

THE "PURPOSE OF GOD" IN PAUL'S ADDRESS  
TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

by

Mark Royce Summers

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Author: Mark Royce Summers  
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Adviser: Dr. E. William Male

The declaration of the "purpose of God" or the more common rendering, the "counsel of God" is implied by the Apostle Paul to reveal a personal accountability to God for its contents. Consequently, the Apostle's ministry was affirmed to have freed him from the blood of all mankind.

Three trends of modern Christianity that short-circuit this "purpose of God" are presented. From these, it is seen that there is a modern misunderstanding of the Biblical significance of the "whole purpose of God." The Apostle's address to the Ephesian elders recorded in Acts 20:17-35 is shown to have much relevance to the correction of this misunderstanding.

A historical background, the overall purpose of God in the inspiration of the Book of Acts and the Pauline address itself shows this relevance to contemporary Christianity. An expository discussion of Paul's address likewise is shown to indicate the necessity of all Christian leaders to recognize their logical and moral obligation to convey the whole message of εὐαγγέλιον and βασιλεία. These two aspects of the βουλή (purpose) of God recorded in this Pauline address are shown to be important to the understanding of Paul's use of βουλή. The exposition shows εὐαγγέλιον to be the foundation of the message of God's revelation to fallen mankind and βασιλεία to be the finale of the mission of God's revelation to fallen mankind through His Son mediatorially.

After the exposition of the address, a summary discussion of each of these three phrases, εὐαγγέλιον, βασιλεία, and βουλή τοῦ θεοῦ is presented. The εὐαγγέλιον discussion is limited to the Pauline gospel. The discussion of the kingdom follows the outline of Dr. Alva J. McClain in The Greatness of the Kingdom. The discussion of the "purpose of God" shows the more correct interpretation of βουλή to be "purpose" rather than "counsel." "Counsel" is indicated as the archaic rendering of "purpose."

The final chapter shows some key practical implications of the "purpose of God" to contemporary Christian education. These are shown to be necessary parts of a ministry to free the individual from the blood of all mankind (Acts 20:26).

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree  
Master of Divinity

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "E. William Hale". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Adviser

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Three Trends of Modern Christianity

The evangelical church today is being influenced by secular humanism and existential philosophy which have worked their way into the church and into its leadership. The result is the contemporary idealism of ecumenicity even among born-again Christians:

. . . with a corresponding avoidance of doctrines upon which all Christians are not agreed. This generally involves an elevation of love above doctrine . . . a "rethinking" of Christian doctrines with a view toward modifying them for the benefit of the "modern mind."<sup>1</sup>

There appears to be three human distortions which are behind these errors and short-circuit the all-pervading purpose of God. These are: one, the emphasis either on evangelism or on discipling almost to the exclusion of the other; two, the lack of "heart" in the service of the ministry; three, the contemporary thinking that one must prove the "gospel" before anyone can be regenerated. There appears to be a genuine need for present day churches to return to what the Apostle Paul called "the whole purpose/counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

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<sup>1</sup>John C. Whitcomb, "Biblical Fundamentalism" class lecture notes, (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 1.

These errors pervade the church's ministry and method of evangelism and discipleship. In many evangelical churches today, the leadership itself or church policies and practices emphasize one doctrine to the exclusion of other equally important doctrines and Biblical teachings. Some accentuate evangelism almost to the omission of discipleship. Others accentuate discipleship to the limitation of evangelism. Even more sad, others are doing very little of either and therefore are depending upon programs and artificial gimmicks to attract a superficial hearing. C. Michael Cocoris, in addressing the vital relationship between evangelism and the enduring responsibility of grounding converts in the Word of God affirms:

The "Great Commission" says we are to do two things: evangelize and edify. We ought not to divorce those two things from each other so that they live separately, . . . We ought to separate them enough to distinguish the difference between the two, but not separate them to the extent that we divorce them from each other. If we fail to do this, we end up in the trap of having to ground people in the Word of God before we win them to Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The failure to teach "the whole purpose of God" or an unbalanced presentation of one aspect over another short-circuits "the divine plan for world evangelism."<sup>2</sup> This is a "chain reaction series" found in Second Timothy 2:2.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>C. Michael Cocoris, "Evangelism Today," Grace Seminary Spire 4 (Spring 1977):5.

