

51b ACTS

Let's pick up our study now, our final half hour or so, in Acts chapter 28. In verse 21, we saw that when Paul, after three days, called the Jewish leaders together and told them his tale of woe, about how he had been maltreated by the Jews in Jerusalem and was innocent, and it was for the hope of Israel that he was called into question, they said, what? What are you talking about? Nobody sent us a letter. Nobody has come and said anything.

Now, we ask ourselves, why is this? Why is it that the Jews in Rome know nothing about Paul's case? Well, remember, it's been nigh on three years. You have all these three-day periods. It's been three years since Paul was... I mean, he's kind of old news now.

The people in Jerusalem have long since settled down. The people in Caesarea, the 40 guys that said they would neither eat nor drink until they had slain Paul must be dust in the grave because, of course, they didn't slay him. And naturally, they kept their vow.

They probably found a little loophole and got out of that somehow. Maybe they killed him in effigy or something and then they were able to go about their business. But it's kind of lost its steam.

The outrage and the... For example, I was thinking about this this past week for no good reason. We had the movie come out months ago, The Passion of the Christ, the Mel Gibson movie. Oh, there was torrential publicity everywhere.

You couldn't swing a cat without hitting something that had to do with The Passion of the Christ. And churches were buying tickets and it's the most important thing in a hundred years, etc., etc. Where is it now? Out on DVD.

I mean, they can't even hardly give them away now. The churches are all over it. They're not stockpiling them and giving them to new converts.

I mean, it's over. It was a big, big peak of interest and now it's gone. Well, that has happened just within a space of months.

Imagine three years in the ancient world. Paul who? What? Jerusalem? Riot? So? What did he say? Well, you know, it's old. It's old news.

Nobody can remember. So, Paul comes in and, of course, being in the center of a pre-Copernican universe, he figures, well, of course, everybody knows. There's just going to be riots when I arrive in Rome.

And he has to call the Jews. They don't come and meet him. And even when he makes the same sort of pitch that he made in Jerusalem, we're going to see that he doesn't get near the reaction that he got in Jerusalem.

Because it's passé. Christianity is known. It's been around.

It's out in the great cosmopolitan marketplace of ideas. It's not this iconoclastic, hard-shelled, iron-headed, bull-necked, stubborn resistance that you have in the very center of Jerusalem. This is why God had no plan for sending Paul to Jerusalem as a great door-opener to faith because that's the core of the resistance.

Go out where people are reasonable. Go out where people are used to hearing a lot of different viewpoints, where they're cosmopolitan, they're flexible, they will give you a hearing, and you're going to have... This is where he is supposed to have been all along. But he calls these people.

Arranged a day, verse 23, they came to his lodgings in great numbers. From early morning until evening, he expounded his position. And this is the word patho.

Patho means he persuaded. Remember, in short, you're persuading me to become a Christian. Remember the words of Agrippa? Patho.

You're persuading me. You're arguing with me to be a Christian. Patho teautus peritu iesu apatetunamu moesus.

This is the law of Moses. He is using the Scriptures. If you want to make a case to somebody about important things of this life, about God and about his word, use the word.

Not reasoning arguments. Not experience. I'm so much happier since I believed in Jesus.

My life has been a great bed of roses. No, it hasn't. You're lying.

If you've come to faith in Christ, your life is not a bed of roses. It's not supposed to be. Jesus said you will have tribulation in the world.

Philipsis. It's a great word in Greek. And it means you're going to have big trouble.

So don't lie and tell somebody that you're on a flowery bed of ease because you're not. Nobody is. We're in a fallen world in the flesh with the devil against us, roaming the earth like a lion, seeking whom he may devour.

And if you've ever seen the African movies, you know, with the lion, the ghost in the darkness, for example. Now, there's a movie. You want to see what it's like when the devil roams the earth like a lion? Watch The Ghost in the Darkness.

That'll give you an idea. So, it isn't our personal testimony. Christianity for the last several decades that I've been around has been big on testimonies.

Let's get the famous football player. Let's get the celebrity to come and talk to our group

about how his life changed when he came to Christ. Well, praise God if his life changed when he came to Christ.

But it's not his word. It's not his experience that is convincing. The life-changing power, the mind-changing leverage.

