

God's Word Cannot Be Bound

Radio Broadcast

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Bible Text: Acts 28:16-31

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Welcome to the Grace Abounding broadcast brought to you by the congregation of the Shreveport Grace Church that meets at 2970 Baird Road in Shreveport, LA. My name is Ken Wimer and it is my privilege to bring to you today a message that seeks to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious person and finished work of salvation accomplished for sinners at the cross. Please stay tuned.

My text today is taken from Acts 28 and I want to read for you from verses 16 down to verse 31 and speak to you on this subject: The Word of God Cannot Be Bound. I know there are many that are concerned about religious freedom and they tend to believe that our religious freedom is dependent upon legislation and politicians giving us that freedom and yet any serious student of the Scripture will quickly learn, as the Lord is pleased to teach them, that promotion and direction is from the Lord. He directs all things to his honor and glory and so any freedom that we enjoy, with regard to worship, is from the Lord and in times and seasons when the Lord is pleased to remove it or take it away regardless of the secondary causes which might be government or legislation or other things, still it is the Lord who is directing. And we see this particularly in the life of the Apostle Paul when, because of his taking a clear stand for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, he was bound over by his Jewish brethren to the Romans and he appealed to Caesar and, therefore, was sent to Rome to be tried by Caesar. And that's what we read of here in Acts 28 beginning with verse 16, his arrival in Rome. And we read,

“And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren

that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

There’s the clear testimony of Scripture, although this portion that I read began in verse 16 of Acts 28 with Paul being bound over to the captain of the guard and having a soldier keeping him, yet the portion ends with Paul dwelling “two whole years in his own hired house and receiving all that came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” And notice the freedom, the Word not being bound. It says, “with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

Now, we talk about the Word of God not being bound, what was the message for which Paul here was bound over as a prisoner and for which he stood on trial? He sums it up in verse 20 of my text where he says, “because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” What was he referring to when he said “the hope of Israel”? Well, the hope of Israel was the Messiah who was foretold in the Old Testament who should come and who should fulfill the law and justice of God and who would lay down his life in payment for the sin debt of his people. And his kingdom, although the Jews looked for a physical natural kingdom, yet the kingdom of God, which verse 23 of my text says that Paul spent his time expounding, was not a physical kingdom, it was not to be a natural kingdom. In fact, the Israel of God, as Paul wrote in the Book of Romans, “Not all are Israel who are of Israel.” There is a spiritual Israel, that is, that seed for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died. And in that seed, there are both Jews and Gentiles.

Now, remember that Paul was raised up to be a preacher unto the Gentiles and it was for this reason that his Jewish brethren persecuted him and wanted to see him bound and even put to death because they felt that he was violating their customs and traditions by

taking the message of Scripture, which they considered to be a Jewish message, and yet he preached it to the nations, he preached it to the Gentiles.

Dear friend, that's why the Lord Jesus is called in Scripture "the Savior of the world." It's not that he came into the world to try to save everybody. No, if that were the case, he would've been a miserable failure, but he is the Savior of the world in the sense that he has a people that the Father gave him from out of the world from every tribe, nation and tongue and it is for that people that he came, lived and died. And that is the true Israel. It's not being circumcised of the flesh, he said in Romans 2, but of the heart. These are they which the Lord Jesus Christ by his Spirit draws to himself because he paid their sin debt.

And the hope of Israel, when you come back here to Acts 26:23, this was when Paul was before Festus and King Agrippa. These were the leaders of the day who had a right to either condemn him or to set him free and in Acts 26:23 Paul declares what it is that his message was and why it was that he was put on trial. He says, "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people," and then it says, "and to the Gentiles," or "even to the Gentiles."

So, this was the bone of contention that Paul would take a message out of the Old Testament Scriptures which the Jews considered to be their own and he would preach a Christ who would come, live, die and rise again and preach it to the Gentiles, the nations, those whom the Jews considered to be dogs. And it was for that message then that he was bound over to Caesar.

