

# ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

## LXV. Fulfilling Our Ministry Calling

(Acts 28:17-29)

### I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 351. We can thus learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 28:17-29 records Paul's final formal effort to evangelize his Hebrew countrymen, and though the effort had mixed results, it exemplified how to fulfill our ministry calling. We view the passage for our insight:

### II. Fulfilling Our Ministry Calling, Acts 28:17-29.

- A. Acts 28:17-29 is the "climax of the book" as it records "another rejection of the gospel," this time of Jews in the capitol city of the empire, Rome itself, "and of Paul's taking the message to Gentiles (v. 28)," *Ibid.*, p. 430.
- B. Nevertheless, right up to the final rejection of the Gospel by his fellow countrymen, Paul gave a sterling effort, exemplifying how to fulfill our ministry calling from Lord (as follows):
  - 1. Three days after settling into his dwelling and while awaiting trial before the emperor, Paul called the chief leaders of the Hebrews in Rome to meet with him since he was under house arrest and could not attend their synagogues, Acts 28:17a; *Ibid.* "Paul wanted to prevent any derogatory report from his Jewish enemies in Jerusalem" from hurting his opportunity to witness to the Hebrews in Rome (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 28:17), so he was faithfully doing his best to be as winsome and persuasive to his countrymen in Rome in a final effort officially to lead leaders in Israel to faith in Christ!
  - 2. Paul made "several significant points" in his presentation to these Hebrew leaders, *Ibid.*; Acts 28:17b-20:
    - a. He testified that he was innocent of the charges his countrymen in Judaea had levelled against him of damaging the Hebrew people or their customs, Acts 28:17b.
    - b. Paul added that even the Roman authorities in Judaea considered him innocent, (Acts 28:18 with Acts 23:29; 25:25; 26:31-32), a strong argument in favor of his innocence.
    - c. Paul explained that the reason he would be tried by Caesar was not due to any wrong by him, but since his countrymen in Judaea had refused to deal with him justly, he had appealed to Caesar, Acts 28:19a.
    - d. A significant point by Paul was his testimony to his Hebrew countrymen in Rome that he was not pressing charges against Israel for mistreatment or for any other reason, that he only wanted to be acquitted, v. 19b. This point was made to remove any concern on the part of the Hebrews in Rome that Paul might have had biased animosity against his people in Israel, what would hurt his credibility with the Hebrews in Rome.
    - e. Paul added that his main reason for wanting a hearing with the Hebrew leaders in Rome was to present his case to them of "the hope of Israel," Acts 28:20. To Paul, the "hope of Israel . . . meant fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel (cf. 26:6-7). Paul firmly believed Jesus is the Messiah of Israel who will return someday and establish Himself as the King of Israel and Lord of the nations (cf. 1:6)," *Ibid.*
  - 3. The Hebrew leaders gave an indecisive response that appears to be only partly truthful: they claimed to have had received no bad report about Paul from the Hebrew leaders in Judaea, but they had heard only negative reports about the Christian faith that he held, Acts 28:21-22; *Ibid.* It appears that these Hebrew leaders in Rome were guarded about relating candidly to Paul out of concern over the negative reports they had received about his Christian faith, but they were certainly interested in what he had to say, so they set a date for them to come and hear his explanation of the Christian faith, Acts 28:22a, 23a.
  - 4. When the day arrived, many more Hebrews came to Paul along with their leaders, and Paul taught from morning until evening on the kingdom of God from the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures, Acts 28:23b.
  - 5. In the end, some believed, and some did not, and with their disagreement among themselves, Paul noted that in fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10, Israel as a nation was hardened against the truth, Acts 28:24-27.
  - 6. Accordingly, Paul would turn to the Gentiles, and that they would hear the truth, Acts 28:28-29. ["Many manuscripts do not contain" verse 29, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Acts 28:29.]

***Lesson:*** Right up to the end of trying to reach Hebrew leaders in Rome with the Gospel, Paul did his best to give an edifying witness, only to see the same general rejection of Christ's Gospel by Hebrews that he had faced all along. Accordingly, he turned once again to minister to the Gentiles, having fulfilled his calling to his countrymen.

***Application:*** May we like Paul do our best to fulfill our ministry calling from God regardless of the results.