

Acts 28

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[0 : 00] So the song, Speak O Lord, is a big encouragement to me. Alex and I have a long history with that song. He sang it many years ago when he was like a freshman in college up here at our college Bible study.

That's actually a modern hymn. That wasn't written hundreds of years ago. That was written in the early 2000s. I commend Keith and Christy Getty to you. They're modern-day hymn writers. They're from Ireland. They're from northern Ireland, actually, County Armagh. So they write some really good songs. So dive into those, look them up.

They also wrote the music to End Christ Alone. They're really well-known, so good gospel songs. Okay. We have made it to the end of Acts.

How many people were here at the start of Acts five years ago? Oh, wow, okay. So a few of you. So some of you college students are kind of coming in at the end of the movie.

[1 : 02] So go back and read. Go back and read Acts and enjoy the whole story. But Paul has finally made it to Rome.

All right? He finally made it. That's kind of where we're looking today. The gospel has gone out from Jerusalem and into the nations around the Mediterranean.

And finally, it kind of brings us to the close of Acts and just kind of stops right there. So we're just going to read the text. Acts 28.

And we're just going to start in verse 11. Just kind of rewind a little bit. After three months, we set sail on a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin guys as the figurehead.

Putting in at Cerro Cruz, we stayed there for three days. And from there, we made a circuit and arrived at Ridium, which is the bottom tip of the Italian peninsula.

[2 : 12] And after one day, a south wind sprang up. And on the second day, we came to Petioli. There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days.

And so we came to Rome. And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the forum of Appius and three taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

And when he came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who guarded him. After three days, he called together the local leaders of the Jews. And when they had gathered, he said to them, Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the custom of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, though I had no charge to bring against my nation.

For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain. And they said to him, We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here have reported or spoken any evil about you.

[3 : 40] But we desire to hear from you what your views are. For with regard to this, know that everywhere it is spoken against. When the appointed day had come, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers.

From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God, and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. And disagreeing among themselves, as they departed after Paul had made one statement. The Holy Spirit was right.

And saying to your fathers, to the prophet Isaiah, Go to this people and say, You will indeed hear, but never understand. You will indeed see, but never perceive.

For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their eyes they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn that I would heal them.

[4 : 50] Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen. He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God, and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you that we have such a rich heritage in our faith in Christ, that we have many, a multitude, a great host that has gone before us and have carried their crosses, who have made disciples, who have preached the gospel, who have planted the church in dark areas.

And God, I pray that today you would encourage us as those who are also a part of your church to live lives worthy of the gospel and to surrender all to Christ.

I just ask that in Jesus' name. Amen. So we're going to do a little bit of introduction and then we're going to go kind of unpack things a little bit by way of questions kind of about the text.

But first of all, I think it's amazing that when you look in these, the first few verses here in 11 through 16, you see that amazingly Paul, Luke, and the traveling party, they were met by believers three times along the way to Rome.

[6 : 29] And I think that would be an overwhelmingly encouraging thing to do. Just imagine the pressure and anticipation and intensity that Paul must have felt just going to Rome.

And then to have people coming out all along the way to greet them who are already in the faith, brothers and sisters that are already there. They met him at Peteloi, which was 130 miles like south. Then they met him at the Forum of Appius. Then at Three Taverns, which was about 12 miles away. And so, I have some visual aids for you today. Again, I won't bore you with too much, but you can go ahead and put the first one up.

But again, that's the Roman Empire, but if you look at it, it's amazing that God kind of launched the gospel out through the Roman world because the ancient world had never been able to be traveled as well as when Rome built all these roads.

It went everywhere all over. We had access to Europe, to Asia, and to Africa from the Roman Empire. And the gospel was just shooting out all over the place.

[7 : 38] And it was amazing that like in God's providence, that's what he saw fit to do and so if you look at just Italy, I had to practice saying Petilloi. It didn't look how he said that, but it's a little bit southeast of Rome there.

So that's the journey that he traveled. He eventually would have run into the Via Appia, which is the main road, one of the major roads going into Rome. You can go to the next slide. It's really a picture of like the Roman roads.

That's the Via Appia. That would have been the road that he would have entered into Rome by, a very well-known road through antiquity. But I imagine that it really blessed his heart.

