

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 20:22-35 | Session 58 | Paul Recounts His Teaching in Ephesus | A.D. 59

Since the beginning of our Acts study, I have been working from the assumption that it is a book of transition from the *dispensation of the Law*, to the *dispensation of Grace*. The book begins with the preaching of the National Gospel to Israel and then begins to transition to Individual Gospel, available as a free gift to any man, woman, boy, or girl. The English word, *dispensation* is used four times in the KJV (and twice in the NKJV). The Greek word translated *dispensation* is *oikonomia* (*oiko* means house, and *nomia* means law, *house law*, we get our word economy from *oikonomia*). Modern translations don't use the word *dispensation* because the translators disagree (translators should translate, not interpret) with the theology of the word. It can mean the management of a household, which is why many translations use the word *stewardship* (*and at times even the KJV translates the word as stewardship*), but it carries the more literal idea of a period of time under a certain economy. I used the illustration many months ago where I handed each of you money in the form of a dollar bill, and I told you to go out and spend it at McDonald's after church. The problem was, you couldn't spend it; it was worthless. The bill was Cambodia dollar bill. You can't spend Cambodia money in the U.S. because we are under a different *oikonomia*.

If you try to live under the dispensation (or, economy) of the Law, it doesn't work. Yet, in the book of Acts, the nation of Israel still had the opportunity to accept the Kingdom Gospel (as a Nation) and by so doing, Messiah, Jesus would return to set up His Kingdom on earth (See Luke 13:35). The Nation, however, rejected their Messiah, and by A.D. 70 the Nation was attacked by the Romans, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple therein destroyed and the People dispersed throughout the world. The offer to Israel of the Kingdom was pulled off the table until the time of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). Today, with the Kingdom offer no longer valid, we live only in the dispensation (or, economy) of Grace. It will remain so until the Rapture of the Church (2 Thessalonians 4:16,17). In the book of Acts one is fading away and the other is taking its place.

The Apostle Paul, while primarily the apostle to the Gentiles, was given the task of preaching both gospels (Acts 9:15,16). In our passage today, we see this plainly.

Verse 21—

We looked at this verse last time, but Paul was **Testifying both to the Jews (repentance toward God), and also to the Greeks (faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ)**. I think we would agree that repentance (Greek: *metanoia*), and faith (Greek: *pisteuo*) are not the same thing (Acts 13:39; 16:30,31; 2:37,38). Paul is telling us that as one man, he preached two messages. Kingdom and Individual. What we have to do is rightly divide those messages and not mix the two into one message.

Verse 22,23—

Paul is at Miletus, meeting with the Ephesian *elders*, vs. 17 (Greek, *presbuteros*). He is recounting his three-year visit with them and reviewing what he had taught them during his time in Ephesus. It is time for him to leave them as he goes **bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem**. Notice the lower-case **spirit**. The Greek word is *pneuma* which can be translated as *my own spirit*, or the Holy Spirit/Ghost. Here the translators leave it up to us to decide. In verse 23 the KJV uses **the Holy Ghost**. **Ghost** and **spirit** are the same Greek word, but verse 23 uses the word *hagios*, or Holy. Literally *the spirit the holy*. When the translators of the KJV used the term **Holy Ghost** they were indicating there was no doubt it is referring to the third person of the Trinity. I don't know how the Spirit did it but, in every city, **the Holy Ghost** told Paul **bonds and afflictions abide** (await).

Verse 24—

**But none of these things move me**. This might be a reason why we should interpret *spirit* in verse 22 as *his own spirit*. Nothing moves him, he is not worried about his life, he is *bound and determined to finish my course with joy*.

**And the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus**. Paul did not get his instructions for ministry from Peter or the other Apostles, it was given to him **of the Lord Jesus**. The Lord Jesus Christ was the source of Paul's message (See Ephesians 3:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:8). The message given to him was **to testify the gospel of the grace of God**. This is Paul's message of individual salvation—salvation by grace through faith and not of yourselves.

We will see in the next verse that Paul also teaches the gospel of the Kingdom, but the Gospel that was entrusted to him was **the gospel of the grace of God**. We call this the Pauline Gospel.

We live in the Pauline dispensation, Paul lived in one in which there was overlap as we have already noted.

Verse 25—

We noted back in chapter 19:8 (See notes on session 52) that when Paul was in Ephesus, he was teaching **the things concerning the kingdom of God**. Paul taught a very Jewish message.

What I think we always see with Paul is that he gives the correct message according to his audience (This was his method: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

The error that we often make is that the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel of the grace of God are the same thing (or, the same economy). This is where great confusion comes in and I think there is too much evidence to the contrary. We have to rightly divide!