

Unhindered

Acts 28:17-31

Hindered...

The great call and commission on the church—Acts 1:7-8: [Jesus] said to [His disciples], “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.⁸ 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.”

If the Holy Spirit has come upon us to indwell us at the point of our salvation, *we are His witnesses*. There is no way around it in this awesome, Spirit-inspired Book. And if we have been called, then we may be equipped. But there is this one thing that is against us, that wars against us becoming equipped. We are hindered by the flesh—our _____ humanity holds us back. And *something specific* about our individual flesh holds us back. What is it that holds you back from being His most effective witness, fulfilling your God-given calling?

Is it shyness?

Or fear?

Or a lack of confidence?

Or a lack of passion?

Or is it something else?

What is hindering you from being the witness you are called to be?

An example of an unhindered witness:

1. Unhindered in his _____ (17-22).

Verses 17-20: It's because of Israel's Messiah that he's chained *and* under Roman guard. Paul believed with all his heart that “the messianic hope of Israel” was fully fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. But the Jews in Jerusalem did not share Paul's faith in Jesus. That was the central dispute between them. That's why he's in chains.

Verses 21-22: Christianity was widespread in Rome, so it's likely that they too spoke against it. But they wanted to hear Paul's take on *this sect*—the Greek word is *hairesis*, from which comes "heresies."

The only thing they could say about *this sect* was negative. But they're willing to give Paul his best shot at laying out his views. So, notice with me, that not even Paul's chains and a Roman guard could _____ him from being a faithful witness in obedience to His Messiah. It makes me wonder, if I am imprisoned for my faith, wearing literal chains for the hope that's in me, will I continue to testify for Jesus...

2. Unhindered in his _____ (23-24).

Before they arrived, these high society Jews were already prejudiced against Christianity. Their views were only negative. To them it was a wild offshoot of Judaism, a heretical sect. Did that stop Paul from testifying of the hope of Israel, the true Messiah of the Jewish faith? Clearly not. What's not so clear is if such negative views from people we engage in conversations about Jesus will hinder us.

Paul's calling was to testify, knowing he couldn't control outcomes. He tried to convince his Jewish brothers, but he knew most would reject the message. But that didn't hinder him from testifying. And that's the point. *Without the testimony, there would be _____ response.* And Paul would rather have a negative response than no response at all because he failed to testify about Jesus. How about you and me? Is a negative response more important to us than no response?

3. Unhindered in the face of _____ (25-28).

Stubborn refusal to believe results in spiritually deaf ears, blind eyes, and hard hearts. From Jerusalem, north to Syria, west across Asia, then throughout Europe, in one city after another, and now in Rome, most Jews rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. But rejection never hindered him. It only justified his turning to the Gentiles, to us folk! And that's why you and I are _____ today!

Even in the face of disbelief, Paul, and you, and I will not be hindered from engaging in conversations that prayerfully will lead to an opening to offer them their only hope! And just maybe someone will listen to the point of hearing, will see to the point of understanding, and their once lost soul will be saved.

4. Unhindered in his _____ (30-31).

You're not a preacher? But you are a *witness*. The only question before you and I is this: are we unhindered witnesses?

Paul lived two whole years chained and guarded, imprisoned in his own apartment, his likely source of income was missionary support from some of the churches he established. And one of his activities during this imprisonment was letter writing. The prison epistles came out of Rome: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

And Paul was allowed to receive anyone who wanted to stop by to talk to him. There was only one condition: you would hear the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, as for the Roman guards, they worked six-hour shifts. I wonder how many times they heard the proclamation of the gospel. Listen to this word from one of his prison letters, Philippians 1:12-13: "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me [in Rome] has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³**so that** it has become known **throughout the whole imperial guard** and to all the rest, that my imprisonment **is for Christ**."

And that's how the **Acts [the Actions] of the Apostles** ends, with a note of triumph! It ends as it began. "You shall be my witnesses...to the end of the earth." And here's Paul, being totally obedient to that call, bold and unhindered. But Acts is meant to continue with us, for we have the same call and commission on us, despite all obstacles, difficulties, and misunderstandings: **boldly witnessing without hinderance!**

What's holding you back?

And what's holding me back? My shyness does not have my permission to hold me back! So in the beach house last Sunday afternoon, I listened to Ned's great message about engaging in conversations, waiting in readiness for God to open a door through a question. What is it about you that's no longer going to hinder you from sharing your faith no matter what?