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### **Unhindered Acts 28**

He pitched a no-hitter against the Major league Cleveland Indians. He was chosen to represent the United States Olympic baseball team. He played on four different major league baseball teams and he did it all with only one left arm. Jim Abbott was born without a right hand and was fitted at age 4 for a prosthesis to help him accomplish the daily activities of holding a fork and tying his shoes, but not only did the prosthesis feel awkward, it resulted in the kids calling him names. For these reasons he decided not to use it, but it never kept him from pursuing his favorite game, baseball. He started out just playing catch with his father and younger brother Chad in the backyard. This was when he developed his now famous glove switch, holding the glove under his stump, he would throw the ball then quickly transfer the glove to his good hand to field the ball, then back again to throw the batter out at first base. When his dad wasn't around, he would spend hours throwing a tennis ball against the garage to decrease the time of the glove switch. His parents wanted him to play soccer, because no hands are needed and the neighborhood boys wouldn't let Him play in their games, but that didn't stop him and when he joined little league at age 11, on his first game he proved his ability by pitching a no-hitter game.

Limitations. Jim Abbott was born with an obvious physical limitation. He had no right hand. He could have easily said; "no right hand...its pretty obvious I'm no going to be playing certain sports...certainly not a pitcher in the major leagues." But God in the middle of his limitations, gave him a drive and an ability to excel in baseball unlike many others.

We are all born with a certain number of limitations. Some more obvious than others. Some physical, some mental, some emotional, some relational. Some of our limitations come from the family we grew up. Some of us had some very crippling limitations that came at us in the form of very painful circumstances...violations done against us. As we grow older, we grow more skilled and confident in some areas and less and less in others. As we near the end of our life, our limitations can become quite frustrating because the things that we used to be able to do so easily now are difficult and some impossible. Limitations. Conventional wisdom tells us to starve our limitations and build on our strengths and yet... often it seems God wants to use our limitations in ways we could never have imagined.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the very last chapter in the book of Acts. Acts 28. It has been almost a year and a half since we started our study, but we have finally arrived at the end and it actually will seem very strangely like the beginning. Churchills words seem fitting here. "this not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end, but perhaps it is the end of the beginning." The book of Acts describes the beginning of the early church with all its setbacks and struggles, but it is certainly not the end of the story...but perhaps the end of the first chapter. We are currently writing additional chapters in the history of the church as we speak. We read the story of how God transformed a small group of unusually ordinary men and women and spread the truth of the good news of Jesus in a very extraordinary way. The church is battered with conflict and disagreements from within and without the church. People disappoint, unexpected troubles and unexpected triumphs come...and yet the strong line that runs through the whole story of Acts is that God is in control and His purpose will be accomplished regardless of sinful and broken people like you and me. God is looking for a few good men and a few good women who will take up His challenge to follow Him and live in radical obedience to his word and trust by faith to see what God will do.

We all have our limitations...but God is not and the truth of His Word will continue to go out unhindered.

Last week we left Paul and 275 others pulling themselves to shore after fighting a storm for 14 days. Their ship has run aground and broken up on the island of Malta, located just 50 miles south of Sicily. Its an island 18 miles long and 8 miles wide whose name means "refuge". Indeed Malta became a refuge for Paul and the entire ship, none of whom had lost their life by means of God's protection. The people on the island were very kind to the shipwrecked people who had lost everything.

We read in the first few verses of chapter 28 that they took them in, warmed them, received them. While they were trying to warm themselves by the fire, a poisonous viper jumped out of a bundle of sticks that Paul had carried to the fire and sunk its jaws into Paul's hand. Knowing that Paul was a prisoner, the native people assumed Paul must have been a murderer or committed some terrible crime because even though he was saved by the storm, justice would not allow him to live. V.5 They expected Paul to fall over dead, but when he did not they changed their minds and decided that Paul was instead a god.

