



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 87 “Paul’s Roman Holiday”
By Pastor Jody May 07/14/2024**

Paul in Rome

¹⁷After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. ²⁰For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.”²¹And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. ²²But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

²³When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. ²⁴And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. ²⁵And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ “Go to this people, and say, “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”	and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’
²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull,	

²⁸Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

³⁰He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

[READ THE TEXT]

**Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”
People – “Thanks be to God.”**



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[PRAY]

[ILLUSTRATION]

When Heather and I first thought we would be moving to Georgia it was just the beginning of a very drawn-out process. For starters we didn’t have a normal reason to leave WPB, we both had good jobs, we were living debt free, we had a good church home, we had our family down there, but there was a nagging thought that we are missing something if we stayed. Our determining decision maker at the time is that we wanted to raise our family outside the confines of concrete sprawl away from the forced inclusion in a culture we couldn’t escape.

That thought generated a plan to start looking in NW Georgia for a piece of property to buy, to make it our home.

We found a piece of property, bought it and sat on it for 4 years before ever deciding to do anything with it. Just so you know that part of the story is when I was called into formal ministry, working as a pastor at our local church. Even though I was doing what many Christians believe would be the pinnacle of God’s will, I thought we were still missing an opportunity. We found a property builder, put down a deposit, worked through a denial by the county to build what we wanted, worked through that, told everyone we were leaving, sold our home in the middle of the housing collapse of 2008 and moved up here to Dallas, without a job or a completed home, just the compulsion we were to be here.

I remember walking the property while they were building praying that God would bless this endeavor, that He would establish us in this new home, that He would use it for His purposes. Little did I know that this had been God’s plan all along. That the night like Jacob, when I wrestled with God in my house about doing His will before every becoming a pastor, Jesus was already lining up our travel plans to come here. That like Paul He was there telling me, *fear not Jody, to Dallas you must go.*



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I remember having a brand-new home living a peaceful life for a very short-lived time before Jesus revealed the real reason why I was here. You see I was not brought here to be some secluded homesteader; no, God was going to put me and my whole family on display and make me a church planter! All the sudden back in 2011, it was dawning on me that just getting up here wasn't the real the plan. Starting a church, being responsible for people outside my family, bearing the name of Jesus publicly, that was the goal.

Now when I look back over these last 14 years of church planting, I can tell you I never foresaw that we would be here right now. But what I knew back then if I was just to sit still that would not be God honoring. So, I went back to school, I worked hard sharing the Gospel, I learned how to preach, and I made many relationships with other people that were essential for our existence. Everything that has gone on before I can now see where it has led us to this point in our existence together. I came to learn real quick what Paul was experiencing as he finally made it to Rome, and what we will learn the value of this together today.

MP:

Make the most of your life basing it on the success of Christ.

Here's what I mean, don't waste opportunities to bring the Kingdom of God to bear on this world, making much of Christ, **because you are still waiting on a destination/dream/vision to come true**. Don't get caught in the trap that you have to be a certain way, or that you can start living for Christ when certain things are cleared up, or that you have to have a certain amount of Biblical Knowledge to be effective in evangelism. When you are caught up with that type of thinking, we will miss valuable time contributing to the Kingdom of God. **Just be obedient to the calling of living for Him.**

[INTRO. & BACKGROUND]

Paul, got to Rome, and we read in v.30 that he was there 2 years before ever having his audience with Nero. Getting to Rome was the direction that Jesus was taking Paul, but it was **not the bullseye** for Paul's calling in ministry. His one audience with Nero wasn't going to usher in the second coming of Christ,



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but what he did with his time there, while waiting, made all the difference in the world, **even in our present day lives**. Those things he did will have an impact until Jesus’ return. You and I can learn from this passage, celebrate it together, the fact that when we make the most of our lives, **basing the success of it on Jesus’ already victorious work**, all of it will be used to bring Him glory and even works towards bringing us one step closer to His return.

I have three observations that I will **use as suggestions** to help us make the best use of our lives, not waiting for God’s plans to be revealed, but believing the plans are here, they are now, and we must grab it and make the most of it. The first suggestion is to **make the most of the time** you get, secondly **make the most of the audiences** you are given, and then lastly **make the most of the accommodations** you have. Then when you have done that, let Jesus reign, knowing He is using it, He will produce the fruit, and live knowing you contributed to the Kingdom of God.

