

“ALL For Hope’s Sake”

Acts 28:16-22

May 15, 2016

INTRO:

What roles do “hope” & “courage” play in your life?

Does your “hope” reflect a wish or a worship?

Is your courage about “muscle” or mission?

What part of your faith is shaping your hope and challenging your courage... RIGHT NOW?

*Biblical-HOPE & Biblical-COURAGE
are the smile & spine of
Biblical-FAITH.*

- JDP

T/S: Today we’re going to see how BOTH, biblical hope & biblical courage validate victorious-living for sojourners with Jesus

Friend, we “take” courage... to “give” hope! - JDP

TIMELESS TRUTH: “*Hope Happens Here!*”

PREVIEW: Sojourners with Jesus are...

- A. Encouraged for Hope's Sake (v.16-19)
- B. Commissioned for Hope's Sake (v.20)
- C. Challenged for Hope's Sake (v.21-22)

It's ALL & ALWAYS about Jesus!

CONTEXT:

- A. *"And so we came to Rome..."*
 - 1. *Send-off*
 - 2. *Ship-out*
 - 3. *Storm-tossed*
 - 4. *Ship-wrecked*
 - 5. *Look-up & See-Rome!*
- B. *"and when the brothers heard about us..."*
- C. *"Seeing them..."*
 - 1. Paul *"thanked God"*
 - 2. Paul *"took courage"*

T/S: Literally... between Acts 23:11 & 28:15

- Spiritual **warfare** (Ephesians 6:10ff)
- Spiritual **fruit** (Galatian 5:22ff)
- Spirit-fill **family** (John 17)

I. ENCOURAGED for HOPE's SAKE

A. Playing CHESS

¹⁶ When we entered Rome, Paul was permitted to stay by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

1. Providence - Jesus is in charge :-)
2. Provision
3. Power – Paul to write for 2 years

B. Paul CONVENES

¹⁷ After three days he/Paul called together the leaders of the Jews.

C. Paul CLARIFIES (v.17)

When they (Jewish leaders) had gathered he said to them: “Brothers,

- “Brothers” as a term of endearment
- “Brothers” is a national term with spiritual hope

although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors,

- Paul emphatically declares his innocence...

I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

- Paul clarifies the injustice of his circumstances

D. Paul CONTENDS

¹⁸ *After they examined me, they wanted to release me, since I had not committed a capital offense.* ¹⁹ *Because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar;*

- “wanted to” & “release me” = **Jesus’ Passion!**
- Paul implies that the **Jews wanted him dead!**
See Jesus’ passion week in this...

E. Paul CHAMPIONS

it was not as though I had any accusation against my nation.

- Paul says I was on **Defense vs. Offense...**
- Paul’s love evident in **Romans (3 yrs ago)**

Romans 9:1-3

¹ I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh...

II. COMMISSIONED for HOPE's SAKE

²⁰ For this reason I've asked to see you and speak to you. In fact, it is for the hope of Israel that I'm wearing this chain."

1.Purpose

1. "for **THIS reason...**"
2. "for the **Hope of Israel**"

QUOTE: Given the assurance of hope, Christians live in the present with confidence and face the future with courage. They can also meet trials triumphantly because they know "**that suffering produces perseverance;**

perseverance character; and character, hope" ([Rom. 5:3-4](#)). Such perseverance is not passive resignation; it is confident endurance in the face of opposition. There is, therefore, a certitude in Christian hope which amounts to a qualitative difference from ordinary hope. Christian hope is the gift of God. "*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure*" ([Heb. 6:19](#)).

- Holman Bible Dictionary.

*Courage turns hope into confidence
&
Hope turns courage into Christ-likeness!*
- JDP

Paul's Pattern of Proclamation:

- 1. Christ**
- 2. Christian**
- 3. Church**

*Here's the **HOPE LINE!***

A. CHRIST & His Gospel!

Creator Christ

Crucified Christ

Coming-again Christ

B. CHRISTIAN individuals

i. ***“Where Are the Christians?”***

ii. **GET OUT YOUR PHONES...**

(here's Love, Hope & Courage!)

443-262-2986 & 802-745-7229

“HOPE Line”

(open 24/7, 365 days a year!)

C. The CHURCH (collective Christians)

i. Visible vs. Invisible “church”

ii. Christ's calling card to the world (John 17)

2. People = "...see you & speak to you..."

See validation of Skype!

QUOTE:

Christians are meant to live in the presence and power of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit helps us to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 12:3), empowers us to serve God with supernatural power (1 Cor 12:4-11), binds us together as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13), helps us to pray (Rom 8:26), and even intercedes for us with God the Father (Rom 8:27). The Spirit guides us (Gal 5:25), helping us to live like Jesus (Gal 5:22-23).

...We are limited by our fear, our sin, our low expectations, not to mention our tendency to be distracted from God's work in us.

- **Dr. Mark D. Roberts**
Fuller Seminary

3. Persecution = "I'm wearing this chain"

4. Perseverance = (again & again & again)

Biblical examples of HOPE + COURAGE...

Noah, Abe, Moses, Joshua & Caleb, Rehab, Deborah, Esther, Mordecai, Gideon, David, the 3 boys in the furnace, Elijah, Ezekiel (ch.33)...

JESUS... Peter & John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Silas,
Timothy... PAUL...

5.Power = (see Matthew 28:20 & Acts 1:8)\

“Hope never disappoints us; for through the Holy Spirit that has been given us, God’s love has flooded our hearts” ([Rom 5:5](#)).

“the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit” ([Rom. 15:13](#)).

III. CHALLENGED for HOPE’s SAKE

²¹ *Then they said to him,*

“We haven’t received any letters about you from Judea. None of the brothers has come and reported or spoken anything evil about you. ²² But we would like to hear from you what you think.

T/S: Here we literally have
some good news & some bad news...

A. Good-news:

1. Jews in Rome have not heard...???
 - i. No letters...
 - ii. No word of mouth...
2. *"We desire to hear from you..."*

B. Bad-news:

²² ...*For concerning this sect, we are aware that it is spoken against everywhere.*

1. They see “The Way” as a “sect”
2. *“we are aware”*
 1. **They know the lies but not the Lord**
 2. Beware the liars & their lies
 3. People see what they want to see
 4. People hear what they want to hear
3. *“...spoken against everywhere”*

World War is underway!!!

- John 3:16
 - Ephesians 6:10ff
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - EVERY knee will bow...

CLOSE:

Hope has a source... Love!

*“By His great mercy **He has given us a new birth into a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (**1 Peter 1:3**).*

Hope has a name... Jesus!

Christ is called “our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1)

Jeremiah (14:8) addressed God as the “hope of Israel, the savior thereof in time of trouble”

Hope has a promise... Gospel!

Romans 8:1-11 (NASB)

¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Hope has a family...

Church!

- Ekklesia in Koinonia!
- Living portrait of God's grace & glory!

Hope has a *privilege & responsibility*... Share!

Light of the world
Discipleship (Find... Grow)
Ambassadorship
Aroma
WITNESS!

QUOTE: George Bernard Shaw... liberal philosopher.

In his last writings we read:
**"The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt.
Its counsels, which should have established the
millennium, led, instead, directly to the suicide of
Europe. I believed them once. In their name I helped
to destroy the faith of millions of worshippers in the
temples of a thousand creeds. And now they look at
me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has
lost his faith."**

- George Bernard Shaw.

Hope has a home...

Here!