We could spend an entire Sunday just on this section talking about the fickleness of people who jump to wrong conclusions and then swing with imbalance to exalt people inappropriately like a baseball player who is a booed villain one minute when he drops a routine fly ball and a cheered hero when he hits the game winning homerun. Paul is unaffected by neither their condemnation or their praise. He simply continues the ministry that God has called him to be about...and he does it without complaint. The people of Malta assumed that God's justice was eye for eye tooth for tooth. Death for murder and blessing for kindness. But it is not always so. The islanders wrongly assumed that Paul's snakebite was because of some severe wrong he had done. The calamity was proof of guilt. But it is not always so. There are times when we suffer simply because we are humans living on the earth. We live in an

imperfect, fallen world with plenty of sinners and things go wrong, no fault of our own and we suffer. There are times when we suffer and it is because we have sinned and God is allowing suffering to discipline us and draw us back to obedience. There are times when we suffer and God allows it because through the suffering He knows that our faith will be strengthened and those around will watch and give glory to God.

God is not a God who simply gives people tumors when they sin. He does not dole out diseases when we fail him. He does not send cataracts when we lust or harden our arteries when we hate. He does not punish us with leukemia or discipline us with cancer. The Pharisees had this same faulty thinking about the justice of God and when a blind man came to Jesus asking to be healed they wanted to know who had sinned. Was it his parents that sinned? Was it he that sinned? Neither, said Jesus and proceeded to heal the man.

Back to our story and the island of Malta. Paul miraculous protection from the viper gave way to opportunities for ministry. The head official of the island Publius, v,7 had a father who was very sick in bed. Paul prayed for him and God healed the man. The Greek word used there is of an instant healing. That led to other opportunities for healing in v.9 and possibly Dr. Luke got in on the action as the word for healing in that verse is “Therpeuo”, we get our word therapy, a more gradual cure and may imply using more natural means to heal people the people. Whatever the means, God used the healing power to meet the physical needs of the Maltese people and that opened great opportunity to demonstrate the power of God and confirm the truth of the gospel.

In v.11 the story goes back to reading like a ships log as they continued on their voyage to Rome. They set sail on an Alexandrian ship. Headed toward Rome stopping at several ports along the way. They made very good time. As they came closer to Rome, the word started to get out that Paul was one his way and some of the Christian brothers came out

to meet him. This was encouraging to Paul and you can read in v.15 that Paul “thanked God and took courage”

v.16 we read that Paul arrives in Rome. He is still under arrest, He is definitely limited. He can't go anywhere, but the authorities have allowed him to rent his own house and the soldiers come to guard him there, probably on a rotating shift schedule. Paul is also allowed unlimited visiting hours by people coming to see him. Lets read what Paul does within the first three days of arriving in Rome. (READ) V.16-31)

Paul is under house arrest. He can't leave. He can't go out and tell the good news about Jesus in the Jewish synagogue like he typically did in every new city he went into. Paul was limited...but God was not. We may be limited...but God is never limited.

This would be the first challenge point for those of us faced with limitations. When faced with limitations, look for opportunities that our limitations provide. Paul is stuck in this house. Soldiers come in and out constantly with the change of shifts. Limitations sure...opportunity? Absolutely. Turn with me to the first chapter of Philippians. This is a letter that Paul wrote while he was imprisoned in Rome. Along with many other letters like Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. Aren't you glad that God slowed Paul down long enough so that he would write these very encouraging letters? In Philippians 1:12 Paul writes (READ Phil 1:12-14). Sure I'm limited here imprisoned in my house, but it has turned out surprisingly well. I have been able to share the good news of Jesus to many soldiers of the elite praetorian guard. My example of boldness in prison has brought courage to other believers who now have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Every 8 hours another soldier to guard Paul can't go anywhere and listens to the gospel and watches Paul live it out. What a great opportunity. If you go and visit Rome, you can see a picture that was discovered scratched in the wall of the Roman army barracks with an inscription included meant to insult a

Christian soldier. The picture on plaster was of a man nailed to a cross who had a head like a donkey, the inscription read, 'Anexamenos worships his god'. I just have got to wonder if this guy, Anexamenos spent time guarding the apostle Paul.

