

March 19, 2023 by Steve Brandon



## Two Years in Rome

### Acts 28:30-31

1. Living (verse 30a)
2. Welcoming (verse 30b)
3. Proclaiming (verse 31a)
4. Teaching (verse 31b)
5. Boldness (verse 31c)
6. Unhindered (verse 31d)

Many of you know my parents, as they attended church here for over a decade. Hardly a month goes by without one of you asking me how they are doing. Well, my father is doing great, but my mother is struggling. Though she hasn't had any exact diagnosis, my mother is struggling with dementia. She is struggling with remembering what takes place from day to day. And because of a stroke she had several years ago, she has trouble expressing herself. She can understand much of what is going on, though she can't remember. Her struggle is putting together words to communicate with us. Though she often does.

In this situation, my father is shining. My father was an orthopedic surgeon, but now he is a nurse. He's doing a great job of caring for my mother. taking care of all of her physical needs. cooking for her. cleaning for her. washing her clothes. He's doing a great job of directing her to the Lord constantly reading the Scripture to her, praying with her, and singing old hymns with her. He is doing everything that a husband is called to do in nourishing and caring for his wife. My three sisters and my brother and I are getting to see a great example of what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who gave himself for his bride, the church. Our mother is very happy, as all of her earthly needs are being cared for.

Well, for the past 10-15 years or so, they have spent the winters in Arizona. (where they are right now). Because of some circumstances, my sisters have determined that one of the siblings need to be with them at all times. For the most part, my sisters have taken their turns in being in Arizona with them. Well, this past week it was my turn to be in Arizona with the folks. And so, I spent this past week with Yvonne and my parents in Arizona. (Yvonne and I returned home yesterday).

I had an experience this past week that is probably unique to all of you. It was Friday night, the night before we were coming back home. Yvonne and I were in bed sleeping. it was Saturday morning, about four in the morning. I was awakened as I felt something on my forehead and on my face. As I went to wipe it away, I felt a strong pain in my hand. So, I was jolted out of bed, trying to figure out what happened. I turned on the light, and saw a scorpion walking in the bed where I was sleeping. Have any of you been stung by a scorpion before? It's not a pleasant experience. The best way that I can describe it is a bee sting on steroids.

This particular scorpion is known as a "bark scorpion," the most venomous scorpion in North America. Though thousands in Arizona and New Mexico are stung by this species, only two fatalities have been recorded in the last 50+ years. (So, such a sting isn't fatal). But it isn't pleasant either. I was stung on my right ring finger. Instantly, my finger hurt, but after capturing the scorpion, and putting him in a cup, and taking a few Tylenol, I was able to return to bed. This all took place at 4am. We had to leave our house by about 6am. Over the next two hours, I tried to sleep, but I couldn't. I felt a tingling sensation in my finger, which spread to my wrist, and up my arm. On our return flight, I was uncomfortable, even experiencing tingling in my left fingertips, and in my feet. Even this morning, I can't feel much of my ring finger. and I have a tingling sensation up my forearm.

It's not so pleasant, but it's tolerable.

From everything that I have read, I should be clear of all symptoms from 24-72 hours. So far, it has been a bit over 24 hours. So in another day or two, I'm hoping to be fully recovered with full feeling in my finger. So, how does this apply to our text this morning? It doesn't really, but it's a unique story. Well, maybe I can stretch it. In our text, we will find Paul in Rome under house arrest. It's not so pleasant an experience. Yet it's tolerable. This is just like my scorpion sting. It isn't so pleasant, but it's tolerable.

So, open your Bibles to the very last two verses of the book of Acts. That is, Acts 28:30-31. I began to preach through this book the last Sunday in August of 2020. And here we are, two and a half years later, finishing up the book. From my count, this is my 88th message in the book of Acts. I trust that you have been challenged, as I have, to be a witness for Jesus Christ. This is the great application of the book. It is what Jesus is calling all of us to be: his witnesses. to tell others of what we have seen and heard about Jesus.