<sup>2</sup>Whitcomb, "Biblical Fundamentalism," p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

There is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is Paul and "many witnesses," teaching the things which they have heard, implying that the things heard are equal to the whole counsel of God in Acts 20:27. There is Timothy commissioned to teach the same things that the divinely commissioned Apostle taught. There are likewise "faithful men." This implies that these men are not just anyone who claims to be a Christian, but spiritually qualified and tested men who are "able to teach" by faithfully transmitting doctrine rather than speculations in human opinions. The last link in the series is "others also" who continue to perpetuate the series.

Whitcomb also asserts that:

. . . this chain reaction pattern is guaranteed by God to spread to the ends of the earth if each believer does his part in mastering and transmitting the exact 'things' revealed by God through chosen apostles and faithful men. If the chain of true doctrine is not kept intact there ultimately can be no dynamic spiritual transformations at the other end (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, for the complete proclamation of "the whole purpose of God" there must be equal emphasis upon evangelism and discipleship.

#### Lack of "Heart" in the Ministry

In many church circles, there is a lack of genuine concern for people in presenting the whole purpose of God. To the one extreme, some see the ministry as a "job", not seeing the real spiritual needs of the people. To the other extreme, some see the real spiritual needs of the people but

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

do not have adequate preparation or the ability to carry out the service of the Lord. They are in the ministry because "their mother thought it would be nice to have a son in 'the ministry.'"

#### Theory of Having to Prove the "Gospel"

The last human distortion to the all-pervading purpose of God is the contemporary theory that the evangelist must "prove" the authority and authenticity of the gospel message before anyone can be regenerated. This leads to questions about the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Theology of this type teaches that man is autonomous and must decipher his own "needs." Dr. Robert Reymond asserts,

. . . the instructed Christian apologist will never invite, by suggestion or implications, the non-believer to examine the biblical revelation and the evidence for the truth of the Christian faith (which is manifestly present everywhere) from the latter's viewpoint. To do so is by implication to deny what Scripture declares about him and to imply that he is not a covenant breaker.<sup>1</sup>

The apologist must simply share the message of the Word of God from its beginning principles to the final commands without apology or defense. God's Word is authentic and man is accountable to its revelation of the whole purpose of God.

Acts 20:17-35 has much relevance to a discussion of these three human distortions of God's all-pervading purpose. There are likewise two important reasons for the present study of this passage.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert L. Reymond, The Justification of Knowledge, An Introductory Study in Christian Apologetic Methodology (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 93, 94.

First, Acts 20:17-35 reveals the scope of the Apostle's ministry. He "solemnly declared the gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24), the foundation. He "preached the Kingdom of God" (v. 25), the finale. Consequently, the Apostle contends that he is "innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26).

The passage is the divinely inspired Lucan summary of the Apostle's thoughts and ministry. This gives credence to the authenticity of this passage as a divine example of ministry and Christian education. The allusion to the scope and contents of the Apostle's ministry is discovered in the relationship of the "gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον) and the "Kingdom" (βασιλεία). The allusion to the apostolic approach is discovered in the emphasis of the "purpose of God" (βουλή τοῦ θεοῦ).

Second, the passage reveals Paul's heart for the ministry. He asserts that he was "serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials" and that he did not "shrink from declaring . . . anything that was profitable" (vv. 19-20). (The passage also gives the reader some contents of the gospel according to Paul. This is very relevant to the question, "What is the Gospel?").

It is the thesis of this writer that εὐαγγέλιον in verse twenty-four is the foundation of God's revelation to fallen mankind and βασιλεία is the finale or the ultimate completion of the mission of God's revelation to mankind through His Son, mediatorially. βουλή τοῦ θεοῦ in verse

twenty-seven is therefore a reference to the inclusive contents of εὐαγγέλιον and the subject of the βασιλεία which is best translated "the purpose of God."

#### Limitations of the Study

The purpose of the study is not to give a comprehensive discussion of εὐαγγέλιον and βασιλεία. Many have written at length on both εὐαγγέλιον and βασιλεία. These works adequately address those topics. This thesis begins with a short discussion of the purpose of the book of Acts as a whole, and Acts 20:17-35 in particular. There is then a survey of the Pauline "heart" for the ministry and its teaching to contemporary Christian leaders. A short summary of the contents of the Gospel follows, limited to the Pauline contents of the gospel. Included also is a short summary of the Kingdom, following the outline of the incomparable study of Dr. Alva J. McClain in his work, The Greatness of the Kingdom. A discussion of βουλή shows the more correct interpretation of the term to be "purpose" rather than "counsel" or "will." Finally, there is a short presentation of the implications of the study to contemporary Christian Education which shows the real significance of the passage for today.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Date