If you really care about somebody and you really want their mind to change, don't harangue them. Don't run on about your experiences. Oh, I was in Jerusalem and all the Jews tore me apart.

I went here and I went there and I was two years in Caesarea. That has no traction. It has no power.

It has no grip. God cannot use that as a sharp sword to divide asunder to the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow, can He? I don't care if you have been flayed alive and sewn back together afterwards. It isn't powerful.

It isn't convincing. There is only one thing that has the power to change hearts and minds. And as much as I'd like to say otherwise, it is the Word of God.

The Word of God. So, Paul gets on track here. I imagine in his evening devotions, after he'd given his big long spiel about all of his hardships, he went to the Lord and realized, wow, there was a preponderance of the first person singular pronoun in that thing.

I had better go back to the Word of God that is living and powerful. So, the next day, from early morning until evening, he expounded his position, bearing witness to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, trying to convince them, patho, from the law of Moses and the prophets. That's the way you win hearts and minds.

It is by delivering the Word of God. Now, to deliver the Word of God, you have to know it. You say, well, Sam, you deliver the Word of God.

You know it. You've been to seminary. You can do Hebrew and Greek, etc., etc.

No. I will tell you a thing that astounds me is that most of the people who have questions, most of the real interesting conversations are not with me. People talk to Patti all the time.

She is forever getting embroiled and people approaching and accosting and situations come up and they talk with Patti all day long. These people, I would prevail with a preponderance of the evidence if they would ever come to me, but I never get the chance because they don't come to me. They come to her and they're going to come to you and you and you and you.

You're the one that needs to have the Word. Don't say, you know, I know a guy that can

answer all your questions and hand them my name. God didn't bring them to me.

He brought them to you. You answer them. You have to have the Word of God in your soul just like the Apostle Paul has the Word of God in his soul.

I can't tell you how discouraging it was as a pastor when I lived in a different town, a different congregation. People would come into the town, have a question, look for a church, this, that, and the other and people would say, oh, come to me on Sunday and hand me a name and an address and a phone number on a piece of paper and say, oh pastor, I ran across these people and you need to go talk to them. I just wanted to pull my hair out.

God didn't send them to me. He sent them to you. You're passing the buck.

You've been thrown the forward pass and you're lateraling it back. God gave the ball to you. Grab it.

Run with it. Oh no, no, that's a pastor's job. I'm just a go-between.

No, no, not at all. Bearing witness about Jesus from the law and the prophets. We have the scriptural witness.

We should know our Bible well enough to get around, to show people from the scripture. You don't have to be the world's leading expert and trust the word of God on this. If God brings someone into your periphery and it's time to speak, you have everything you need.

God would not bring them to you if you were not fully equipped, if you didn't know every scripture you need to know, if you didn't have every good point and every logical argument and every piece of information from the scripture to help that person. If you didn't have it, God wouldn't bring them to you. So if God does bring someone to you, maybe another believer who's in need in some way, who needs comfort or encouragement or strengthening or direction, who has realized that the place where they are is a bad place, the information they're getting is bad information, the way they're operating is a bad way of operating, and they are searching, they're seeking something.

God brings them to you. As they say in the vernacular, you the man. You're the one.

You've got it. The ball is yours. It's in your court.

You take it and have confidence that it wouldn't be in your court. God would not bring them to you, would not hand them to you, would not put you in that position unless you had every single thing you need. So don't wilt.

Don't say, Oh, no. I can't do this. Speak up.

Speak out. The Word of God is in your soul. How many hours have we spent together looking at the Scriptures? It's there.

And God the Holy Spirit will bring it to your mind. If you find yourself drawing a blank, just close your eyes for three seconds and send up a prayer and say, Lord, I know the Holy Spirit is with me. He has been given to me to lead me into all truth, to bring to mind.

Jesus told the disciples, I'm going to send you the Comforter. He will bring to your mind everything I've said to you. This Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the mind of Christ.

Every passage we've ever studied, every point we've ever made, I know you can't call it to mind. I can't either. I can't remember half of the things I've learned and presented to you.

But when I need them, when it's time for application, when it's time for communication, God the Holy Spirit does remember and He does bring it to our mind. Everything we need. So have confidence.

Be clear. Be concise. Do not fall into the first-person pronoun trap.

Oh, let me tell you what my situation was. Stick with the Scripture, the Word of God. It doesn't say your personal testimony is alive and powerful.