It said that he saw them and his heart was encouraged when he saw the believers coming to him all along the road and probably just strengthened him to go and face whatever awaited him in Rome. So he probably traveled five days or so on the Via Appia to Rome. And it had been a crazy, rough, and often despairing journey to get there.

[8 : 47] But God had promised him, if you remember, in chapter 23, he said, the following night the Lord stood by Paul and said, take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify about me in Rome.

So he knew that God had promised he would make it there. But if you study the journey that Nathan so well taught us, what happened along that journey, very difficult to imagine.

But he finally made it. And three years prior, in Corinth, that's where Paul wrote the Epistle of the Romans. So he knew there was a flourishing church in Rome.

I want you to turn there with me, just to Romans chapter 1. So he wrote this while in Corinth. And though he had not personally visited Rome yet, he was blessed to hear about how the church had been growing there.

So it was a dream come true for Paul to make it to Rome. He was so thankful to be there. And just listen to these words, like his longing for them, his desire to come and see them.

[10:01] We'll just start reading chapter 1. Look at verse 7. This is him writing. Listen to what he says three years prior. to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

For God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son. That without ceasing, I mention you always in my prayers asking that somehow by God's will I may now at least succeed in coming to you.

For I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. That is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented in order that I might reap some harvest among you as well as amongst the rest of the Gentiles.

[11:15] I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish, so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

So Paul had this great yearning, this great longing to go and be with the believers in Rome. And I love how you can hear the longing, the humility even of like, I am coming to be mutually encouraged by your faith.

Not like I am coming to lord over you and tell you I am an apostle and just direct you in many different ways, but he was like, I am blessed to see that the gospel has gone way beyond where I thought I would have carried it.

So, we are going to go through this just in the form of some questions. All right, so question number one, what happened while Paul was in Rome?

What happened while Paul was in Rome? Well, as was his way, he typically sought out the Jewish communities that were already in cities.

[12:22] It was a way that, you know, these people had knowledge of the scriptures, they had the knowledge about the Messiah. It was an easy first step when he came to a new city or town. But Paul, being unable to actually go to the synagogues, like he invited them to come to his lodgings.

So, Paul was under house arrest, which in Roman law wasn't that severe. He had a lot of freedom, so don't, you know, in this section, don't picture him sitting in a coal dungeon in chains.

He uses chains just to kind of say that I'm kind of bound, like I'm under arrest, but he had a lot of freedom. So he invited the Jews to come and hear him.

They got their leaders and then they came and as we see, typically, he reasoned with them, he expounded the scripture from the law and from the prophets and then I'm sure he even told them his story about how Christ met him on the road and saved him and how he was a persecutor of the church, but now he had been commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and to the Jews. And, you know, as usual, right, most disbelieved and said, you're crazy, get out of here, but in this case it said that some believed and others disbelieved. And in his sadness, right, his sadness at their rejection, he remembered Isaiah's prophecy written 700 years prior that foretold that many of Israel's descendants would not believe in the Messiah.

[13:52] And that's why he remembered Isaiah. And that was what he said when they were leaving. When was the last time that you taught or explained the gospel to someone from an entire day, pleading with them, going into the scriptures, pleading them to see Christ for an entire day?

That's what he did. Then when it was finished, Paul basically, as usual, again, he turned his undivided attention to the Gentiles. right? So, we know that he's in Rome for trial.

We know that he's awaiting trial, hopefully, by the emperor. But there was apparently a very long delay in Paul's trial. He was coming to trial, but it says that he probably waited about two years at least, and he had not appeared before the court.

that could be due to a lot of facts. One was, there were so many cases stacked up that he would have to have the emperor himself override it to get it near the top at the time.

And to be honest, like, Rome had some bigger issues going on, and in his mind, the emperor's mind, it might not have been that big of a deal, so he wasn't that concerned about getting Paul to the front of the line.

[15 : 11] So, what the heck, right? He's in Rome to go to court before the emperor, so why is he waiting so long? It seems like wasted time, right?

Nope. Praise God and God's providence and God's sovereignty. During Paul's time under house arrest, this is when God inspired him to write many of the letters that we hold dear today that have blessed believers throughout the centuries.

during this time in church history while Paul was under house arrest, these two years, this is when he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, ancient writings that have survived and have been passed down to us and that you hold before you today.

He wrote that while he was there. So, he also wasted no time. He preached the gospel. He preached the gospel. You see that? Go back to Acts, by the way, if you're not there.

