

Paul's Discourse to the Dull

Compiled by Paul R. Blake

Introduction: Acts 28:17-31

- A. The end of the series of sermons from Acts, Luke's book of outlines
 - 1. This last sermon presents no new audience, subject, or approach
 - 2. It is presents as a summary of the work of evangelism
- B. Acts closes with Paul in chains in the midst of a tremendous mission field. It's fitting that the book of Acts should end with evangelism.

I. PAUL'S INTRODUCTION (Acts 28:17-20)

- A. Paul's pattern examined - Acts 28:17
 - 1. F. F. Bruce: "we have references in Roman inscriptions to at least seven Jewish synagogues in Rome" (Commentary on the Book of Acts; Eerdmans, pp. 63, 530). Each of those synagogues would have been represented by a chief man.
 - 2. Paul's love for the Jews - Rom. 9:1-3, 10:1
 - 3. The Jews' interest in Paul
 - a. He had become popular in the Roman world just as he had become unpopular in the Jewish world.
 - b. He had disrupted every synagogue he had entered by winning some to Jesus Christ.
- B. Paul's Imprisonment Explained - Acts 28:17-20
 - 1. Paul had to explain a delicate matter. He had to prove he was innocent of the charges brought against him by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, yet at the same time not alienate his Jewish audience.
 - 2. His innocence - Acts 28:17-18
 - a. Portrayed - Paul had not violated Jewish law, and he had not injured Jewish people.
 - b. Proven - Paul established at the outset that he was innocent in the eyes of the Roman government.
 - c. He was a prisoner in Rome. He didn't become one as a result of guilt, but because the Romans were pressured by the Jewish leaders, and Paul appealed to Caesar for protection.
 - 3. His appeal - Acts 28:19
 - 4. His reasoning - Acts 28:20
- C. Paul gave the reason for the antagonism against him: the hope of Israel: The Hope of Israel
 - 1. Paul's testimony before the Sanhedrin - Acts 23:6
 - a) Isa. 26:19; Job 19:26; Dan. 12:2
 - 2. Paul's testimony before Felix - Acts 24:15
 - 3. Paul's testimony before Agrippa - Acts 26:6-8

II. THE JEWISH LEADERS' INTEREST (Acts 28:21-22)

- A. The Jewish leaders in Rome displayed a very diplomatic attitude. They denied knowledge of Paul's case, and they were eager to hear about Christianity, about which they had heard negative things.

1. Amazingly enough, they had received no word from Judea about Paul.
- B. No accusation: the Sanhedrin was reluctant to pursue its case to Rome. They knew they didn't have a case.

III. PAUL'S INVITATION (Acts 28:23-24)

- A. The content of Paul's message - Acts 28:23
- B. The response to Paul's message - Acts 28:24

IV. THE GOSPEL IS A PRIVILEGE, NOT A RIGHT (Acts 28:25-29)

- A. The gospel went to the Jews first (Rom. 1:16) - Isa. 6:8-10
 1. Jesus quoted him in Matt. 13:14-15
 2. John also quoted the same passage - John 12:40
 3. Finally Paul quoted them in Acts 28:25-27.
- B. God's plan for Israel - Acts 28:25-27
 1. Israel's willful rejection - John 12:35-40
 - a. What began as willful blindness turned into sovereign blindness. He who will not believe may find one day that he cannot believe.
 2. Israel's eventual restoration
 - a. Grafting in the Gentiles - Rom. 9:25, 30-31, 11:17-22
 - b. Re-grafting in Israel - Rom. 11:23-25
- C. God's plan for the Gentiles - Acts 28:28-29
 1. The book of Acts chronicles how God's Word went to the Gentiles
 - a. Acts 9:15, 11:18, 13:46-47, 14:27, 15:14-18, 18:6

V. THE ACCOUNT'S COMPLETION (Acts 28:30-31)

- A. Paul had partial liberty. For two years he proclaimed Christ under the complacent eye of the Roman authority.
- B. Why Was Paul a Prisoner for Two Years?
 1. Since Paul was innocent, why did he have to remain under house arrest for two years? It's possible that the records about him sent from the Roman governor in Judea were lost in the shipwreck. Sending back to Judea to get copies and having them returned would take some time. In addition, Roman law required the accusers or those prosecuting the case to be present in Rome to accuse the prisoner.
 2. In those two years he led many people to Christ. He wrote epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, to the Ephesians and the Philippians. Many who served him could come and go. He told the Colossians that Aristarchus, Luke, Mark, Jesus Justus, Epaphras, and Demas were with him (4:10-14). He told the Philippians about his blessings and how the gospel was spreading--his bonds being manifest throughout the palace (1:12-14). In Philippians 4:22 he says, "All the saints greet you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household."

VI. WHAT DOES ACTS 28:17-31 TEACH ABOUT PAUL'S EVANGELISM?

- A. Where Paul Preached
 1. Paul preached the gospel anywhere. He was a prisoner in chains (vv. 16, 20). He was restricted to his own hired house (vv. 23, 30). Yet he was always preaching (v. 31). Paul knew no restriction to his pulpit. If he was in a prison, he

preached there. If he was in a marketplace, he preached there. If he was in a synagogue, he preached there. It didn't matter where he was.

B. How Paul Preached

1. Lovingly - Acts 28:17-20
2. Biblically - Acts 28:23
3. Doctrinally - Acts 28:23, 31

C. When Paul Preached

1. Paul preached promptly; in Rome only three days - Acts 28:17
2. He preached tirelessly - Acts 28:23
3. He preached incessantly - Acts 28:30-31
4. He preached boldly - Acts 28:31 - with all confidence.

D. To whom Paul preached

1. Paul preached both to Jews (v. 17) and Gentiles (v. 28).
2. He was willing to speak to anyone.