We see it at the beginning of the book, when Jesus tells his disciples that they will be his witnesses. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Indeed, that's what took place in the book of Acts. The apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit and became witnesses in Jerusalem and the surrounding regions and to the end of the earth. And now, here, at the end of the book, we see Paul being a witness for Jesus. So, let's read our text.

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.

In these verses, we find Paul in Rome. Paul has come to Rome as a prisoner, awaiting trial before Caesar.

Now, for the past several weeks, we have been tracing Paul's travels, from Jerusalem to Rome across the Mediterranean Sea. It wasn't an easy trip. It was filled with difficulty and danger (Acts 27:7-9). They were lost at sea, and finally shipwrecked on the island of Malta. where Paul stayed for three months. And now, finally, Paul is in Rome. The title of my message this morning is, "Two Years in Rome," because that's how long Paul was in Rome.

By way of outline this morning, I simply want to take six words straight from the text. For my first point this morning, I want to talk about Paul's living situation. Or, as I'm calling it, ...

## 1. Living (verse 30a)

Verse 30 tells us that Paul "*lived* there [in Rome] for two whole years at his own expense." The best way to understand this is "house arrest."

Today, this is done with an ankle bracelet, which is connected to GPS, and tracks those who are under house arrest, to see if they leave their house. Now, in Paul's case, he was always chained to a Roman soldier, who was keeping guard over him. This was his lot in life for "two whole years." That's a long time!

In Jerusalem, Paul had already spent two years in prison, awaiting a trial. And now, he experiences it all over again. Two years in prison. And, from the best that we can tell, after two years, he was released. One commentator suggested that the original readers would have understood that "a two-year period of detainment went beyond the statutory period for prosecution."<sup>[1]</sup> Thus, Paul would have been released from his arrest at this time. Thus, the significance of the reference to "two whole years" (verse 30).

Still, Paul was under house arrest for a long time. Yet, without minimizing how difficult this time would have been, it seems as if it wasn't all bad. Though, my guess is that his "imprisonment" here in Rome was more tolerable that it was in Caesarea, where he was in a proper prison.

You might say, that it was not so pleasant, but it was tolerable (like my scorpion sting). He still had the bother of guards and chains. But it wasn't all bad. You can see this in the second half of verse 30, which I'm calling ...

## 2. Welcoming (verse 30b)

Acts 28:30

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and *welcomed* all who came to him,

Paul's house arrest was not solitary confinement. No, on the contrary, it seems as if Paul's house became the gathering place for much Christian activity.

I mentioned last week of how Paul landed at Puteoli, and he was welcomed by people from the believers in Puteoli. further, Paul was well known enough that there were some who traveled to welcome Paul from the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns, which were cities near Rome (Acts 28:15). further yet, Paul knew many believers in Rome.

In Romans 16, we read a list of more than 25 people to whom Paul sends his greetings! He knew all of these people before ever coming to Rome! Listen to Romans 16:1-15. I want for you to hear Paul's personal connection to many people in Rome.

Romans 16:1-15

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphæna and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

Now, these words were written several years before Paul came to Rome. So, not all of these people were in Rome when Paul was there. But I would guess that many of them were. My guess is that many of them would come and visit with Paul.

I picture this house like a ministry house on a college campus. Where a bunch of guys from a college ministry live. When there are activities in the week, it's the natural place to gather. So likewise with Paul. I'm sure that there were no shortage of people coming to visit with him. not only those he knew before coming to Rome, but their friends. and any who came to faith through Paul's ministry. Jews or Gentiles.

In Acts 28:24, we read of how some Jews were convinced of Paul's message. In Acts 28:28, we read of how Paul was convinced that there were some Gentiles who would listen to his message and believe. These new believers would also have been among his visitors. So,

certainly, there would be no shortage of people coming to see Paul

And in verse 31, we see what Paul was doing with those who were coming to him.

Acts 28:30-31

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.

Again, taking words from these verses, we see Paul, ...

