

Acts 28:17-31, Paul in Rome
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Overview

1. Function of the episode:
 - a) Culmination of the mission to Rome; fulfillment of God's direction in 19:21.
 - b) Paul climbs back out of the pit of Caesarea, with the encouragement of friends and the Lord's strengthening during the ocean voyage.
 - c) Implicit legitimation of the gospel in the Roman capitol.
2. Outline: summary.
 - a) Starts with one more detailed description of how Paul evangelizes. Three step:
 - 1) Pre-evangelism: establishes and qualifies an audience;
 - 2) Evangelism: Gives the message;
 - 3) Post-evangelism: How to deal with rejectors.
 - b) Then (30-31) summarizes his ongoing practice.

A. 17-22, Paul establishes an audience: Pre-evangelism.

Note emphatic "I" (17) vs. "we" (21), first in their respective sentences in Greek. Preevangelism: establishing a link between evangelist and audience.

must account to them for his own condition in bonds, and perhaps must overcome messages from Jerusalem. Cf. opening of message in Athens with reference to the altar. Need to hook people's attention. -->Anticipates realistic obstacles and tries to deal with them up front. But don't get so bogged down in hypothetical ones that we never get to the gospel! Must listen to the Spirit to decide which are which.

1. 17a, "After three days": by Jewish reckoning, = "on the third day": he arrives on the first, settles in and perhaps meets with the believers on the second, and invites the elders of the Jews on the third.
 - a) Time with the believers is implicit, but unavoidable, given how they have come out to meet him 40 miles from the city. Should identify and work with the other believers in a locality.
 - b) He has been sent to Rome to bear witness (23:11), so he gets down to business. No wasted time.
 - c) Starts with the Jews, following his standard pattern, "To the Jew first," Rom. 1:16.
2. 17b-20, Paul's Statement.

Usually, Paul goes into the synagogues and teaches. Here, his bonds prohibit this, so he must call the Jewish leaders to come to him, as he states in the main clause, 20a: "I called for you to see you and speak with you." Two reasons: one before, and one after, explaining why it was necessary for him to call them rather than going to him.

- a) 17c-19, denies the supposed reason for his bonds: that he is an evildoer. Discusses the actions of three individuals or groups: the Jews, the Romans, and himself. In all three he emphasizes his innocence. Considers successive possible charges against himself.
- 1) 17c. Though *he* had done nothing against either the people or the custom, yet the *Jews* (implicit; uses passive to avoid being too accusatory) delivered him to the Romans. The possible charges here are those relating to Jewish concerns, two out of the three in the original accusation (24:5,6).
 - 2) 18. Because *he* had done nothing worthy of death, the *Romans* wanted to release him. This answers the charge of sedition (24:5), a secular offense.
 - 3) 19. Though *he* does not wish to accuse the Jews, yet their opposition forces *him* to appeal to Caesar. Answers the charge that he may be here to stir up trouble against the Jews, a particular threat since the edict of Claudius expelling Jews from Rome (ca. 49; this is now 60).
- b) 20b, asserts the real reason for his bonds: "the hope of Israel." A "hooker," designed to grab their attention and lead them to inquire further.
- c) Paul is not preaching the gospel here, but anticipating realistic obstacles up front. He must account to them for his own condition in bonds, and perhaps must overcome messages they may have received from Jerusalem. But at the same time, starts building a bridge for the gospel, to get around to his main burden.

We need balance here: don't get so bogged down in hypothetical objections that we never get to the gospel! Must listen to the Spirit to decide which are which.

3. 21-22, The Elders' Response

- a) The same expression used twice in 21 of Paul ("concerning thee"; "of thee") is used in 22 of the gospel ("concerning this sect"). They have received no accusations against Paul, but they certainly have heard bad things about the believers ("this sect").
- b) The organization is chiastic, the outer panels giving the reasons for the request in the center.
 - 1) 21, they have not heard ill of Paul. Thus he is to them a credible witness.
 - 2) 22b, they have heard much of the Christian way. Thus they are curious about it.
 - 3) 22a, their request: please tell us more.

c) *Application*: The excellence of our conduct can often open a door to tell the gospel to people who otherwise would not give us the time of day over it. The requirement that elders "have a good report of them which are without" (1 Tim. 3:7) is a desideratum for all of us. Indeed, without a spoken message they cannot be saved (faith comes by hearing), but our conduct will often be the means that gets them to sit still for the spoken message.