Paul is limited, but God is not limited. Paul is hindered, but the gospel is unhindered. God uses Paul's limitations as a platform for the gospel message of hope and freedom. Acts 28:17 Paul can't go to the people with the gospel, so he invites the people to come to him. The Jewish synagogue leaders come v.23 "in large numbers" to listen.

He uses the chains about him as illustrations of bondage to sin. He looks over in the corner of the room and sees a Roman soldier and writes a letter to the Ephesians about how they need to be putting on the armor of God to fight strongly in the spiritual warfare. He can't change what others are saying about him, so he simply tells the truth and explains the truth and does so in v.17-21.

In V.23 we see Paul explaining the truth, testifying about the kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus. To explain means to lay out...to set forth. The author Luke used this word earlier in Acts to describe how Aquilla and Priscilla pulled a talented Apollos aside and explained more accurately the word of God. Here Paul is explaining his message by laying out arguments in accurate and logical order. Paul also testifies which means in Greek to declare emphatically. Paul is passionate about what he believes and challenges them to respond. That is what Paul is doing as he persuades them. He wants them to respond to the message, not just think about it as an intellectual curiosity. He is battling for change.

The message is about the kingdom of God and Jesus mission. God is sovereign and ruler over the universe. But through Satan's deception, man revolted against the divine king. So God decided to send Jesus the Messiah, the prince of peace into the world to atone for sin and sin back wayward subjects. And that now through faith in Christ he can deliver

us from the domain of darkness and back to the kingdom of His Son.  
(Colossians 1:13)

The response? Just like it has been all through Acts and continues to be until this day. V.24 “some believed and some did not”. We may be limited but God is not. We may be hindered, but the gospel is unhindered. The book of Acts ends on kind of a strange note. It leaves the reader hanging. It doesn't say much about the church in Rome. We don't even find out what happens to Paul. It seems that the author Luke was much more concerned with how the gospel expanded and grew. That last word of the book “unhindered” tells it all. The author wanted to leave the book unfinished. It highlights the opening verse in Acts 1:8 “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth. Paul may be hindered but that is not going to stop the gospel message. This is simply the end of the beginning and the word of God is not bound up no matter our own limitations and struggles.

II Corinthians 12:9-10 says “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness”. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses with insults with distresses with persecution, with difficulties for Christ sake; for when I am weak then I am strong. The very weakness. The very limitation gave Paul a forum to share the gospel message. Just as God easily overcame Paul's weaknesses, he can overcome ours as well.

So what have we done with our limitations? Joni Earackson is severely limited due to an accident on a hot summer day during her high school years, while diving into the Chesapeake bay. Paralyzed from the neck down. Totally dependent on others to move and eat. She is today well known for her courage and indomitable spirit. Much sought after

speaker and singer and possesses such a strong faith in Jesus Christ. This faith has been infectious for all who spend time with her.

Joni writes Few of us have the luxury to come to ground zero with God. And it took me forever to think of it as that...a luxury. Before my accident, my questions had always been, "How will God fit into this situation?" How will He affect my dating life? My career plans? The things I enjoy? All those options were gone. It was just me, just a helpless body and God. I had no other identity but God and gradually He became enough. I became overwhelmed with the phenomenon of the personal God who created the universe, living in my life. He would make me attractive and worthwhile...Maybe God's gift to me is my dependence on Him. I will never reach the place where I am self-sufficient, where God is crowded out of my life. I am aware of His grace to me every moment. My need for help is obvious every day I wake up, flat on my back waiting for someone to come dress me. I cannot even comb my hair or blow my nose alone! And there is one more thing. I have hope in the future. The Bible speaks of our bodies being "glorified" in heaven. In high school that was always a hazy foreign concept. But now I realize that I will be healed. I have not been cheated out of being a complete person. I am just going through a 40-year delay and God is with me even through that.

So what have we done with our limitations? Have we tucked them under our arms and wallowed down into a pit of self-pity? Hopelessness? Or have we taken them to God so that he can do His greatest works through us? Building a faith, building vision and strength in dependence? Perhaps you look in the mirror and see limitations that are restricting service to the Lord. Look for the opening. God may well use your limitations as an opportunity.

