

Text: Ac 28.16-20

The last section of Acts is “Paul in Rome.” As I surveyed these verses, I’ve divided up this section into three messages. It has taken us 6 and $\frac{3}{4}$ years to get to this point!

Our message today will turn into a topical message after an extended introduction explaining our text, so let’s read the passage first.

Read Ac 28.16-20

Paul’s generous imprisonment (16)

1. Permission for a “private room”
 - a. The Praetorian guard ran the police services of the city of Rome
 - b. The man in charge of this department is known to history
 - i. Afranius Burrus, executed by Nero in a purge of top officials, including his tutor, Seneca, AD 62
 - ii. Most likely Paul did not interact with Burrus directly
 - c. Paul was granted *custodia liberior*, i.e., the right to secure private housing under custody
 - i. Would be at his own expense (or by donation of Christian friends)
 - ii. Likely due to the testimonial of the centurion and the communications of Festus and Herod Agrippa
 2. Provision of a personal guard
 - a. Paul wasn’t “on his own recognizance,” but under custody
 - b. The guards would change shifts through the day, getting to hear all Paul said
- Phil 1.13 so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,
- Phil 4.22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.
3. Termination of the “we” sections
 - a. We know that Luke and Aristarchus sailed with Paul from Caesarea
 - b. We learn from Philemon and Colossians that they continued with him in Rome for some time, likely through the trial before Nero

Paul's immediate outreach (17a)

1. Paul lost no time in reaching out to the Jews of Rome
2. He invited a select group, probably the leaders of each synagogue
 - a. Jews in Rome at this time numbered in the thousands (various estimates) — Rome itself about 1 million people
 - b. Eleven known synagogues from this time are known to archaeology
3. In keeping with Paul's consistent practice, "to the Jew first" (Rm 1.16)

Paul's preemptive defense (17b-19)

1. The major theme of his discussion: "I have no issue with our nation"
 - a. See opening stmt of v. 17b
 - b. See closing stmt of v. 19
2. Despite his innocence, he is in the hands of the Romans

"To say that he 'was delivered into the hands of the Romans' is a very mild way of describing how he was rescued by Roman soldiers from a mob that was trying to beat him to death."¹

3. His custody is due to a forced appeal (a very brief summary of his testimony before various courts since his arrest)
 - a. The Romans were willing to release him (dithering Felix so inclined, but inactive, Herod more definite)
 - b. The Jews (he means the leadership) were adamant against him
 - c. These circumstances forced his appeal

"His appeal to Caesar has been made purely in order to have his innocence established."²

4. Paul wished to see them to protest his innocence and gain a hearing (20a)

Paul's central mission: the Hope of Israel (20)

1. The chain: Paul's confinement meant chained to a soldier 24/7
2. The hope of Israel was his consistent claim, as we shall see. It will form the centerpiece of our message

¹ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 505.

² Bruce, *Acts*, 505.

Proposition: The hope of Israel is the hope of all.

I. Defining the hope of Israel

A. Paul's consistent claim

1. Before the Sanhedrin, "I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" (Ac 23.6)
2. Before Felix: "having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Ac 24.15)
3. Before Festus and Agrippa:

Ac 26.6-8 "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers;⁷ *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.⁸ "Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead?"

Ac 26.23 that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles."

B. The hope of Israel is the hope of resurrection

1. God said to Adam that when he ate of the tree of knowledge, he would surely die ("dying you will die")
2. Death is the long-time enemy of mankind
 - a. It faces everyone who is born into this world
 - b. It sobers everyone when it comes calling for our loved ones (friends/family)

Teenage friends who died in car accidents

One of the young men who stood up with me in our wedding

A tiny baby who died two weeks after we were married

And on and on

3. Emperors, kings (and queens), rulers: all may rise, but they will always fall

4. Among the OT believing Israelites, there was a hope of resurrection
 - a. The Sadducees did not believe
 - b. But the Pharisees and the people did believe
- C. Paul's thesis: Jesus is the hope of Israel!

II. Recalling the faith of Abraham (duplicated in many generations)

- A. From generation to generation among the patriarchs of Israel, the hope lived
1. Job: "yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19.26)
 2. Abraham: "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God" (Heb 11.10)
 3. The testimony of Hebrews 11

Heb 11.13 ¶ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

- a. Abel
- b. Enoch
- c. Noah
- d. Abraham
- e. Sarah

Heb 11.13 ¶ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

B. Echoed in the Prophets

Ps 49.15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah.

Isa 25.8 He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.

Hos 13.14 Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

Dan 12.2 “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.

Dan 12.13 “But as for you, go *your way* to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise *again* for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”

1. We looked at these passages in a message on April 3, 2022
2. The resurrection *of the body* is the hope of Israel

I was listening to a podcast yesterday. The hosts had a guest on, (David Limbaugh actually) who has written a book about Paul’s epistles. One of the hosts asked him, “Is the resurrection necessary for Christianity?”

David Limbaugh replied, “Yes, you can’t be a Christian without believing in the resurrection.”

One of the other hosts jumped in with something like this: “Well, you can understand the resurrection in different ways, right, it doesn’t have to be a *bodily* resurrection, does it?”

Yes. Yes, it does. No bodily resurrection, no Christianity.

III. Appealing to faith among hearers today

A. The hope of Israel is the hope of the world

Jn 1.29 ¶ The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

B. The appeal of the gospel is for everyone who hears Paul’s message

1. Those Jews in Rome that day, Paul pointed them to Jesus, the hope of Israel
2. Through the ages, the church and its preachers have pointed those who hear to Jesus, the hope of the world

3. Today, I call out to you: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved

Conclusion:

Proposition: The hope of Israel is the hope of all.

You will die.

You can live after you die, if you will take Jesus.