

BECAUSE OF THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

Acts 28,16-31
Key Verse 28,20b

„It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with chain.“

We are here to remember and celebrate two historical days. Congratulations on the 44th Anniversary of Pioneering Bonn UBF. Congratulations to five shepherds who are anointed by God today! An anniversary is wonderful time to remember the great works God has done and to express our gratitude by giving Him all glory, honor, and thanks. It is also time to check if we live by the word of God, then renew our faith and vision through repentance and decision of faith.

To do so, we earnestly long to hear the Word of God through Acts 28. By learning Apostle Paul's faith, life and vision, we may also serve God's redemptive History with the same faith and vision until Our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. With joy, we may bear any chains because of the hope of Israel. We may proclaim the Kingdom of God and teach the gospel of Jesus with all boldness and without hindrance.

Part 1. Because of the Hope of Israel (16-20)

Look at 16. "When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed live by himself, with a soldier to guard him." "We got to Rome!" Those who have studied the book of Acts through FS know how amazing and remarkable moment this was. At last Paul had arrived in Rome, but in chain as a criminal. He was confined in his own rented house with soldiers to guard him, waiting for Caesar's trial. It seemed insignificant. However, it was the moment when God's divine word to Paul was fulfilled.

So, what did Paul do as the first thing? As he had always done, he began with the Jews. Look at verses 17-20. Three days after his arrival in Rome, Paul called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he simply explained the reasons for his imprisonment. He had never done anything against his people or against the customs of his ancestors. Though Romans wanted to release him, as they found nothing deserving death, he had to appeal to Caesar due to the persistent hostility of the Jews. Paul did not blame the Jews for his imprisonment but testified to God's sovereignty, revealing the true reason behind his chain.

Look at verse 20. "For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain." He was bound with the chain, not because of the Jews, but because of the Hope of Israel. What is the hope of Israel? It is Jesus, the Messiah. This hope of Israel is the Hope of salvation by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. The hope of Israel refers to God's promise to restore His people through faith in Jesus as the kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex19:5-6) so, that Israel become a source of blessing for all nations. This Hope of Israel is the hope of salvation by faith in Jesus for the Jews and also the Gentiles. So, because of this hope of Israel, Paul was willing to be bound with chain, appealing to Caesar.

It might be ever since God's divine calling for him. Paul, originally named Saul of Tarsus,

was a Pharisee, a defender of Judaism, and a persecutor of the early church. He was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians. On his way, he was encountered and captured by the Risen Christ for His divine purpose. In Acts 9:15-16, the risen Christ said, "...This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Since then, Paul undertook three missionary journeys across the Roman Empire to proclaim the gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles. Preaching the gospel, he endured tremendous hardships: he had been in prison frequently, been flogged severely, been exposed to death again and again; he received the lashes five times; beaten with rods three times; shipwrecked 3 times; he spent a night and a day in the open sea; he had been in danger from everyone and everywhere. It may sound like he had committed terrible crimes, such as mass murder. But it was all for one reason: The Hope of Israel. For the sake of the Hope of Israel, Paul had bore all chains.

Especially to fighting against Judaism, Paul was bound with this chain as a Jewish Law-breaker. He underwent trials before the crowd, the Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa, ultimately appealing to Caesar. What if Paul had compromised with Judaism? he would have been set free long ago. However, the Jews would have remained in their sin of pride as God's chosen people, still enslaved under the law, and endlessly burdened by the guilt of sin. The Gentiles would have remained in their hopelessness, trapped under the power of sin. Both Jews and Gentiles would have perished without the hope of salvation.

That was why Paul could not compromise, but fought the fight of faith by holding the truth that Jesus is the Messiah; Jesus is the only Hope of salvation for the Jews and for the Gentiles. The more Paul suffered, the brighter the truth shone—that Jesus is the one true hope for all. Believing in the Risen Christ as the Sovereign Lord, Paul remained faithful to his calling. Believing in the Sovereign Lord, he endured all sufferings as part

of God's plan to advance the Gospel; he could be courageous and rejoice in chain even.

To fight against Humanism in Germany and Europe, a servant of God had bore a chain as a fundamentalist. What if he had compromised with humanism? He would have been called a nice grand-father. However, in his church, there would no longer be the absolute truth of God, nor any true obedience to His word. Without the absolute truth of God, the church would become dead, merely a social gathering. However, for the hope of Israel, holding firmly to God's word as the absolute truth, Paul had bore many chains. Bearing chains is no joke. It was so painful, as if his heart was being torn out. Yet, as he endured the chains, the Word of God gained authority and power in the church. The church became a living church of God, full of truth and life. His children and his grandchildren acknowledged him as a man of God, and find the truth of God in the Bible and grow to become world Mission Co-workers, especially for M-mission.