It doesn't say your bad experiences are sharper than a two-edged sword. It doesn't say your scenario matters. What matters when you're talking to someone else? How can you be a blessing? How can you be an encouragement? How can you be used by God for His glory and His kingdom? Just like Paul told Timothy, preach the Word.

Be faithful in season, out of season. Rebuke, correct, exhort. Now that's a pastor.

But you can present the Scripture. Give people God's Word. There is a dearth.

There is a famine in the land. We look around our nation and we think it's prosperous and we think it's abundant and that it's brimful and overflowing. We live in a wasteland of ideas.

We live in a famine-stricken Afghanistan with stick people walking around with swelled bellies and flies in their eyes like the worst films you've ever seen of famine-stricken areas. That's the way we look to God. That's the way our country looks to God because there is so little faith.

There is so little legitimate, true, biblical Christianity being practiced. And trust me on this, when God looks at you and when God looks at me and sees someone who cares about His Word and someone who recognizes its importance and wants to live in its light, He is going to pay a lot of attention to you. He is going to support.

He is going to encourage. He is going to shine the light of His countenance upon us because we are few in number. There is a very small remnant in this country.

I promise you. Vast numbers of our brothers and sisters in Christ have been diverted off the path. And I'm not saying that we are walking just a perfectly straight path either, but I believe we are trying.

I believe we know where the path is and we are doing our best to get down that road. And it is not that common. It is unfortunately rare.

And when it does take place, you and I are precious in God's sight because we have His Word, we have His Spirit, and we know the value of those things. Very few Christians in this day and age know that. And I'm not patting us on the back.

I'm saying it's a sad thing when the barracks gets attacked and there's only a handful of soldiers who wake up and grab their weapons and everybody else is stumbling around in the dark. We're doing no more than we should do. It's like the parable of the servants that Jesus told.

At the end of the day, you've worked hard in the field, you come in and you prepare the Master's meal, and even after that you say, we are unprofitable servants. We have done no more than what we were supposed to do. And that's us.

We're not unusual. We're not special. We are not glorious and noteworthy because we see God's Word and we try to live by it.

This is what everybody is supposed to be doing. We get no great brownie points for this. It's just a sad thing that so few of us in this country as believers are doing this.

We're all supposed to be doing it. It ought to be common, it ought to be widespread, and it's not. So those who are, and I include you in that number because you are here night after night, week after week, month after month, God takes note.

You're written in the book. And when God decides to use you in an opportunity, have some confidence in Him and in His provision and in His preparation. He would not put you in a position unless you were ready.

Whether it's adversity, whether it is trial, whether it is opportunity to speak as the Apostle Paul has here, just rest and have confidence. I would not be here if God didn't think I was ready. I would not be shouldering this load unless God knew I could carry it and that it would benefit me and Him.

It's a win-win scenario. I don't care what you're facing. You could get diagnosed with cancer tomorrow.

You could suffer a death. You could have a tremendous tragedy. I don't care what it is or

how bad it looks.

It would not come to you and to me unless God knew we were ready and unless He was going to work it together for good, good for us and good for Him. So, have confidence. Be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you a reason for your hope.

Your hope ought to be visible. Remember I asked earlier, what would it be like if somebody had to give your eulogy, your memorial service, just a few days from now? What would they say? I would hope that each one of us would, in some part of that spiel, be noted for our confidence in God, our faith in the Lord Jesus, our love for our fellow believers and our hope of the resurrection. Listen, the word resurrection is mentioned in Acts all the way from chapter 1 through chapter 26.

It is time and time and time again. I've got a list, a page long, of nothing but references to the resurrection all the way through the book of Acts. Why? That is the great central hope and substance of the gospel.

There is no point to any of what we've been talking about if we are not raised like Christ was raised. If we are not going into the kingdom, what's the point of preparation? It's like going to boot camp and learning all about your weapon and getting your uniforms and everything else. And then they say, alright, you can go home now.

And you never serve. You never get posted anywhere. You never do anything.

If all of this life is preparation and there is no afterlife, then the preparation is a waste of time. You go to 1 Corinthians where Paul says, If it is only in this life that we have hope, we are of all men most miserable. It is the resurrection that counts.

We are looking ahead. This is our training ground. And we need resistance.