Praise God...
Thank you Jesus!

the hope of glory is identified with
“Christ in you”
(Col. 1:27)

*“we have fixed our hope on the living
God, who is the Savior
of all men”*
(1 Tim. 4:10)

Hope Happens Here :-)

Amen!

Let's Pray

Paul's Witness in Rome

28:17–31

The account of Paul's witness in Rome centers primarily on his testimony to the Jews of the city. This comes as something of a surprise because the narrative up to this point has prepared us for Paul's witness before Caesar. Nothing, however, is said of his trial before the emperor. Instead, the focus is on Paul's encounter with the Jewish community in Rome. A familiar pattern reappears, where Paul was first heard favorably by them, then was resisted, and finally turned to the Gentiles—a pattern that recapitulates Paul's experience with the Jews of Pisidian Antioch ([13:42–48](#)), of Corinth ([18:5–7](#)), and of Ephesus ([19:8–10](#)). It is not by accident that Luke ended his book on this note. The Jewish rejection of the gospel and the acceptance of the Gentiles has been a major theme throughout Acts. Indeed, the book opens with the question of Israel's place in God's kingdom ([1:6](#)). It closes on the same note.

The conclusion to Acts is carefully constructed. It consists of an outer framework which focuses on Paul's situation in Rome, living in his own rented house and under military guard (vv. [16](#), [30](#)). In between are two scenes involving Paul's testimony to the Jews of Rome—an initial favorable encounter (vv. [17–22](#)) followed by a second encounter in which the Jews reject Paul's message and the apostle turns to the Gentiles (vv. [23–28](#)).

(1) First Meeting with the Jews

28:17–22

28:17 Paul's first conversation with the Jews of Rome occurred at his own initiative: he called together the Jewish leaders of Rome, and they came to him in his rented quarters (v. [17](#)). There was an extensive Jewish community in Rome, but it does not seem to have been well-integrated but rather to have consisted of a number of separate synagogues. It is unclear exactly who these "leaders" of the Jewish community were—perhaps the ruling elders of the various Roman synagogues. Paul set before them the circumstances that had brought him to Rome. His words summed up what is already familiar to the reader from the defense scenes of chaps. [22–26](#) and serve to underline one final time Paul's total innocence. He first pointed out that he had done nothing against the Jewish people or their ancestral customs. The Asian Jews in Jerusalem might quibble with this statement because they had charged him with exactly the opposite (cf. [21:28](#)). Paul, however, had constantly pointed out that these charges were false and that he had been a law-abiding Jew in the strictest sense (cf. [22:3](#); [24:14](#); [26:4f.](#)). Paul next described how he had been arrested in Jerusalem and "handed over" to the Romans (v. [17b](#)). This is Paul's summary of the temple scene in which the Romans intervened, rescuing him from the angry Jewish mob and placing him under arrest ([21:33](#)). Paul's version to the Roman Jews brings out the parallel to Jesus, who was also "handed over" (*paredothen*) to the Gentiles (cf. [Luke 9:44](#); [18:32](#); [24:7](#)).

28:18–20 Paul then pointed out to the Roman Jewish leaders that he was guilty of no crime deserving death (v. [18](#)). The Roman officials had constantly affirmed this in his hearings before them (cf. [23:29](#); [25:25](#); [26:31](#)). Paul's own version of his experience with the Roman officials is highly abbreviated and

an interpretation of the events. The reference to their wanting to release him (v. [19a](#)) is only explicitly borne out by Agrippa's comment after the appeal had been set in motion ([26:32](#)).

Likewise, Paul's remark that he made his appeal because of the objection of the Jews is an interpretation. It was because Festus wished to do the Jews "a favor" that Paul had made his appeal ([25:9](#)). All of these things are familiar from the narrative of [Acts 22–26](#). Paul's statement in [19b](#) is a new emphasis and a new angle on his innocence: he had no charge to make against his people. He was a loyal Jew in every respect. Just as he was not guilty of any crime *against* the Jews, so he was innocent of any ill intent *toward* them. They had falsely accused *him*. He would make no accusations against *them*. He only wanted one thing from his fellow Jews—their commitment to Christ. It was ultimately because of "the hope of Israel" that Paul found himself in chains (v. [20](#)). It was his testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, that Jesus is both Messiah and Lord, that constituted the real contention between him and the Jews. That was the *real* issue, and Paul had constantly focused on it in his defense speeches ([23:6; 24:15; 26:8, 23](#)).

[28:21](#) The response of the Roman Jews is somewhat surprising. First, they stated that they had received no official letters from Judea or even an oral report about Paul (v. [21](#)). Some interpreters find this inconceivable. Yet it may well be that because of winter travel conditions, no one from Palestine had arrived in Rome prior to Paul. It is also possible that the connections between Jerusalem and the synagogues of Rome were not very strong anyway. Or it may possibly be that the Roman Jews were deliberately disassociating themselves from the trial of Paul, not wishing to be involved in a case that could

eventually prove to be an embarrassment for the Jewish accusers.

28:22 The second response of the Roman Jews is somewhat more puzzling. Their knowledge of the Christians did not seem to be very intimate, only a sort of hearsay acquaintance that “people everywhere are talking against this sect.” Christians were well established in Rome. Paul had written an epistle to the church there, and Luke had just referred to the “brothers” who met Paul on his way to Rome (v. [15](#)). The edict of Claudius seemed to have involved a dispute within the Jewish synagogue over Christ, and that only some ten years or so prior to this. It is altogether likely that in the aftermath of Claudius’s edict the Jewish synagogues kept themselves completely separate from the Christians, but it seems equally likely that they would have had some acquaintance with the movement. Perhaps the Roman Jews were being “a model of diplomacy,” maintaining as much distance as possible from the whole matter of Paul. In any event, their refusal to speak anything against Paul was in itself something of an indirect testimony to his innocence.

- New American Commentary

Word had gotten to Rome that Paul was coming; how, we do not know. Perhaps Aristarchus did not go with Paul and Luke on the grain ship, but made his way instead overland to Rome where he met Paul's friends. (At least twenty-six are named in [Rom. 16](#).) Or, perhaps a delegation from Caesarea headed for Rome as soon as Paul appealed to Caesar.

Julius and his party took the famous Appian Way and traveled 125 miles from Puteoli to Rome. The first group of Christians met Paul at the Forum of Appius, about 43 miles from Rome; and the second group met him at the Three Taverns, 10 miles nearer to the city. (Some saints will go farther than others!) Paul was greatly encouraged when he met them, as well he might be. Now he could fellowship with the saints and they could be a blessing to one another.

Paul's greatest concern was his witness to the Jews in Rome. They had received no special word about Paul, but they did know that the "Christian sect" was being spoken against in many places ([Acts 28:21-22](#)). When you read Paul's letter to the Romans, you get the impression that the Jews in Rome had misunderstood some of his teachings ([Rom. 3:8; 14:1ff](#)). The apostle made it clear that his appeal to Caesar must not be interpreted as an indictment against his nation. Actually, he was a prisoner *on behalf of* his nation and "the hope of Israel."

- Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Daring

vv.17–20. He made no delay in beginning his work; and his first appeal, according to his uniform custom, was addressed to his own kinsmen according to the flesh.

