

**KNOW THE WORD SERIES**  
Paul's journey o Jerusalem and Rome  
(Acts 19:21- 28:31)

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1. THE DECISION (19:21)

<sup>21</sup> After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also."

The journey to Jerusalem and then to Rome was planned at Ephesus. Paul would revisit the churches he had founded in Macedonia and Achaia. He would travel to Rome only after visiting Jerusalem where he had intended to bring the collection ("alms) from the Gentile churches to show their oneness with the Jewish Christians (24:17 – this seems to be what he had in mind). Paul's decision was clearly led by the Spirit (20:22) and he had no idea what was going to happen to him.

2. TRAVELS TO ENCOURAGE THE CHURCHES (20)

a. Macedonia and Greece –

He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, <sup>3</sup> where he stayed three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia.

b. Troas

<sup>9</sup> Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead.

c. Miletus

<sup>17</sup> From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

<sup>25</sup> "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.

Paul's farewell speech to the elders of Ephesus is the only record of a speech to believers and is remarkably similar to his pastoral letters written to church elders.

Three main themes:-

- (i) Paul's life as an example – Paul lived amongst them and identified with their needs. He was not only a preacher but a teacher who taught them everything that was helpful; both publicly and from house to house (v20). He reminds them of the importance of proclaiming the gospel (v27). He presents his life as one lived in obedience to God (v22-23) and how he must suffer as a consequence. The goal of life is not how best to preserve our life but to be faithful to God's calling. Paul also reminds them of his sincerity, not coveting what others have (v33) but rather working hard and earning his own keep.
- (ii) He presents a charge and a warning – Paul charges them to be on their guard against "savage wolves" that will not spare the flock. The elders are (a) to

keep watch over their lives (b) watch over their flock and (c) shepherd them (v28-31)

- (iii) He commits them to the Lord and to the word of His grace (v32)

Note Paul ministry of encouragement – he encourages the churches by (a) his presence (by being with them and identifying with their hurts and aspirations - not as a detached specialist who does his public ministry and retreats to his private world), (b) his words (teaching is as vital as evangelism - for e.g. the time spent in Troas preaching late into the night) and (c) his actions (the raising of Eutychus from the dead, the house to house visits, serving the Lord with humility and tears).

### 3. IN TYRE AND CAESAREA (21:1-16)

- a. Disciples urged him not to travel to Jerusalem

We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. <sup>4</sup> We sought out the disciples there and stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> When it was time to leave, we left and continued on our way

- b. Agabus prophesied the consequences should Paul travel to Jerusalem

<sup>10</sup> After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. <sup>11</sup> Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

Misplaced concerns to help Paul avoid capture and imprisonment? Consider the role of prophetic insight and understanding God's larger purpose.

- c. Paul's response

<sup>13</sup> Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." <sup>14</sup> When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Paul explains reason for his decision and also his frustration and pain over their approach. Obedience to God over rides personal safety and concerns of those dear to him.

### 4. A. IN JERUSALEM – WITH THE CHRISTIANS (21:17-26)

Paul's meeting with the Jerusalem Christians and decision to undertake ceremonial purity ritual (21:17-26)

<sup>17</sup> When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. <sup>18</sup> The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

<sup>20</sup> When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. <sup>21</sup> They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. <sup>22</sup> What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, <sup>23</sup> so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. <sup>24</sup> Take these men, join in their purification rites and

pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.

Paul is warmly received by the Christians and Jerusalem and they rejoiced at the report of the work that is being done amongst the Gentiles. For the sake of the many Christians in Jerusalem who are zealous for the Jewish law, they think it is a good idea for him to dispel any misrepresentations about his stand on the law by showing he was willing to submit to the law publicly. This can be done by paying for the expenses of 4 fellow Christians who have taken a vow. Paul would also have to purify himself along with them by a seven day ritual of purification.

Was this a good idea? Did Paul make a mistake? Is Paul being inconsistent here (opposition to the works of the law in his letters)? Did the plan (regardless of its good intentions) backfire?

We cannot be sure whether this act (of getting Paul involved in the funding of vows) is a mistake – perhaps it is an example of fallible Christians expressing Christian love – but it does show how serious Paul was in preserving the unity of the Church. Although he was primarily an apostle to the Gentiles, he never gave up on the Jews. More importantly, the unity of the church was so important to him that it was well worth paying a price to preserve. It is also pertinent to note that Paul was not objecting to the law per se, but to the extent it blinded the people from knowing Christ as Messiah. We also bear in mind Paul's writings in 1 Corinthians 9:20 : "To the Jews, I become like the Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became one like the law (though I myself am not under the law) so as to win those under the law".

## B. IN JERUSALEM - PAUL BEATEN AND ARRESTED (21:27-36)

### a. Paul falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple

<sup>27</sup> When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, <sup>28</sup> shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place."