B. 23-24, Paul preaches the gospel: Evangelism

While this is an extremely short record, it is also very dense, giving us an excellent review of the essential elements in preaching the gospel.

1. His twofold Message:

a) Kingdom of God: God's authority in our lives.

b) Lord Jesus.

c) *Application*: While the heart of the gospel is the death and resurrection of Christ, people need to understand more than just those two facts. Only when they recognize God as their creator, against whose holy law they have sinned, will they know what those sins are for which the Lord has died, and then they will be eager to show their faith by their lives.

2. His twofold Method: literally, only one verb and two expanding participles: "he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus." Two important elements of his exposition:

a) testifying--personal experience. Cannot help people with things we haven't grappled with ourselves.

b) persuading--not just a statement of facts. Cf. 18:4; 19:8. Here's where I've failed over the years. We must want others to be saved, and exert ourselves to that end.

3. His Basis: scripture. In the Jewish organization, the OT has three sections: law (Moses), prophets (includes most historical books), and writings (poetry and late historical books). Luke 24:44 enumerates all three as testifying of Christ; Paul here concentrates on the first two, where the witness is more direct.

While it's wrong just to quote three verses and neither witness nor persuade, it's also wrong to rely entirely on personal emotion and leave out the Scripture!

4. Diligence: all day. Not casual or half-hearted. Made a diligent effort. Not "here's the gospel, take it or leave it," but really invests his energy into it. Goes with "persuading."

5. *Application*: An excellent synopsis of how we should hold forth the gospel. Diligently, based on a firm knowledge of scripture but not avoiding either personal witness or persuasion; and including the practical implications of the gospel, the rule of God in the lives of his people.

C. 25-29, Paul turns from the rejectors: Post-evangelism.

As the parable of the soils teaches, not everyone will believe. Paul recognizes this, and quotes Isaiah, both to warn them and to encourage himself--much as we were encouraged during the recent art fair by the parable of the soils. He does not seek to force the message further on those who reject it.

Our task as evangelists is to seek a hearing for the gospel, and devote our energy to expounding it as clearly as we can. Once that's done, we should focus our efforts on those who respond.

NB: this is not the end of a dispensation. Announcements about turning to the Gentiles have been twice made already (13:46, Antioch in Turkey; 18:6, Corinth in Greece). In each case his message deals with the local situation, and so here as well.

D. 30-31, Paul's ongoing ministry

1. 30 is literally, "at his own expense," not just "in his own house." Everything, not just the house.
2. Audience: everybody. Go to all the world; and if you can't, receive all who come. We are to scatter the seed broadcast, and not try to prejudge who is elect.
3. Message: same as before: kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrinal facts about the person and work of the Lord Jesus, in the matrix of man's response to the rule of God.
4. Balance of initiative and opportunity.
 - a) "with all boldness." Supernaturally provided, in response to the prayers of our brothers and sisters (Eph. 6:19,20). But still manifested as personal willingness to endure shame and mockery for the Lord.
 - b) "no man forbidding him," lit. "without let or hindrance." A thoroughly legal term. Emphasizes that the Roman authorities by whom he was restrained and to one of whose soldiers he was chained did not in any way seek to block what he was doing. Thus it enjoyed the explicit permission and implicit protection of the Empire. Purpose of this here:
 - 1) Luke wants Theophilus to know that there is precedent for toleration of the faith in the empire.
 - 2) Testimony to God's grace in providing for this tolerance.

Summary:

Go ye and do likewise.

1. Take reasonable steps to build bridges with your audience.
2. Present the gospel scripturally, diligently, personally, and with the correct content.
3. Recognize that many will turn away; let them go.
4. Keep on keeping on, "to all the world," at your own expense, and trusting in God's gracious provision.

Hymn: Yellow book or Bible, "What things were gain to me."
Phil. 3.