### 3. Proclaiming (verse 31a)

He was “proclaiming the kingdom of God.” That is, he was preaching. he was heralding! he was speaking to those who came about “the kingdom of God.” I think this phrase “the kingdom of God” has reference to the grand plans of God in this world. That God is a king, and he is establishing his kingdom upon this earth.

When Paul was “proclaiming the kingdom of God,” he surely would have referred back to Genesis, and told of how God created the world, to be ruled by mankind, who he created in his image. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" (Genesis 1:26-28).

From the beginning of creation, Adam and Eve were to “have dominion” over the created world. This is a “kingship” word. A king has “dominion” over his realm. Adam and Eve were to be king and queen over the world! But they rebelled by eating of the forbidden, and failed in their responsibility to rule the world. And all of their offspring, likewise failed to rule the world, as they lived in rebellion against the Lord. But God, in his sovereign plan, chose another way to establish his kingdom upon the earth. His way would actually be a better way. Not with people who would fail, But with his own son, who would never fail!

To bring his son into the world, God had first to establish his people. And this he did by choosing Abraham. Do you remember Abraham’s call?

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Abraham would be the father of a great nation. And through this nation, God would bring blessing to “all the families of the earth.” And that blessing would come through a king, from the kingly line of David. Do you remember the promise that God made to David?

2 Samuel 7:12-13

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

This promise came true, of course, through the coming of Jesus. Do you remember the message that Jesus first proclaimed?

Mark 1:15

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.”

The kingdom was at hand, because the king was near! The king had come to establish his kingdom! Jesus often spoke about the kingdom of God. In fact, do you remember in the very beginning of the book of Acts, after his resurrection during the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension. Do you remember what was Jesus telling his disciples? Here’s how the book of Acts begins,

Acts 1:1-3

In the first book, O Theophilus, [that is the gospel of Luke], I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Jesus was telling his disciples about the kingdom of God for forty days! What question was on the minds of the disciples during those forty days? The last question they asked Jesus was this:

Acts 1:6-8

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

In other words, the kingdom of God will come through the faithful witness of the followers of Jesus. So, realize this, church family, that when you heed to call of the book of Acts, to be a witness of Jesus, you are building the kingdom of God. Well, that's what Paul was proclaiming.

He was proclaiming the kingdom of God. Now, certainly, there is more to the kingdom of God than the creation, the call of Abraham, and the Davidic covenant. There is the New Covenant as told in Jeremiah 33. There are the prophecies of the Old Testament, that prophesy of the coming of Jesus. that prophesy of the return of Jesus. There are the ways in which God brings his rule upon the earth. Not by force, but through the suffering servant. But by force later, when Jesus comes again. Paul would have proclaimed on all of these things over the two years that he was under house arrest in Rome.

And in our text, Luke gives some more specifics about what he was telling those who came to him. Paul was ...

Acts 28:31

proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

I simply want to pull out this word.

#### **4. Teaching (verse 31b)**

Now, as we think about what Paul may have taught about Jesus, we don't need much to wonder. Because, when Paul was in prison at this time, he wrote some letters, telling others about Jesus. The letters are called, "The Prison Epistles." Can you name them?

The prison epistles are Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. Paul refers to his imprisonment in each of these letters (Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 4:10; Philippians 1:13-14; Philemon 1, 9.

A little cursory read of these letters will show you what Paul was teaching about Jesus.

##### **Ephesians**

In Ephesians, Paul taught that we have every spiritual blessing in Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3). God's plan from before the world began was to bring us to himself through Christ. "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Ephesians 1:4). We are redeemed and adopted and forgiven through Jesus (Ephesians 1:5-7).

We who were dead in our sins were made alive in Christ! and all of this comes by God's grace through faith in Christ. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus brought unity between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-22). And God calls us to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1). Paul says to do so "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3). We should walk in love as Christ loved us, whether in marriage or in the family, or even in the workplace.

I am sure that these themes were present in Paul's "teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ" in Rome.

##### **Colossians**

In this letter, Paul lifts Jesus high!

