

Acts

Part 64 – Paul in Rome

Acts 28:11-31

The final two passages of the book of Acts narrate Paul's passage from Malta to Rome and the ministry he carried out there while a captive. This concluding section of Acts is Luke's final report concerning the ministry of the apostles and the expansion of the church in its first decades. Not surprisingly Luke revisits common themes found throughout Acts such as Jesus as the promised Messiah, the free offer of the gospel, and the supernatural work of repentance. We also see Paul, once again, engaged in the ordinary work of the ministry of the Word of God which formed the heart of the apostolic ministry.



Verses 11-15 form something of a travelogue which Luke as employed previously in Acts. The second section (vv. 16-31) is narrated in terms of four incidents. 1) Luke describes the conditions of Paul's captivity (vs. 16). 2) He describes Paul's first encounter with Jews from Rome (vv. 17-22). 3) Luke then describes Paul's second meeting with Jews of Rome (vv. 22-28), during which he explains the gospel to them (vv. 25-29). 4) Finally, Luke summarizes the ministry of Paul during his confinement (vv. 30-31).

Main Idea: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile." (Rom 1:16)

Exegetical Outline:

- I. From Malta to Rome (28:11-15)
 - A. The journey from Malta via Syracuse to Puteoli (11-13)
 - B. Paul's meeting with the believers in Puteoli (14)
 - C. Paul's meeting with the believers in Rome (15)
- II. Paul in Rome (28:16-31)
 - A. The conditions of Paul's imprisonment (16)
 - B. Paul's first encounter with the Jews of Rome (17-22)
 - C. Paul's second encounter with the Jews of Rome (23-28)
 - D. The continuing ministry of the imprisoned Paul (30-31)

1. Paul's ordinary practice of ministry

Vv. 17-23

- Throughout the Book of Acts, Paul and the other apostles engaged in one activity above all else: the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures. Peter's sermon at Pentecost was the inaugural act of the sending of the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Word was established as fundamental for the churches growth from the very beginning (Acts 2:42). Repeatedly Luke portrays Paul's ministry as marked primarily by the ministry of the Word. And now, in Rome Paul continues to do what he has done throughout his ministry: teaching and preaching.

- Luke provides three verbs to capture the breadth of Paul's ministry: "expounded," "testifying," "convince" (vs. 23).
- Paul is not brief. He teaches and proclaims "from morning till evening" (vs. 23). His theme is twofold: 1) "The Kingdom of God," which he "expounded" and to which he testified. 2) The substance of this message of the Kingdom of God is Jesus Christ whom he sought to "convince" his hearers is the hope of Israel. The ground of his efforts to persuade was the Jewish Scriptures ("the Law of Moses and the Prophets").

2. God's primary means of conversion

Vv. 17-23

- God has determined that his primary means of converting the lost will be through the proclamation of his word. This is often counter-intuitive to human reasoning. How can words be so powerful? How can a message be life changing? Are there not more effective methods to bring about change? But such objections reveal a lack of understanding about the character of God and how he has chosen to work in the lives of his people. While pagans have always relied upon sense experiences, God has chosen to save and sustain his people by his Word.
- Romans 10:14-17 – "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'...So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

3. People's inevitable responses to the gospel

Vs. 24-28

- By its very nature the gospel calls for decision. The gospel is not merely information. It is a call to repent and believe in Jesus. The Jews who came to hear Paul respond in the only two ways possible when confronted with the gospel: belief and rejection (vs. 24). The response of belief to Paul's claims about Jesus confirms that genuine faith in Christ requires persuasion of and commitment to the claims of the gospel.
- The result of the mixed response elicits a parting word of judgment from Paul to the unbelieving (vv. 25-27). Paul appropriates Isaiah 6:9-10 in which the prophet pronounced judgment upon unbelieving Israel and attributed the further hardening of their hearts to sovereign work of God.

4. The church's continuing mission to the world

Vv. 30-31

- Luke briefly brings his account to close by summarizing Paul's ongoing ministry in captivity. He remains in a private room which he pays for himself perhaps with the help of supporting churches (Phil 4:10-20). Paul's ministry is described in two respects: he continued to teach "with all boldness and without hindrance." Paul, himself in chains, proclaims a message that will never be chained.