

Theme: The book of Acts closes with a bold, unhindered proclamation of the Gospel - in spite of all the oppositions of Satan and the world - which guarantees a glorious thriving future for the Church and the kingdom of God.

## I. Intro – A Great Ending

- A. George Orwell's *1984*
- B. Powerful story of tyranny
- C. Winston had hated and fought Big Brother
- D. The chilling ending - conveys Orwell's warning
- E. Endings often tell us the real purpose of the book
- F. How does Luke end Acts?

## II. The Structure of the Book of Acts

- A. A structure to show thriving growth
  - 1. Acts 1:8 - thriving growth by the Spirit
  - 2. Growth summaries (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20)
  - 3. Conclusion - a thriving future (28:30-31)
  - 4. Bookends - Jesus & the kingdom (1:1-3; 28:30-31)
    - a. 1:1-3 - Jesus teaching apostles about kingdom
    - b. 28:30-31 - Apostle teaching all about Jesus & kingdom
- B. The conclusion - a thriving future (28:30-31 details)
  - 1. Provision - two whole years at his own expense
  - 2. Openness & Interest - welcomed all who came to him
  - 3. Message - kingdom and Jesus!

- 4. Freedom - all boldness & without hindrance
  - a. Stott quote on the connotation of *parresia* (boldness)
  - b. Last words in book (ESV/NIV 2011; old NIV moved)
  - c. Positive ending - even if in jail!

## III. Thriving - No Matter What!

- A. Without hindrance????
  - 1. No hindrance - Paul is in jail!!!
  - 2. Why would Luke say this?
- B. No hindrance can stand in the way of God's Word!
  - 1. Luke has shown thriving growth throughout Acts
  - 2. There have also been obstacles throughout Acts
    - a. Remember Garey's teaching last week
    - b. A small fearful group - until Pentecost!
    - c. Early threats and persecution
    - d. Internal divisions - Ananias & Sapphira; widows bread
    - e. Martyrdom of Stephen; Saul persecution
    - f. Rejection of Jewish leaders
    - g. Growing opposition from Rome
  - 3. Yet through it all the Church has thrived!
  - 4. The promises of God to His people
    - a. Isa 54:17 - no weapon formed shall prosper
    - b. 2 Tim 2:8-9 - God's word is not bound!

#### **IV. A Thriving History - And Future!**

##### A. Consider how the church has thrived

1. From Abraham to Jesus - mainly Israel
2. During next 30 years - Paul is in Rome!
3. The church spread through Roman empire
4. The church has continued to spread until today
5. The church is growing rapidly around the world

##### B. Consider how the church has thrived in spite of opposition

1. The church has always had opposition
2. The infant church was opposed by Rome
3. Persecutions under Nero, Domitian, Diocletian
4. Church seemingly lost her way and the Gospel
5. But God saved the Church - and she thrived
6. Many oppose God's Gospel & people today
7. But the Gospel and the church will thrive!

#### **V. Applying the Word**

##### A. Do we see the opposition to God's kingdom?

1. Make no mistake - it is real!
2. Satan & the world oppose the Gospel at every turn
3. The church will not thrive if she expects to be popular

##### B. Do we see that God will triumph in and through us?

1. He has promised - and He will deliver!
2. We do not see tomorrow - but we do know the end
3. God calls us to live in faith rather than fear
4. God calls us to be bold in proclaiming Christ

##### C. Coming to the Table - Garey

#### **A Thriving Future**

Acts 28:30-31  
November 20, 2011  
Communion  
Genesis 12:2-3

The voice from the telescreen was still pouring forth its tale of prisoners and booty and slaughter, but the shouting outside had died down a little. The waiters were turning back to their work. One of them approached with the gin bottle. Winston, sitting in a blissful dream, paid no attention as his glass was filled up. He was not running or cheering any longer. He was back in the Ministry of Love, with everything forgiven, his soul white as snow. He was in the public dock, confessing everything, implicating everybody. He was walking down the white-tiled corridor, with the feeling of walking in sunlight, and an armed guard at his back. The longhoped-for bullet was entering his brain.

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.  
(Conclusion to George Orwell's *1984*)

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:1–3

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Acts 9:31

But the word of God increased and multiplied. Acts 12:24

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. Acts 16:5

So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. Acts 19:20

Stott, 400 - *Parresia* denotes speech which is candid (with no concealment of truth), clear (with no obscurity of expression), and confident (with no fear of consequences).

No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD. Isaiah 54:17

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! 2 Timothy 2:8–9