

LIVINGHOPE

BIBLE CHURCH

46 | ACTS 28:17-31

WORTH IT ALL

Whatever you have to lose to know Christ better is worth it all.

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Call to Worship

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! ²Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble ³and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.—Psalm 107:1-3

Songs

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Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

Introduction

Would you say that you are truly happy in your walk with God at this moment in your life? God wants to give you real joy in your life, but there is a price to pay for it, and it is so incredibly worth it! This is the last message in the book of Acts, and we see Paul having lost everything, but gaining Christ, and it is worth it all. Whatever loss you incur to follow Christ, **it is worth it**. We see this lived out in our story from Paul's life. The book of Acts ends with Paul chained to a Roman soldier for two years preaching the kingdom of God. Paul was single minded. **He had one hope and one happiness: Jesus Christ.**

All of us know what it is like to give up in order to gain. **Athletes** give up free time and foods they like to gain strength and speed to play football. **Young couples** give up sleep, extra income, freedoms in order to gain children. **Students** give up hang-out time in order to gain the required grade on the test. **Fathers** give up unwind time in order to gain investment into their children. **Many** give up cookies and desserts in order to gain weight loss. **Christians** give up day off options in order to gain opportunities to serve Christ. As **faithful stewards**, we all lose a generous portion of OUR income in order to invest in heavenly riches. We are called to lose our lives for Christ. We hear this in Jesus' own words.

Matthew 10:39 | Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus also says that knowing him is like finding a buried treasure in a plot of land. You would sell everything just to buy that land.

Matthew 13:44 | The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

What am I saying? If you lose everything in pursuit of knowing Christ. It's worth it all. Paul says as much to the Philippians.

Philippians 3:8, KJV | Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

Paul finds himself in a very uncomfortable **situation of great loss**. It looks like he lost his church planting ministry. He lost his **earthly comfort** and **freedom** and is now chained to a Roman soldier.

Perhaps you find yourself **suffering loss** today. You've lost a **spouse** or a **child** or **both**. And you never dreamed life would be this way. You're **not where you thought you'd be** in your life or your walk with Jesus Christ. Perhaps you **have failed too often in marriage** or **singleness**. You feel like a **failure**.

I want to help you see that God is working to make you his glorious workmanship and masterpiece (Eph 2:10). He is the potter, and you are the clay. You are God's child, and

every loss you experience is an invitation to depend totally on Christ. Your total surrender to him means your total happiness and a harvest for the kingdom.

Key Thought: Whatever you have to lose to know Christ better is worth it all.

Paul lives this out in this conclusion to the book of Acts. You might wonder, “If I’m **stuck in a place of loss**, how do I get to a place where I count all as loss and find my contentment in Christ? How can I become content in Christ in all circumstances?” There is one answer: **focus on hope that is everlasting**.

Paul’s focus was cosmic, not myopic. How do we focus our affections on things above (Col 3:1-3)? Paul focused first on “the hope of Israel”—Jesus the Messiah had come! He had conquered death and risen from the dead for the redemption of his people.

1. THE HOPE OF ISRAEL (28:17-23)

It looks like everything is crashing down for Paul, but for Paul of course **the story was only just beginning**. **Everything he had done in his life was a preparation** for this moment ... when he was going to **stand before Caesar**.¹ He’s going to preach what he calls “the hope of Israel.” God’s people through the ages have had a hope, **that Messiah would come**. When Jesus comes, he dies, and then he rises again. Paul preached his glorious resurrection.

It was this very preaching of Jesus as the resurrected King that **irritated the Jewish authorities**.² The kingdom of Messiah, the hope of Israel, had finally arrived.

JESUS IS PRESENTED

Paul takes **three days to get settled into a rented lodging**, and then calls the local leaders of the Jews to him. He cannot make it to them, so he calls them to come to him where he is under house arrest by the Romans, waiting to appear before Caesar who is Nero at the time.

Acts 28:17-20 | 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.¹⁸ When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case.¹⁹ But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation.²⁰ 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**.”

The Jews had **several plots against Paul’s life**, so **he had to appeal to Caesar**, or else he would have already been set free. It worked out for the best since Paul was able

¹ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 239.

² MacArthur, *Acts*, vol. 2, 370.

to declare the true reason he was imprisoned: for **“the hope of Israel”** he says that he has to be shackled in chains.

JESUS IS PONDERED

This group of Jews from Rome had not yet heard about Jesus, and so they are curious.

Acts 28:21-22 | 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. ²² 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.”

It's a **wonderful invitation to preach the gospel** when these Jews had already heard bad things about “this sect” of believers. By this time, they had heard that it is “everywhere spoken against,” but they didn't know why. They desired to hear Paul out. What a great opportunity for Paul to go “to the Jew first,” and then to the Gentiles.