Mother of 4 kids under three? Who will God put into your life that only you could touch and encourage? Brand new believer that doesn't know much Bible content? How can that fresh approach to the Bible and a hunger for God's word ignite a fire in a older believer in desperate need

of recapturing his first love of God. Suffering? Fearful? Has your job held you back and missed a promotion you clearly deserved? Why has God placed you where you are right now? Why has he allowed you to walk through some very painful circumstances? It may be those things limitations that open up some of your greatest opportunities to help others. II Corinthians 1:3-4.

This week if you are delayed. If you are late look for opportunities those limitations provide. Like Paul, enjoy God's peace in the middle of the storm. Watch as God perfects us inside of our weakness. We may be limited by God is never limited. We may be hindered but the good news of Jesus Christ will always be unhindered.

## Acts 28

Paul has been shipwrecked on an island called Malta. Located 50 miles south of Sicily, Malta is a rough island 18 miles long and 8 miles wide. In Paul's day the island was named Melita which is the Canaanite word of "refuge". It has been suggested that when Luke wrote, "We knew the name of the island was Malta. He meant to say the Island called "refuge" was well named. Everyone is safe.

Island natives are extremely kind

Warmed us. Received us

Paul was bitten by a viper (poisonous snake) on the hand that came out of a bundle of sticks on the fire. Came out because of the heat.

The natives assumed this prisoner was getting his judgment. Probably a murderer. Saved from the sea but killed by a viper.

Ever been misunderstood in your pain? You may be recovering from depression, abuse, or some crisis and there is the danger that others misinterpret our pain. The islanders suggest that Paul's snakebite is a divine judgment for a severe wrong done. The calamity is proof of his guilt.

Jobs counselors held the same assumptions. To them Jobs problems were a result of unconfessed sin (Job 22) When tragedy strikes our lives others may tell us. Obviously God is disciplining you. Clean it up before it gets worse.

That's false thinking. Snakebites don't prove wrongdoing any more than hard times always imply hidden sin.

So now when Paul doesn't die they exalt him inappropriately. Maybe he is a god!!! People's opinion of us has an amazing propensity to swing wildly back and forth. A baseball player is a hero one minute and a booed villain the next game. Paul seems unaffected by their praise. Paul just continues to go about his ministry of healing that opens up opportunities to share with others.

What do you think of the Maltese view of God's justice? Does God always act in this way?

Justice has not allowed this man to live. These people assumed people were rewarded according to their deeds. (thus they were kind to people in need and assumed they would be blessed because of it).

But since he didn't die they changed their assumption. Must be a god to have been amazingly protected twice. He should be dead but is not. They recognize God's provident hand of provision.

Swindall p149 story of Dave Dravecky someone accused him of bad arm due to a sin in his life.

The issue is not our character but the character of God. Is God the kind of god who gives people tumors when they sin? Does he dole out diseases when we fail him? Say maybe cataracts when we lust or hardening of the arteries when we hate? Does he punish us with leukemia? The Pharisees thought. This man or his parents that he was born blind. Jesus responded. Neither, and then proceeded to heal the man. Psalm 103:10-14 describes the divine healing touch showing God's incredible compassion toward us in our sin.

Is that the picture of a father who takes a belt to his children when they spill milk or wet their pants? Is that the picture of a God who gives people cancer when they sin? I don't think so.

Turmoil without and inner peace within.  
Fear versus faith in God.

Publius; head of island. Kind and providing had a need. His father was very sick in bed. Fever and dysentery. Paul visited, prayed for him and he was healed.

Now the whole island who had diseases came to Paul and Paul prayed to God for them and they were cured. Wow! Paul and group given much honor and supplies and help for their trip.

