

SERMON NOTES: SEPT. 8TH
Scripture Readings...Luke 24:44-53, Acts 28: 23-31

Luke's Odd Ending...in Acts, we've had front-row seat to mission trips, and hair-raising tales of courage. A small Jewish sect became a world-wide movement that put Christianity on the map. The last 7 chapters- Acts 21-28- is one long account of Paul's arrest/trials before Jewish and Roman authorities. Reminiscent of Jesus, he is driven by destiny, fearing no enemy, holding nothing back. Luke ends with Paul in jail. He didn't end with Paul's death but his finishing his mission.

Rome At Last...Paul had only seen Rome in his dreams. Imagine his joy as his ship reached harbor! His being in Rome wasn't a coincidence. It was the center of power, politics, culture. As he arrives, he is stunned: Christians came to meet him. It thrilled his soul: Christians In Rome. How? The Jesus Movement had spread beyond his reach.

Enduring to the End...like us, Paul didn't realize all his dreams. He had regrets and unfinished business. He couldn't undo the harm he caused or resurrect those he killed. Yet he felt more joy, blessed more lives, acquired more wisdom in his years of serving Christ than all his other years combined. His own survival didn't matter; advancing the cause of Christ was his focus. Paul endured. Endurance isn't a prize we pick up at the end of life. It won't happen by human willpower; it's a by-product of courage and faith. We need God. Instead of cursing his luck, or throwing a pity party, Paul ministered to guards. Without God, we may stand for a SEASON, but we will not ENDURE TO END.

TO BE CONTINUED IN US...Acts wasn't meant to be Peter/Paul's greatest hits. Luke's main character wasn't one person but the Holy Spirit. So Luke ends Acts not with Paul's death but with these words...

Paul was teaching about Jesus with boldness, without hindrance. The LAST CHAPTER of the Early Church is the FIRST CHAPTER of the Later Church. Luke leaves his readers to fill in blanks. Christianity is TO BE CONTINUED IN US. God isn't finished writing his story. We carry Christ's mantle. For over 2,000 years, despite persecution/internal division, the Church of Christ has changed millions of lives. We are a part of what God is doing the world. I don't know what God wants to do in your life but playing it safe isn't the way to discover it.