The propriety of this interview, and of the individual statements in the speech, is quite obvious. It might have been supposed, from the fact that he was accused by the Jews, that he had been

guilty of some crime; and from his appeal to Cæsar, that he intended to prefer charges against his accusers. The fact that the Romans would have released him but for the opposition of the Jews, was much in his favor on the first point; and on the latter, his own disavowal was sufficient. **His closing remark, that it was for the hope of Israel that he was bound with a chain, was well calculated to enlist their sympathies; for it was no uncommon thing for Jews to be persecuted.**

vv. 21-22. The response of the Jews was candid and becoming. It is rather surprising that they had heard nothing of the exciting scenes of Paul's life in the last two years; but it often thus happens that events pass almost unnoticed by a living generation, which are destined, in subsequent ages, to figure as the leading events of history. By hearing *nothing*, however, they had heard nothing prejudicial to him, except that **the sect of which he was an advocate had a bad reputation.** If they had acted on the principle which often governs predominant religious parties, this would have been sufficient to turn away their ears. Doubtless, they *had* acted somewhat on this principle toward the preachers of the gospel who had preceded Paul in Rome; but **the direct personal appeal which he made to them, and the conciliatory manner and matter of his address, induced them to think proper to hear what he thought.** In these words, they gave good expression to an important rule of conduct; for, however a party who attempts to show us the truth may be spoken against, it is always proper to hear them before pronouncing sentence against them.

vv.23-24. Before the Jews took leave of Paul, they made arrangements for a formal and deliberate hearing of what he thought. Sufficient time was occupied to place the whole subject before them, and to support each separate proposition with suitable evidence. The result was such a division of sentiment as almost uniformly attended the preaching of the gospel.

- A Commentary on Acts of Apostles

Verse 17. *Paul called the chief of the Jews.* He probably had two objects in this: one was to vindicate himself from the suspicion of crime, or to convince them that the charges alleged against him were false; and the other, to explain to them the gospel of Christ. **In accordance with his custom everywhere, he seized the excellent opportunity of making the gospel known to his own countrymen; and he naturally supposed that charges highly unfavourable to his character had been sent forward against him to the Jews at Rome by those in Judea.**

Against the people. Against the Jews, [Acts 24:12](#).

Or customs, etc. The religious rites of the nation. [Acts 24:12](#).

Was I delivered prisoner, etc. By the Jews, [Acts 21:33](#), etc.

- (*) "come together" "assembled"
- (*) "though I have committed" [Acts 24:12,13, 25:8](#)
- (*) "delivered prisoner" [Acts 21:33](#)

Verse 18. *When they had examined me, etc.* [Acts 24:10-17](#), [Acts 25](#), [Acts 26](#).

No cause of death. No crime worthy of death.

- (*) "Who" [Acts 24:10, 26:31](#)

Verse 19. *The Jews spake against it. Against my being set at liberty.*

I was constrained. By a regard to my own safety and character.

To appeal unto Cæsar. [Acts 25:11](#).

Not that I had ought, etc. I did it for my own preservation and safety; not that I wished to accuse my own countrymen. It was not from motives of revenge, but for safety. Paul had been unjustly accused and injured; yet, with the true spirit of the Christian religion, he here says that he cherished no unkind feelings towards them.

- (*) "appeal" [Acts 25:11](#)

Verse 20. Because that for the hope of Israel. **On account of the hope which the Jews cherished of the coming of the Messiah; of the resurrection; and of the future state through him.** [Acts 23:6](#).

I am bound with this chain. [Acts 26:29](#). Probably he was attached constantly to a soldier by a chain.

(*) "hope of Israel" [Acts 26:6,7](#)

(*) "chain" [Acts 26:29](#), [Ephesians 3:1](#), [4:1](#), [6:20](#), [2 Timothy 1:16](#), [2:9](#), [Philemon 1:10,13](#).

Verse 21. We neither received letters, etc. Why the Jews in Judea had not forwarded the accusation against Paul to their brethren at Rome, that they might continue the prosecution before the emperor, is not known. **It is probable that they regarded their cause as hopeless, and chose to abandon the prosecution. Paul had been acquitted successively by Lysias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa; and as they had not succeeded in procuring his condemnation before them, they saw no prospect of doing it at Rome,** and chose therefore not to press the prosecution any farther.

Neither any of the brethren that came. Any of the Jews. There was a very constant intercourse between Judea and Rome; but it seems that the Jews, who had come before Paul had arrived, had not mentioned his case, so as to prejudice them against him.

(*) "shewed" "related"

*Upon the Free Conference He Had with the Jews at Rome,
Both About His Own Affair*

28:17-22

Paul, with a great deal of expense and hazard, is brought a prisoner to Rome, and when he has come nobody appears to prosecute him or lay any thing to his charge; but he must call his own cause; and here he represents it to the chief of the Jews at Rome.

It was not long since, by an edict of Claudius, all the Jews were banished from Rome, and kept out till his death; but, in the five years since then, many Jews had come thither, for the advantage of trade, though it does not appear that they were allowed any synagogue there or place of public worship; but these chief of the Jews were those of best figure among them, the most distinguished men of that religion, who had the best estates and interests. Paul called them together, being desirous to stand right in their opinion, and that there might be a good understanding between him and them. And here we are told,

I. What he said to them, and what account he gave them of his cause. **He speaks respectfully to them, calls them men and brethren, and thereby intimates that he expects to be treated by them both as a man and as a brother, and engages to treat them as such and to tell them nothing but the truth; for we are members one of another-all we are brethren.** Now,

1. He professes his own innocence, and that he had not given any just occasion to the Jews to bear him such an ill will as generally they did: "I have committed nothing against the people of the Jews, have done nothing to the prejudice of their religion or civil liberties, have added no affliction to their present miseries, they know I have not; **nor have I committed any thing against the customs of our fathers, either by abrogating or by innovating in religion.**" It is true Paul did not impose the customs of the fathers upon the Gentiles: they were never intended for them. But it is as true that he never opposed them in the Jews, but did himself, when he was among them, conform to them. **He never quarrelled with them for practising according to the usages of their own religion, but only for their enmity to the Gentiles,** Galatians 2:12. Paul had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had done his duty to the Jews.

2. He modestly complains of the hard usage he had met with—that, though he had given them no offence, yet he was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. If he had spoken the whole truth in this matter, it would have looked worse than it did upon the Jews, for they would have murdered him without any colour of law or justice if the Romans had not protected him; but, however, they accused him as a criminal, before Felix the governor, and, demanding judgment against him, were, in effect delivering him prisoner into the hands of the Romans, when he desired no more than a fair and impartial trial by their own law.

3. He declares the judgment of the Roman governors concerning him, v. 18. They examined him, enquired into his case, heard what was to be said against him, and what he had to say for himself. **The chief captain examined him, so did Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and they could find no cause of death in him; nothing appeared to the contrary but that he was an honest, quiet, conscientious, good man, and therefore they would never gratify the Jews with a sentence of death upon him; but, on the contrary, would have let him go, and have let him go on in his work too, and have given him no interruption, for they all heard him and liked his doctrine well enough.** It was for the honour of Paul that those who most carefully examined his case acquitted him, and none condemned him but unheard, and such as were prejudiced against him.

4. He pleads the necessity he was under to remove himself and his cause to Rome; and that it was only in his own defence, and not with any design to recriminate, or exhibit a cross bill against the complainants, (v. 19): When the Jews spoke against it, and entered a caveat against his discharge, designing, if they could not have him condemned to die, yet to have him made a prisoner for life, he was constrained to appeal unto Caesar, finding that the governors, one after another, stood so much in awe of the Jews that they could not discharge him, for fear of making him their enemies, which made it necessary for him to pray the assistance of the higher powers. This was all he aimed at in this appeal; not to accuse his nation, but

only to vindicate himself. Every man has a right to plead in his own defence, who yet ought not to find fault with his neighbours. It is an invidious thing to accuse, especially to accuse a nation, such a nation. **Paul made intercession for them, but never against them.** The Roman government had at this time an ill opinion of the Jewish nation, as factious, turbulent, disaffected, and dangerous; and **it had been an easy thing for a man with such a fluent tongue as Paul had, a citizen of Rome, and so injured as he was, to have exasperated the emperor against the Jewish nation. But Paul would not for ever so much do such a thing;** he was for making the best of every body, and not making bad worse.

