

WITNESS TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Acts 28:16–31

OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever faced a situation where you had to stand up for something you believed in, even when it was difficult or unpopular? How did you handle it, and what was the outcome?

CONTEXT

The Book of Acts highlights how opposition and persecution helped spread the Gospel. The early church faced increasing resistance—from verbal warnings in Acts 4, to physical beatings in Acts 5, and even executions in Acts 7 and 11. Despite these challenges, the church grew rapidly, with mentions of increasing numbers and multiplying disciples (Acts 2:47; 6:7; 12:24; 16:5). This shows that, guided by the Holy Spirit, the church not only survived but thrived amidst adversity (Acts 9:31; 19:20).

Our passage today in Acts 28 is the climax of Paul's journey to Rome, the center of the Roman Empire. After enduring many trials, including a shipwreck, Paul finally arrives in this diverse and influential city. This moment is significant because it marks the final step in Jesus' command in Acts 1:8, where he called his disciples to be his witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Rome, being the heart of the known world at that time, represents the Gospel reaching those "ends of the earth." Even under house arrest, Paul continues to boldly preach about the kingdom of God and teach about Jesus Christ without hindrance, illustrating the unstoppable nature of the Gospel and the fulfillment of the mission Jesus set forth at the beginning of Acts.

READ ACTS 28:16–31

¹⁶ When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. ¹⁷ Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: "My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸ They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. ¹⁹ The Jews objected, so I was compelled

to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. ²⁰ For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.” ²¹ They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. ²² But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.” ²³ They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. ²⁴ Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. ²⁵ They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ “ ‘Go to this people and say,
“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”
²⁷ For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.’

²⁸ “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” ³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

DISCUSS

1. How does Paul's approach to engaging the Jewish leaders in Acts 28:23-24 reflect the importance of understanding and connecting with your audience? What can we learn from this for sharing the Gospel on our campuses today?
2. Paul speaks strongly about the consequences of rejecting the Gospel (Acts 28:26-28). Why do you think he felt such urgency and passion about this message? How can this inspire us to be more passionate and urgent in our own

3. The last word in Acts, "without hindrance" (Acts 28:31), emphasizes the unrestrained spread of the Gospel. What does this reveal about God's power and sovereignty? How can this encourage us in our efforts to share the Gospel, even when we face obstacles?

REFLECT

The book's abrupt ending shows that the church's history is incomplete. We are part of the sequel. Though we encounter obstacles and setbacks, God can work through any opposition.

PRAY

Lord, help us to persevere in our mission to advance your kingdom on our campus. Empower us with your Holy Spirit to share the Gospel with boldness and clarity. Center our efforts on Jesus and guide us to make his message relevant and compelling to everyone we encounter. Amen.