We need opportunities. We need to learn how to use what God gives us. That's what Paul is doing here.

He bears witness to the kingdom of God. Now, of all the things Paul could talk about, why does it say this? Bearing witness to the kingdom of God. *Dea Martyromanos*.

This is actually a participle, which is a verb that turns into a noun. *Martyreo* is where we get the word martyr. We say, oh, you know, Fox's book of martyrs, people that got impaled and flayed and burned alive and all of that.

But *martyreo* means to bear witness, to give testimony. Martyrs were those who bear witness, who give a testimony. And you look at Wycliffe and Hus and all of these others that got burned and slain for their faith.

The fact that they did not wilt and they did not waver is a testimony. But this is *Dea Martyreo* and it means to witness. *Dea* means through.

You know, the diameter? That's the meter that goes through the circle, right? Dia-meter. We say he's diametrically opposed. That means you meet in the middle and you're opposite.

Dea means through. So this is to witness through. It says he is bearing witness.

He is witnessing through to the kingdom of God, the basilea of God. Persuading, patho, concerning Jesus by the law of Moses and the prophets. Some were convinced, it says.

This is another use of the verb patho. And this is the imperfect passive indicative. It's not an aorist.

It doesn't mean they came to a decision. It means they were being persuaded. They were seeing some of the points.

But because it's an imperfect and not an aorist, I don't think this indicates that they came to faith, at least not in large numbers. It says they heard it and it was intriguing to them. They were being persuaded.

They were being brought along by the argument. I can see your point. But the imperfect means it didn't really come to a conclusion.

They're open to it. They're listening to it, some of them. And so they're being persuaded.

If they had come to faith, it would have used pastuo or it would have had patho in the aorist. They were convinced. But they're being swayed would be a way of translating this.

They were swayed. They were in the process of being persuaded. But it just doesn't conclude.

It's kind of indecisive. Others did not believe. And the interesting thing here is that we have a different word used.

Others did not believe. And this is from pastuo. And it is another imperfect active indicative, a pistun.

And it means they were not believing. And they persisted in a state of not believing. You have some people in a persistent state of being persuaded.

Kind of like almost thou persuadest me, although that's not what it meant. And these others are in a constant state of not believing. But you don't have anybody that comes to a constant state of belief.

That's the problem. You have your fence sitters and your unbelievers. You don't really have a category that clearly says, ah, okay, we're on board.

Mourning until leaving. Bearing witness. Some were convinced.

Others did not believe. Were not believing. So then in verse 25, asymphonoi.

And they're described here with another noun. A in front of something. If you're asymptomatic, it means you have no symptoms.

Well, if you're asymphonoi, you're not a symphony. You're a cacophony. You're a random collection of garbage-y sounds.

So being out of harmony among themselves, they began to leave. So Paul made one final word. One final rhema.

There's a rhema Bible Institute up in Tulsa. Rhema is a spoken word. Remember when Jesus referred back to the Old Testament, he says, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? When that's in Greek, it's not logos.

It's not every logos, you know, the great principle, the great timeless truth. It's every rhema, every spoken word, every promise, every covenant decree. A spoken word means you're talking to someone.

A logos is more of a, it can be an idea. It's a principle and it's not necessarily personal. A rhema is a personal word.

You spoke it to me. It's a covenant. It's a promise.

It's a word for me. Rhema. These are the two Greek words translated word in the New Testament.

This is rhema. Paul says, I've got one final thing for you, Jewish guys. Well did the Holy Spirit speak to your fathers through the prophet Isaiah saying, go to this people and say, you will keep on hearing, but you will not understand.

You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive. For the heart of this people has become dull and with their ears, they scarcely hear and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and I would heal them.

Paul quotes this to them from the Septuagint version. In the original Hebrew, these are imperatives. At least that's the way it's pointed.

Hear, but do not understand. See, and do not perceive. And God in the original Hebrew text of Isaiah says, go to this people and tell them, which basically puts them on the spot.

As He prophesies, they are to hear. And the fact that they hear Him, but they don't understand Him, that's their indictment because they should. There is no reason for them not to except that they harden their hearts, they blind themselves, they cut off, just like in Romans chapter 1, they hold the truth in unrighteousness, they suppress the truth, they push it away.