The Greek word for healed in v.8 is *iaomai*. Paul instantly healed Publius father. The Greek word for cured in v.9 is *Therapeuo* we get our word for therapy. It may mean to "treat medically" implying that Doctor Luke got involved with Paul's ministry of healing perhaps by using natural means to heal the people. Whatever the method, God used the healing to meet the physical needs of the people and to demonstrate the power of God and confirm the truth of the gospel.

There is a very interesting use of words here. When Luke says that Publius' father was *healed*, he uses a Greek word which means "instantaneous healing." But when he says that these people were *cured* he uses another Greek word which refers to "a more gradual cure." It is an entirely different word. Not all of them were instantaneously healed.

Therefore many scholars have felt that we have here a unique combination of medical skill and divine healing, that Luke was involved as a physician in these cures which took place during their three-month stay on the island, and that there is a beautiful blending, without any contradiction, of these two gifts of God: the skill of medicine in curing, and the divine power of God at work in direct healing. The two are not at all contrary but stem from the same wisdom and power of God and can work together beautifully, as we see in this account. At any rate, many were cured and, as a result, when they came to leave, there were, literally, many "honorariums" given. The people expressed their gratitude by stocking the ship with supplies. Now we read of the remainder of the journey to Rome:

The twin gods Castor and Pollux were the guarding gods of sailors. When their constellation was seen in the stars after a storm, it was assumed to be good luck.

v.15 Left in 3 months...sailed to Rome. If they landed in November, it was probably early March. Christians met them in Rome as word spread that he was coming.

Puteoli was the leading port for Rome at this time. It was still 70 miles south of Rome but contained a community of Jews and Christians. Three taverns were 35 miles south of Rome. Getting closer. The decree from Claudius in AD49 that outlawed Jews in Rome had lapsed after his death in AD54 so Jews were now back in Rome.

Paul thanked God and took courage.

In Rome Paul was allowed to be in a home by himself with a soldier guarding Paul. As the duties shifted Paul got another guard to witness to. They were paid by Rome to watch him live life and witness to others round the clock.

God used the limitations of the situation as a platform for the gospel message of freedom.

TT: Turn limitations into opportunities.

1) Paul can't go to the people with the gospel so people come to him. V.17 Paul had a habit of coming into a new city to preach and go to the Jews in the local synagogues. In Rome instead he invites the Jews to his apartment and they willingly come to listen to him.

2) He uses the chains about his as an illustration. Teach about bondage to sin, spiritual warfare he looks at the roman soldiers armor and writes a letter to the Ephesians. He also writes Philippians Colossians and Philemon right in this little rental house.

3) He can't change what others are saying about him so he simply tells the truth. He can't alter the charges against him leveled by the Jews, but he can explain the truth. V.17-21

II Cor 12:9-10 "my grace is sufficient for you for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly I will rather boast about my weaknesses for when I am weak, then I am strong." Paul was content in his weakness, free from bitterness towards others who have put him in chains. Ironically those very chains gave Paul a forum for the gospel message. God overcame the limitations of Paul's prison.

Swindall p.158 Joni Earakson Tada after a diving accident left her in prison in her own body. She struggled with questions about her purpose and her relationship with God, but God showed her as he did with Paul

that His grace would see her through. Can God still use me paralyzed?  
Can I still worship God and love him? He has taught me that I can  
maybe God gift to me is my dependence on Him....

Perhaps you have limitations that you think are restricting our service  
for the lord. Look for the opening, God may well use your limitation to  
enrich your service for him.

Paul wrote during that time Phil 1:12 "Now I want you to know brethren  
that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the  
gospel." Tozers prayer in Swindall p.159

v.17 Paul didn't wait long once he got to Rome (3 days) to share the good  
news with the Jews there. He still had a heart to reach his fellow  
countrymen.

Many leading Jews met together to listen to Paul. They hadn't heard  
about Paul so seemed more open to listen and not jaded by others  
comments, other than this "sect" is spoken of against.

Paul: I've done nothing against our people, customs, or fathers

Yet, Jews gave me to Rome as a prisoner.

Roman government was ready to release me, the Jews objected and so I  
was forced to appeal to Caesar.