To stand against humanism, a young man bore the burden of being seen as an irresponsible husband or father all while holding firmly to Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. If he had compromised, he would have become a slave to humanism and remained as a noble husband or a victim of evil. However, for the hope of Israel, he had endured chains, holding onto the word of God – Seek first his kingdom and righteousness. By putting his faith in Christ, he wholeheartedly served the next generation through Bible studies and life together. In time, the next generation saw the living truth reflected in his life. They accepted him as a man of God, followed him as their true shepherd, and learned from him. Through his example, they also discovered the shining truth: that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. he has grown to be a shepherd for all God's flock.

This hope of Israel is the hope of all nations. By faith in Jesus Christ, all nations will become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Because this hope, Mother Sarah Berry, who

was the princess of Mississippi, had poured out her life, even her marriage, to serve Korean campus students with the gospel of Jesus. At her age 23, she went to Korea as a missionary. Nothing could explain why such beautiful young lady went to Korea. The hope of Israel motivated her, empowered her to be a source of blessing for many lost souls in Korean and then all over the world.

I wonder why God let Bonn UBF had bore many chains for years. In such way, God has made Bonn UBF to be a living church with full of the word of life, with full of the Spirit of God. It is to make you to be "the city on a hill," so that people may find the light of life, the way of truth. Though you could compromise and chose an easy way out, you didn't do so. Instead, you have fought the good fight of faith against Humanism, Materialism, and Zeitgeist by holding onto the word of God through GLEF, IBS, Early Morning Prayer, Bible Studies, Testimony writing and sharing, Master courses, and life-together. For the hope of Israel; For the hope of Germany and Europe and even Middle East, you have bore many chains and God refines you to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Here, I can testify that among you, the word of God grow in power with authority and change you to be spiritual giant; among you, the word of God is living and active with power and authority.

Let us read Verse 20b. "It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with chain." Thank God for all the shepherds who dedicate their lives to God today. If you want to live for the hope of Israel, you cannot avoid these chains. Fighting against humanism, you might be called heartless; fighting against materialism, you might be called dumb or crazy person. However, when you bore such chains for the hope of Israel, you will grow to be spiritual leaders; many will find the word of life and many will come to you to hear the word of God.

At my age 48, I made the decision to be full time servant of God. I did not know what the Pentateuch, nor the five books of Moses. Still, I made the decision because of the hope of

America, Jesus Christ. Many consider that money is their hope and serve the money. However, Money is not true hope of salvation, but Jesus Christ only. To fight against the power of money, I had to hold onto one word "Have faith in God." Many asked - how you support your 3 children who are going to be college students? How could you pay Mortgage? How could you let you weak and sick wife to work full time? Sitting on the desk, what are you doing all day? Isn't it better to get a job? How many American students are in NJ? People want to get profits or interests or fruit right away. Otherwise, they turn around and leave. All I have done for the past 6 years are study the Bible and teach the Bible through GLEF and IBS by holding onto one word "Have Faith in God." In this way, God empowered me to overcome Materialism, and plant the word of God in the hearts Dream Team and Vision Team faithfully like a farmer. All this is simply for the Hope of Israel, Jesus Christ. On God's time, God will bless NJ to have spiritual harvest 30, 60, 100 times over that I have sown. Pray for NJ ministry to plant the words of God by studying and teaching the bible faithfully with the vision to have 7000 harvest. Let us read Verse 20b. "It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with chain."

Part II. Paul's One-on-One Bible Study in a Rented House (21-31)

Paul chose to be in chain for the sake of the Hope of Israel. Then, how did the Jews in Rome respond to Paul? Look at verses 21-22. They replied that they had not received any letters from Judea concerning Paul, and none of the brothers had come to say anything bad about him. But, out of curiosity, they wanted to hear His view on the sect, the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. They set the day to meet him. On that day, even larger numbers of Jews came to hear him.

Look at what Paul testified to them in verse 23. "He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from

the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus.”

Here Paul did not defend himself. Rather, he boldly spoke to them about the Kingdom of God and about Jesus. He tried desperately, by patiently expounding to them many of the great passages in the Law and the Prophets, to convince them that Jesus is indeed Messiah. What a magnificent Bible study this must have been—lasting from morning till evening—with the best Bible teacher, who had deep knowledge of the Old Testament and also compassion for them.

Then, how did the Jews respond? Though some were convinced, nobody responded by faith. (24-25) However, Paul was not discouraged or despaired. Rather, he accepted their rejections as the fulfillment of the prophesy from Isaiah. Look at verse 26-27. “Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.” For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” This Words of God had been given to the Israelites who were about to be destroyed by the Babylonians due to their hardened and unrepentant hearts. By quoting those words of Isaiah, Paul was giving the warning to the Jews that they would face the same consequences of God’s judgments.

Look at verse 28. He also accepted this rejection as part of God’s divine plan to open the door for the Gentiles to receive the gospel, ultimately to bring salvation to the Jews through their jealousy of the Gentiles.

In reality, Paul was confined in his rented house. Though he might have some freedom within the house, still it was a prison. He could not visit synagogues for he was still chained day and night to a Roman guards. What would you do if you were in Paul’s place?