### b. Timely intervention of the Roman commander - Paul was arrested so that he could be given a proper trial. Note God's provision and timely intervention (the arrest probably saved Paul from certain death). Consider also the place of suffering - that Paul is NOT spared the physical pain although God's grace is always sufficient to ensure His purpose is fulfilled.

<sup>30</sup> The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. <sup>31</sup> While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. <sup>32</sup> He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

## C. PAUL SPEAKS TO THE MOB (21:37- 22:29)

Then Paul said: <sup>3</sup> "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, <sup>5</sup> as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul spoke of his excellent Jewish credentials (22:3) and training as a Pharisee under Gamaliel, who was one of the most revered teachers of the era. He shared about his activity as a prosecutor of the Christians and his subsequent conversion. He defends his work with the Gentiles and show that he is still a good Jew.

The mob's response: total rejection – "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"

Paul was taken away and the commander intended to flog him - probably as a form or torture to understand what wrong Paul had committed. Paul then asserts his rights as a Roman citizen – illegal for a citizen to be punished without first being convicted in a trial – and the commander became alarmed at this as he had almost committed a wrong against a citizen of Rome.

#### 5. PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN (22:30-23:11)

- a. The commander still had to get the bottom of this case and it was quite obvious by now that this concerns a religious issue. So he decided to order the Sanhedrin to look into the matter (v30)
- b. Paul defense – he had lived a blameless and exemplary life by Jewish standards

<sup>1</sup> Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."

Paul claims he is being put on trial only because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead. Note: this was a dividing issue between the Pharisee (who believed) and Sadducees (who rejected such belief) – was Paul simply being shrewd here to divide the group (clearly he caused an uproar)? Perhaps but it is more likely that he was using a strategy here to point to the heart of the gospel. He is saying that the Jew's national hope lies in the hope of a future resurrection and that the first stage of that "resurrection" has been fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. In other words, the hope of the Jews and the resurrection of Christ are inextricably linked.

<sup>6</sup> Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." <sup>7</sup> When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup> (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

- c. God's affirmation

<sup>11</sup> The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

#### 6. PAUL IN CAESAREA (23:12-35)

- a. A plot by the Jews to kill Paul was discovered and the Roman commander decided to send Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea for his own safety. He was to be accompanied by 200 soldiers, 70 horseman and 200 spearmen. The commander wrote these words in a letter to Felix:

<sup>27</sup> This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. <sup>28</sup> I wanted to know

why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. <sup>29</sup> I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment.

## b. Paul before Felix

### The charge

<sup>5</sup> "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect <sup>6</sup> and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. <sup>7</sup>

### The defense

My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup> And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. <sup>14</sup> However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, <sup>15</sup> **and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.**

<sup>18</sup> I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. <sup>19</sup> But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. <sup>20</sup> Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— <sup>21</sup> unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: **"It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today."**

### The outcome

Paul had clearly committed no wrong. The only point that Paul would admit to concerned the resurrection of the dead (24:21) – a doctrinal and theological issue that Felix had no jurisdiction over. Consequently, he should have released Paul but delayed doing so in order to please the Jews. Luke leaves us with no doubt that Paul had committed no crimes against the state.

## 7. PAUL BEFORE FESTUS (24:1-23)

Paul remained imprisoned in Caesarea for 2 years and his case was reconvened when Felix was replaced by Festus. The Jews made another attempt to move Paul's case to Jerusalem where they plotted to kill him. Preferring to hold court in Caesarea, he arranged for some Jews to travel there to question Paul. Again they could not prove any of the charges brought against Paul.

<sup>6</sup> After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. <sup>7</sup> When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them. <sup>8</sup> Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar."

Festus tried to please the Jews and asked if Paul would be prepared to travel to Jerusalem to be tried. Paul refused and appealed to Caesar (which meant he had the right to be heard in Rome) and this decision paved the way for this travel to Rome.

<sup>9</sup> Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?" <sup>10</sup> Paul answered: "I am now standing

before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. <sup>11</sup> If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

## 8. PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA AND BERNICE (25:23-26:23)

King Agrippa was well acquainted with the customs and traditions of the Jewish people and Paul took this opportunity to preach to him:-

- (a) he is a Pharisee and observed the law (v5)
- (b) he was on trial not because of any wrong doing but because of his hope in God (v.6)
- (c) his conversion experience and encounter with Jesus (v9-22)
- (d) the centrality of the resurrection (v.23)

I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— <sup>23</sup> that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

Paul also took the opportunity to evangelize and ask if King Agrippa would consider becoming a Christian like him.