You see this in political dialogue today. There can be an obvious, mind-numbingly simple truth, but someone who is defending an ideology will refuse to acknowledge it, refuse to admit it. Because to admit it, this happens in science.

I'll give you a great example. They've got this great chart with the little monkey and then he gradually stands up. You know, you've seen the pictures where he starts out with a little knuckle-dragging thing on one end and it goes up and you've got a man on the other end and you've got Australopithecus and Cro-Magnon and all these others in between.

And they say, okay, here's evolution from the monkey to the man. Okay, fine. So this should be borne out in the fossil record.

And so as they dig down in the layers, they find ape skulls and bigger brows and thicker skulls and all that as they go down early and they say, now see, you've got your man skeletons and your man skulls with a flat forehead and thinner brow ridges and a more prominent nose and more vegetative teeth and that kind of thing, vegetable eating teeth in these later strata. And down below, you've got these monkey skulls, these ape skulls. Big brows, thick incisors, meat-tearing teeth and that kind of thing.

So the fossil record shows us that there was a gradual evolution from ape to man. But then Richard Leakey and his crew are digging around over there in Africa and lo and behold, in a strata below all of the ape skulls, they find this wonderful perfectly formed hominid man skull with thin brows and a big globular space for a brain and vegetable eating teeth. And it throws the whole sequence out of whack.

Do they talk about it? Do they admit it? No. It throws their system all into confusion. So you'd look in vain to even find references to this skull.

And somebody says, well, could it have been buried? No, they were very careful to document all the ground. It wasn't a hole that somebody dug and put it down below. It has all the normal sediment above it.

They can't explain it. They don't know what to do with it. But it doesn't fit their theory so they just throw it out.

They blind themselves to it. And time and time again, you have the irreducible complexity principle, which means there are certain things that cannot evolve. You can't evolve an eyeball because without the retina and without the lens and without the iris

and the cornea and all of the inner working parts, you can't have half a lens.

You can't have a partial iris. It just doesn't work unless it's all there. And you can't wait for it all to evolve and in the meantime it does nothing because that violates the principle of natural selection that they swear by.

But people just ignore that. They don't want to hear it and so they just subtract it out of their evidence pool. Right? Go to this people and say, you hear, but you don't understand.

You see, but you do not perceive. Now this is great when you're talking about somebody else and we use the second person. We say, you people over there, you keep hearing and you don't understand.

You keep seeing and you don't perceive. You're looking right at it, you're staring it in the face and you just won't admit it. Shame on you.

But when we shake our finger at somebody and we realize there are three pointing back at us, God puts things in front of us from his word, doesn't he? Are we hearing and not perceiving? Are we seeing and not really taking in what we see? Before we can be an effective witness in our lives and in our speech, it has to have made a difference to us. God can't use us for anything meaningful unless we are first transformed. The beam has to be gotten out of our eye before we can go into any moat removal business.

Right? Isaiah is told by God to go to the Jewish people and say, you will keep on hearing, but you're not going to understand. You will keep on seeing, but you will not perceive. Why? Your heart, the heart of this people, has become dull.

And with their ears, they can barely hear. And they have closed their eyes. How is it that they're not able to perceive? Is it predestination? Was it they just weren't included in the great elective decree of God? It doesn't say God has closed their eyes.

It doesn't say Satan has closed their eyes. Who closed their eyes? How come they don't see? If I grab your head by the hair and I point you at something, picture on the wall, we've got the state quarters up here on the wall. I grab your head.

You can't grab Joseph's hair. I'll grab his ears. Point your face at it and say, look at those quarters on the wall.

All you have to do is shut your eyes and you don't see them anymore. Right? They have closed their eyes, otherwise they might see with their eyes. If you don't remember anything else about this, you just remember this.

The reason we do not know what we should know, the reason we do not respond the way we should respond is that we close our eyes. And when you see other people that are in

trouble and are far from the truth and don't have power and don't have solutions and don't have blessing and don't have light in their life, it is not that God's grace is not sufficient. It isn't that their circumstances were too great.

It isn't that Satan just overpowered them. It isn't that there was just too much against them. They just got a bad deal.

You know, the dealer got the cards and they just got dealt such a bad hand there was nothing they could do with it. Any human being on this planet that is not dwelling in the peace and the grace and the blessing of God, I don't care what their circumstances are, the reason we lack those things, the reason they lack those things is they've shut their eyes. We have shut our eyes.