JESUS IS PREACHED

Paul upholds Jesus as the fulfillment of all of the Scriptures. We read in verse 23.

Acts 28:23 | 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.

Jesus' teaching on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), profoundly influenced and shaped all of the apostles in Acts, and this is the driving focus to the end of the narrative.³

Paul was under attack for **simply being a loyal, Jew who is faithful to the Messiah**. He was following the **hope of Abraham, the hope of all Israel, from Adam until now**. The Seed of the woman would be born as a Jew, under the law. This was Israel's hope.

Paul showed how Christ is seen in the great messianic prophecies found in Isaiah, the Psalms, and elsewhere. He confronted them with the need for personally accepting Jesus as Messiah and personal Savior and thus to enter the kingdom of God.⁴

Israel's hope, Jesus, would be born of a “virgin” (Isa 7:14), born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). He would be the true word of God, a prophet greater than Moses (Deut 18:15). The Messiah would be rejected by his people, betrayed by his own (Psa 41:9), and “pierced for our transgressions” (Isa 53:5). He himself says, “They have pierced my hands and feet” (Psa 22:16). And then according to the Scriptures, he would rise again on the third day (Hos 6:2). These are just a few of the prophecies Paul would have considered.

Paul took an entire day **“from morning till evening”** telling them about Jesus of Nazareth, **God in human flesh**, testifying that Jesus is the King over the kingdom of God. Every knee must bow to him. Every tongue must confess.

The hope is for Messiah to come into the world and redeem a people, so that he would take our sin upon himself, and he would give us his righteousness (2 Cor 5:21).

³ James M. Hamilton Jr. and Brian J. Vickers, *John–Acts*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. IX, ESV Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 579.

⁴ J. Phillips, *Exploring Acts*, Ac 28:23.

As Messiah, Jesus is not only Savior of the world, but he is the Judge of all the earth. If you don't bow to him now, you will be judged for all your sins on the Last Day.

Each believer is called to evangelize and present the gospel to sinners. The response is not our responsibility. We are called to present the hope of salvation to all people. Jesus said,

John 12:32 | When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

Are you in the word, hiding the Scriptures in your heart, so that when the time comes, you can present the gospel to your loved ones, friends, and neighbors?

2. THE HOPE OF SALVATION (28:24-29)

Our hope for salvation is Jesus alone. What we find here is that the hope of salvation is the kingdom of a certain king. He is the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. Paul turns his prison cell into an evangelism center and testifies to "the kingdom of God" where Jesus is king.

THE PERIL OF REJECTING CHRIST

Paul did not sugarcoat salvation. Jesus alone is King of kings. When many of the others disbelieved, Paul warned them. There are eternal consequences. **Some of Paul's hearers were gloriously convinced and converted**, while **others rejected** the Messiah.

Acts 28:24-27 | And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. ²⁵ 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: ²⁶ "Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." ²⁷ 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.'

Paul quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10 to warn them of judgment, and to again call for their repentance so that they would hear and understand with their heart, and turn, and the Lord says, "I would heal them." Yet there were those there who didn't want the Messiah's healing.

John 1:11 | He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

For those Jews who rejected Paul, giving this passage to them is **a moment of final judicial warning**.

This is a divine judgment upon them because they hardened their hearts to the word of God. God's word brings the diagnosis of sin, which is painful to hear and accept, but at the same time **it wounds in order to heal**. Once a person deliberately refuses the word,

there comes a point when he is deprived of the capacity to receive it. It is a stern warning to those who trifle with the gospel.⁵

The point is, **if you feel a tenderness to God's word, don't put it off.** Respond immediately and wholeheartedly no matter what the cost. You are not guaranteed a second chance. God may give you over to a hard heart. Ponder the claims of Christ and respond in tenderness. Don't delay!

THE PRIZE OF RECEIVING CHRIST

Paul now attempts to make the Jews jealous. He says that the Gentiles will receive what they have rejected.

Acts 28:28-29 | Therefore let it be known to you that **this salvation of God** has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." ²⁹ (NKJV) And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

The Jews disputed over this great gift that was given to them. Paul gives more understanding in Romans as to what the Jews rejection of the gospel means. In Romans 11, he says that the Gentiles are called to salvation in order to make the Jews jealous.

Romans 11:11-12 | Through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

Though the Jews rejected Christ, **God's desire for them was for them to be saved** (Rom 11:26). Paul's desire them to be saved **so much that he was willing to be accursed**, damned to hell.

Romans 9:1-3 | I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

The hope of salvation for Israel and the Gentiles is Jesus Christ alone. Now is not a time for dispute or argumentation. It is a time to surrender to the kingdom of God that Paul preached where Jesus is King of kings. Yield your life to him today.

