

UPHELD BY GOD

God's Word:

Acts 28:16-25a, 28-31

Key Verses:

"AND HE STAYED TWO FULL YEARS IN HIS OWN RENTED QUARTERS AND WAS WELCOMING ALL WHO CAME TO HIM, PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TEACHING CONCERNING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH ALL OPENNESS, UNHINDERED."

ACTS 28:30, 31



Breaking It Down:

Luke wrote the book of Acts. It is the second of a two-volume work. Acts gives an account of the birth and growth of the Christian church. It describes the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost upon those who were in the upper room (Acts 2). The Jerusalem church grew and so did the opposition. The opposition and persecution caused the believers to scatter to other countries where they shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:4-40).

Paul made four missionary journeys across the ancient world. After his third missionary trip, he returned to Jerusalem even though he knew that he could be arrested (Acts 20:22-22:32). Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Antipatris, then on to Caesarea under Roman guard. Paul appealed his case to Caesar and began his 2,000-mile journey to Rome. After storms, layovers in Crete, and shipwreck on the island of Malta, Paul arrived in Italy. He then traveled by land, under guard, to Rome (Acts 27:1-28:16).

Paul longed for the salvation of his Jewish brothers and sisters (Romans 9:2-3). He took no pleasure in their unbelief. He spoke with great pain when he



told King Agrippa that the Jews accused him of betrayal, when he was simply proclaiming the fulfillment of Jewish hopes and prophecy (Acts 26:7). But Paul looked at the unbelief of the Jewish nation as an opportunity for Gentiles to become grafted into the people of God (Romans 11:17).

The book of Acts is the chronicle of this rejection of Jesus by the Jews. It ends with Paul in Rome. He used this opportunity to preach Christ to the Jews there, but he received a mixed reception and many did not believe him. Paul saw that the Old Testament prophets not only spoke of the Messiah, but they also foresaw the unbelief of Israel. Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 to the crowd, a horrifying prediction of the rejection of God's message. Why did they come against Paul's preaching? Acts does not give us a specific reason. Whatever the case, Paul turns to the Gentiles with the offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 13:46; 28:28).



Living It:



Commitment to Jesus Christ is sometimes hard. We have so many distractions and hindrances that can cause us to lapse in our responsibility to share His Good News. Jesus had a lot of adversity to deal with as He walked the earth. However, He never allowed anyone or anything to stop Him from reaching the place He was destined to go – the cross. If Jesus can remain faithful in spite of all He had to endure, surely we can, too. We must not allow anyone or anything to hinder our commitments to Christ.

The world may not understand how we can remain faithful, but we know God is sustaining us.

In Frank Capra's classic film, "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," a simple, honest man from Vermont inherits a fortune and heads to New York City. There, many people try to take advantage of him to get some of his money. When he puts it to use helping the disadvantaged get back on their feet, distant relatives try to get him declared mentally incompetent so they could take over the money. In the end, Deeds proves his sanity, gets the girl, and is set free.

All too common in history for people to be accused of crimes of which they are innocent. Jesus experienced this, as did Socrates, Naboth (1 Kings 21:13), and Paul. If you have been falsely accused, you are in good company. People who have an evil

agenda will make false accusations against an innocent person to accomplish their own agenda.

Paul was accused and put in prison. Even so, he continued to preach and teach, and he wrote letters to churches and individuals. When you are falsely accused, will you handle it as well as he did?



Understanding It:

1. How was God's favor shown toward Paul in Rome?
2. How did Paul keep his commitment to God while imprisoned?
3. Paul was able to convince some, but not others, concerning Christ. How, if at all, is this encouraging to you as you try to share your faith with others?
4. Even though he was in prison, Paul continued to preach the Gospel. What do you think was the source of his boldness? How can you increase your boldness in sharing your faith?



Doing It!



This week, pray that God will give you the strength to keep your commitments. Always remember that God is present and in control over your circumstances. Testify to others of the faithfulness of God and how He has helped you keep your commitments.