5. He puts his sufferings upon the true footing, and gives them such an account of the reason of them as should engage them not only not to join with his persecutors against him, but to concern themselves for him, and to do what they could on his behalf ([v. 20](#)): "For this cause I have called for you, not to quarrel with you, for I have no design to incense the government against you, but to see you and speak with you as my countrymen, and men that I would keep up a correspondence with, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." **He carried the mark of his imprisonment about with him, and probably was chained to the soldier that kept him;** and it was,

(1.) Because he preached that the Messiah was come, who was the hope of Israel, he whom Israel hoped for.

"Do not all the Jews agree in this, that the Messiah will be the glory of his people Israel? And therefore he is to be hoped for, and this Messiah I preach, and prove he is come. They would keep up such a hope of a Messiah yet to come as must end in a despair of him; I preach such a hope in a Messiah already come as must produce a joy in him."

(2.) Because he preached that the resurrection of the dead would come. This also was the hope of Israel; so he had called it, ch. 23:6; 24:15; 26:6,7. "They would have you still expect a Messiah that would free you from the Roman yoke, and make you great and prosperous upon earth, and it is this that occupies their thoughts; and they are angry at me for directing their expectations to the great things of another world, and persuading them to embrace a Messiah who will secure those to them, and not external power and grandeur. I am for bringing you to the spiritual and eternal blessedness upon which our fathers by faith had their eye, and this is what they hate me for,-because I would take you off from that which is the cheat of Israel, and will be its shame and ruin, the notion of a temporal Messiah, and lead you to that which is the true and real hope of Israel, and the genuine sense of all the promises made to the fathers, a spiritual kingdom of holiness and love set up in the hearts of men, to be the pledge of, and preparative for, the joyful resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

II. What was their reply. They own,

1. That they had nothing to say in particular against him; nor had any instructions to appear as his prosecutors before the emperor, either by letter or word of mouth ([v. 21](#)): "We have neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee (have no orders to prosecute thee) nor have any of the brethren of the Jewish nation that have lately come up to Rome (as many occasions drew the Jews thither now that their nation was a province of that empire) shown or spoken any harm of thee." **This was very strange, that that restless and inveterate rage of the Jews which had followed Paul wherever he went should not follow him to Rome, to get him condemned there.** Some think they told a lie here, and had orders to prosecute him, but durst not own it, being themselves obnoxious to the emperor's displeasure, who though he had not, like his predecessors, banished them all from Rome, yet gave them no countenance there. But **I am apt to think that what they said was true, and Paul now found he had gained the point he aimed at in appealing to Caesar, which was to remove his cause into a court to which they durst not follow it.** This was David's policy, and it was his security ([1 Samuel 27:1](#)): There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines, and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coasts of Israel; so shall I escape out of his hands: and it proved so, [v. 4](#). **When Saul heard that David had fled to Gath, he sought no more again for him. Thus did Paul by his appeal: he fled to Rome, where he was out of their reach; and they said, "Even let him go."**

2. That they desired to know particularly concerning the doctrine he preached, and the religion he took so much pains to propagate in the face of so much opposition ([v. 22](#)): "We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest-*ha phroneis* what thy opinions or sentiments are, what are those things which thou art so wise about, and hast such a relish of and such a zeal for; for, though we know little else of Christianity, we know it is a sect every where spoken against." **Those who said this scornful spiteful word of the Christian religion were Jews, the chief of the Jews at Rome, who boasted of their knowledge** ([Romans 2:17](#)), and yet this was all they knew concerning the Christian religion, that it was a sect every where spoken against. **They put it into an ill name, and then ran it down.**

(1.) They looked upon it to be a sect, and this was false. True Christianity establishes that which is of common concern to all mankind, and is not built upon such narrow opinions and private interests as sects commonly owe their original to. It aims at no worldly benefit or advantage as sects do; but all its gains are spiritual and eternal. And, besides, it has a direct tendency to the uniting of the children of men, and not the dividing of them, and setting them at variance, as sects have.

(2.) They said it was every where spoken against, and this was too true. All that they

conversed with spoke against it, and therefore they concluded every body did: most indeed did.

It is, and always has been, the lot of Christ's holy religion to be every where spoken against.

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

THE WAY LUKE ends Acts is abrupt, but an examination of these last verses suggests that he is giving a summary of what happened all through the section of Acts that focused on the evangelism of the Gentiles ([11:19-28:31](#)). Paul went first to the Jews, but most of them rejected the message. So he went to the Gentiles, and...

...we close the book with Paul chained to a soldier, while the gospel was unchained as he shared it with the many different people who came to him.

A Rented Home in Rome (28:16)

ONCE PAUL ARRIVED in Rome he was "allowed to live by himself," which means he must have rented a house (see [v. 30](#)). **He had a soldier to guard him, and Paul was probably chained to him by the wrist.** This soldier would be relieved every four hours or so.

As a result, Paul and the gospel became a talking point among the members of the palace guard ([Phil. 1:13](#)).

The environment was not ideal, but it was adequate for Paul to have a bold and unhindered witness in Rome for two years ([Acts 28:30-31](#)).

LUKE DOES NOT refer anymore to Paul's relations with the Roman Christians. Instead, he concludes his book by describing Paul's attempts at witnessing to the Jewish community and by giving a summary of his other evangelistic activity.

These have been key themes in Acts.

Paul first called the Jewish leaders to meet him ([v. 17](#)), which was the correct protocol in communities that had a strong sense of solidarity. He explained to them the circumstances of his coming to Rome, climaxing with the statement, **"It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain"** ([v. 20b](#)).

The leaders replied that they had not received any letters from Judea concerning Paul ([v. 21](#)). This is surprising, considering the urgency with which the Judean leaders hounded Paul while he was there. **Also surprising is the fact that the Jewish leaders said that they did not know much about Christianity in spite of a Christian community in Rome ([v. 22](#))**. Haenchen uses these two facts and the fact that Luke does not talk much of the Christian church in Rome to discount the historicity of this passage.

Perhaps a letter or representative had been sent but was delayed because of the complexities of winter travel. Equally plausible is that the leaders in Judea did not think that they had much of a chance of success in Rome after failing in Judea, where the Roman leaders were eager to do them favors ([24:27](#); [25:3, 9](#)). They may have preferred to let the case go by default, especially since Roman law was severe on unsuccessful prosecutors.

Gempf explains the relative ignorance of the Jews about Christianity on the grounds that the Jews had been expelled for a time in A.D. 49 (Paul arrived in Rome in 60). "In the interim, the church would have become predominantly gentile in make-up, and the recently returned Jewish community may have had no contact with them in this big city."

The tragedy of Jewish unbelief.