Christ is worth the loss of all things! Paul was teaching these things while he was without home and chained to a Roman soldier. **What have you lost for Christ?** Take heart! He has given you something of an **infinite worth: salvation in Christ!**

3. THE HOPE OF THE WORLD (28:30-31)

Regardless of the Jews disputing among themselves, this salvation and hope was not just for Israel, but for the whole world.

Galatians 3:6-9, NLT | "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." ⁷ The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. ⁸ What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time

⁵ Marshall, *Acts*, 445.

when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, “All nations will be blessed through you.”⁹ So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

Israel’s hope is your hope. And Paul tells us that we as believing Gentiles are “grafted in” to Israel (Rom 11:17).

Now, if you have faith in Jesus, “then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29).

FIRST SAVED

When I was first saved, I thought, “If this is really true, then the whole world needs to know.” I still believe that today. Paul believed it too. Wherever he was, even when he’s incarcerated, he’s preaching Jesus.

Paul is in his own **rented home, which was his jail cell**. He wasn’t free to travel and plant churches, but he couldn’t have known the worldwide impact his ministry would have from that moment until now. For now Paul had a new ministry.

A NEW MINISTRY

Paul’s **entire ministry** was now **confined to a rented room** that served as his prison cell. The situation remained with Paul under house arrest but free to witness to anyone who came within earshot.

Acts 28:30 | He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him.

Paul was chained to a soldier day and night, so **he at least had one Roman soldier in his audience at all times**. He was not at liberty to go where he wished, but he was at liberty to receive all who cared to come to him.

Why did Paul have to be confined? We ponder the mystery of God’s plans and ways for us. God, through Isaiah, reminds us that he has all the cards. He knows how your rugged, discouraging pathway will lead you closer to Christ.

Isaiah 55:8-9 | My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We do not know all the reasons, though indeed **we are indebted to Paul’s imprisonment** for his epistles to the **Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, not to mention 1 and 2nd Timothy and Titus**. Paul’s prolonged captivity is part of the Lord’s unsearchable ways. We can be sure, however, that the Lord of the harvest, who is in charge of the entire mission program of the church, makes no mistakes.⁶

AN OLD MESSAGE

Paul’s message never changed. It wasn’t just forgiveness of sins, although that was the foundation. What did Paul preach?

⁶ J. Phillips, *Exploring Acts*, Ac 28:30a.

Acts 28:31a | Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul taught about Christ as King over our lives and over the world. That's the **pathway to true joy**. Be **willing to lose everything** for Christ. How sweet he is when he's all you have! Surrender to him. Walk with him. He's coming soon! Very soon the nature of this world will change with all things under the headship of Jesus Christ. Heaven and earth will become one. Our **greatest joys on earth will seem like misery** compared to the glorified joy that awaits us.

A GLORIOUS FREEDOM

Paul's hired house in Rome became the headquarters of world evangelism. He could not go, but others could. People flocked to him.

Acts 28:31b | Teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Paul taught and led people to Christ, won **many of the Roman soldiers** who were guarding him (Phil 1:13–18), and led several within **“Caesar's household”** (Phil 4:22) to Christ. Do you see that the **loss of everything means nothing** to the surrendered Christian? You can be **happy and fruitful** right where you are.

And that is where Luke puts down his pen. He gives us this final glimpse of Paul, living victoriously despite his captivity in Rome. What better place could there be to end the inspired written history of the Christian church—not just looking back but looking ahead!⁷

4. PAUL'S HOPE AND OURS

Paul is in Rome for two whole years, and then he is **set free** for a time. During this time, it seems **he meets Titus and establishes a church** in Crete.

THE OUTPOST OF PAUL'S HOPE

The outpost of Paul's hope was a jailcell of the worst kind. Sometime after the fire in Rome, Nero starts an awful persecution against Christians, and Paul is arrested for a final time, probably around the year 67. **This time his situation was changed drastically**. Paul did not live in a house but was chained in the dreaded Mamertine prison and **treated like a convicted criminal** (2 Tim 1:16; 2:9). According to church history, **Peter and Paul were imprisoned** at the same time at the **Mamertine prison**. It consists of two chambers, one above the other. Sallust describes the lower chamber, as a horrible dungeon, “repulsive and terrible on account of neglect, dampness, and smell.”⁸ It has now been turned into a church since the middle ages. The cells they were held in were made available for those who were V.I.P.s who were a threat to the state.⁹

⁷ J. Phillips, *Exploring Acts*, Ac 28:30b–31.

⁸ Sallust, *Jugurthine War and Conspiracy of Catiline With an English Commentary, and Geographical and Historical Indexes*, “Chapter 55” (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 11841), 286.

⁹ Maurice Hassett, “Mamertine Prison” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), vol. 9, New Advent edition online.