If we close our eyes, otherwise we will see and we will hear and we will understand and return and God will heal. God doesn't say, I'll heal most of them. He doesn't say, I can heal the ones that aren't too badly damaged.

He says, if you open your eyes, if you hear with your ears, if you understand with your heart, you will be healed. It's a promise of God. You can take it to the bank.

You can take it to the Lord in prayer. Lord, my eyes are wide open. I am looking at your word.

I desire to understand. I intend to live my life to please you. This is my reason for being.

This is my goal when I wake up in the morning. The last thing I think about when I shut my eyes at night, how can I live to please the Lord? You will be healed. Anyone who looks at God, look and live.

As the song says, there is life for a look at the Savior, but you've got to open your eyes. People have to open their eyes. People who do not open their eyes are going to be in a Helen Keller world and wonder why they keep bumping into things and keep tripping over things and keep stumbling and falling and getting hurt.

Open your eyes. Open your ears. Open your heart.

Read Proverbs 2, verses 1-6. Ask. Lift up your voice.

Cry out. Seek it like silver. Search for it like you would hidden treasure.

It's an amazing thing. People that get hooked on a TV show, they will arrange their schedule to be sure they're plopped down in front of the TV at 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock or whenever it comes on. But people can't make any kind of effort for the Word of God, for Bible class or quiet time or meditation.

How is it that we can be there for a sports event or we can be there for something that

we really enjoy, but the most important thing in life? Of course, I'm not talking about present company, but you know what I'm talking about. Why is it? It's because it doesn't have a priority. It's not important.

Eyes are shut. Therefore, verse 28, let it be known to you that this deliverance of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen.

It has been sent to them, and guess what? Also, they're going to listen. What a shame to the Jews, the people of God, the stewards of the oracles of God for 1,500 years, and they're missing it. And the godless, savage, pagan, barbarian Gentiles are going to get it.

And when they hear it, they're going to respond. When He had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves. That verse 29 is not original.

Luke has already told us up in verse 25, they began leaving. And as they were leaving, Paul, as he's sort of throwing the last few pearls out there, he says, Isaiah had you pegged, as they're going out the door. Well, by the time he finishes the quote, they're gone.

And this other has been added. Verse 29 is not original. Verse 30, Paul stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, as it were.

At his own expense is probably a better translation here. Two full years. Welcomed all who came to him.

Now, two years, there was a time criteria in Roman law that your case had to be heard within 18 months, or it could be reviewed and dismissed. Now, Paul, even if they don't count his lock-up time in Caesarea, after the 18-month mark, what happened? He's here two full years. Was his case dismissed? Did the people who were bringing charges never show up? It was possible in Roman law, and the most likely scenario is that you can see the apathy and the indifference and nobody even knew about his case in Rome, and evidently nobody came from Caesarea or Jerusalem to prosecute the thing.

Paul had made his appeal to Caesar, but it was probably administratively shoved off the books. I mean, no harm, no foul. What's the problem? And you'll also notice that the Jews here seem really skittish about having anything to do.

None of these Jews, even the ones who disagree with Paul, they don't make a riot. They don't try to tear him in pieces. They don't get him locked up.

They don't appeal to the Roman authorities. You get the idea that this close to the Roman throne, they don't make waves. It's not like Jerusalem where you've kind of got a majority of numbers and you're far from Rome and you've got the Romans a little more of a disadvantage.

In Rome, the emperor can just look at you cross-eyed and you're out there running away from lions and things. So they've been driven away and they've only recently been let back in the city. So they make no waves and they don't have the same kind of leverage in Rome that they had in Jerusalem.

And you get the idea that this whole case thing kind of died on the vine. Did Paul stand before Caesar? Yes. How do I know? Because Jesus told him twice, you will stand before Caesar in Rome.

So at some point, he did. What the outcome was, we're not real sure because Luke, look how Luke finishes the book here. He lived two whole years at his own expense, welcomed all who came to him.

What did he do? Verse 31 is one of the most important verses in the whole book. Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. What did it say just above? What did he tell the Jews? Testifying, in verse 23, to the kingdom of God, convincing them about Jesus.

This is the message. It is the kingdom of God. It is the Lord Jesus.