Of the different things Paul did after arriving in Rome, the one thing that Luke focused on most was his witness to the Jews (28:16-29). Luke does not mention the witness to the palace guard as a result of Paul's imprisonment and the encouragement that the brothers received as a result (see [Phil. 1:12-14](#)). The Gentile Luke seems to have chosen at the close of this book to report on Jewish evangelization because that was an important theme to him. **While Paul gave up on specific Jews in his ministry when they became obstinate, he never gave up on the race as such.**

He lived with a constant ache in his heart over their unbelief ([Rom. 9:1-3](#)) and kept trying to do what he could to bring them to Christ.

- NIV Application Commentary

Luke tells us that when Paul and his entourage finally came into the city of Rome, the centurion turned over all the prisoners, except for one, to the one in charge of the fortress prison in the Roman barracks.

House Arrest

Paul was not incarcerated in the Roman jail but was put on house arrest. House arrest meant that Paul could enjoy the company of his friends even though he was kept under guard twenty-four hours a day, chained by his wrist to one of the guards.

The guards changed shifts every four hours, so in a twenty-four-hour period, six different guards were chained to the Apostle Paul. Surely they did not appreciate that guard duty because by it they were restricted to Paul's activities and company. Yet there were no more blessed prison guards in the history of the world than those six men who had the unspeakable privilege of being cuffed to the wrist of the world's greatest preacher of all time.

We can only imagine their situation at the judgment day if they ignored the teaching they heard while they were guarding God's anointed.

The closest thing I have witnessed to a house arrest occurred while I was teaching at Gordon-Conwell Seminary during the administration of President Gerald Ford. Ford's son was enrolled in the seminary and preparing for the ministry.

Although he was the son of the president of the United States, most of the time he felt like a prisoner. Everywhere he went, he was accompanied by two members of the Secret Service. When he arrived at my class, which was held in a large amphitheater,

the Secret Service agents escorted him to his chair and then went out of the room to stand guard by the doors. Sometime about the third day of lectures, the Secret Service agents no longer waited outside the doors but remained in the room to listen to the lecture. They began taking notes and continued to do so for the duration of the course. The agents seem to have been influenced by him while he was under their protection so that they had taken an interest in the things of God. In the same way, I cannot help but wonder what happened to those guards who were with Paul day and night during his two years of house arrest in Rome.

After three days, Paul summoned the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome to visit him. He did not go to the synagogue, as was his custom, because he was under arrest, but he sent a message to the leaders and invited them to come. Many of them took up the invitation, and when they came together he gave them his story in brief. “**Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation”** ([vv. 17-19](#)).

There was no spirit of vengeance or vindictiveness in the heart of Paul. These are the people to whom he had written three years earlier that he would be willing, basically, to lose his salvation if it would mean the conversion of his fellow Jews. So even now in chains Paul is pouring out his heart to the Jewish leaders.

“For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” ([v. 20](#)).

Luke tells us that they responded to Paul’s announcement by saying that they had heard nothing from the leaders in Jerusalem or received any letters.

No one had come to Rome to bear witness against Paul.

They wanted to hear, however, about this sect that was being spoken of everywhere. Why no one had sent messages yet from Jerusalem is a bit of a puzzle, because **Rome required that anybody bringing charges against another was compelled to present evidence of the charges in the Roman court.** So far, no one from Jerusalem had shown up, not because his adversaries had lost their zeal but because of the bad weather at that time of year. Paul barely made it to Rome due to the winter conditions, so probably the elders in Jerusalem were waiting for better weather before coming to Rome to present their case against Paul.

- St. Andrew's Expositional Commentary

Review of Context:

Acts 28:14b-15 (HCSB)

¹⁴ ...*And so we came to Rome.*

- Just imagine that moment with the Lord!!!
- Just imagine...
 - Damascus road...
 - 2 Corinthians 11:25ff
 - First journey
 - Second journey
 - Third journey
 - Back to Jerusalem (see Acts 20 & 23:11)
 - Now... ROME

¹⁵ *Now the believers from there had heard the news about us...*

- “*believers from there*” = the **Book of Romans!**
 - Think about their view of Paul...
 - Look at Content & Context of Romans:
 - Paul’s “systematic theology”
 - Chapter One says it all...
- “*believers...there...heard...about us...*”
 - Contrast this verse with v.21...
 - Note God’s providence & power here...
- What do you suppose the “news” was???

...and had come to meet us as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns.

- Faithful families form, fly & flock together!
- Koinonia is NOT just a Sunday morning thing!
- The brothers traveled approx. 40-50 miles...
- True love travels...

*When
Paul saw them,
he **thanked God**
and
took courage.*

- Sermon 2 weeks ago: “*Between Here & There*”
 - Christian living = sojourning w/ Jesus!
- Last week’s sermon: “*Between Take & Took*”
 - You can trust Christ... No matter what!
- NOTE: literally... between Acts 23:11 & 28:15
 - Spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10ff)
 - Spiritual fruit (Galatian 5:22ff)
 - Spirit-fill family (John 17)
- NOTE: Paul “took” courage for the next step!

Acts 28:16-22 (HCSB)

¹⁶ *When we entered Rome,
Paul was permitted to stay by himself
with the soldier
who guarded him.*

- Promise kept!
- Power proven!
- Providential permission for Paul...
- Providential provision for Paul...

NOTE: Paul is going to make eternally good use of his preferential treatment...

Contextual Appreciation:

- Guards usually had 4 hour shifts
 - Think... = 6 guards/day
 - Imagine Paul's witnessing!
- Paul's wrist would likely be chained to the guard

¹⁷ *After three days he/Paul called together the leaders of the Jews.*

- “3 days” parallels Nehemiah’s shrewdness!
- NOTE: no need to be aggressive to be assertive

- Paul shows his relational influence in Rome.
- NOTE: “leaders” vs. “leader” or Chief Priest...
 - Dynamic between Jews & Jews...
 - Dynamic between Rome & Jews is key
 - Jews had been expelled from Rome
 - Jews only back for approx. 10 years

*When they (Jewish leaders) had gathered
he said to them:
“Brothers,*

- Paul uses “brothers” as a term of endearment
- “Brothers” is a national term with spiritual hope
- NOTE: reminiscent of Ananias with him/Saul...

*although I have done nothing
against our people
or
the customs
of our ancestors,*

- Paul emphatically declares his innocence...
- Innocence before all of Jewish humanity...
- Innocence before all of Jewish heritage...

I was delivered as a prisoner

*from Jerusalem
into the hands
of the Romans.*

- Paul declares the injustice of his circumstances
- Paul declares the injustice of his accusers
- Paul declares the injustice of his oppressors
- Paul infers the injustice of their complacency!

¹⁸ *After they examined me,
they wanted to release me,
since I had not
committed
a capital offense.*

- Paul declares his repeated acquittal...
- Paul declares the government official's findings
 - Roman Tribune...
 - Governor Felix
 - Governor Festus
 - King Agrippa
- NOTE the term: "wanted to"
- NOTE the term: "release me"
- Again... Paul reminds us of Jesus' Passion week
- NOTE: implied is that the Jews wanted him dead!

¹⁹ *Because the Jews objected,*

*I was compelled
to appeal to Caesar;*

- Paul calls out the unjust Jews of Jerusalem!
- Paul implies the Jews of Jerusalem are responsible for his demise & difficult circumstances...
- Paul says he was “compelled to appeal to Caesar” which reveals just how unjust & treacherous Paul knew the Jerusalem Jews to be....
 - Paul’s implications would not be lost...
 - Paul is “crossing the line” to confront evil
- Paul also KNOWs that Jesus providentially and sovereignly commanded all of creation to prepare for the exact moment you find yourself in...

it was not as though I had any accusation against my nation.