Analysis

- A. 16, Paul's own house: specification p
1. time: 16 (/Ote de\ ei)sh/lqomen ei)s (Rw/mhn,
 2. general: (o ekatonarxos paredwke tous desmious tw stratopedarxw
 3. specific: tw^| de Pau/lw| e)petra/ph me/nein kaq' e(auto\n su\n tw^| fula/ssonti au)to\n stratiw/th|.
- B. 17-22, Paul's initial defense: interchange p.
Note emphatic "I" (17) vs. "we" (21). Preevangelism; Starts with Jews, following his standard pattern "to the Jew first"; must account to them for his own condition in bonds, and perhaps must overcome messages from Jerusalem. Cf. opening of message in Athens with reference to the altar. Need to hook people's attention. -->Anticipates realistic obstacles and tries to deal with them up front. But don't get so bogged down in hypothetical ones that we never get to the gospel! Must listen to the Spirit to decide which are which.
1. setting:
 - a) 17)Ege/neto de\ meta\ h(me/ras trei^s sugkale/sasqai au)to\n tou\s o)/ntas tw^n)Ioudai/wn prw/tous:
By Jewish reckoning, "after three days" = "on the third day": he arrives on the first, settles in and perhaps meets with the believers on the second, and invites the elders of the Jews on the third.
 2. IU: Paul: quote p
 - a) time: sunelqo/ntwn de\ au)tw^n
 - b) quote f: e)/legen pro\s au)tou/s,
 - c) quote: chiastic double reason para.
 - 1) reason-1: his personal history. Highlights what he didn't do.
 - a> concession p: What the Jews in Judea did, though he had done nothing against the people or the customs.
 - 1> concession:)Egw/, a)/ndres a)delfoi/, ou)de\n e)nanti/on poih/sas tw^| law^| h)\ toi^s e)/qesi toi^s patrw/|ois
 - 2> text: de/smios e)c (Ierosolu/mwn paredo/qhn ei)s ta\s xei^ras tw^n (Rwmai/wn,
 - b> reason p: What the Romans did, because of his innocency.
 - 1> text: 18 oi(/tines a)nakri/nante/s me e)bou/lonto a)polu^sai
 - 2> reason: dia\ to\ mhdemi/an ai)ti/an qana/tou u(pa/rxein e)n e)moi/:
 - c> chiastic double reason paragraph: What Paul did, and why (and why not).
 - 1> reason-1: 19 a)ntilego/ntwn de\ tw^n)Ioudai/wn
 - 2> text: h)nagka/sqhn e)pikale/sasqai Kai/sara,

- 3> reason-2 (negative): ou)x w(s tou^ e)/qnous mou e)/xwn ti kathgorei^n.
- 2) text: 20 dia\ tau/thn ou)^n th\n ai)ti/an pareka/lesa u(ma^s i)dei^n kai\ proslalh^sai,
- 3) reason-2: Positive motive. e(/neken ga\r th^s e)lpi/dos tou^)Israh\l th\n a(/lusin tau/thn peri/keimai.

3. RU: elders of Jews: quote p

a) quote f: 21 oi(de\ pro\s au)to\n ei)^pan,

b) quote:

- 1) (Hmei^s ou)/te gra/mmata peri\ sou^ e)deca/meqa a)po\ th^s)Ioudai/as,
- 2) ou)/te parageno/meno/s tis tw^a)delfw^a)ph/ggeilen h)\ e)lla/lhse/n ti peri\ sou^ pnhro/n.
- 3) 22 a)ciou^men de\ para\ sou^ a)kou^sai a(\ fronei^s,
- 4) peri\ me\n ga\r th^s ai(re/sews tau/thn gnwsto\n h(mi^n e)stin o(/ti pantaxou^ a)ntile/getai.
"peri de sou" left unstated--or inverted to 21!

C. 23-29, Paul's gospel exhortation

As elsewhere (Antioch, Corinth), he does not continue to force the gospel on those who decline to hear. His evangelism is a sowing, which includes focusing attention where the message is best received.