But go back to Acts 28. But in verse 30, he says, he lived there two whole years at his own expense. All right? So he had some comfortable lodgings for the most part.

[16 : 24] And he welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching them about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. I always thought it'd be interesting to wonder, like, I'd love to interview that soldier that was, like, around him all the time, just to say, what was that like, to be, like, right by Paul all the time, and you had to guard his every step.

Might have become a brother, who knows? But the law allowed Paul to provide his own quarters as a Roman citizen, and he had seen a lot of freedom during this time.

So it's safe to assume that under guard, he could have walked the streets of Rome, he could have gone to the parks, he could have gone to a lot of the public places and the forum, and he would have had a lot of freedom just to go and come and go as he pleased.

So for two years, roughly 60 AD to 62, that's when he was believed to have been there. So don't ever, if you feel like you're stuck in a place, and you think, if I could just bust out of the situation, I think that God could use me so much more than just if I was stuck here, right?

I've felt that way before, over many years of very long hospitalizations where I wanted to be here, I wanted to be ministering to people here, but I tried to remember that that's where God had me, and I tried to be a light to doctors, nurses, visitors that came to see me.

[18 : 01] I was even trying to share Christ in the OR one time, and he cut me off and put me in sleep right when I was getting to the juice of it. So I had to go back and hunt him a blade, like, hey man, you cut me off.

But John Calvin wrote of that text where it basically says that Paul lived at his own expense, and he preached the gospel. He said, the apostle shows us an excellent example of constancy, and that he offered himself so willingly to all those who were desirous to hear him.

he remembered that he was no less the servant of Christ and a preacher of the gospel when he was in prison than if he had been at liberty. He thought it was not lawful for him to withdraw himself from any which were ready to learn, lest he shouldn't neglect the occasion which was offered to him by God.

And therefore he did more regarding the holy calling of God than in his own life. So he made the most of that time and he knew that God had him there for that reason.

So as he awaited trial, he waited that two years at least. So when Paul's trial did come, we have to rely basically just on ancient writings and church tradition in a lot of ways and just what would have happened to someone who was under trial during this time in the first century AD in Rome.

[19 : 33] Most likely he would have been at the Basilica of Julia, which is the southeast corner of the Roman Forum. The Roman Forum, I think you can go to the next slide.

What is he I think? Yeah, that's the ruins of the ancient forum. That's like the marketplace of Rome. A lot of big, big events happened there. You can go and walk there today.

And so that's probably where his trial took place, the Basilica of Julia. And at this time, the emperor who served as the judge, he would usually invite six of his close advisors to hear cases and to advise on the judgment and the outcome.

But during the first century, there's evidence, there's writings, of if the emperor didn't hear a case, he could be delegated to the commander of the Praetorian Guard, which was obviously gladiator. They're the guys that wear purple. So that was like the emperor's household guard. So they could be heard by the commander. There's evidence of that during the reign of Tiberius.

[20 : 40] And it was, the emperor typically only dealt with very, very important cases. Cases that had to do with the state or just the welfare of the empire. So probably Nero, who had been the emperor this time, delegated those cases and then he would confirm with sentences afterwards the smaller cases.

So it's very entirely possible that Paul never appeared before the emperor. What a showdown that had been though. I kind of loved a scene like Paul sitting across looking up at Nero himself, talking about Christ and testifying, but we don't really know.

Church history doesn't say, the scripture doesn't say, but what we know at any rate was Christianity as a whole was not seen as a major threat by Rome yet.

And from what we know, they just saw it as like a little sect, a split off of Judaism, and they weren't that concerned about it. So we are pretty confident there's a growing popularity that Paul was released.

He was released after that trial occurred. A lot of evidence points to this. Let me give you three reasons why Paul was probably released. First of all, the charges that were brought up against him, if you remember, were infractions of the Jewish law seen throughout Acts, right?

[22 : 11] And not seen as a very serious threat in the eyes of the Romans. If you remember, in Acts 26, King Agrippa said, this man probably would have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

Just didn't find any real big fallout. Come on, you Jews, calm down. This is silly. He's not threatening us at all. So it wasn't seen as a big deal, a major threat yet.

And the Jews even said, we've received no documents about you. We have not even heard of you before he got to Rome. Secondly, while under house arrest in Rome, Paul often writes in his letters that he's pretty confident that he'll be released.