²⁰ *For this reason*

I've asked to see you and speak to you.

- “For this reason” = pointing ahead...
- “...to see you & speak to you”
 - See the validation of Skype here :-)
 - Paul is always relationally ministering
 - NOTE: both/and of “with & words”

*In fact,
it is for the hope
of Israel
that I'm wearing this chain."*

- See Paul's pattern again...
 - First for the Jews... then the Gentiles
 - NOTE: Paul never gives up on Israel
 - Today is no different
- HOPE LINE!
 - The CHRIST
 - "The Gospel"
 - Creator Christ
 - Crucified Christ
 - Coming-again Christ
 - The CHRISTIAN
 - Paul to the Romans 3 years ago:

Romans 9:1-5

¹ *I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,* ² *that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.* ³ *For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,* ⁴ *They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law,*

the temple service, and the promises.

5 The ancestors are theirs, and from them, by physical descent, came the Messiah, who is God over all, praised forever. Amen.

- 1. “Where Are the Christians?”**
- 2. GET OUT YOUR PHONES...**

(here's Love, Hope & Courage!)
443-262-2986 & 802-745-7229
“HOPE Line”
(open 24/7, 365 days a year!)

- The CHURCH (collective Christians)
 - First, a note of caution:
 - Define “visible church”
 - Define “invisible Church”
 - A 3-strand cord, not easily broken!
 - Christ’s calling-card to the world
- Paul is in fact an Ambassador in Chains!
 - See Ephesians 6:20
 - See the consistency of his chains...
 - See Paul’s consistency with Christ...
 - See OUR call to cross carrying in chains!

*²¹ Then they said to him,
“We haven’t received any letters about you
from Judea.
None of the brothers has come and reported or
spoken anything
evil about you.*

*²² But we would like to hear from you
what you think.*

For

*concerning this sect,
we are aware
that it is spoken against*

- Again... Paul hears: “we would like to hear...”
- Always be prepared to give an account...
- “Concerning this sect”
 - The WAY is not a sect!
 - “we are aware”
 - They know the lies but not the Lord
 - Beware the liars & their lies
 - People see what they want to see
 - People hear what they want to hear
- See an “arsenal of the against”
 - Atheism/Agnosticism
 - Something from Nothing...
 - (Crutch / Vacuum)

- Religiousity/Ritualism
 - Troublesome Traditionalism
 - (Rule book)
- False religions & False gospels
 - Poisons & Placebos
 - (Different map / COEXIST)
- Intellectualism
 - Creatures over their Creator
 - (Play-dough)
- Individualism
 - Whatever YOU want...
 - (Mirror)
- Anger
 - What I HATE about all you...
 - (Water-gun)
- Fear
 - I just don't know about that...
 - (Bubbles)
- Selfishness
 - It's ALL about me...
 -
- Pain
 - Your God allows too much hurt
 - (Newspaper)
- Pride
 - I don't need you or your God
 - (First aide kit)
- Luke-warmness
 - That's what grace is for...
 - (Thermostat)
- “Power”

- Don't tell me what to do...
- (Weights)
- “Control”
 - I've got this... no worries!
 - (Coloring book)
- Evil
 - War & wickedness deny God
 - (Urumqi cemetery)
- They ALL boil down to SIN!
- LifeWithoutCHRIST.com

everywhere.”

- World War is underway!!!
- John 3:16
 - Whosoever
 - Where-so-ever (“the world” / cosmos)
- Acts 1:8
 - Locally
 - Regionally
 - Globally
- Ephesians 6:10ff (perpetually “putting on”)
- Matthew 28:18-20
 - “go make disciples of ALL nations”
 - “teach them ALL My commands...”
 - “I will be with you...” ALL the time!
- “EVERY knee will bow & EVERY tongue will confess, Jesus Christ...”

Sunday is the celebration of Pentecost... which remembers:

God pours out the Spirit upon all who put their faith in Jesus Christ and become his disciples (see Romans 8:1-11).

The Life-Giving Spirit

1Therefore, no condemnation^a now exists for those in^b Christ Jesus,^c because the Spirit's law of life^e in Christ Jesus has set you^f free from the law of sin and of death.^g 2What the law could not do^h since it was limitedⁱ by the flesh,^j God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours^k under sin's domain,^l and as a sin offering,^m 4in order that the law's requirement would be accomplishedⁿ in us who do not •walk according to the flesh^o but according to the Spirit. 5For those who live^p according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh,^q but those who live^r according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit. 6For the mind-set of the flesh^s is death,^t but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. 7For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile^u to God because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so. 8Those who are in the flesh^v cannot please God. 9You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since^w the Spirit of God lives in you.^x But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ,^y he does not belong to Him. 10Now if Christ is in you,^z the body is dead^{aa} because of sin, but the

Spirit^{ab} is life because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead^{ac} lives in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through^{ad} His Spirit who lives in you.

QUOTE:

Christians are meant to live in the presence and power of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit helps us to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 12:3), empowers us to serve God with supernatural power (1 Cor 12:4-11), binds us together as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13), helps us to pray (Rom 8:26), and even intercedes for us with God the Father (Rom 8:27). The Spirit guides us (Gal 5:25), helping us to live like Jesus (Gal 5:22-23).

Personal Implications: Pentecost presents us with an opportunity to consider how we are living each day. Are we relying on the power of God's Spirit? Are we an open channel for the Spirit's gifts? Are we attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Is the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.) growing in our lives? Most Christians I know, including me, live in the presence and power of the Spirit, but only to an extent. We are limited by our fear, our sin, our low expectations, not to mention our tendency to be distracted from God's work in us. Pentecost offers a chance to confess our failure to live by the Spirit and to ask the Lord to fill us afresh with his power.

The Central Role of the Church in God's Work in the World

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on individual followers of

Jesus as they were gathered together in Jerusalem. This gathering became the first Christian church. New believers in Jesus were baptized as they joined this church. They, along with the first followers of Jesus, shared life together, focusing on teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. They shared their belongings so that no one was hungry or needy. As these first Christians lived out their new faith together, “the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Thus we speak of Pentecost as the birthday of the church.

In theory, the Spirit could have been poured out on the followers of Jesus when they were not gathered together. There are surely times when the Holy Spirit touches an individual who is alone in prayer, worship, or ministry to others. But the fact that the Spirit was given to a gathering of believers is not incidental. It underscores the centrality of the church in God’s work in the world. The actions of the earliest Christians put all of this in boldface. The Holy Spirit is not only given to individuals, but also, in a sense to the gathered people of God. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul observes that the church is God’s temple and that the Spirit dwells in the midst of the church (3:16-17; in 1 Cor 6:19-20 we find a complementary emphasis on the dwelling of the Spirit in individual Christians).

Personal Implications: Many Christians, especially those of us who have been influenced by the individualism of American culture, live as if the church is useful but unnecessary. We seem to believe that as long as we have a personal relationship with God, everything else is secondary. But Pentecost is a vivid illustration of the truth that is found throughout Scripture: the community of God’s people is central to God’s work in the world. Thus, Pentecost invites us to consider our own participation in the fellowship, worship, and mission of the church. It is a time to renew our commitment to live as an essential member of the body of Christ, using our gifts to build the church and share the love and justice of Christ with the world.