Colossians 1:15-18

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Thus, he urged those in Colossae not to be taken captive "by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Paul says not to follow after the wisdom of the world! But to follow Christ "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

I am sure that these themes were present in Paul's "teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ" in Rome.

##### **Philemon**

Philemon is a real practical book about forgiveness. One of those who came to Paul in Rome was a man named Onesimus. He was a runaway slave. But in listening to Paul, he believed in Jesus. Paul counseled him to make things right with his master, Philemon. Paul happened to know Philemon, and that he was a believer. Listen to the core of Paul's counsel:

Philemon 1:8-16

Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

I love the wisdom of the counsel: As an apostle, I could command you. But, rather, I'm going to appeal to you, to receive him back kindly.

Certainly, Paul would have taught many other practical things like this when “teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ” in Rome.

## Philippians

This book has two themes: joy and partnership in the gospel. These themes are evident in Paul's opening word to those in Philippi.

### Philippians 1:3-5

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

In Philippians, Paul speaks of the advancement of the gospel. He speaks of his willingness to sacrifice for Christ! The gospel is made clear in Philippians, chapter 3, where Paul puts forth all of his religious credentials, as being a Hebrew of the Hebrews. doing everything according to the law. ascending the religious ladder to be a teacher of Israel, full of zeal! After saying all of this, he then says, “all these things I counted as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8). Paul considered all of his righteous deeds to be sewage.

It's not our own righteousness that makes us right with God. Rather, it's the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. Paul said, “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ” (Philippians 3:9). Because of the gospel, Paul could rejoice at all times (Philippians 4:4).

I am sure that these themes were present in Paul's “teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ” in Rome.

Certainly, we have only skimmed the surface of what Paul was teaching those in Rome about the Lord Jesus Christ. We could go much further in depth in each of these epistles And that's only a small part of what Paul would have been teaching of the course of his two years in Rome! But we must move on to my fifth word.

## 5. Boldness (verse 31c)

### Acts 28:31

[Paul was] proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ he was doing so with all boldness and without hindrance.

This means that Paul stated the case for Christ clearly and without doubt. This is one of the common themes throughout the book of Acts: the boldness of the witness of the apostles. Their boldness was noticed and recognized.

Peter stood boldly on the day of Pentecost and spoke face to face to those who were directly responsible for the death of Jesus, and said, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).

A little later, Peter was arrested and brought before the religious counsel. Again, he confronted them directly, saying, “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:11-12). In doing so, he may well have been pointing at them with his finger, identifying each one of them who were guilty of these things.

We read in the next verse, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Are you bold in your own witness? See, it wasn't the intelligence of John and Peter that struck them so much as their boldness.

There is a piece of paper that is in my office, right in front of my desk. I reads, “No ministry will be really effective, whatever may be it's intelligence, that is not a ministry of strong faith, true spirituality and deep earnestness.”<sup>[2]</sup> I have it before me to remind me what God will bless. In recent days, I have been quoting it to myself every day. It's not intelligence that God blesses. It's faith and spirituality and earnestness. So likewise here. It wasn't the intelligence of Peter and John that was making its impact upon these men. It was their boldness. They saw that they were “uneducated” and “common” men. But they were astonished with their boldness.

The same is true today. As you witness for Jesus, people aren't going to be impressed with your intelligence in witnessing to others. If you

do, you will merely bring attention to yourself. But people will be impressed with your boldness, when you confidently assert what is true, what people need to do, and be clear as day with those outside the family of God. Are you bold in your witness?

I was talking recently with a guy who was married. But now is divorced. He had been living with his girlfriend for many years. But that has now fizzled. And now, he's off with someone else. In talking with him, he was looking for counsel. I said, "Well, you are facing many of your problems because you weren't married to your girlfriend. She is certainly walking in unrighteousness. And you are walking in unrighteousness. You need to repent and believe in Jesus." Such words pretty much shut the conversation down. I was kind to him. I still communicate with him. I just emailed him this week. You can have a kind boldness. Such is the boldness that we see here. Are you bold in your witness?