I'm here and wear these chains because of the hope of Israel.

Taught about kingdom of god

Tried to persuade them about Jesus from Law of Moses and prophets

Did it for a very long time. Morning until evening.

Some were persuaded...others did not believe.

v.23 Paul communicates three ways:

explaining means to lay out to set forth. The author of acts used this  
word in 11:4 to describe how Peter explained to the Jews in an orderly  
sequence his vision of a sheet of unclean animals. Aquilla and Priscilla  
pulled Apollos aside and explained more accurately the word of God. In  
this context we can see that Paul explained his message by laying out  
arguments in accurate and logical order

Testifying: Greek means to declare emphatically. He is passionately  
engaged in verbal battle for people's souls.

'persuade' them to respond to what he is saying. He wants to effect a  
change

Subject of message: the kingdom of God and Jesus mission.

God is sovereign ruler over the universe but through satans deception  
man revolted against the divine king. So God sent Jesus the Messiah  
prince into the world to atone for sin and win back His wayward  
subjects. Now through faith in Christ he can deliver us from the domain  
of darkness to the kingdom of His Son. Colossians 1:13

The response? V.28 some believed and some would not. Again an argument erupts between these two groups. We might be tempted to pacify the two groups, "hey guys, lets agree to disagree", but not Paul. He knows that the black and white nature of the gospel, conflict was inevitable so he quotes Isaiah.

v.26 Paul ends by quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10

Missions challenge from a view of the holiness of God Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. A picture of the Lord high and lifted up and Isaiah a man of unclean lips among a people of unclean lips. Whom will I send and who will go for me? Here I am send me. Available yet. The people will not listen their ears and hearts are dull and rigid.

v.28 Salvation of god has been sent to the Gentiles...they will listen. This comment started quite a dispute.

v. 30-31 Paul stayed in the rental house 2 years and he had many chances to talk with all who came to visit him. With openness and unhindered. Paul's door was open to anyone, rich, poor, Jew or Greek free or slave

He preached the kingdom of God  
Taught concerning the Lord Jesus Christ

**Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen. {Acts 28:28 RSV}**

With sad hearts the apostle and his friends saw these Jews turn away once again. This is the last time in the Scriptures in which you find the appeal of the gospel officially set before the Jewish people. One of the great mysteries of all time is Jewish unbelief. How can this people miss these tremendous passages, this clear-cut delineation of their Messiah? And yet what happened here, as recorded in this passage, is nothing other than what is happening in much of the church today. What was the reason these people refused to move? As you analyze the account you can see that it was because it meant change. It meant that their comfort would be disturbed. They had worked out a comfortable theological explanation of who the Messiah would be. When God moved in ways different from what they had expected, even though he had predicted it, they refused to move with him. They hung back and clung to their tradition and refused to be disturbed in the comfort of their lives. They did not want to be changed.

And that is the problem today. Many Christians are doing the same thing. Having misunderstood much of Scripture, and applied it in ways that are not warranted, and having developed a very comfortable pattern of life, when the Spirit of God moves in fresh and vital ways we do not want to change, and will not follow. We resist anything that disturbs the tranquility of an accepted and commonly practiced tradition. We want to cling to the comfortable dead rags of the past, even though the Word of God has always

marked out the pathway by which the Spirit works. What a lesson this ought to be to us! Because as God bypassed the Jews, so he bypasses any who continually refuse to move with the creative power and the advance of the Spirit of God. And so we come to the last two verses:

**And he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered. {Acts 28:30-31 RSV}**

This is what I like to call "the end of the beginning." The book of Acts is just the beginning of the record of the operation of the body of Christ at work in the world since his resurrection and ascension. It is just the first chapter. We have come now to the last page of that chapter. The rest of the record is being written as history is being unfolded. It is still being written today. That is what we must understand. Fresh and wonderful chapters are now being written in our own day, ultimately to be incorporated into this account. It is a tremendous privilege and joy to be a part of this divine record

One of the most impressive things about this last section is the last word. Do you notice how the book of Acts ends? With the word "unhindered." That word describes the freedom of the gospel. You see, Paul was hindered. He could not go about the city. He was still chained day and night to a Roman guard. But he could welcome friends in. And he could walk around his house and yard, and he could minister and teach there. Paul never chafed under this restraint. His letters from this period are filled with joy and rejoicing. He never fretted about his condition, but he welcomed all who came and he sent letters back with them -- letters that have changed the world. It was during this time that he wrote Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and the letter to Philemon. What tremendous truths are set forth in these letters which he had time to write because he could no longer travel abroad.