After the Holy Spirit fell upon the first followers of Jesus, Peter preached a sermon to help folks understand what had just happened. In this sermon he cited a portion of a prophecy from Joel:

‘In the last days,’ God says,
‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young men will see visions,
and your old men will dream dreams.
In those days I will pour out my Spirit
even on my servants—men and women alike—
and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18; Joel 2:28-29)

Later, Peter explained that the Spirit would be given to all who turned from their sin and turned to God through Jesus (Acts 2:38).

This was a momentous, watershed event. For the first time in history, God began to do what he had promised through Joel, empowering all different sorts of people for ministry. Whereas in the era of the Old Testament, the Spirit was poured out almost exclusively on prophets, priests, and kings, in the age of the New Testament, the Spirit would be given to “all people.” All would be empowered to minister regardless of their gender, age, or social position.

Although this truth would not mean that every Christian would be gifted for every kind of ministry, it did imply that all believers would be empowered by the Spirit. The church of Jesus Christ would be a place where every single person matters, where every member contributes to the health and mission of the church (see Eph 4:11-16).

Personal Implications: Each Christian needs to ask: Am I serving God through the power of the Spirit? Am I exercising the gifts of the Spirit in my life, both in the gathered church and as I live for

God in the world? Pentecost is a time to ask God to fill us afresh with the Spirit so that we might join in the ministry of Christ with gusto. And it is a time to renew our commitment to fulfilling our crucial role in the ministry of God's people in the world.

Moreover, those of us who hold positions of power in the church should examine our attitudes and actions. Are we encouraging all of God's people to minister through the power of the Spirit? Are we open to what the Spirit of God wants to do in our churches and communities through his empowered people? Or are we gatekeepers of the church who would even keep the Holy Spirit out of our carefully tended and controlled communities? As a pastor, my role is to equip God's people for doing the ministry of Christ in the church and the world (Eph 4:11-12). Sometimes, however, we pastors are so concerned about our own position and power that we fall short of this central pastoral calling. Pentecost is a day for pastors and other church leaders to recommit to equipping and encouraging all Christians for their ministry. When we do this, the Holy Spirit will be free to use the church of Jesus Christ for God's purposes in the world.

- **Dr. Mark D. Roberts**
Fuller Seminary

ILLUSTRATION

At a recent charity event in England, magician Anthony Britton--in an attempt to mimic Harry Houdini's failed "Buried Alive" stunt--allowed himself to be buried beneath 6 feet of dirt. Before the buckets of dirt began to shower down on him, he was handcuffed and shackled. But just like Houdini, Britton was unable to dig his way out. He almost died, needing to be extricated from the grave and revived by paramedics.



Lucky to be alive, Britton told the following story of his harrowing experience to NPR's Arun Rath:

To start off with, it's painful. There's no coffin there, there's no casket — nothing there to protect your body. I remember the first bucket of soil hit me — it was a bit of a shock. ... Each bucket that went on to you — obviously the crushing that is coming from the front, you know, underneath you. It's coming from the sides of you, it's going on top of you.

For some reason, I think the soil shifted or something, and I got my right arm trapped. It was trapped between my body and the actual soil itself. So, at that point, it was, "Crikey, I can't move my right arm."

Anyway, I felt myself going unconscious, and I was just trying to focus on, "You've got to do this, you've got to escape the grave." To keep myself calm, believe it or not, I was actually, in my head, singing the song of "Great Balls of Fire," by the wonderful Jerry Lee Lewis ...

But you know, it just got to the point where I'd given it my entire best shot. I had nothing left in my body. ... I could feel myself going under. At that point, everyone knew exactly what to do — and they got to me as quick as they could.

Fortunately, Britton would walk away from his near death experience with just a few scrapes and bruises and a cracked rib.

APPLICATION

If it's so difficult to release one's self from a tomb after being buried "alive," try doing it after being buried dead!

That was the challenge facing Jesus as they laid his lifeless body in the tomb. Yet He rose from the grave without the aid of an

extrication team or paramedics. Despite the increased (nay, impossible!) difficulty, Jesus accomplished what no one, not even Houdini, could—the resurrection from death to life!

"For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

From *Parade* magazine comes the story of self-made millionaire Eugene Land, who greatly changed the lives of a sixth-grade class in East Harlem. Mr. Lang had been asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth-graders. What could he say to inspire these students, most of whom would drop out of school? He wondered how he could get these predominantly black and Puerto Rican children even to look at him. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. "Stay in school," he admonished, "and I'll help pay the college tuition for every one of you." At that moment the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had hope. Said one student, "I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling." Nearly 90 percent of that class went on to graduate from high school.

George Bernard Shaw is perhaps most renowned as a free thinker and liberal philosopher. In his last writings we read, "The science to which I pinned my faith is bankrupt. Its counsels, which should have established the millennium, led, instead, directly to the suicide of Europe. I believed

them once. In their name I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshippers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now they look at me and witness the great tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith."

George Bernard Shaw.

I have a violin which was given to me by my aunt many years ago. It is a beautiful instrument, and is capable of making very beautiful sounds. When I look at my violin, and listen to the sounds it makes, I think, "What an extraordinary piece of workmanship!"

The pieces of wood were carefully cut from the trunk of the tree in thin sheets, which were then cut into exactly the right shapes to fit together into a musical instrument. But that's not the end of the process; the ribs (the wood separating the front and back plates of the instrument) had to be planed to the right width, heated, and bent to the shape necessary.

The face plates were carved in a "bowl" shape, and hollowed out to make just the right thickness and curvature to resonate properly. Too thick, and the violin won't resonate. Too thin, and the violin won't hold the tension of the strings.

If only the tree trunk could speak--what would it say? "What are you doing to me? Why are you cutting me up? Why are you putting me on the fire and heating me? Get that knife away from me!"

But each painful cut, each bending and twisting, is necessary to make something beautiful! If only the tree knew what the violin maker was doing, how it might rejoice to know that it was being transformed into something of extraordinary beauty! So it is with us; James tells us (**James 1:2-4**) to rejoice when we face difficult times, because difficult times mean that God is making something beautiful of our lives, just as the violin maker transforms the drab tree trunk into something amazing. We should approach our difficult circumstances with the attitude "Hooray! God is making me complete and beautiful!"

Of course, one of the difficulties for us is that we cannot see the end of the work. Just as the tree trunk can't understand what the craftsman is doing, we can't see what it is God is making of our lives.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us that we will not "find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end." Nevertheless, the same verse tells us that God "makes everything beautiful in its time."

The real tragedy would be if the tree could *stop* the violin maker from creating what he desired. What would be then end result? The tree would never become something beautiful and long-lasting. The violin would never be made. But the tree would still serve a purpose; it would keep someone warm in the winter time. But if I had my choice, I'd choose being a violin over being firewood!

James 1:2-4 *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

HOPE: Trustful expectation, particularly with reference to the fulfillment of God's promises. Biblical hope is the anticipation of a favorable outcome under God's guidance. More specifically, hope is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future. This contrasts to the world's definition of hope as "a feeling that what is wanted will happen." Understood in this way, hope can denote either a baseless optimism or a vague yearning after an unattainable good. If hope is to be genuine hope, however, it must be founded on something (or someone) which affords reasonable grounds for confidence in its fulfillment.

The Bible bases its hope in God and His saving acts.