Universally, scholars consider this book to have been written during a period of transition following the Jewish rejection of the Messiah. Immediately following this rejection, Christ's message then began to emphasize the necessity of His death and resurrection (Matt 16:21; Mk 8:31,32; Lk 9:22) and the promise of the building of His Church, a concept distinct from Judaism (Matt 18,19). In the first part of the book (chs. 1-12), Peter is the primary spokesman. In the latter chapters (13-28), Paul is the primary spokesman. It is significant that Acts 20 is found in the latter section of the Acts where the message of the gospel is spreading throughout the whole world resulting in a developing and growing church.

Biblical scholars place Acts 20 during Paul's third missionary journey. The dates are generally stated to be from 52 A.D. to 58 A.D. After considerable study of the background of the book of Acts, this writer has no reason to conclude otherwise.

### The Purpose of Acts

The message of Acts 20:17-35 is housed within the overall divine plan for the composition of Acts itself. The Acts of the Apostles may be described as a picture of the church, from its birth into its growth and its encompassing of the known world. Dr. Christopher Wordsworth states, "The design of the writings of the Acts of the Apostles is to reveal Jesus Christ in glory, ordering and disposing all things, by the agency and teaching of men; particularly His Apostles, for the advancement of His Kingdom upon earth, and for the full and final triumph of His holy Name and Word."<sup>1</sup>

The book is "a bridge from the gospels to the Epistles."<sup>2</sup> The idea of the book of Acts is to provide a Holy Spirit inspired textbook of church growth and church planting, evangelism and discipleship. In the book, one finds seed doctrines which are more fully explained in the later Epistles. It is "the second part of a two-volume work which forms somewhat more than one quarter of the entire New Testament."<sup>3</sup> The Acts is "the sequel to the third

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Wordsworth, The Acts of the Apostles (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1891), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>"The Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles," New Scofield Reference Bible, ed. E. Schuyler English et al (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 1160.

<sup>3</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, An Introduction to the New Testament, vol. 1: The Gospels and Acts (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 246.

gospel."<sup>1</sup> The third gospel "traces the story of God sending His Son, that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> The Acts "traces the story of sending the Holy Spirit, how God is forming the mystical body of Christ, the church."<sup>3</sup>

Although this writer fully accepts the authority of Paul's writings, there appears to be another underlying purpose for the divine recording of the Acts of the Apostles. Since Paul never saw Christ during His earthly ministry--an accepted credential for apostleship--some scholars have deduced that the work is intended to equate the Apostle Paul with the Apostle Peter. These scholars assert that an implication of this is that people today may fully trust the Pauline messages. One such scholar, A. J. Mattill, Jr., takes the position that Luke records parallel miracles, visions, sufferings and speeches of Peter and Paul, including no degree of miracle told of Peter without a Pauline analogy.<sup>4</sup> In another source, the same writer observes that the harmony portrayed in Acts between Paul, the original apostles and James is in accord with the Epistles showing Paul and the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>A. J. Mattill, Jr., "The Purpose of Acts: Schneckenburger Reconsidered" in Apostolic History and the Gospel, eds. W. Ward Gasgne and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 110.

twelve to be at one in faith, love and proclamation.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Purposes of Acts 20:17-35

The Apostle Paul dedicated approximately two and a half years in establishing the church in Ephesus. The real significance of this fact is its fame. Some state that the Apostle's labors "made Ephesus the third capital of Christianity"<sup>2</sup> alongside of Jerusalem and Antioch. The strength of this assembled group of believers is lauded by the Lord Himself in Revelation 2:1-3 as being perseverant for the Lord's name sake.

In this emotional address to the elders of this famed church the Apostle has several purposes in mind. The purposes of the recording of this passage are of two degrees, primary and secondary. These must be discussed.

#### Primary Purposes

This message of Paul, divinely recorded by Luke, is the only real sermon in the entire Acts of the Apostles delivered to Christians. It is recorded primarily to impress upon the hearers the full responsibility of Christian leaders.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A. J. Mattill, Jr., "The Value of Acts as Source for the Study of Paul" in Perspectives of Luke-Acts, ed. Charles H. Tolbert (Danville, VA: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>Adolf Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, trans. and ed. by James Moffatt (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1901), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup>George L. Ploetz, "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech to the Ephesian Elders at Miletus in Acts 20:17-38" (Bachelor of Divinity thesis, Springfield, IL: Concordia Seminary, 1968), p. 10. For references, hereafter the entry will read "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . . ."