Now, half of that message is future. The kingdom of God is future. This encompasses the kingdom of Christ, the millennial kingdom, and the kingdom of the Father.

If you want to use one term for the whole kingdom future, it's the kingdom of God. Kingdom of the Son, kingdom of the Father. The whole thing, kingdom of God.

Pick either one, it's the kingdom of God. It is the hope of the resurrection. It's mentioned in nearly every chapter of Acts.

He talks about, it's for the hope of Israel that I was put on trial. That's resurrection. So, how does he spend these next two years? Proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with boldness and without hindrance. Even though he's a prisoner, God arranges it so that he is living at his own expense. Where does he get the money? Does he make everybody tithe? No.

Does he pass the plate? Does he charge admission? God provides. God motivates people who recognize that the Apostle Paul is doing something worthy. They give.

It's between them and the Lord. That's how it ought to be. No enforced tithing.

No brow beating. No guilt. But the Apostle Paul is supported and is able to live for two years and he's not making tents.

Where does he get the money? God provides it through whatever means. Teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the account ends and we don't know what happened

with Paul.

We had this great eye appeal to Caesar and he's in Rome and it's like the last page is left off kind of like the Gospel of Mark. Well, what happened? How come this does not finish? Church tradition tells us that it is during these two years that Luke wrote both his Gospel and the book of Acts. And it gets right up to this time and within this period, Luke passed away.

Luke did not live as long as the Apostle Paul did. And this is as far as God the Holy Spirit got him in the writing of this book. And he checked out.

He wasn't there to write the ending. Within just a couple of years of the arrival in Rome, Luke has passed away. He was evidently older than Paul and this may be why he didn't accompany him on all of his travels.

He did it as his strength allowed him, but he passed away. But God could have gotten this finished one way or another. Why is it unfinished? It's a great way to symbolically show that the Gospel, the Kingdom of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ is being preached with boldness and without hindrance in the Gentile capital of the world.

That's how God leads it. That's how it's been for the last 2,000 years. There's been oppression.

There's been persecution. There has been Bible burnings. There have been people flayed alive, burned at the stake, imprisoned, tortured, resisted in every way, shape and form.

But the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ has been proclaimed all over the world with boldness and without hindrance. You cannot stop the Word of God. It is too powerful.

And that's the way this book ends. Because after all, this book is not so much a biography of the Apostle Paul or Peter or any of the other personages as it is the story of the sending forth of the Gospel from Israel to all the world. And we are the beneficiaries even today.

It is from this time on that you'll find that during these two years, you have the books of Ephesians, which is actually Laodiceans, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon is written during this time. There is a church tradition that says that after Paul's case was dismissed here, he actually made another excursion and went back and revisited some of the places. The church tradition says he went back to Ephesus, which would be kind of strange since he gave him that big farewell in Miletus.

But it's just another indication that he wasn't really hitting on all eight cylinders when he went through there, if that's true. The church tradition says he even made it to Spain. He mentions that in one of his letters that he hopes to go to Spain.

But we don't know. That's all very speculative. We do know, all authorities agree, that he was eventually retried.

He was brought up, re-arrested, perhaps at the time of the burning of Rome by Nero. And he was executed. He and Peter died very nearly at the same time.

Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified upside down. Why was Paul not crucified? It was forbidden by Roman law for any Roman citizen to die on a cross.

That was the punishment for the lowlifes, the pagans, the shameful death. Roman citizens, even if they got the death penalty, got the chop. It was considered a more noble and much less painful death.

So Paul was beheaded in Rome. He could have died anywhere from 63 to 67 A.D. But his life's work and his ministry lives on through these great epistles, through the story of his life. And we have a great heritage as believers.

We have a great opportunity to listen not only to his words, but to be informed by his example. And to let God use our lives just as he used the Apostle Paul, just as he used Stephen and Peter and the others that we've studied in this book. It is totally up to us.

We choose whether or not we will see with our eyes and hear with our ears and open our hearts so that God can reflect his glory in and through us and persuade others through us and prepare us for the kingdom of God and equip us for every good work through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Well, that concludes our study of the book of Acts. We will begin a new study next Friday night.

We may actually finish a couple more books before the Lord returns. I think that would be great. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the great things that you have shown us through your word, particularly in this book of Acts. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress the truths on our hearts so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in his name.

Amen.