Words for Hope In the Old Testament the words which are most often used to connote "hope" are *tigwa* ("to look for something with eager expectation"), *batach* ("to rely on something reliable"), and *yachal* ("trust"). In the New Testament "hope" is the proper translation for the verb *elpizein* and the noun *elpis*. Other words which belong to the vocabulary of hope are *pepoithenai* ("to trust"), *hypomenein* ("to endure"), and *prosdokan* ("to expect" or "to await"). **It is important to note that the reality of hope is often present where the exact words are absent.** A case in point is the New Testament Book of Revelation. The word "hope" does not appear in its pages. The message of Revelation, however, is permeated with the reality of hope. **A complete examination of hope would have**

to include all of the exhortations, prayers, promises, and future tenses in the Bible.

The Ground and Object of Hope In the Old Testament, God alone is the ultimate ground and object of hope. Hope in God was generated by His mighty deeds in history. In fulfilling His promise to Abraham ([Gen. 12:1-3](#)), He redeemed the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. He provided for their needs in the wilderness, formed them into a covenant community at Sinai, and led them into the successful occupation of Canaan. These acts provided a firm base for their confidence in God's continuing purpose for them. Even when Israel was unfaithful, hope was not lost. Because of God's faithfulness and mercy, those who returned to Him could count on His help ([Mal. 3:6-7](#)). This help included forgiveness ([2 Chron. 7:14](#); [Ps. 86:5](#)) as well as deliverance from enemies. Thus, **Jeremiah addressed God as the “hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble” ([Jer. 14:8](#);** compare [14:22](#); [17:13](#)). Likewise, the psalmist called on Israel to “hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins” ([Ps. 130:7-8](#) NIV; compare [131:3](#)).

A corollary of putting one's hope in God is refusing to place one's final confidence in the created order. All created things are weak, transient, and apt to fail. For this reason it is futile to vest ultimate hope in wealth ([Ps. 49:6-12](#); [52:7](#); [Prov. 11:28](#)), houses ([Isa. 32:17-18](#)), princes ([Ps. 146:3](#)), empires and armies ([Isa. 31:1-3](#); [2 Kings 18:19-24](#)), or even the Jerusalem Temple ([Jer. 7:1-7](#)). God, and God only, is a rock that cannot be moved ([Deut. 32:4,15,18](#); [Pss. 18:2](#); [62:2](#); [Isa. 26:4](#)) and a refuge and

fortress who provides ultimate security ([Pss. 14:6, 61:3; 73:28; 91:9](#)). An accurate summary of the Old Testament emphasis is found in [Psalm 119:49-50](#). “Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: your promise preserves my life” (NIV).

A significant aspect of Old Testament hope was Israel’s expectation of a messiah, that is, an anointed ruler from David’s line. This expectation grew out of the promise that God would establish the throne of David forever ([2 Sam. 7:14](#)). The anointed ruler (messiah) would be God’s agent to restore Israel’s glory and rule the nations in peace and righteousness. For the most part, however, David’s successors were disappointments. The direction of the nation was away from the ideal. Thus, people looked to the future for a son of David who would fulfill the divine promise.

The New Testament continues to speak of God as the source and object of hope. Paul wrote that it was the “God who raises the dead” on whom “we have set our hope” ([2 Cor. 1:9-10](#) NIV). Furthermore, “we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men” ([1 Tim. 4:10](#) NAS). Peter reminded his readers that “your faith and hope are in God” ([1 Peter 1:21](#) NAS). In the New Testament, as in the Old, God is the “God of hope” ([Rom. 15:13](#)).

For the early Christians, hope is also focused in Christ. He is called “our hope” ([1 Tim. 1:1](#)), and the hope of glory is identified with “Christ in you” ([Col. 1:27](#)). Images applied to God in the Old Testament are transferred to Christ in the New. He is the Savior ([Luke 2:11](#); [Acts 13:23](#); [Titus 1:4](#); [3:6](#)), the source of life ([John 6:35](#)), the rock on which hope is built ([1 Pet.](#)

[2:4-7](#)). He is the first and last ([Rev. 1:17](#)), the day-spring dispelling darkness and leading His people into eternal day ([Rev. 22:5](#)).

New Testament writers spoke of Christ as the object and ground of hope for two reasons. 1) He is the Messiah who has brought salvation by His life, death, and resurrection ([Luke 24:46](#)). God's promises are fulfilled in Him. "For in him every one of God's promises is a "Yes" ([2 Cor. 1:20](#) NRSV). 2) They are aware of the unity between Father and Son. This is a unity of nature ([John 1:1](#); [Col. 1:19](#)) as well as a unity in the work of redemption. Because "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" ([2 Cor. 5:19](#)), hope in the Son is one with hope in the Father.

The Future of Hope While the New Testament affirms the sufficiency of Christ's redemptive work in the past, it also looks forward to His return in the future to complete God's purpose. Indeed, the major emphasis on hope in the New Testament centers on the second coming of Christ. The "blessed hope" of the Church is nothing less than "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:13](#)). See [**Future Hope**](#).

This expectation filled the horizon of the early Christian community. Jesus Himself spoke of it ([Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:28](#); [John 14:1-4](#)). His disciples were promised that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" ([Acts 1:11](#)).

Apostolic preaching reiterated the theme ([Acts 3:19-21; 10:42](#); [17:31](#)). References in the epistles are numerous. Paul reminded the Philippians that "our conversation is in heaven, from which

also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" ([Phil. 3:20](#) NAS; compare [1 Cor. 15:51-54](#); [1 Thess. 1:9-10](#); [2:19](#); [4:13-18](#); [1 Tim. 6:14](#)). Christ "will appear a second time... to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" ([Heb. 9:28](#) NRSV). Christians are "shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" ([1 Peter 1:5](#)). If the Lord's coming seems delayed unduly, it is still certain because "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise" ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). The last book of the Bible begins and ends with a reference to Christ's return. "Behold, he cometh with clouds" ([Rev. 1:7](#)). "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" ([Rev. 22:20](#)).

The content of the hope which will be realized in the future is described in different ways. Christians will "obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" ([Rom. 8:21](#) NRSV); realize their hope of "righteousness" ([Gal. 5:5](#)); be "transformed into his likeness" ([2 Cor. 3:12-18](#) REB; compare [1 John 3:1-3](#)); acquire possession of the inheritance ([Eph. 1:14](#)), and experience the resurrection of the body ([1 Cor. 15:21,50-55](#)).

Hope is not merely individual in scope, however. It has cosmic dimensions as well. God's purpose is to redeem the whole creation. Thus, Christians expect that "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" ([Rom. 8:21](#)). Peter expressed it like this: "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" ([2 Pet. 3:13](#)).

The Assurance of Hope Christians live in hope for two basic reasons. The first reason is because of what God has done in

Christ. Especially important is the emphasis the New Testament places on the resurrection by which Christ has defeated the power of sin and death. “By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” ([1 Peter 1:3](#) NRSV).

The second reason is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” ([Rom. 8:16](#)). Furthermore, the Spirit is the “first installment of our inheritance, so that we may finally come into full possession of the prize of redemption” ([Eph. 1:14](#) Williams). “Hope never disappoints us; for through the Holy Spirit that has been given us, God’s love has flooded our hearts” ([Rom 5:5](#) Williams). Hence, Paul’s prayer that “the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” ([Rom. 15:13](#)).

Given the assurance of hope, Christians live in the present with confidence and face the future with courage. They can also meet trials triumphantly because they know “that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character, hope” ([Rom. 5:3-4](#) NIV). Such perseverance is not passive resignation; it is the confident endurance in the face of opposition. There is, therefore, a certitude in Christian hope which amounts to a qualitative difference from ordinary hope. Christian hope is the gift of God. “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” ([Heb. 6:19](#) NIV).

Bert Dominy

- Holman Bible Dictionary.