We're far better off. Than the generations. Before us. Even a generation.

That would have built. This church. We're far better off. Than they are. Financially. And yet. They gave. So willingly. And they gave.

So much. And when we find. Somebody. Who is giving. Extravagantly. To the gospel. Do we not find. That they are being. Questioned. Why.

[17:25] If the heart of. The believer. Has been moved. By grace. The undeserved. Mercy of God. We find ourselves. At this time of year.

Spending. Extravagantly. On other people. And it's quite challenging. Whether we are supporting. The gospel. And helping the poor.

With that same sense. Of willingness. Of heart. With that same sense. Of love. And desire. And with a burden. For the lost. Let peoples.

Praise you. Let the nations. Be glad. And let you. And I. Be part of this. Part of the sacrifice. Part of. The willing giver. Part of the stewardship. Of the resources. That God has given to us. Thirdly. Paul proclaims.

[18:24] The gospel. In Rome. In verse 17. We find there. Paul is there. For three days. And so he takes. Three days. After the weariness.

Of the journey. And settling himself. There. Then he begins. And he takes. The initiative. He has declared.

That he has come. To Rome. With the gospel. That this is his intention. To proclaim this gospel. And that he is taking. The initiative. And first of all. In verse 17.

He gathers. The local leaders. Of the Jews. Representing. Somewhere in the region. Of 40 to 50 thousand. Jews. Who were in Rome. And he speaks to them. And he shares with them.

In verse 23. He is declaring to them. That this is the Messiah. Messiah has come. Jesus. Has been proven. By Paul. As the Messiah. Here he is.

[19:19] Telling people. This good news. This is what Paul. Is busy with. The prisoner of Rome. Imprisoned. Under house arrest. Chained to the guard.

Of the Roman emperor. And he is telling people. Come. Not in order. That I would prosecute. My case. And declare. My innocence. But I.

That you would come here. And before you. I would make the case. For Christ. I would tell you. Of the Messiah. Here is Paul. Actively engaged.

In the burden. Of sharing this gospel. It is everything to him. That he must tell people. About Jesus. He is not there. Sitting. In this confinement.

Feeling sorry. For himself. Saying to himself. Woe is me. What has happened to me. How have people. Treated me. How unjust. This case. How terrible. The shipwreck.

[20:16] No Paul. Is saying here. I have come. To proclaim Jesus. God has taken me here. I am here. And I must tell.

This message. I must share. This message. I am here. By a sovereign. Act of God. This is my providence. And this is what I must do. This is what God has.

For him to do. The commentator. Howard Marshall. Says the fate of Paul. Is secondary to the gospel. How things would change.

If we felt the same way as Paul. If we left our own fate secondary. If we stopped being scared. Stopped holding on. Stopped feeling sorry for ourselves. And if we just told people. Who Jesus is. And what he has done for us. The Jewish leaders are with him.

[21 : 21] All day. In verses 20 to 23. We read of. Their response to him. And how he testifies to them. And then in verse 24.

Some were convinced. Others disbelieved. Our message divides. It is binary. Some believe. And some do not.

And so Paul then. In verse 26 onward. He cites. From Isaiah. And that great. Wonderful scene. In Isaiah chapter 6. Where the prophet. There receives the vision. Of God. High and lifted up. The holiness of God. Declared by the angelic hosts. And then the prophet. Saying that he is undone. Then the call of the prophet. Coming. And it is accompanying. With the reality of this response. That the people would not listen. And they would not listen.

[22 : 18] Because they were unwilling. To repent. Jesus cites this. As part of his own ministry. And here Paul cites it. That here are people. Who knew the law. And the commandments. Recipients of the covenants. And they are unwilling. To receive the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. Because Paul is saying. They are unwilling to listen. They are unwilling to bend the knee. They are unwilling to repent. And I wonder.

With some of you here. You have heard the gospel. Your whole life. You have heard about. The dramatic transformation. Of someone. Like the apostle Paul. On the road to Damascus. You have seen this. In the lives of people. You have known. Friends and family. Who have been converted. Who have come to follow Jesus. You have heard this gospel.

[23 : 12] Heralded. Time and time again. You have heard the commandments. You have heard the Lord's prayer. You know all these things. But you are still not a Christian. You are a little like Agrippa. When Paul challenges him.