Now, we see clearly that even though the Apostle Paul was bound, yet the Word could not be bound. And that brings me to the second point after seeing the message for which Paul was bound over. We see secondly that Paul never considered himself to be the prisoner of Caesar or of any man. Now, as a Roman citizen, although a Jew, Paul appealed to Caesar. In Acts 26:32, "Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar." Some would look at that and think that maybe Paul was hasty in appealing unto Caesar but such is not the case. There are no accidents with God. If Paul was brought before Caesar and brought to Rome and there to remain for two years in a hired house as he awaited his trial, and yet during that two years the Lord gave him great liberty to preach the kingdom of God and teach those things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, all we can say is that God purposed it, he decreed it and, therefore, brought it to pass.

And that's certainly the Apostle Paul saw his being in prison. He did not see himself as a prisoner of Rome or of Caesar or of his Jewish brethren. Here's an example, in Ephesians 3:1, he says, "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." Again, clearly the hatred and disdain of the Jews was not only over who he preached to be the Messiah, which was the Lord Jesus Christ, that Jesus of Nazareth, but for whom he preached the Messiah. See, for them, it was blasphemy to take any of the Scriptures and relate it to the Gentiles or those outside of the Jewish religion. For them, if a Gentile was to be saved, then he had to be circumcised and it's what they call proselytizing, they had

to take a Gentile and purify him and make him a Jew, dress him like a Jew, make him speak like a Jew.

Sadly, dear friends, that's the way that modern day Christendom often works as well. They'll take somebody from out in the world and bring him into a congregation and catechize that one and teach him how to walk and talk according to their religion and then say that they've been converted. But, dear friends, conversion is not catechizing somebody. Conversion is not transforming or even reforming, I hear that word being used, a Reformed Baptist or a Reformed Lutheran or a Reformed Presbyterian or a Reformed such-and-such. These are terms that men use and yet there's only one way for any to be called a child of God and that is through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for those whom God the Father has chosen and given to his Son and calls to Christ by his Spirit. They are the Lord's and don't belong to any one particular denomination. But here in Ephesians 4, in the same epistle, we see the same thing. Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

So, we see clearly that the first cause of all things is God. The second cause was the Jews delivering him to Caesar but Paul saw himself as being the prisoner of the Lord. It was the Lord who determined the time and the bounds of his habitation as he does with all of us. O dear friend, that we would learn this lesson even through the constraints of life and the different circumstances that would arise that put us in narrow straits sometimes, to see that regardless of what it is, it is of the Lord. And is he not able to do with his own what he will?

So, there again, we see that the word cannot be bound even if one of God's messengers is bound, we know that the Word cannot be bound. And Paul particularly brings that out in 2 Timothy as he wrote that final epistle. 2 Timothy was the last epistle that the Apostle Paul would be led to write by the Spirit of God and in chapter 2, Paul himself says that even though he was bound, the Word could not be bound. 2 Timothy 2:9-10 he says, "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

So, the Word cannot be bound. There was one of the so-called church fathers who declared in his day that the blood of martyrs was the seed of the church. Here was the opposition, here was the persecution, putting to death any who stood for the Lord Jesus Christ and yet one that day declared even before his death that putting him to death, that blood, that seed sown would flow down into the ground and would water and nurture the true church. Persecution has never stopped the true church because it is the Lord who directs it all and many times it is by means of persecution, opposition and going against the message of Christ and him crucified as has been done down through the centuries, that God has caused the church to grow.

In Revelation 6:10 we read of those who had been slain for the Word of God and the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's in Revelation 6:9 and then in verse 10, "they

cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” Do you see how the language is put there? This is God’s decree; this is what he has purposed. We are immortal until such time as God himself is pleased to take us from this world and if he does by persecution, if he does for those that are his own because they have clearly declared the testimony of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, then it will be according to what he has decreed and not one more or one less than what the Lord has purposed.

This is the very heart of the true gospel. It’s not so much even pertaining to those who are called upon to lay down their lives for the truth but the very heart of the gospel is that by Christ’s bloody death, the blessings of life eternal have been purchased for all those for whom the Lord paid the debt. And that’s the reason that the Word of God cannot be bound. It’s because it is of the Lord. He is the one who has shed his blood and Christ himself said that of all that the Father had given him, he should lose nothing. And so, should we expect any less than what we read here in this portion in Acts 28? That although Paul was bound, yet the Lord used that circumstance, he’s being in chains, to put him in a place where others would hear the gospel who would not have otherwise heard had Paul not been brought to Rome in this manner.