1. Making the most with the time you get. (vs. 17 & 30)

¹⁷After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

³⁰He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,

Paul has had just enough time to unpack, to figure out these living arrangements with his new guard, to set up some type of income as it says there in v. 30, “**at his own expense**” and instead of enjoying the view and sites of Rome he sets up an appointment with the local synagogues.

Now before we get to all of that in case you are wondering what this ancient city was like let’s discuss that briefly first. We have done that for all our other way points in Acts so let’s talk a minute about the new Babylon of the first century.



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Rome is a city that has been noted to have as many as 2 million residents at the time of Paul’s first visit. In comparison, Jerusalem was home to a quarter of this amount. Not all residents were happy though, roughly 1 million of those people were slaves and the rest were considered poor. Only a few held all the money and the power which seems to be the way of big government: the bigger it grows the more totalitarian it becomes, the fewer that have money and true power, and the more there are under indentured servant status. Not much has changed in 2,000 years, if you follow the formula of making the government bigger believing the lies that it tells you; that there is freedom in that type of society, you will continually find yourself with less while a shrinking few will always have more.



Upon arrival to Rome what Paul would have walked down the Appian way, one of the great roads that the Romans built to handle commerce and the movement of troops through the empire. He would have passed a few mile markers the closer he approached Rome.



He would have crossed the Tiber River already supporting magnificent bridges portraying the engineering genius of Roman builders.



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Upon entering the city, he would have walked by several other structures that are well known and are still present in part to this day. He would have come



by the Circus Maximus which is now just a huge green field but was the original grounds of Rome’s sporting events. The Colosseum was not built yet and wouldn’t be completed until 80 AD. Most likely with the spoils they hauled off from the destruction of Jerusalem and the deconstruction of

the temple in 70 AD.

Coming through the middle of the city he would have witnessed the grandeur of Rome and her show of strength in her organization of government buildings, much like our own Washington DC of today.



He would have witnessed the temple of Julius Caser and Augustus. He would have seen the great forum with all its’ shops,

theaters, and temples from Palatine Hill. And of course he would have witnessed the great Pantheon, a point of the





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culmination of all of the religions of Rome where they were portrayed.¹

This is the Rome that Paul has walked into, the capital of the known world. Even in the midst of all this mass of humanity, while his head is still spinning, Paul doesn’t waste any time, but he calls his fellow countrymen together to tell them who he is and why he is there.

At this time historians tells us there are roughly between 20-25K Jews living in Rome, or at least on the outskirts. These Jews made up several different synagogues but did not have much of regular communication with the temple back home in Jerusalem.

Paul can’t get out and about, he won’t be allowed to see Caesar and must wait until he is called, so he makes the **best use of his time** and calls his countrymen to him. It’s a good thing that he did so because he ended up waiting 2 years before he ever saw Caesar. Some of us can’t stand waiting at the Dr. office or the mechanic and if that’s you, you would have never made this time of waiting. Paul, being well aware of his upcoming audience, and aware of the Jews living in Jerusalem, he calls them for an audience.

He starts off with telling them how he got there being totally open with his countrymen

¹⁸ When they (two governors and Agrippa) had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹ But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. ²⁰ For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.”²¹ And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. ²² But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

¹ <https://thehomesteadtraveler.com/the-rome-of-pauls-day/#:~:text=Paul%20would%20have%20seen%20the,the%20Rome%20of%20Paul's%20day.&text=The%20oldest%20monuments%20and%20artifacts,in%20Rome%20are%20Pagan%20temples.>



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Paul discovers they have not heard of him nor why he was there. Well, that is either because of the season of storms that had just passed, that Paul had just gone through, or it was because the temple was done messing with Paul, in fear of now knowing he was a Roman citizen and he was protected, and the rulers knew about their assassination scheme. Both ideas work here. Well because Paul didn’t waste any time, they decided to grant him his audience.

Now what I want us to grasp simply, is that **Paul didn’t take lightly his Apostolic convictions laying down**. He didn’t zone out when he didn’t get an invite from Caesar for dinner. No, he made the best use of his time he had been praying and hoping that here in Rome perhaps Jesus would save more of his people, that there was still time to do this for it was Paul’s great desire to see his countrymen come to a Saving faith in Jesus. (He wrote Romans from Corinth at least 6 years earlier)

Romans 10:1-4 ESV

10 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. **2**For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. **3**For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. **4**For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Paul knows they are ignorant, they are works of righteousness chasers, they don’t know better, and he wanted to clarify who Jesus was before he was called away. That may take a while for several times in his previous travels some Jews usually converted but it took a lot of explaining, and a good amount of HS conviction.