Concerning this pastoral emphasis, Donald Peterson points out that the message gives an indication of Paul's expectations for the church and a plan for its expansion.<sup>1</sup>

From these two primary purposes one may see that the divine purpose is to induce Christian leaders to develop the internal character quality of leadership and the external outworking of this character, which is the building and expansion of the body of Christ, the church.

#### Secondary Purposes

Dr. C. K. Barrett indicates that Acts 20 is both historically and theologically significant. He believes that Luke makes explicit the relationship between the future period about which he writes and the period in which he is writing.<sup>2</sup> The relationship is between the church of Luke's day, the Gospel, and the concept of the ministry of the two periods. People today should observe this same two-fold similarity. Therefore one may see the secondary tie between that first century example and the present day application. One may ask, as did Dr. Barrett, what beliefs about the Gospel, the Church, the Kingdom and the Ministry are set forth? What place do these beliefs occupy in the growth of

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<sup>1</sup>Donald H. Peterson, "The Criticism of Selected Pauline Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles" (Bachelor of Sacred Theology thesis, The Biblical Seminary in New York, 1955), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Charles K. Barrett, "Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders" in God's Christ and His People, eds. Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), p. 107.

post-apostolic Christianity?<sup>1</sup>

Springing from the occasion of the message--the Pauline journey to Jerusalem to deliver the Gentile churches' relief fund which he had collected--is the Pauline purpose of showing concern for other Christian brethren. George L. Ploetz asserts that the Apostle hoped to achieve several things from this occasion.<sup>2</sup>

First, he hoped to demonstrate an act of Christian charity among fellow believers motivated by the love of Christ.

Second, the Apostle hoped to express the solidarity of the Christian fellowship in presenting evidence that their Eternal Father was calling the Gentiles as well to the Christian faith. To illustrate this point, Arthur McGiffert gives this as a logical reason why the Apostle should not desire to visit Ephesus but requested the Ephesian elders come to him at Miletus (Acts 20:16,17).<sup>3</sup> This was directly on his route to Jerusalem. A stop at Ephesus could possibly delay the Apostle's arrival into Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. The occasion, the harvest feast, "would bring to Jerusalem the larger number of foreign Jews than any other festival so that the relation between Palestine and the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ploetz, "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . ." p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur C. McGiffert, A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 339.

rest of the world received then especial emphasis."<sup>1</sup>

Third, a desired achievement for the message recorded in this passage was a refutation and a warning concerning subsequent false teaching present in the churches of Asia Minor. This was also later confronted in the Pauline letters to Ephesus and Colossia and from the pen of the Apostle John in the book of Revelation.

Therefore, this writer observes, in light of the Pauline desire concerning the collection, several theological implications: first, the need to demonstrate Christian charity; second, the need to understand the solidarity of the Christian fellowship, comprising both Jews and Gentiles; and third, the combined need to be on general guard against false teaching, personally and for the entire body of Christ, the Church.

In summary, the importance of this passage is that it shows the necessity for the holy internal character quality of the Christian leadership. It shows the necessity of the external outworking of this character, the result being the building and expansion of the church. This all springs from a correct Biblical theology.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEART OF THE MESSAGE

If the Acts of the Apostles is truly a picture of the church, as stated previously, and the Apostle is the divinely commissioned messenger to personify and illustrate the work of its leadership, then an exposition of the thrust and emotion of the Apostle's ministry, summarized in Acts 20:17-35, is in order.

#### Outline

- I. Paul's Past Ministry (in Ephesus) vv. 18-21
  - A. Serving the Lord 19
  - B. Declaring all Profitable Things 20
  - C. Teaching 20
  - D. Warning to both Jews and Greeks 21
  
- II. Paul's Present Ministry (to Jerusalem) vv. 22-27
  - A. His present circumstances 22-24
  - B. His present confidence 25-27
  
- III. Paul's Exhortation for the Elders' Future Ministry  
vv. 28-30
  - A. Take Heed 28
  - B. False Teachers shall come 29,30

- IV. Paul's Example--The People's Stimulus: Remembrance of His Ministry vv. 31-35
- A. His Past Admonition (in Ephesus) 31
  - B. His Present Commendation 32
  - C. His Attitude 33,34
  - D. His Overall Analysis of His Example--Their Moral Obligation 35

#### Exegetical Observations

It is noteworthy that within the bounds of this passage the Apostle gives reference to three prominent phrases. In verse twenty-four is "testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." Verse twenty-five speaks of "preaching the Kingdom" or ". . . The Kingdom of God." Verse twenty-seven speaks of "not shrinking from declaring the whole purpose of God" (emphasis added). These three phrases give the reader insight into the content of Paul's ministry. The entire passage itself gives the reader insight into the Pauline impartation of his heart. The results of this ministry were eternal. It was the building of the church.

