

The Unhindered Gospel

In this study we wrap up the book of Acts. Over the past eight chapters (21-28), Luke has been describing the events that led to Paul ending up in Rome. Now he's there. Nearly a third of Acts is focused on these events! Surely Luke is building to an epic ending with Paul heroically preaching the gospel before Caesar, right? That seems like the perfect ending to all of this! But that's not what Luke does. Instead, Luke skillfully crafts an ending that declares that the Gospel is unhindered, and which causes his original readers, and us, to ask, "What's next?"

Read Acts 28:16-31

1. What sticks out to you about Paul's interactions with the Jewish leaders who come to him?
2. In these interactions Luke tells us that Paul declares his innocence (vv. 17-22) as well as preaches about the kingdom of God and Jesus (vv. 23-28). What seems to be the priority for Paul? Why?
3. What point is Paul seeking to make in using the reference from Isaiah 6:9-10 (vv. 26-27)?
4. Look carefully at Luke's ending (vv. 30-31). What strikes you about Luke's final progress report? What is the point Luke is seeking to make?
5. Why do you think Luke ends nearly 8 chapters of narrative about Paul's journey to Rome without telling us what happened to Paul?

Brian said:

Luke's ending communicates that **The Gospel is Unhindered**. Luke flat out tells us this. *Unhindered* is the last word in the original language. And what Luke explicitly says in this last verse, he has been demonstrating throughout Acts. At no point has opposition stopped the spread of the gospel. Over and over the Jewish leaders tried to stop this movement. Stephen was martyred. Peter and others were thrown in jail. Paul and his co-workers experience severe opposition in city after city. And now Paul is in prison. But the gospel has marched forward. Against all of this opposition it has spread from a small group of believers in Jerusalem, to countless believers in Asia and in Europe. And it has now come to Rome, the most powerful city in the world at the time. The Gospel is unhindered.

6. As Christians living in the United States during a time when we are losing cultural power, social influence, and are increasingly marginalized, what hope can we find in the truth that the gospel is unhindered and the example of Paul?

Brian said:

The abrupt ending leads us to ask, "What's next? What is my role?" Luke wants us to understand that not only is the Gospel unhindered, the spread of the Gospel is unfinished. Yes, the Gospel has come to very heart of the Roman Empire. This will be important for the continued spread of the Gospel. But here's the thing, Rome was not the "end of the earth" that Jesus talked about in Acts 1:8 . . . Luke's readers would have known that Rome was not the "end of the earth" and as a result they would have understood that there is work yet to be done. They would have understood that it is their turn. The ending of Acts is not the end of the story, it's about the opening to the rest of the story. I believe Luke wants us to ask, "What's my part now?" "How will I join in the spread of the gospel?"

7. What do you think about this? What do you think your part is in joining in the spread of the Gospel?
8. As we reflect on our study in the book of Acts over the past several months, what are some of the main lessons that you are taking away from it?