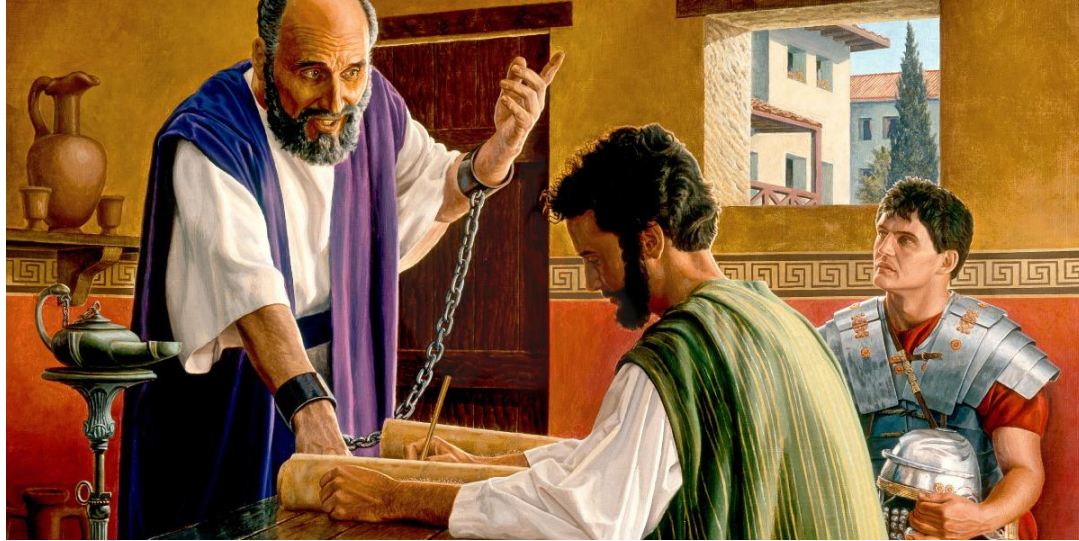


PART 34: THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Acts 28:17-31

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SUMMARY

This passage is Paul's sixth and final defense as he awaits trial before Caesar in Rome. Being under house arrest he is permitted to have guests, many who are curious about him and his message of the gospel. Some believe, some don't.

I. PAUL MEETS WITH JEWISH LEADERS IN ROME (28:17-22)

Three days after Paul's arrival, he called together the local Jewish leaders. He said to them, "Brothers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Roman government, even though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors. 18 The Romans tried me and wanted to release me, because they found no cause for the death sentence. 19 But when the Jewish leaders protested the decision, I felt it necessary to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no desire to press charges against my own people. 20 I asked you to come here today so we could get acquainted and so I could explain to you that I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of Israel-- the Messiah-- has already come." 21 They replied, "We have had no letters from Judea or reports against you from anyone who has come here. 22 But we want to hear what you believe, for the only thing we know about this movement is that it is denounced everywhere." (Acts 28:17-22)

A. Paul explains why he is in Rome (28:17-19)

1. Jewish leaders were not the rebellious Sanhedrin leaders. These Jewish leaders were most likely the Jewish leaders in the local synagogues.
2. Paul began by denying that he was not guilty of violating anything against the Jewish people or their traditions.

3. Paul explains how he had to appeal to Caesar when the Jewish Sanhedrin leaders protested his innocence in Caesarea.

B. Paul's primary message (28:20)

1. The Messiah has already come, and he is Jesus who was prophesied in the Old Testament (Tanakh).
2. Jesus is what Israel has been hoping for all these years.

C. Reply from the Jewish leaders (28:21-22)

1. They explain that they have no letters from Jerusalem about Paul's situation, so they want to hear first-hand from Paul what it's all about.
2. The only information they have is that the (gospel) movement is being denounced everywhere.

II. CURIOUS VISITORS (28:23-27)

²³ So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. ²⁵ And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet,

²⁶ 'Go and say to this people: When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. ²⁷ For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes-- so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'

²⁸ So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it." ²⁹(And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves).¹ Acts 28:23-27 NLT

A. Paul argues from the Old Testament

1. In response to these curious Roman Jewish leaders Paul explains the connection between the gospel and the Old Testament ("Law and Prophets").
2. Some believed Paul, and some didn't.

B. Israel rejects the gospel, it is offered to Gentiles

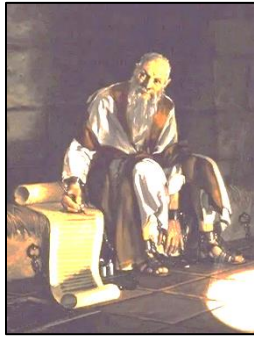
1. As the Roman Jewish leaders were arguing among themselves about this Paul writes

¹ Acts 28:29 Many ancient manuscripts omit this verse. For this reason, it is also omitted in some of today's translations.

that this kind of rejection of Jesus and the gospel was foretold by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah.