The Mamertine Prison was **nothing more than a glorified hole in the ground**, yet it was the holding tank where Paul and Peter—as part of Nero’s crackdown on Christians—spent the last days of their lives on earth. **While there Paul wrote some of his most important letters, including the two to young Timothy.** The conditions were **deplorable**. The author’s feet were bound. The damp, cold musty air was barely breathable. The iron grate covering the lone entry allowed dust-filled light as well as rain and cold to pour in. And though Paul never complained about his inhumane conditions, the prison was the perfect setting to write to young Timothy about perseverance and endurance, since Paul was living it!

Look at Paul. He’s truly suffering at the end. **He’s lost everything.** Everything! Yet he has everything he needs in Christ. When he is weak, he’s strong, and the power of Christ rests upon him.

JOHN BUNYAN

It reminds me of the story of **John Bunyan**. At age thirty, Bunyan started preaching. But, as any seasoned pastor knows, preaching is never easy. And, because **Bunyan lacked governmental approval** to preach, he was picked up by the police, hauled off to jail, and tossed into a prison cell for the **disgraceful act of preaching without a license**. The nerve!

Finally, after three months of confinement, he was brought before the local magistrate and offered a full pardon on one condition: “Stop preaching the gospel!” But that was something John Bunyan couldn’t do. So back into the slammer he went—**twelve more years** of incarceration in the **Bedford city jail**. He waived his chance at freedom because, more than freedom, preaching was an even greater gift. No conditional pardon could satisfy the heart that must proclaim God’s Word. But our God is never hemmed in by seemingly impenetrable walls. In fact, it was from that cell that **Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress***—next to the Bible the most widely read book in the world, serving as the No. 2 bestseller for centuries.

Paul had lost everything but chose to **stay focused on his only joy: Christ!** Paul didn’t have a pity party, but was joyful! He was the chief of sinners, and he had been given the gift of eternal life. Paul offered that gift to all, even from the hole in the ground, the Mamertine prison.

THE OUTCOME OF PAUL’S HOPE

The outcome of Paul’s hope was to be glorified in Christ. He left this life behind. He was sentenced to death by beheading under the reign of Nero. In Paul’s last letter to Timothy, he speaks of his firm hope in Christ. He’s sentenced to death but is unafraid.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 | The time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Paul is said to have died in October of 67 A.D., the fourteenth year of Nero’s reign (*cf* Jerome, Eusebius). Clement of Rome in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 5:5–6, written around 96 A.D., almost thirty years after Paul’s death says this of great apostle.

By reason of jealousy and strife Paul by his example displayed the prize of patient endurance. After he had been imprisoned seven times, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest reaches of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance.¹⁰

Jerome later says that Paul and Peter were martyred the same day, Peter through crucifixion and Paul through beheading.

Paul, then, in the fourteenth year of Nero on the same day with Peter, was beheaded at Rome for Christ's sake and was buried in the Ostian way, the twenty-seventh year after our Lord's passion.¹¹

Paul lost everything, even his head! Think about that. What a seemingly short ministry Paul had. **Less than twenty-seven years**. His secret was his joy in Jesus Christ alone. He didn't put his joy in anything else. All else was dung to Paul. **For Paul, losing everything was worth it all!** Remember what he said to the Philippians? May this be our theme too!

Philippians 1:21 | For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Conclusion

During the gymnastics portion of the 1976 Olympics a **Japanese athlete** named **Shun Fujimoto** broke his leg during one of his **floor routines**, and he tried to hide it. As the competition turned out, the last day's performances on the **rings** would **determine** whether the **championship** went to the **Japanese** or the **Russians**.

Despite his leg being broken, the injured athlete mounted the rings for a final performance on the rings, swinging so high above the ground. The **look of pride** on his face was magnificent. But there was also **obvious anguish** as from ten feet above the ground he came hurtling to the floor for his dismount, **landing on his broken leg**. His **fighting spirit** made him **invincible**. With his goal firmly in mind, he refused to quit, no matter how severe the pain. He kept his balance, earning the **best score** of his life despite his broken leg. It was literally the best he'd ever done. **He was willing to lose everything** just to win a temporary Olympic medal.¹²

Paul lost everything, but he had one thing that **changed the world**: his **love** for Jesus Christ. What about you? Are you willing to be that **vessel that God can use**?

Where Acts 28 ends, your story begins. Don't let anything hold you back. Be willing to lose everything for Christ. Christ is the lamb who was slain, and he deserves the reward for his suffering. Lift him up! Lift him high. Proclaim his name, and he will draw all men to him. **Whatever you have to lose** for knowing Christ and making him know is **worth it all!**

¹⁰ Clement of Rome, *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, 5:5–6 in Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations* (New York: Macmillan, 1890), 274.

¹¹ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* (On Illustrious Men), 5. See also Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 2.25.

¹² Paul Jones, "Olympics: How Japanese Gymnast Shun Fujimoto Hid His Broken Knee to Lead His Country to Gold" (London: Radio Times, August 8, 2016).