Pretty confident. He says in Philemon verse 22, Philippians 1, 25-26, and as an example, he's writing to the Philippian church, and he's saying, I'm going to send Timothy to you, and this is what he says, I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how it will go with me.

And I do trust that the Lord will send me to you, and I also will come back to Philippi, that is. So he was confident in his letters that he would be released, that he would see brothers and sisters he was writing again.

[23 : 34] Thirdly, and lastly, there are several references indicating that Paul had a fourth missionary journey. He referred multiple times, particularly in Romans 15, that he had really hoped to go to Spain via Rome.

From Rome, go zip up to Spain. And church history does seem to indicate that he was in Spain. So those are a lot of reasons why. And when he was released, that's when he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus during that span of time.

So he has trial, who knows? He was before the emperor or not, but he was released eventually, I believe. So, second question.

That was all like what happened while Paul was in Rome. Second question, what happened when Paul left Rome? Rome. A lot happened when Paul left Rome.

As we just referenced, he probably went on a fourth missionary journey and planted a very strong church in Spain and other places as he went throughout the empire. So, that's one thing.

[24 : 45] He wrote the letters of 1 Timothy and Titus. So, giving you a little bit more background, I hope it's not boring. Some of you need to learn to enjoy some things like this to get into the world of the Bible.

But, go to the next slide. let's talk about the whack job a little bit. So, Nero reigned from 54 AD to 68 AD.

He was set up basically by his overbearing, conniving mother named Agrippina. She was the second wife of the emperor Claudius.

And, she had an agenda to basically somehow get her son on the throne and that she would kind of rule in a way, share power equally with her son.

So, she plotted and then eventually, no surprise, right, the story of Roman history poisoned Claudius, her husband, and soon after had Nero marry Claudius' daughter, Octavia.

[25 : 56] So, he was in. He was the next emperor. That was around 54 AD. So, his mother was definitely overbearing, would not leave him alone, really got on his bad side eventually, and he lost it.

And, eventually, this psychopath commanded his own Praetorian guard to go and kill his mom. And, as the Praetorians came into her room, she kind of stood up really boldly, looked at them and said, stab right here, because this is what bore Nero.

That's pretty dramatic. And, so, she died, and then, to kind of seal his power, he also killed his wife. He killed Octavia. He thought she was behind all that, too.

So, very brutal from the get-go. It was said that he was haunted by his mother's ghost the rest of his life. He grew more and more freaked out, schizophrenic, as the years went on, just haunted by his mother's ghost throughout the palace, writers say.

So, Nero, not a good guy, not a friend of the church. He was not a general, he was not a guy who would go out and fight battles and lead armies.

[27 : 15] He was really obsessed with drama, with theater, with music, and he loved to play the liar. He would either excommunicate or kill you if you fell asleep near one of his performances.

So, he got his way most all the time, as did most Roman emperors. He also had a lust for building pleasure palaces.

He loved luxurious building. A lot of Roman emperors tried to make their mark by building something amazing throughout the empire. So, he was pondering his city and Nero, he hated Rome itself.

He was like, it's one of the dirtiest, filthiest, gross cities ever. It smells, and so he would often talk about how much he just couldn't stand by just the city of Rome itself.

So, during his time, during his reign, two revolts sprang up throughout the empire, two huge ones, two of the biggest defeats in the Roman history by an uprising province.

[28 : 25] The one was in Britannia, which was Britain, Boudicca, the warrior queen, fought against the Roman legions there but eventually lost.

And then, if you remember the last time, the Judean revolt started at the same time. And Nero had excommunicated one of the empire's best generals, Vespasian, because he fell asleep during one of his performances.

Vespasian was the kind of guy who would rather watch a UFC match than go to an opera. So, he was not into all that. So, he was excommunicated but he called him back to go quell the rebellion in Judea.

And so, as the summer came in 64 AD, in July, Nero, I forgot to mention this, one of his favorite poems was the fall of Troy.

So, think about that, a burning city that's being destroyed, right? That was one of his favorites. And, seemingly out of nowhere, not really, there was a huge fire that started on a hot day in July, 64 AD, in the city of Rome.

[29 : 40] And it burned for nine days and huge parts of the city were consumed, including the areas that were the most affluent. Right? And Nero was seen atop a tower watching the fire, playing the lyre, and reciting the fall of Troy.

