

1. Intro

- a. We're finishing up Acts today - been following the arrest and trial of Paul
 - b. **And when** we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him. (Acts 28:16 ESV)
 - c. Paul in Rome w/ decent circumstances all things considered (explain situation)
 - i. Still, he was facing trial and maybe death
 - d. What do people normally do when they find themselves in situations like this?
 - i. Make life miserable for the soldier guarding him
 - ii. Complain on facebook, mope around, throw a pity party, binge watch netflix, eat lots of pizza or donuts, and drink
 - iii. I mean Paul is past his prime, his glory days are over with, it's all downhill from here, what can he do now that he is in prison waiting to possibly die?
 - e. What does it look like in the twilight years of our faith and life?
 - i. How do you finish well?
 1. Applicable to those of you who feel like you're late to the game, those who feel like this Christianity thing is old hat, and to those who are just getting (or haven't gotten started)
 - ii. We could die tomorrow so the catch isn't how you live once you are 80, but how you live now, today, whether you are 12 or 92.
2. **After 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. When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 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." 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. 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." (Acts 28:17-22 ESV)
- a. "Hey, everyone wants to kill me for what I have to say, so...when are we gonna talk?"
 - i. Paul throws himself out there allowing potential for persecution and fights
 - b. Why would Paul do this?
 - i. It will make it worse for him → the leaders in Jerusalem hate him
 - ii. It won't help his case → spoken against everywhere
 - c. Here's the thing: why wouldn't he do this?
 - i. **What does he have to lose?** What's his worst case scenario?
 1. Death? Jesus said he would raise his followers from the grave.
 2. Losing a trial? Jesus calls his followers conquerors over all things
 3. Loss? What could Paul lose that he won't gain in Christ?
 - ii. God gave him a mission and he knows he isn't going to live forever

1. Better to go out swinging then to curl up and die
- d. **Paul wanted to finish well**
 - i. To live is Christ, to die is gain (to be with Jesus)
 - ii. He knew he might die, but that was the worst that could happen and he wasn't afraid to die
- e. For us: Deep down we want to live like this → maybe dudes understand it best
 - i. Die with honor, to go out fighting
 - ii. We respect and look up to guys like that → Rambo
 - iii. Paul decided to finish like a warrior rather than a broken man
- f. See, we think so much "in the now" that we forget the big picture
 - i. The early church was driven by heaven, not by now
 - ii. What does it look like to persevere to the end?
 1. Persevere to obey Jesus against persecution or ridicule
 2. Persevere to obey Jesus and the Bible against loss
 3. Persevere to live out your faith against threat of death
- g. **#FinishWell means boldness despite your end**
3. **When 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. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. (Acts 28:23-24 ESV)
 - a. Paul invites all these guys to his house, knowing what might happen and preaches the Gospel to them from morning until evening
 - i. Sure, come over my house and beat me up, stone me, everyone else has
 - b. Morning til evening → most people can't even be convinced to open their mouths!
 - c. And God uses Paul's willingness to obey despite threats and fears
 - i. People actually come to him and he is bold with them when they do
 - d. See despite his very possible death on the horizon, he isn't spiritually moping around whining about how hard his life is
 - i. He is aggressive to the end, pushes forward like a champ
 - e. **Paul knows that he has one shot at his life**
 - i. Don't waste your life
 - ii. This is the practice round, the scrimmage for eternity
 - iii. Far more time in the next life than in this one
 - iv. When you realize that, you can deal with anything. ANYTHING.
 - f. Paul knows that **life is a marathon, not a sprint**
 - i. It's not about his "good dash" when he was young, but about a constant obedience in the same direction
 - ii. Still, he isn't running a marathon at a 15 minute mile, but he is running to win!
 - g. Some of you guys are straight up tired
 - i. Tired of waiting for a spouse who won't show any interest in faith
 - ii. Tired of waiting for God to bring you that special person