You and I can be grateful that God kept him still long enough to write them; otherwise we might have been deprived of these great messages which have changed the history of man time and time again. Still, Paul had to appear before the emperor. And, in the next year or so, a great persecution broke out under the vicious Emperor Nero which was one of the greatest that Christians have ever experienced. But the Word was not hindered. No matter what the condition of the church, the Word of God is never bound. We must remember that.

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why does Paul say so very little about the church in Rome? What happened to Paul? Acts leaves us hanging. From tradition and certain reference in his letters we can piece together a probably ending to Paul's life.

We want to know what happened to Paul, but Luke is more concerned with how the gospel expanded and grew. That is the ending emphasis

that Luke wanted to leave the book...unfinished. There were all sorts of hindrances to the gospel, but here we see for two years it goes out unhindered.

In answer to many prayers for deliverance Phil 1:19 the Roman court probably acquitted him around ad 62. Now free he may have taken a life long dream of preaching in Spain Rom 15:28. He might have visited his friend Philemon in Colossae as promised in Philemon 22. We know he traveled through Macedonia writing his first letter to Timothy and taking Titus to Crete where he organized the church there. From Crete he would sailed to Greece and written his letter to Titus. In Ad 64 Nero suddenly slammed the door of religious freedom shut. He infamously blamed the Christians for a terrific fire he himself ordered set. A vicious persecution of believers ignited and Paul was probably arrested and dragged to Rome as prisoner. As Roman citizen he was allowed his day in court, deserted by most of his supporters and falsely accused by enemies he had little hope of a second acquittal II Timothy 4:9-18. Tradition records he was beheaded in the Mamertine prison

Why does Acts end like this? How did the final confrontation serve to high-light the main point of the book of Acts. Acts 1:8 you shall be my witnesses to Jerusalem, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Sending the good news to the Jews and the Gentiles.

Paul was not able to go anywhere, but God sent people to him to hear the good news of Jesus.

What do you think Paul specifically taught about the kingdom of God?

Why nothing about Paul's trial before Caesar? Death? Could be no one knew anything about it. Paul may have been tried and executed without any believing witness to provide Luke with information for his story. Luke chooses to end Luke not with death, but with passing on of life and the good news message going out "unchained"  
"The body they may kill...Gods word abideth still."

Churchills words "This is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end but perhaps its is the end of the beginning." Fitting lines that apply to the book of acts. The churches beginning with all its setbacks and struggles is ending but by no means has the story ended. Swindall p.162

Hughes: Joni Earackson: Limitations. What have we done with our limitations? Have we taken them into a pit of self pity so we can swallow in hopelessness and impotency or have we given them to God so he can do his greatest works through us? Joni: "I have not been cheated out of

being a complete person, I am just going through a 40 year delay and God is with me even through that. Being glorified p.345

Hughes. P344 Picture on plaster of man with donkey head nailed to cross. Found in Roman army barracks with inscription meant to insult. "Anexamenos worships his god" I wonder if this guy was a guard to Paul.

The gospel preached by Paul in the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter is the same gospel preached by Peter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. Preached by different people but the same gospel message. It's the same today.

The results of the gospel are also the same. Some rejects it and some respond to it. It was that way at Pentecost and that was in Rome.

Christ's plan to expand the gospel has not altered. The great commission is still valid and being fulfilled. We may look at the slow progress and get discouraged, but Jesus is not frustrated.

What may have happened to Paul? Boice p431

Final message of Acts, The Word is not hindered and we are its messengers.