Look at verses 30-31. “For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ – with all boldness and without hindrance!”

First of all, he proclaimed the kingdom of God with all boldness and without hindrance.

It was the beginning of the Golden Age of Rome, known as the Pax Romana (Roman Peace). All kings and kingdoms had surrendered under the Roman Empire. The emperor was heralded as a god. Anyone who refused to worship him would be thrown into a prison or rejected and killed as a traitor. Nevertheless, in Rome – the center of Roman Empire – Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God. Paul proclaimed that “God reigns,” not Caesar. And the kingdom of God will come through Jesus. At first, Jesus came to redeem us from our sins through sacrificing himself on a cross. But he will come as the righteous judge and bring His holy people to the glorious Kingdom of God. This kingdom of God is the living hope for all believers.

Second of all, Paul taught about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

In such environment, Paul taught the word of God. What did this fact tell about his faith? Paul believed that the word of God has the power to conquer and change the world. So, Rome Empire would be conquered by the gospel and through her, the gospel of Jesus will reach to all nations. What a faith and vision Paul had!

Then, with such faith and vision, what did he do? He taught the word of God with all boldness. Though he was in the house, the Roman government provided him Bible Students, the rotating soldiers to guard. For two years, he was chained to four different guards each day. So, he would have had 2,920 1:1 Bible Studies. His rented house, a prison, turned out to be the best Bible school in Rome.

Though he was physically confined, the word of God never be chained. When Paul devoted to the Bible Study for 2 years, the gospel of Jesus had reached to soldiers after soldiers, officers after officers and their family members and even Causer's household. Then, his faith in the power of God's word was realized in reality. In AD 391, the Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity as the official state religion. From a historical perspective, Paul's Bible Study and Disciple-making ministry had changed the courses of the History by transforming the Roman Empire into a Christian nation.

Here we can learn about the secret of 1:1 Bible study ministry that changes the history of the world. One 1:1 Bible Study seems insignificant. However, Paul served one sheep with all his strength as if he served one nation. No matter who came to him, he never ignored him, never despised him. He accepted him, served him and taught him until he came to know the gospel of Jesus. Just as God served one man Abram to be a source of blessing for all nations, he served one sheep with all his strength until he grows to be a great nation. Serving one sheep with 1:1 bible study, Paul carried out God's world mission command.

Look at verse 31 – the last verse of the book of Acts. "He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ – with all boldness and without hindrance!" His faith in the word of God – the gospel of Jesus – motivated him, empowered him to carry out 1:1 Bible Study no matter what. Believing in the transforming power of the word of God, we may carry out one-on-one Bible study; we may proclaim the kingdom of God and teach the gospel of Jesus with all boldness and without hindrance.

We may learn Paul's faith and vision. Do you believe that our bible study will change 1700 Campus in Europe into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation? Do you have the vision that Europe, Middle-East, and America will be a holy nation? What would you do with this faith? Teach the Bible with all boldness and without hindrance.

The book of Acts ends abruptly as if there might be another chapter. The book of Acts is no end because God is still working for salvation of sinners through men and women who have inherited Paul's faith and vision. The rest of the record is being written still today.

Acts Ch29 might begin with the story of Timothy in Ephesus, Titus in Crete, and Aquila & Priscilla in Corinth in the first century. It might be followed by the story of Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch in the second century. And then the story of Irenaeus of Lyons (130-202) who fought against heresies in the early church and Augustine of Hippo (354-430) who shaped Christian theology on justification by grace through faith. I cannot list all the great man of God in History.

It is truly a great privilege and joy to be part of this divine record. I believe that somewhere in Acts ch29, there is the story of Sh. Peter Schweitzer who has devoted his life for campus mission in Bonn, the story Sh. Jochen Schweitzer, Sh. Warmherz Elsholz who have taught the word of God by faith.

Also, there will the story of brothers Noah and David Schweitzer; and Samuel A. Chang and Joshua Elsholz who overcame the pattern of the world and devote their lives for M Mission. Somewhere there is also story about Sh. Olaf who has been faithful to God.

The story of Bonn UBF for the past 44 years would fill more than 44 pages because she has done all things by faith and for the glory of God. Though some big church could not be written at all because everything had been done according to Humanism. By proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, we may continue to write the book of Acts.

Today we learned that Paul's faith, life and vision. He was bounded in chain because of the Hope of Israel. Still, he believed in the power of the word of God, the power to bring salvation to everyone who believes in Jesus,

so that he taught the word of God with all boldness!!

The hope of Europe is not no economic prosperity. The hope of Europe is Jesus Christ. May God bless Bonn UBF to establish 10,000 one –on-one bible study teams, so that Europe will be a missionary-sending continent again. We may fight against Humanism by studying, accepting and teaching the word of God as the absolute truth of God to obey. Believing in the power of God's word, we may build up 120 mission base camp for M-mission. By proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus, as Paul did, we may serve God's redemptive History in this generation.