Do you know how to be bold in your witness? Pray. That's what the early church did. Do you remember the prayer meeting after Peter and John were released? They prayed these words:

Acts 4:29

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.

They prayed for boldness to speak. And do you know what happened after they prayed? Their prayers were answered:

Acts 4:31

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

This was a characteristic of the people in Acts. This was a characteristic of Paul from the moment of his conversion. In Damascus, Paul spoke boldly (Acts 9:27). In Jerusalem, Paul spoke boldly (Acts 9:28). On his missionary journeys, Paul spoke boldly (Acts 13:46). In the synagogues, Paul spoke boldly (Acts 19:8). Before Agrippa, the king, who could put him to death, Paul spoke boldly (Acts 26:26).

Paul was bold many, many times. "The righteous are as bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). I would encourage you to live a righteous life. Be firm and secure in your faith. Pray for boldness. And speak boldly for Jesus.

Let's move on to our final word.

## **6. Unhindered (verse 31d)**

Acts 28:31

[Paul was] proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ he was doing so with all boldness and without hindrance.

This word, "unhindered," speaks about how free Paul was to speak about these things. His house arrest was like my finger that was stung by a scorpion. My finger is still numb right now, but it is unpleasant, but tolerable. I'm not hindered by anything because of my finger. So also, Paul's imprisonment was "unpleasant but tolerable." Paul was always bound to a Roman soldier.

Do you know what happened as a result of his house arrest?

Philippians 1:12-13

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

All the the soldiers that were guarding Paul were watching the believers come in droves to see Paul. They were hearing Paul talk about "the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus" (Acts 28:31). They witnessed the boldness of Paul speak these things. That means that every guard watching Paul heard about Christ! Some even of Caesar's household came to faith (Philippians 4:22).

Philippians 1:14

And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Paul's example of boldly speaking gave others the courage to speak with boldness as well. This meant that the gospel was going out and progressing.

Let me ask you. Are you hindered in preaching the gospel? Who among you are hindered? Now, there might be some things at work that are hindering you. You are paid to do your job, not to speak to others about Jesus. When I worked in the Information Technology world, I remember being reproved by my boss for speaking with others about Christ during company time. So, it is best if some things are said and done after hours. But are you hindered?

If I was preaching this sermon in other countries, like Iran, and asked the question, "Are you hindered in preaching the gospel," every hand would go up. Some would be able to say, "If they found out that I believed in Jesus, I would be killed." But this isn't any of you. You have no threats of God upon your life.

So, are you his witness? Paul was unhindered, so that he was a bold witness. You aren't being hindered. Are you a bold witness? This is the book of Acts. This is my final admonition of the book of Acts. The theme of Acts that we have focused upon during these past three years is the words of Jesus, "Be My Witnesses" (taken from Acts 1:8).

There is a missions organization called, "Acts 29."<sup>[3]</sup> We live in Acts 29 (i.e. the chapter after Acts 28, the last chapter in the book of Acts). We live in Acts 29 by being witnesses of Jesus.

I remember early on when we started Rock Valley Bible Church, even before we began meeting on Sunday mornings, I was given an opportunity to preach at our grandmother church in sending us out. As I preached, I told them what was going on at our church. I preached from 1 Thessalonians and Acts 17, saying how our missions strategy to spread the gospel in the Rockford area was "boldness." I said, "I haven't read all the church growth things or demographic studies. I simply know that we need to be bold in talking with others about Jesus, trusting that God will take care of the rest. I would encourage all of you to be bold about Jesus. Be a witness for Christ, trusting the Lord for the results.

This is the last chapter of the book of Acts, but it is not the last chapter of Paul's life. It's not the last chapter of our lives either. In fact, it's sort of the first chapter in our lives, as the rest is yet to be written.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 19, 2023 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

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[1] Need a reference for this quote: "a two-year period of detainment went beyond the statutory period for prosecution"

[2] John Angell James, *An Earnest Ministry: The Want of the Times* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993), 28.

[3] <https://www.acts29.com>.