2. Because of Israel's overall rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, the gospel is also being offered to the Gentiles who will accept it.

III. PAUL'S FINAL YEARS IN ROME (28:30-31)



³⁰ For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, ³¹ boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him. (Acts 28:30-31 NLT)

John Stott writes, "it is difficult for us to conceive how such a congenial activist as Paul managed to endure nearly five years of comparative inactivity (two years in the Caesarea prison, two under house arrest in Rome, and about six months in between voyaging from Caesarea to Rome).

Paul's prison years...were they wasted? Was he champing at the bit and pawing the ground like a restless and rebellious horse?

No, his prison letters breathe an atmosphere of joy, peace, patience, and contentment, because he believed in the sovereignty of God.

IV. THE APOSTLE PAUL'S LIFE

A. Paul's Timeline (his age in years approximately)

- AD 05----Born in Tarsus, Cilicia.
- ≈25---32 Persecutions of Christians, watches the stoning of Stephen
- ≈32---35 Conversion then Arabian desert for three years
- ≈35---41 Preaches in synagogues
- ≈41---42 Goes to Antioch with Barnabas and establishes his base.
- ≈42---44 First Missionary Journey
- ≈44 Jerusalem Council
- ≈44---46 Second Missionary Journey; writes Galatians, Thessalonians
- ≈47---52 Third Missionary Journey; writes Romans, Corinthians
- ≈52---54 Caesarean Imprisonment
- ≈54 Shipwrecked on his way to Rome
- ≈55---57 1st Roman imprisonment; writes Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians
- ≈58---61 Pastoral letters and visits; writes 1st Timothy, Titus
- ≈62 Paul's 2nd Roman imprisonment; writes 2nd Timothy
- ≈62---67 Paul's trial and execution²

² The exact date of Paul's execution is unknown.

B. Letters written by Paul and their message

- Galatians: Against the Judaizers. The main theme is justification by divine grace through faith in Jesus Christ—against the Judaizing doctrine of meritorious works of the law. In other words, Galatians insists on Christian liberty from any doctrine of salvation that requires human effort in addition to divine grace.
- 1 Thessalonians: Congratulations and Comfort. Paul's letters to the church in Thessalonica are best known for their teaching about the second coming of Jesus Christ and associated events. First Thessalonians includes congratulations upon conversion and Christian growth and exhortations to further progress, with emphasis on comfort from and expectancy toward the second coming.
- 2 Thessalonians: Correction on the Second Coming. Between the two letters to the Thessalonians there has arisen among these believers a belief in the immediacy of Jesus' return to destroy their persecutors. Not so fast, says Paul: the end-of-the-age rebellion against God must take place first, so go back to normal Christian living.
- 1 Corinthians: Church Problems. Paul writes this letter to solve problems of manners, morals, and beliefs within the church. The letter demonstrates lamentable conditions in the church that do not characterize the post-apostolic church alone.
- 2 Corinthians: Paul's Conception of His Ministry. More than any other letter of Paul, 2 Corinthians allows us a glimpse into his inner feelings about himself, about his apostolic ministry, and about his relation to the churches he founded and nurtured. Paul also stresses the collection that he wants to gather from the church for the Christians in Jerusalem.
- Romans: The Gift of Righteousness Through Faith in Christ. Justification by faith for Jews and Gentiles alike is the basis of Christian unity. Because Paul knows only certain of the Christians in Rome, Romans is more formal than any of Paul's other letters.
- Philemon: Plea for a Runaway Slave. Paul asks mercy for Onesimus, a runaway slave, who had become a Christian.
- Colossians: Christ as the Head of the Church. Paul highlights the divine person and creative and redemptive work of Christ. Then Paul draws out the practical implications of this high Christology for everyday life and conduct.
- Ephesians: The Church as the Body of Christ. Paul covers the spiritual privileges and responsibilities of the church. Unlike most of Paul's letters, Ephesians seems not to have been written in response to a particular circumstance or controversy. It has an almost meditative quality.
- Philippians: A Friendly Note of Thanks. This letter includes thanks for financial assistance, along with personal news and exhortations. The church at Philippi appears to be Paul's favorite, and the Letter to the Philippians is thus the most personal of any that he wrote to a church.
- 1 Timothy: The organization and administration of churches by Timothy. The letter proceeds from a greeting to a warning against false teachers who mishandle the law. Paul then recalls his own experience of conversion and commission to apostleship and charges Timothy to cling tenaciously to orthodox Christian faith.
- Titus: The organization and administration of the churches in Crete by Titus. As in 1 Timothy, he warns against false teachers and issues instructions to various classes of Christians on

proper conduct. The doctrinal basis for these instructions is God's grace, and the experiential basis for these instructions is regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

- 2 Timothy: The commission of Timothy to carry on Paul's work. A final charge to preach the word of God, a statement of readiness to die, and personal news and requests conclude Paul's farewell letter.

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