There are various interpretations of the relationship of these three phrases, some of which appear to be stretching the author's point and add to the text. W. H. Griffith Thomas is a possible example of this. Dr. Thomas states that the "grace" represents the elementary fundamental truths of

the Gospel in relation to the Lord as Saviour.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas' interpretation of "the Kingdom" indicates that it refers to the fuller and deeper truths as taught to those who had been Christians for some time and refers to the rule and sovereignty of God, present and future.<sup>2</sup> "The whole counsel of God," asserts Dr. Thomas, is a reference to the deepest and fullest of spiritual truths suited only to those who have been mature Christians for a long time.<sup>3</sup>

This writer therefore desires to show from the context and its contents, the relation between εὐαγγέλιον and βασιλείαν. The Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) appears to be the foundation of the message of God's revelation to fallen mankind. The Kingdom, (βασιλείαν), is the finale, or consummation, the ultimate completion of the mission of God's revelation to mankind through His Son as the mediator. Melvine Crump explains:

The disciples were witnesses in that they bore witness to the fact of the resurrection and in light of this fact, heralded Jesus; they announced the good news had its fulfillment in the Messianic promises. These Messianic blessings were to be realized upon repentance and remission of sin and faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. They saw and taught Jesus as the Messiah in His

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<sup>1</sup>W. H. Griffith Thomas, Outline Studies in the Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 396. For references hereafter, the entry will read Outline Studies in Acts.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

relation to the Kingdom of God. To herald the good news (gospel) of the one was to herald the truths of the other (kingdom).<sup>1</sup>

When the Apostle Paul therefore asserts in verse twenty-seven, "I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole purpose/counsel of God," he is asserting that he did not withhold any aspect of either the foundation or the finale of God's revealed purpose for mankind. The writer will approach this study by the exposition of the following verses: 18-19; 20; 21; 22-23; 24-25; 26-27; 28; 29-32; 33-35.

#### I. Paul's Past Ministry in Ephesus 18-21

Verses eighteen through twenty illustrate the Apostle's heart for the ministry. He recognizes himself as a bond-servant of Christ Jesus (Rom 1:1). The example of Paul's emotion is mentioned explicitly as an obligation morally on the part of all other Christian leaders (Acts 20:35).

#### Serving the Lord (vv. 18-19)

The emphatic pronoun ('Υμεῖς) used in verse eighteen reveals the Apostle's appeal to the Ephesians' personal knowledge of his life in Ephesus.<sup>2</sup> It is the following

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<sup>1</sup>Melvine W. Crump, "'The Gospel' in Light of the Greek New Testament--An Exegetical Study" (Th.D. dissertation, Philadelphia: Eastern Baptist Seminary, 1937), p. 69. For references hereafter, the entry will read "The Gospel . . . in Greek NT."

<sup>2</sup>A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 6 vols. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 3:347.

verse that illustrates the Apostle's emotional involvement of the ministry. It is Paul's delight to be serving (δουλεύων) the Lord as a bondservant (cf. Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1; Phlm--"a prisoner"), with all humility, tears and testings. Luke records in 19:9f the hostile attitude of the Jews in Ephesus toward the Apostle, explaining the trials, (πειρασμῶν) happening to the Apostle in the plots of the Jews.