For us today, friends, perhaps you too are in a holding pattern in your life so you have taken your focus off the most important thing you can do, **which is use your time wisely for the Kingdom of God**. Jesus taught us the importance of this commodity.

Luke 12:35-36 ESV



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³⁵“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.

Our time is short, and we are held accountable to how we spend it for the Lord. Maybe there is a conversation you need to have with a loved one today. Maybe there is someone you need to tell about Jesus today, about why you love Him. Maybe there is someone you need to say I’m sorry to, and you have been thinking of them lately. Dads perhaps you keep putting off the family devotion time you have been wanting to start. Moms you keep not bringing up that topic in the family that needs to be discussed. Students you are avoiding that situation you need to talk to your parents about. Don’t put off what you can do today, but put that God given **gift of time** to work for the Kingdom today, because you never know when your invite to see your King may come.

Trust God make the most of your time and let Jesus worry about making that successful or not, that is the area of His oversight not yours.

2. Making the most of the audiences you are given. (vs. 23-28)

²³When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the **kingdom of God** and trying to convince them about **Jesus** both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

Paul has been sharing the same story now for over 2 decades with other Jews. This is about the manifestation of God’s Kingdom, the culmination of what Israel wanted to bring in. It is also about the one who brought it and that was Jesus.

Family let me just say briefly here, when you are given time, and you are given audiences, when those two things combine and you are given the go ahead to talk about God, you talk about the Kingdom, and you talk about your King. **If nothing else, you make sure you bring up those two things.** If you keep these things in perspective as Paul has done for decades you will declare what it is that God wants you to declare. **The Kingdom of God has come, it**



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was ushered in by Christ, He reigns, He calls for your repentance, therefore repent for time is short, for He will return. So how did this work out for Paul?

²⁴ And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. ²⁵ And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ “Go to this people, and say,
“You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull,

²⁸ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed;
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.’

This was a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10 for Paul had suspected what he would find in Rome. BUT he was under the command and compulsion that you preach to the audience you are given to.

Romans 11:8-10 ESV

⁸ as it is written,
“God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day.”

⁹ And David says,

“Let their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;

¹⁰ let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.”

It is tough when you know the people you have to talk to most likely won't accept the Lord. Family let me let you in on a little information, Jesus went through the same thing.

Luke 8:9-10 ESV



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⁹And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that **‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’** (Isaiah 6)

Jesus was aware that people would not accept Him, but it didn’t negate His passion from telling others about His Father, His Gospel, and the hope of Salvation. Because when we proclaim to the audience that is provided us, many times the elect are sitting within ear shot, waiting for some hope.

That may be **what keeps you from talking** to others, the fact that **you believe they won’t listen**. Family I spent the majority of my life talking to two men who lived like Hell and wanted nothing to do with God until they could see the end of their life around the corner. One was my father, and one was my brother, and both confessed Christ to me before death. Now whether that was legitimate or not I know not, but I do know they will not be able to stand in front of Christ and say they never heard, and I know I won’t be asked why I didn’t tell them. I want the same for you, you have a select audience and when God gives you the opportunity, whether you believe it is any good or not, be like Christ, give them the good news, you don’t know the effect it will have, and you don’t know who you are influencing with your words.

You are given a short time, and you are given selective audiences, make the most of both and tell them about Kingdom and King and let Jesus worry about the success of what you have given.

3. Making the most of the accommodations you have. (vs. 30-31)

³⁰He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,

Well, what do you do when you have too much time on your hands? I can tell you this, we would never have caught Paul death scrolling on Tik Tok. In saying that when you have some free time, yes take some time to relax there is nothing wrong with that, just don’t use the time for idleness of laziness.

Colossians 3:23-24 ESV



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Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

What do you do when you have the accommodations that means **the provisions** to do something needed? You take advantage of the situation; you make the most of it. Paul went on to write **4 different letters while he had that 2-year stint in Rome**. You get a quiet place, and the church gives you messengers, you write some letters.