He declares that he is almost persuaded. And you wonder yourself. Why you are not a Christian. And the preacher wonders. Why you still don't believe. Is it because you are unwilling to repent? Unwilling to open your eyes. And open your ears. Unwilling to receive. The Messiah. When this happens. Paul carries on. And he speaks then. In verse 28. Of declaring this to the Gentiles too. He goes on. This is the pattern that is followed. If these people won't listen. We will take this gospel to the people who will listen.

[24 : 14] And this is part of the reason why Paul is here. He has come to the center of the world. To tell the world. This gospel is for them. This is more than just a local Jewish dispute. This is for them. The whole world needs to hear this gospel. And this is why Paul is in Rome. To tell the world. To tell the world at its very center. To tell the world's great powers. And great authorities. And great empires. That there is a Savior. Who is Lord of all. Whom we must bow the knee before. Who we must come. And repent. And lay hold of by faith. Paul's time in Rome. In his prison. Is a fruitful time. It's a fruitful time for the church. The church is encouraged. Here Paul writes Ephesians. Philippians. Philippians. And Philemon. Here Paul receives Onesimus.

[25 : 19] Who repents of his sin. And who serves Paul. And who serves the cause. Here the whole imperial guard. Hear about the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is Paul who is unwilling to miss a single opportunity. Here is this hardened Roman soldier. He has been in the church. Gone through different battle scenes. Been in conflicts around the empire. Chained. Taking their turns. Chained to Paul. Guarding him. Standing over him. Watching him. And Paul looks at these people. Every one of them coming one by one. And saying. A soul. A soul who needs to hear this message. They're chained up to me. Well they're going to have to listen. Paul doesn't sit there feeling sorry for himself. But he engages in something better. Telling precious souls.

[26 : 18] The precious truth. Of the kingdom. Of God. We come here to the end of the book of Acts. And we wonder what happened next.

The book of Acts doesn't tell us. We can understand ourselves. As we take out information. From the rest of the New Testament. And what history tells us too.

That Paul was probably released. And he would suffer a second imprisonment. From which there would be no release. And Nero would engage. In that awful persecution.

Which would include the martyrdom. Of both Peter. And Paul. But for Paul. Everything is for Christ. He is imporing the entirety of his life out for Jesus. Because his heart is filled with gratitude. His heart is filled with thanksgiving.

[27 : 21] With the one who saved him. And the salvation he has experienced. And he is able to say. As he would record.

In his final words. In 2 Timothy. And in chapter 2. In verse 9. He says there to Timothy. That he was suffering. Bound with the chains of a criminal.

But the word of God. Is not bound. It's not bound. This gospel has to go out to the whole world. It has to go to the whole of our world too.

All the different relationships and situations. We are involved in. And invested in. We have to take our place. To support the gospel work.

To support the gospel. To tell people. To hear the call of the gospel. To engage in it. And to tell everyone.

[28 : 25] And anyone. What Christ has done. For us. May we share this message. By the grace of God. With boldness.

And courage. To a needy world. Amen. Let's pray together. Gracious and most holy God. We give thanks to you. For your word.

We give thanks to you. For the gospel. That brings salvation. Into souls. We pray that you would help us. To be bold with it. And to be supportive of it. Help us to support one another.

In this as well. To encourage one another. And to be speaking our word of season. To those around us. Be near to us. We pray. And forgive us our sins. In Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. We're going to sing again. To God's praise. On page 314. Where we have Psalm 72.

[29 : 24] We'll sing verses 17 to 19. Of Psalm 72. Afterward we'll have the benediction.

And we'll close with the benediction. But if you could please allow me a moment. And I'll get to the front door. And be able to see some of you. As you exit. Psalm 72 verses 17 to 19.

His name forever shall endure. Last like the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in him. And blessed all nations. Shall him call. Verse 19. And blessed be his glorious name.

To all eternity. The whole earth let his glory fill. Amen. So let it be. Let's sing then to God's praise. Psalm 72 verses 17 to 19. His name forever shall endure.

Last like the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in him.

[30 : 34] And blessed all nations shall involve. Now blessed be the Lord our God.

The God of Israel. For he alone doth wondrous words.

In glory that excel. And blessed be his glorious name.

To all eternity. The whole earth let his glory fill.

Amen. So let it be. Now may the God of peace.

[31 : 57] Who brought again from the dead. Our Lord Jesus. The great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of the eternal covenant. Equip you. With everything good. That you may do his will.

Working in us that which is pleasing.

In his sight. Through Jesus Christ. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.