And, most scholars believe, as to the people in this day, that he had started this fire himself to basically clean out the nasty city, and he kind of wanted to wipe it clean.

He wanted to build, eventually, he built this huge pleasure palace called the Domus Aurea. It was a place, like in the prominent place of the city, and it was all for himself.

And it took years to build. And that was where a lot of the citizens were getting very upset. No one was safe under the reign of Nero.

Not even Roman generals, like no one was safe. And so, as history goes, Nero had to have, he played the political game, he was like, I have to have someone to blame for this fire, because they're all pointing the finger at me.

[30 : 55] So the Roman historian Tacitus, who lived under the reigns of Tiberius to Vespasian, he wrote, therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits a class of men and women whom the crowd calls Christians.

Vast numbers of them were convicted. Derision accompanied their end. They were torn to death by dogs. They were fastened on crosses.

And when daylight failed, they were burned to serve as lamps by night in the emperor's garden parties. Go to the next slide. This is a famous painting of the emperor's garden parties as believers were being tied to crosses and burned for entertainment.

So before this, persecution had not existed formally throughout the empire, but it started around this time. Christians and Romans throughout the empire, rumors were spread about them that they sacrificed their children, that they were cannibals, that they plotted rebellion against the empire. So they were burned out of their homes, imprisoned, beaten in the streets, often gang raped in alleyways, forced to and put pressured on to renounce Christ.

[32 : 23] Many put to death in the Circus Maximus, which was the big charioteer thing in Rome, torn to death by lions, wild dogs, his sport.

And one of Nero's favorites, you can go to the next slide, if this just doesn't look demonic, remember he likes drama, he likes theater, he likes ancient history, so his favorite was to get a reenactment of the Greek myth of Diorsi, which was the queen of Thebes in Greek mythology, and she was supposedly executed by being tied to the horns of a wild bull and then crushed to death. And church historians, excuse me, Roman historians, ancient historians, say that Nero took young, beautiful Christian girls who wouldn't renounce Christ and tied them to the bull to reenact that Greek myth, then smashed.

so finally, Paul does loop back around, he comes back to Rome, and when he comes back this time, persecution has started, people are being tortured to death, he's, according to tradition, in prison, and this time it was in a dark, cold dungeon at the foot of the Capitol Lion Hill, a rough, dark dungeon.

Hard to imagine him writing 2 Timothy in that context. And eventually, as tradition goes, one church historian writes that Paul was beheaded eventually.

[34 : 11] And so after Nero built the Domicoria and persecution has started, finally, enough senators, generals, and affluent Romans that had enough, had enough.

And they basically got persuaded the Praetorian Guard to kill him. And while they were, while he was on run in his palace, as the guards were closing around him, he had a loyal slave help him ritually, kind of slit his own throat.

And as I said before, his last words supposedly were, what an artist dies in me. and so after his death, after his journey to eternal punishment, the empire erupted into civil war.

So there was a huge civil war in the Roman Empire, where the top generals were competing to see who would be the next emperor. And while all this was going on, the general Vespasian was still in Jerusalem, he kind of just waited it out.

And eventually there was so much chaos in the empire that the Roman armies finally looked to Vespasian to restore order and named him the next emperor.

[35 : 31] You can go to the next slide. And he became the next emperor, and then he started really bringing order. He was the first emperor not descended from Julius Caesar directly.

So he sent his son Titus back to finish the job in Jerusalem, and he besieged Jerusalem and eventually destroyed it, burned the temple down by accident supposedly, and Vespasian later on brought 10,000 Jewish slaves back to Rome, and with money that he had made from plunder from the Jewish temple and other places, he built the most well-known icon of the Roman Empire, the Colosseum.

So that's why it was called the Flavian Amphitheater. So, a sad history that kind of followed after Paul left Rome. Very sad, very dark.

So, but, we're not going to end on that note because the church is victorious regardless of all of this. which goes to our, you can take the slides off now, which goes to our third question, where did the church expand after Acts, right?

It just kind of stops. Well, the gospel really took a deep, deep foothold in Europe, a deep foothold in Europe. It went all the way across to Britain and Hibernia, which was the ancient name for Ireland.

[37 : 08] It was brought there. A lot of the British Isles and Spain, France, which would have been Gaul at the time, like the church took really a stronghold in Europe.