- iii. Tired of preaching the Gospel to loved ones only to constantly be rejected
- iv. Tired of obedience without fruit, ridicule, etc
- v. Tired of trying to read the Bible and doing well for one day...
- vi. Are you going to push on and finish well? Or throw in the towel?
- h. But you know what it normally looks like? Distraction and comfort
 - i. I care more about my hobby than my relationship w/ God
 - ii. More about my the Phillies, my abs, my job, whatever
 - iii. Normally our lack of endurance is connected to distraction and comfort
- i. We are called to endure → to persevere → to overcome → to keep on truckin'
 - i. Despite lack of emotional energy, despite an abundance of comfort
- j. #FinishWell means endurance until the end.**
- 4. **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: “Go to this people, and say, “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people’s heart has grown dull, 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.’ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.” (Acts 28:25-28 ESV)

 - a. Think about what Paul is saying, “You guys aren’t listening cause you’re deaf. You can’t see cause you’re blind. You’re too dense to understand the truth I am trying to tell you. If you weren’t so hard-hearted and stubborn, God would heal you. Heck, even your enemies - the Gentiles - will listen, but you ‘God-Fearers’ won’t.”
 - i. Paul lays it out bluntly → he proclaims regardless of the results
 - ii. Paul knew people wouldn’t listen to him, but he was given a job
 - iii. Watchman (Ezekiel) → responsible. period.
 - b. God has given a mission to his people**
 - i. We are responsible to be obedient. We can’t control the rest.
 - ii. Obedient to the end.
 - iii. You are still on this earth to glorify God by being obedient to him
 - 1. If you’re still here, you still have a job to do
 - iv. That one biblical truth would revolutionize every life in this room → we are here for God. FOR GOD. Not for me, not for you, not for anyone, but God
 - 1. And this looks like obedient: hear, embrace, live
 - v. **You don’t retire from obedience**, You don’t outgrow it, You don’t “arrive”
 - vi. You don’t stop becoming more like Jesus or fully grasp/understand what it means to follow him, love like him
 - vii. We are constantly growing, constantly being stretched, constantly being “sanctified”
 - c. There’s no such thing as retiring from ministry** b/c ministry isn’t a job for pastors, it’s a lifestyle for every follower of Jesus
 - d. What does it look like to be committed to obedience?
 - i. Don’t let yourself grow numb to disobedience

- ii. When you read the Bible, live it out → it's not just brain food
- e. **#FinishWell means obedience to the end.**
- 5. **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. (Acts 28:30-31 ESV)
 - a. **Paul finishes well** → obedient for those two years in Rome
 - i. And you know what? He goes free!
 - 1. Imagine if he wasted those two years on a pity party
 - ii. He goes free and has a few more years (around 5) of ministry
 - 1. Maybe went to Spain
 - iii. He is finally executed under Nero
 - 1. A guy who was known to light Christians on fire and put them in his garden as a torch so he could hang out at night
 - iv. Paul pushed forward until the end of his life
 - b. Paul wasn't done because God wasn't done
 - c. And here's the thing: **God's still not done**
 - i. Jesus is still building his church, still saving souls, still pioneering
 - d. I want you to be aggressively involved in the mission that is still going on
 - e. We as a church are committed to that same mission
 - i. Acts 29
 - ii. Church planting (Vlada next week & Kevin/Leilani)
 - f. You need to begin with the end in mind: Know where you are going so you know how to get there.
 - i. Write your epitaph: faithful husband, father, pioneer - what's yours?
 - ii. Aim at nothing and you'll hit it every time
 - g. The Gospel compels us to go and proclaim Jesus to the world, but it also compels us to respond
 - i. We respond through surrender and repentance
 - 1. Repentance for the non-believer
 - 2. Repentance for the believer
 - ii. Through prayer
 - 1. Pray how God would have you finish well → where he would convict you → where you need to persevere → who you need to tell, etc
 - iii. Through giving
 - 1. Giving isn't the mission, but the mission requires us to give
 - h. **#FinishWell means Jesus isn't done yet, so you shouldn't be either.**