Note: Persistent rejection of the gospel by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Luke is perhaps emphasizing the missed opportunity for Jerusalem to be the centre and focus of the Christian church. Since Jerusalem will not accept the gospel by the decision of its leaders, it will lose its primacy. God's plans however will not be thwarted – if Jerusalem will not respond, the growth of the church will not be stop either. Just as in the Old Testament, the fall of Jerusalem was not the end of God's purpose or the defeat of His will. Likewise, the gospel will continue to go forth in spite of Jerusalem's rejection of the gospel.

## 9. JOURNEY TO ROME (27:1-28:15)



a. The journey begins (27:1-12)

Paul languished in Roman custody for two years at Caesarea until he appealed to Caesar. The Roman governor Festus then decided to send Paul to Rome for trial. Travelling companions were Julius, the centurion, Luke and Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica (27:2).

Sidon – Paul permitted to visit his friends, probably members of the Christian community there (27:3). The northwest prevailing winds that blew across the Mediterranean forced ships sailing westward to hug the Anatolian coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia.

Myra - At Myra in Lycia the Roman centurion transferred his prisoners to an Alexandrian ship returning to Rome. Such vessels were the most comfortable to sail on but were heavily laden with grain to make bread for the Roman populace. The ship plodded slowly along Turkey's Carian coast until at Cnidus Paul glimpsed Anatolia for the last time on this trip

The winds were not favorable and instead of continuing west, they had to sail southwest arriving in Fair Havens on the island of Crete. Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there.

b. The Storm (27:13-26)

They set off behind a gentle south wind but soon faced a hurricane known as the “northeaster” and the ship was driven along. The storm grew increasingly fierce and the crew started discarding the cargo (v18) and the ship tackle (v.19) and were soon at the verge of giving up hope of surviving. Paul encouragement – God has decreed that no lives would be lost although the ship would run aground

c. The Shipwreck (27:27-44)

Paul presence and leadership ensured the crew stayed on board so they all have a chance to survive. He also encouraged them to eat (it has been 14 days since the ship sailed) as they needed the strength for the final challenge ahead. The ship eventually ran aground on a sandbar. As the centurion wanted to save Paul's life, he prevented his soldiers from killing the prisoners (a Roman soldier faces severe punishment if they allowed a prisoner to escape) – again Paul's presence made a difference and was crucial in ensuring that no one was killed.

d. Ministering in Malta (28:1-10)

The proposed trip from Fair Havens to Phoenix (a journey of 40 mile) ended with a shipwreck in Malta. Paul's presence and impact on those around was again seen – in surviving the bite of a viper (5-6) and his healing of Publius and others on the island (v.8-9)

e. Rome at last (28:11-15)

After the winter (they had stayed 3 months), Paul set sail for Rome on an Alexandrian ship. They sailed to Syracuse in Sicily, then Rhegium before arriving in

Puteoli, the port of Neopolis (modern day Naples) where they disembarked. Paul was allowed to accept the invitation to spend a week with the Christians there. During his stay, news of Paul's arrival reached the church in Rome and some believers decided to meet Paul on the way (v15). Paul travelled on the Appian Way "the oldest, straightest and most perfectly made of Roman roads" which connected Neopolis and Rome. Some Christians met him at the famous Forum of Appia and others at the Three Taverns and Paul was greatly encouraged.

#### 10. CLOSING – PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ROME (28:16-31)

The book of Acts closes with Paul arriving safely in Rome where he was placed under house arrest. Most scholars agree that Luke ends the accounts of Acts abruptly in this last section. Paul was allowed to live by himself but with a soldier to guard him. Luke does not refer anymore to Paul's relationship with the Roman Christians. Instead, he describes Paul's attempt at witnessing to the Jewish community. It is surprising that the Jews in Rome were not aware of the events in Judea considering how the Jews there had hounded Paul while he was there (i.e, the riots, trials and plot to kill Paul). Although the Jews in Rome showed an interest in Christianity and turned up to meet Paul, their response were not new – some believed while others "would not believe".

Acts however concludes not with a note of Jewish rejection of the gospel but rather a more glorious reality: the Gentiles would hear the gospel and Paul has two years of bold witness of the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ "without hindrance".

Why does the book of Acts end so abruptly? One possibility is because it was written shortly after the two years mentioned in the conclusion (most scholars date Acts in the early to mid 60s). Some have suggested that perhaps Luke had intended to write a third volume of Luke-Acts but there is no hard evidence of this.

What happened to Paul after the two years in Rome? We cannot be absolutely certain but tradition affirms that he was released from imprisonment, had more evangelistic campaigns, and probably visited his friends in Macedonia and Asia. Some believed he managed to visit Spain as he had intended (Romans 15:24), but we cannot be sure. He was probably imprisoned again <sup>1</sup>and martyred sometime between AD 64 to 67.

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