Paul went on to write the book of Ephesians, writing a letter to the Christian capital of Asia. Man, he loved these people, so he wanted to keep emphasizing the themes of family, what Christ did that for them, that reconciliation came through His work and to rejoice in it. Because of it we were granted inspirational verses like this:

Ephesians 1:4-5 ESV

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

He then wrote the book of Philippians back to his retired Roman soldiers that gave him so much support when he was there. That like good soldiers, he reminded them to support one another and suffer well for Christ.

Philippians 1:6 ESV

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

2:6-8 - who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

4:13 - I can do all things through him who strengthens me.



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Then he wrote the letter of Colossians. A church most likely started by his friend Epaphras. It was a correctional type of letter warning against false doctrine.

Colossians 2:13-14 ESV

¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Then lastly to send along with that letter, he wrote a personal letter to Philemon, a friend of his, about a man named Onesimus, a runaway slaved that was ministering to Paul in Rome.

Philemon 17-20

¹⁷So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

These were letters that we have had over 2K years, and they are still used by the HS to save men, correct/edify the church, and bring glory to Jesus.

All of this to say Paul kept in mind what the Lord had started in the beginning of Acts.

Acts 1:8 ESV

“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.”

And from there we get to the end; to Luke’s final sentence of his historical account.

³¹proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

What’s the connection between 1:8 and 28:31? The fact that it was **the HS that did the work.**



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[CHALLENGE]

August 2022, we started this journey, we had just a few less people, but I wanted to do an experiment, I wanted to show us that a church with a small amount of people, with a small bank account, I wanted us all to see what we could do when it came to reaching others for Christ.

- We are in the middle of our third year of hosting CAYA, breaking numbers for the third year in a row, being a part of the hands and feet of Jesus in our community connecting other churches and other Christians in the spreading of the Gospel.
- We have just gotten back our group of students from their 2nd World Changers Mission trip, and you heard the report of that last week.
- We have gone twice now to Ecuador ourselves, helping to spread the Gospel in a foreign land, to the people of Peña’s Blancas, with more trips on the horizon.
- We saw 10 people get baptized and profess Christ as Lord.
- We ordained 2 other elders bringing us to 4 teachers of God’s Word, as they have spent two years teaching and catechizing, much like the ancient church.

There are churches 3 times our size that have not had that much ministry action in their churches for years. Having big bank accounts and hundreds of bodies in seats does to make you a successful church, but being obedient to do the best you can with what God gives you is the marker of success. What’s more, could we have done any of this on our own power? **NO, you know, and I know it was all the power of the HS!** For the same God that was with Paul is with us, for the story was not done, because the story of Acts is our story, the story of God’s people the church!

HCC we are part in this story, and it has only just begun, let’s make sure from here on out we make the most of our time, the most of our audiences, and the most of our accommodations and trust Jesus for the success. His desire above all else is to glorify God, **THEREFORE** let us be dedicated to making



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much of Him and let us prepare to be amazed at what the Spirit can and will do with our efforts.

[PRAYER]

[CALL TO OBEY]

Church **1 John 2:3-6 ESV** tells us to continue to do the work that our Lord did so perfectly. Why? Because we love Him, and we are His.

"And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

Church love Him by – ***Make the most of your life basing it on the success of Christ.***

[COMMUNION]

As we remember our Lord, we remember that for Him He lived a life perfecting how to make the best use of what God gives you. Our Lord took his lowly position, His weakness of flesh, and even His betrayals and He changed the world for us. Now in light of that we see we know could not do that, not if we have a thousand years to live could we ever do what He did. But partaking in His flesh, the bread of life, we admit and praise God that He did it for us, earning us righteousness and the favor of God.

As we drink the fruit of the vine, we are reminded there is a price to pay for failing to use our lives to glorify Him. Friends we have all failed and fallen short of the Glory of God, but thanks be to Jesus, by the giving of His life in atonement for sins, we are forgiven. By that very act Jesus ushered in the time of the New Covenant by which the ancient prophets foretold we would



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now have the eternal helper, the HS. Praise Him and thank Him for the wonderful blessing of always having His presence with you.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – “Christians, what do you believe?”

Congregation recited –

Romans 1:16-18 ESV

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

[OFFERING+LAST SONG] –

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has provided all things for us so that we may use our earthly possessions to make the most of Him.

Go in the name of the Son, that used all that was given Him to make the name of the Father known, perfecting the way of Salvation through substitution.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that causes us to believe, blesses all our endeavors through the meager means we have, now GO and let this world know about the Kingdom of God and your King Jesus.