

# **We've Only Just Begun**

## **Preaching the Kingdom No Matter What**

### **Acts 28:11–31**

Focus: Paul reaches Rome, but rather than signaling the end of his journey, it marks the beginning of a new season of bold ministry. This study reminds us that even in limitation, God expands the reach of the gospel, and when it looks like the conclusion, God is just getting started.

## **I. Why This Study?**

### **A. Objective:**

1. To explore the theological and missional significance of Paul's arrival in Rome
2. To demonstrate how God uses confinement to expand kingdom influence
3. To challenge believers to preach, teach, and live the gospel regardless of setting

### **B. Relevance:**

1. Many believers feel stalled in their purpose when life does not unfold as expected
2. This text reframes limitation as a launchpad for new beginnings
3. Paul's experience offers a model for sustained ministry in seasons of ambiguity, waiting, or perceived endings

## **II. Context of Acts 28:11–31**

### **A. Background**

1. After wintering on Malta, Paul and his companions set sail on an Alexandrian ship with the twin gods \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as figureheads, a nod to \_\_\_\_\_ superstition and maritime hopes of safety.
2. They land in Puteoli, travel to Rome, and Paul is placed under \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Despite being confined, he calls together the Jewish leaders and explains his situation.
4. For two years, Paul lives in his own rented house under guard, yet continues "\_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom of God and \_\_\_\_\_ about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."

5. This phrase is a powerful final note to Luke's two-volume work. The gospel is \_\_\_\_\_.

**B. Key Takeaway:**

The mission does not end when \_\_\_\_\_ stops. God will make your limitation the location of your greatest impact.

**III. What Can We Learn from Paul's Ministry in Rome?**

**A. Obedience May Lead You into Places of Confinement (vv. 11–16)**

1. Paul followed the Spirit's leading, and it led him to \_\_\_\_\_. He arrives in Rome not as a tourist or church planter but as a guarded prisoner.
2. The Greek word used for "allowed to live by himself" (idios mishthōma) implies he is paying rent but still under guard. It is house arrest, not house \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Theologian Justo González writes, "God's call often takes us into tension with the systems of power and privilege. It is not safe, but it is sacred."
4. Paul's confinement is not a \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit's call but \_\_\_\_\_ that the mission will cost something.

**B. Clarity Matters More Than Comfort (vv. 17–22)**

1. Paul wastes no time. He gathers the local Jewish leaders and speaks with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Though he is shackled, his witness is not \_\_\_\_\_.
3. He acknowledges their suspicion and speaks of his hope in the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Greek word *elpida* denotes more than optimism. It is an anchored assurance.
5. Spiritual writer Evelyn Underhill said, "The spiritual life does not consist in looking for the extraordinary but in doing the ordinary with the eyes of eternity."
6. Paul models this. He is not chasing \_\_\_\_\_ moments. He is speaking \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ where he is.

**C. People Will Respond Differently to the Same Truth (vv. 23–25)**

1. When Paul shares the gospel from the Law and Prophets, some are \_\_\_\_\_ and others \_\_\_\_\_ it.
2. Luke notes that “they disagreed among themselves.” The verb *asymphōnosan* reveals deep discord, not polite disagreement.
3. This moment reminds us that results are not our responsibility. \_\_\_\_\_ is.
4. The mystic Julian of Norwich wrote, “God did not say, ‘You will not be \_\_\_\_\_. You will not be \_\_\_\_\_. You will not be \_\_\_\_\_.’ But God said, ‘You shall not be \_\_\_\_\_.’”
5. Our role is to tell the truth with love. The \_\_\_\_\_ is in God’s hands.

#### **D. The Message Will Find a Way Forward (vv. 26–28)**

1. Paul quotes Isaiah, indicting their hardness of heart, then declares that salvation has been sent to the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The verb *apestalē* (has been sent) is perfect tense—it has already been done and continues to be so.
3. The mission is not \_\_\_\_\_. It is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Theologian Leonardo Boff wrote, “The Spirit blows where it wills, often against the walls of the church.”
5. Paul names the truth: the gospel is not bound by \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_. When one door closes, the kingdom bursts open elsewhere.

#### **E. The Work Is Not Over When the Curtain Falls (vv. 30–31)**

1. Paul remains in house arrest for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
2. The final line is stunning: “He welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”
3. The phrase *akōlytōs* (without hindrance) defies the reality of his chains.
4. Feminist theologian Ivone Gebara reflects, “The gospel has never been only about arrival. It is about presence—an incarnate witness in every condition.”
5. The book ends without a formal \_\_\_\_\_, signaling that the gospel story \_\_\_\_\_ through us.

### **IV. Scholars’ and Theological Insights on Gospel Continuity**

- A. Justo González: “The church’s strength is not in its triumph but in its witness through suffering.”
- B. Evelyn Underhill: “The spiritual life is not a special career for the chosen few. It is meant for all.”
- C. Julian of Norwich: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”
- D. Leonardo Boff: “The gospel must be rediscovered at the bottom, where the pain of the people is.”
- E. Ivone Gebara: “God is not static. God is the dynamic of love in motion, calling us to see anew.”
- F. Gregory of Nazianzus: “What has not been assumed has not been healed.” (A reminder that the gospel must take on every form of human experience.)

## **V. V. Prayer Focus**

1. Thank God for how the gospel has moved in and through every season of your life.
2. Pray for boldness to proclaim Christ in every condition, especially in limitation.
3. Ask for grace to trust that what feels like an end may be a holy beginning.
4. Intercede for those who feel stuck or stalled, that they may rediscover purpose.

## **VI. Key Takeaway**

The story does not end in confinement. The final word is not chains but courage. Paul models what it means to be unbound in spirit, even when your body is not free. The kingdom of God has no terminal chapter. Wherever you are, however you feel, the work continues—and so must your witness.

## **VII. Discussion and Reflection Questions**

1. How do you respond when your obedience leads you into discomfort or delay?
2. What does Paul’s approach in confinement teach you about boldness and clarity?
3. Have you ever misread a “stop” in your life that God was actually using to start something new?
4. How do you hold on to the belief that the gospel is advancing, even when your own life feels limited?
5. What would it look like for you to proclaim and teach “without hindrance” in your current context?