

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

LXVI. Paul's Persistence Amid Ministry Obstacles

(Acts 28:30-31 et al.)

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 28:30-31 et al. records Paul's persistence amid ministry obstacles that he faced once he arrived in Rome and awaited trial before Caesar. We thus view the passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. Paul's Persistence Amid Ministry Obstacles, Acts 28:30-31 et al.

- A. Acts 28:30-31 with Acts 28:16 closes the book of Acts, reporting that Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house under house arrest while he was waiting to be tried before Caesar. During that time, he received all who visited or who came to him, and he preached the Gospel of the kingdom of God, discipling people in the things of Christ "with all boldness and without hindrance," Acts 28:31 ESV.
- B. "Knowing that they could not get a verdict of guilty, his accusers probably never showed up and therefore lost the case by default. Paul would then have been released and become free to engage in . . . ministry" once again. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Acts 28:30)
- C. Though confined to house arrest, and though having faced the failure of his countrymen even in Rome to respond positively as a whole to the Gospel of Christ, Paul persisted in his ministry efforts while awaiting trial for two years, doing his best to make the most of his time under house arrest to minister for the Lord:
 1. The prison epistles of "Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon" were written during this time of Paul's house arrest in Rome (Ibid.), and these epistles were full of significant content for the Church:
 - a. "The great theme of" Paul's letter to the Ephesians "is God's eternal purpose to establish and complete His body, the Church," and Paul used it to discuss important truths on "predestination (1:3-14), Christ's headship over the body (1:22-23; 4:15-16), the Church as the building and temple of God (2:21-22), the mystery of Christ (3:1-21), spiritual gifts (4:7-16), and the Church as the bride of Christ," Ibid., "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians: Contents," p. 1672.
 - b. In Philippians, Paul wrote the doctrinally important passage in 2:5-8 of "the kenosis – the self-humiliating, or self-emptying, of Christ." Significant "verses on prayer are 4:6-7," and other "favorite verses include 1:21, 23b; 3:10, 20; 4:8, 13," and a "significant autobiographical sketch appears in 3:4-14," Ibid., "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Philippians: Contents," p. 1682.
 - c. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote of "the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ," and "(i)mportant subjects include Christ's person and work (1:15-23), heresy (2:8-23), and believers' union with Christ (3:1-4)," Ibid., "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Colossians: Contents," p. 1690.
 - d. Philemon, the most personal of all of Paul's letters in the Scripture canon, provided a landmark guide on "how Christian masters and slaves could live their faith within" the evil system of slavery that plagued the culture of his era, Ibid., "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to Philemon: Background," p. 1727.
 2. Remarkably, the window of opportunity for Paul to write these epistles was short, for they were penned around A. D. 60-63 (Ibid., Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 614, 647, 667, 769) and emperor Nero began to persecute Christians in July of A. D. 64 (Zon. Pict. Ency. Bib., vol. Four, p. 411). Paul's release from his imprisonment of house arrest thus left him only 4 to 7 more years of earthly life, during which time he wrote 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus before being captured and martyred in A. D. 67. (Ibid., "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to Titus: Historical Background," p. 1723.
 3. After these prison epistles, we have no other epistle by Paul in the canon of Scripture that was directed to churches – only his three personal letters to Timothy and Titus. Thus, Paul's use of his time under house arrest to write these epistles was his last opportunity to form letters to churches for the canon of Scripture.

Lesson: Paul persisted to minister under house arrest, greatly enriching the Scripture canon of letters to churches. Had he not used his time for this, the Church down through history would have been significantly impoverished.

Application: May we heed Paul's example to make the most of the ministry opportunities we have, even if we are restricted in some way. In Paul's case, his house arrest became God's springboard of extending his ministry for Church History since it forced him to write, so God may have an imaginative opportunity for us in our restrictions!