And it went into Africa as well, but didn't go really far south into Africa. It kind of stopped in Asia as well because there was a Parthian empire there.

and as we know, most of us know that most of our ancestors here came from Europe and from Europe the gospel was brought by missionaries and others to the new world and as that, I love the history of this, know that there was like a state level, a political level that expansion to the new world was happening, but I want you to dig way below the surface, you know, if you ever had the time, and just look at the believers who were coming over, particularly the Puritans.

They wrote massive papers about how they saw the new world as an unreached, if you would, area, and that they wanted to send their people over there to preach the gospel to the natives. I've seen copies of the Bible translated into Algonquin and like other Native American translations. They saw that as a chance to expand the kingdom, guys like Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd took the gospel throughout the new world.

[38 : 38] And as the centuries went by, right, we're a product of that. The church grew strong in the new world, in America. And as time went by, centuries went by, Europe and North America began sending missionaries to Asia, to China, Japan, other Asian countries, and now as we know, it's making its way back across the Middle East, right?

And that's a very fast, quick summary of like where the gospel has gone. And of course, I'm not being very specific, but that's roughly what was happening.

so the gospel was working its way back, and the end will come when all the nations are reached. Fourthly, this is the last question, and we'll wrap it up.

This is personal. I want you to think about this. What are you doing to continue the rich legacy of the church? Acts was a whole history of how the church started, how Christ through the Holy Spirit through the apostles planted the church.

So what are you doing? Do you realize that if you're in Christ, you're a part of a really, really rich history and family that spans thousands of years, made up of ordinary men and women who don't usually have a lot to offer, and that God sees fit to use to do something, for his kingdom?

[40 : 17] People who are willing to surrender their lives all for the cause of Christ, and many of them given their lives to have an eternal hope in the life to come. The church is victorious.

I mean, it's going to be victorious. And whether you want to be a part of that or not, it's up to you. We have one life, let's use it well.

Let's not, if you also study just the way the history of the church has gone, the places where it seems that the church has been the longest are the places that are growing cold right now. Europe, North America, there's a lot of psalms and scriptures in the Old Testament where God is saying, like, look, Israel, I have blessed you and prospered you so that you would be my witness to the nations.

That is the number one reason I have prospered you. And if you're failing to do that, I will judge you. Not that America is a new Israel, not that at all, but he has given us so much.

Never in the history of the world has a nation enjoyed so much junk as we have. And America is just turning into nothing but Disneyland in the kingdom of God. We have to reach the rest of the nations and Christ will do it with or without us.

[41 : 39] And so I hope that you will be willing to weigh that. Like, what am I doing? Like, your life fits, your life is just a drop. All right? You're nothing by yourself.

Nothing. And any life that's spent focused on itself is a miserable life. Surrender it all. Live in the big picture of God's kingdom.

And let's keep our eyes focused on eternity. In closing, I'll turn to 2 Timothy real fast. 2 Timothy chapter 4.

2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 6.

Paul, no doubt, riding on death row in that dark prison cell in Rome, awaiting his death, and in a lot of ways in despair.

[42 : 41] a lot of people had deserted him, left him. He was, in a lot of ways, he felt alone. And that's why he's riding to Timothy, a loyal son of his.

And so I want you to be able to think about this. Like, when you close your eyes, will you be able, with a clear conscience, with confidence, before God, to kind of say this when you breathe your last?

All right? Verse 6. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering.

The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day, not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

I pray I'll be able to say that. I don't want to, I've come close to dying many times, and I wanted to be able to say without any reluctance, these words with a clear conscience.

[43 : 58] Look at that, look at that phrase in verse 6. He says, my departure has come. Really cool phrase, departure. It's both a military and a nautical term.

As a military expression implies like a tent being broken down, taken down to go and move on to another location. And as a nautical term, it's used for hoisting an anchor and letting down the sail to catch the wind to go to another location.

It literally could be translated, listen to this, loosing away upward. The time of his departure has come. Loosing away upward.

A beautiful idea, almost like a balloon that can't wait to have its cord cut so it can just fly up into the air. An image of how eager Paul was to leave and go, to depart and be with Christ for that was far better.

I hope that we will be able to say that. We have finished the job. We have fought the good fight. kept the faith. So, the church is moving on and you're a part of it.

[45 : 12] As we pray together, I'm going to give you a little bit of time to reflect on all that we've learned throughout the book of Acts, all that God has challenged you with both then and today.

And I'll pray for us. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.