Now, when he questioned the Jews when he got there, coming back to Acts 28, they said that they had not yet received any letters, those are legal charges against him, from Judea but they expressed, in verse 22, that they had heard that there was this sect, that’s what they call it, s-e-c-t, that word literally means to bring division. And they declared, “We know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

I know that there are many today that try to be peacekeepers, keep the peace at all costs, don’t bring up any doctrinal issues that might cause division. Well, dear friend, if the Lord has taught you of himself and has brought you low at Christ’s feet, to own yourself to be a lost, condemned sinner apart from the Lord Jesus Christ and his grace and mercy, in his death, then you will face opposition. This message brings the hatred and brings the ire and if men could they would even kill you given that liberty, rather than bow. Such is the nature of the difference between the gospel and what men traditionally believe.

Notice, that everywhere it is spoken against. This is in the heart of men. By nature, they are not friends of God or of Christ, they are enemies, and yet the good news of the gospel is that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. But, in man’s nature, it is not in him to bow. I know there are some that would teach and preach free will and yet, dear friend, the will is not free unless the Spirit of grace is pleased to make it free. Men will constantly speak against the gospel and against Christ.

And this was why, in verse 23 of my text, Paul was directed by the Lord to expound and testify of the kingdom of God and persuade them concerning Jesus both out of the law and out of the prophets. There it is clear that Christ is the message of Scripture. He just

had the Old Testament at this point. I heard one man say there's no gospel in the Old Testament. Well, dear friend, that's where the Christ, the Savior, is proclaimed and prophesied in type and picture and promise. And the New Testament declares that he came. The Old says, "He's coming," the New says, "He is come." But, the Christ of Scripture, the one whom the Scriptures set forth, is one who is sovereign and who is Lord and yet men stand opposed to such a one. They want to have their part in salvation but salvation is of the Lord.

And that's why there was a mixed reaction and that brings me to my final point and that is that there are some who think themselves free that are bound and there are those who the world would consider to be bound and yet have been made free. And, again, here we see that the Word of God cannot be bound. In verse 24 it says, "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." And they couldn't agree themselves. There was the division. It wasn't because Paul was mean spirited or trying to bring division, he was simply pointing sinners to Christ but they, in their rebellious nature, turned against him and that's why Paul quotes from Isaiah when he says, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive." They had physical eyes but they couldn't see the Christ that he was steadying forth before them. It's like a blind person today might have physical eyes but that doesn't mean he can see and so it is spiritually. And the reason is given in verse 27 of Acts 28, "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

And so there are many, dear friends, that consider themselves to be free and yet are bound. But there are also many who men consider to be bound and yet have been made free. And those are the ones of whom Paul spoke here in verses 28 down to verse 31, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." You'd say, "Well, who are those that were bound and didn't know it?" That was the Jews. In their self-righteousness they never saw their need of Christ.

And, dear friends, it's the same way today. I run into so many people, when you begin to talk to them of being lost sinners and standing in need of Christ, they run back to their denomination, they run back to their profession, they look at you strangely and they wonder that you would ever question their profession. It's like one person that was telling a preacher that they had been a Christian all their life and the preacher responded and said, "That's too long." And that's true. If there's never been a time when the Lord has taught you of your guilt and sin before the Lord and opened your eyes to see yourself as nothing, as worthless and in need of one righteousness alone and that is that of the Lord Jesus Christ that he worked out, then you're lost and you're bound.

And that offends but it's the truth. And yet there are many that the world would consider bound, such as myself. I've had people tell me, "You're too narrow. Your message is too narrow." Well, the reason is because it doesn't match up with what they're used to hearing and it points sinners to one exclusive solitary work and that of the Lord Jesus

Christ. But, if they consider me bound for that reason, then I thank God because I would rather be bound up to his grace and mercy as a needy sinner than to assume myself to be free and yet to be lost.

And so it was that Paul was given the freedom: the Word could not be bound. And it was for those whom the Lord Jesus Christ himself had paid the debt and upon completion of his death, God the Father had declared them righteous, justified freely through the redemption that is in his Son.

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