

## The Conclusion of Acts by Pastor Kurt Hoover

### Litany based on Psalm 33

Leader: Let all the earth fear the Lord;

**All: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**

Leader: For He spoke, and it came to be;

**All: he commanded, and it stood firm.**

Leader: The counsel of the Lord stands forever,

**All: the plans of His heart to all generations.**

Leader: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,

**All: the people whom He has chosen as His heritage!**

Leader: We worship you, Lord, In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and The Holy Spirit.

**Acts 1:4-11** <sup>4</sup>And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” <sup>7</sup>He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>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.” <sup>9</sup>And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, <sup>11</sup>and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

**Romans 8:9-11** <sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the

body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

**Acts 28:16-20, 30** <sup>16</sup> And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. <sup>19</sup> But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. <sup>20</sup> 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.”

<sup>30</sup> He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

*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.”  
-Acts 28:20*

Chains... What do you think of when you hear the word chain? I grew up each summer with my dad working at the marina. There were chains everywhere. Big heavy chains for the bouys, for the dock, ... chains used to winch the boats onto their trailers.

Big heavy, dirty chains.

Maybe you think of a delicate chain of gold that bears a precious family heirloom around your neck? Or you may think as Paul was alluding of the chains that shackle us to our past, to our mistakes... a restraint a punishment for criminals who deserve their captivity.

The ending of Acts takes us to Rome, where Paul was placed on house arrest. He may have literally had a chain around his ankles, the equivalent of the modern-day security boot. He may have been chained to his Roman guard. Or it may have been simply a metaphor that Paul uses several times in his letters to the early churches to describe his imprisonment. His embarrassment. To himself and to his people. To the early Christians who were first given the presence of Jesus through the good news shared by Paul.

In this last chapter he is appealing one last time to the Jewish synagogue in Rome. But, his audience was much greater. Because of his chains, because of his imprisonment... because of his embarrassment he was able to share the good news of God's mighty works with the court of several different kings. In Jerusalem and finally on trial in Rome. This is perhaps the greatest historical proof of the faith. That the center of the known world, the center of the Roman empire became the seat of the church. To this day Vatican City in Rome is the home of St. Peter's Basilica and the Pope.

By 300 AD Christianity had become so influential that Caesar declared it the official religion of the Roman empire, which would later become the Holy Roman Empire encompassing not only the Mediterranean churches but all of Europe.

One of the oldest Christian traditions comes out of Africa and Ethiopia. The Chaldean Catholic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Syriac Orthodox in modern day Iraq and Iran date back to the early churches that Paul visited.

Christianity, the *Hope of Isreal* that Paul describes at the end of Acts is still the most influential work of God to save his lost and distracted children throughout the world.

*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."*  
-Acts 28:20

What do you think of when you hear the word chain? What is it in this world that has and continues to take you captive?

What are the mistakes and embarrassments that have and may continue to bind you? And how is it that God has set you free? How is it that God has used your chains as a witness to Him?

This is the heart of Paul's message, the heart of the good news. That not in spite of your weaknesses, but when we fall short, when we come to the end of our own abilities ... it is then that the Spirit of God is most present. Speaking words of forgiveness that you and the lost children of Isreal so desperately need to hear.

This is how Paul says it in his letter to the church in Rome.

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. - Romans 8:9-11

This is good news. And this is your good news.

The things that take captive of you today have been conquered... they do not get the final word. You are a forgiven child who has

life after death. You are a vessel for God who has life now! You are the Kingdom of God.

The Disciples ask an interesting question at the beginning of Acts. They ask Jesus when he will restore the Kingdom of God. They are picturing the world domination of culture and religion that did begin to happen 300 years later. But the reality is that the Kingdom had been restored the moment Jesus had entered their lives. That faithful day by the seashore when they dropped everything to follow him. The Kingdom of God is every moment in our lives when Jesus enters in and His Spirit bumps into the world around us, through us.

This is where we are headed this summer. We will be following the Gospel of Matthew through the call of the disciples and the several different ministries we are called into. Ministry for the least, to the Heavy Laden, our ministry of words, ministry among weeds, ministry to the treasured, ministry for the hungry and distracted, the undeserving and to those who are bound.

The Kingdom of God is and has been here the whole time. Wherever one or two are gathered in His name. In our daily conversations and interactions.

And this Kingdom does not depend on your abilities or worldly power for its influence. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ in the leaven of daily interactions which still remains the most influential force this world has ever known.

You are the Kingdom, God promise to a lost and distracted world.