1. setting: 23 Taca/menoi de\ au)tw^| h(me/ran h)^lqon pro\s au)to\n ei)s th\n ceni/an plei/ones,

2. specification para (cf. v.31 for same specification): oi(^s e)ceti/qeto

a) general: diamarturo/menos th\n basilei/an tou^ qeou^

"kdom of God" as summary of Paul's ministry (cf. Philip, 8:12): has both present and future aspects.

1) *We live in it now; the gospel message calls us to live under God's rule.*

a> *Acts 19:8, in Ephesus*

b> *Acts 20:25, his characterization of his ministry at Ephesus*

c> *Rom. 14:17, center of his chiasm on current Christian conduct!*

d> *1 Cor. 4:20, characterized by power.*

2) *It is something in the future to which we aspire and labor.*

a> *Acts 14:22, something into which we must enter; thus certain aspects yet to be realized.*

b> *1 Cor. 6:9,10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21: something that we have yet to inherit.*

c> *Col. 4:11, something the Christians are working toward.*

d> *2 Thes. 1:5, something for which we need to be counted worthy.*

b) specific: pei/qwn te au)to\n s ta peri\ tou^)Ihsou^

1) a)po/

a> *te tou^ no/mou Mw+se/ws*

b> *kai\ tw^a)n profhtw^a)n*

c) setting: a)po\ prwi\+ e(/ws e(spe/ras.

3. contrast p
 a) 24 kai\ oi(me\n e)pei/qonto toi^s legome/nois,
 b) oi(de\ h)pi/stoun:
4. 25 a)su/mfwnoi de\ o)/ntes pro\s a)llh/lous a)pelu/onto,
5. quote p, dust-shaking.
 a) quote f: ei)po/ntos tou^ Pau/lou r(h^ma e(\n o(/ti
 b) quote:
 1) quote p (Citation from Isaiah)
 a> quote f: Kalw^s to\ pneu^ma to\ a(/gion e)la/lhsen dia\
)Hsai/+ou tou^ profh/tou pro\s tou\s pate/ras h(mw^ⁿ 26
 le/gwn,
 b> quote:
 1> Poreu/qhti pro\s to\n lao\n tou^ton
 2> quote p
 a: quote f: kai\ ei)po/n,
 b: quote:
 1:)Akoh^| a)kou/sete kai\ ou) mh\ sunh^te,
 2: kai\ ble/pontes ble/yete kai\ ou) mh\ i)/dhte:
 3> 27 e)paxu/nqh ga\r h(kardi/a tou^ laou^ tou/tou,
 4> kai\ toi^s w)si\n bare/ws h)/kousan,
 5> kai\ tou\s o)fqalmou\s au)tw^ⁿ e)ka/mmusan:
 6> mh/pote
 a: i)/dwsin toi^s o)fqalmoi^s
 b: kai\ toi^s w)si\n a)kou/swsin
 c: kai\ th^| kardi/a| sunw^sin
 d: kai\ e)pistre/ywsin,
 e: kai\ i)a/somai au)tou/s.
- 2) quote p
 a> quote f: 28 gnwsto\n ou)^ⁿ e)/stw u(mi^ⁿ o(/ti
 b> quote:
 1> toi^s e)/qnesin a)pesta/lh tou^to to\ swth/rion tou^
 qeou^:
 2> au)toi\ kai\ a)kou/sontai.

D. 30-31, Further activity

Support, audience, message, enablement

1. 30)Ene/meinen de\ dieti/an o(/lhn e)n i)di/w| misqw/mati,
self-supporting even in imprisonment!
2. kai\ a)pede/xeto pa/ntas tou\s ei)sporeuome/nous pro\s au)to/n,
*If we're chained and so can't go into all the world, we can
 receive all who come. Same analysis of the message as in
 v.23.*
 a) 31 khru/sswn th\n basilei/an tou^ qeou^
 b) kai\ dida/skwn ta\ peri\ tou^ kuri/ou)Ihsou^ Xristou^
 1) *Paul's part: meta\ pa/shs parrhsi/as*
 2) *God's provision through the state: his guards let him do
 this. a)kwlu/tws.*
*These two need to be matched. If we don't take boldly the
 opportunities in which we are now unhindered, they may
 become closed to us later. Use it or lose it.*