Declaring All Things Profitable--Teaching (v. 20)

Lenski points out that ὡς parallels the πῶς occurring in verse eighteen,<sup>1</sup> pointing to the fact that Paul "never tried to save himself or to seek the slightest advantage for himself."<sup>2</sup> The verb, (ὑποστέλλω) seen again in verse twenty-seven, connected grammatically with ὡς, is "applied to the wrapping up of anything to keep it out of sight or to stow it away."<sup>3</sup> Τῶν συμφερόντων (all things profitable) implies that "the message which pointed men to the way of salvation [as well as eschatological teachings and applications arising from this message of salvation] would at times be couched in terms of rebuke and reproof and would not always be pleasant to deliver however

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<sup>1</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Acts of the Apostles, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934), p. 839.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>J. Rawson Lumby, The Acts of the Apostles, gen. ed. J. J. S. Perowne in Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1885), p. 359.

necessary."<sup>1</sup> The main tasks of the Apostle were preaching and teaching. The Apostle's method was publicly and house to house. Dr. Everett F. Harrison asserts that "this may be intended to suggest not merely contact with individual families but also with groups of people (the church in houses)."<sup>2</sup> The same author adds that this "same breadth of activity characterized his outreach to the unsaved, which embraced 'both Jews and Greeks.'"<sup>3</sup>

Warning to Both Jews and Greeks (v. 21)

The Apostle moves from the emotional intensity of the ministry to some contents of the ministry. Paul solemnly bore witness (διαμαρτυρούμενος) to what was the essence of the gospel message. BAGD points out that this word originally had the idea of a witness "taken under oath."<sup>4</sup> This word is frequently used in the LXX in the sense of solemnly protesting against false views of the ones addressed (cf. Deut 4:26; 8:19; I Sam 18:9; Zech 3:7). In the New Testament it was used by Paul as solemnly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. (cf. I Cor 10:33 for the Apostle's own words, τὰ συμφέροντα).

<sup>2</sup>Everett F. Harrison, Acts: The Expanding Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 314.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Walter Bauer and William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd ed. revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 186.

protesting in 1 Tim 5:21; 2 Tim 2:14; 4:1.<sup>1</sup> The witness was both to the Jews and Greeks, requiring repentance and faith.

Τε καὶ connecting "Jews and Greeks" has the binding effect. Dr. Brooke F. Westcott draws attention to the fact that τε "marks something which is not regarded as distinct from and coordinate with that which it is connected, but serves to complete the fullness of one main idea."<sup>2</sup> This gives the implication that whether Paul was preaching and teaching to both Jews or Greeks, the substance of the teaching was the same under all conditions.

George Ploetz in "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech to the Ephesian Elders at Miletus in Acts 20:17-38" draws one's attention to the fact that Luke uses only one article with μετάνοιαν and πίστιν, thereby indicating that repentance and faith also constitute a unit idea.<sup>3</sup> The uniting of both of these say that the repentance is the beginning of the believer's salvation relationship and faith is the end or application of the relationship which is commanding a resultant life style.

The "goal" of the repentance and faith is indicated here by the use of εἰς, as Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich point

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<sup>1</sup>R. J. Knowling, The Acts of the Apostles, vol. 2, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll in The Expositor's Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 244.

<sup>3</sup>George Ploetz, "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . . ," p. 18.

out.<sup>1</sup> The repentance is "toward" God because of sin. The purpose is that we may be candidates for salvation. Faith is "toward" our Lord that we may receive forgiveness, righteousness and life.<sup>2</sup> These two doctrines are fundamental to the full proclamation of the gospel (20:24).

## II. Paul's Present Ministry in Jerusalem vv. 22-27

### His Present Circumstances (vv. 22-24)

The Apostle now moves from the emotional intensity of his three year ministry in Ephesus to his immediate circumstances with an emphatic καὶ νῦν ἴδοῦ (And now behold"). The Apostle desires the reader to get the full effect of his servanthood to the Lord, mentioned in verse nineteen. The Apostle is saying, in effect, "Look, the heart intensity is still here even now. I haven't lost it through all the tears and trials which came to me through the plots of the Jews." A. T. Robertson states that Paul's being bound in the spirit (δεδένεμενος ἐν ᾧ τῷ πνεύματι) means he was bound from a high sense of duty, as also in 19:21.<sup>3</sup> It has also been mentioned by some that Paul's motive in going to Jerusalem was his great affection for the Jews (Rom 9:1-5) and his hope that the gifts of the Gentile churches to the poor of that city (Rom 15:25-28) would open

<sup>1</sup>BAGD, s.v. εἰς, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup>Everett F. Harrison, Acts: The Expanding Church, p. 314.

<sup>3</sup>A. T. Robertson, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 350.

the hearts of the law-bound Jewish believers to "the gospel of God's grace" (v. 24).<sup>1</sup> In the Apostle's spirit, there was no knowledge of exactly what was to be confronted, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly declared to him that imprisonment (δεσμός) and suffering (θλίψεις) should be expected. This still did not stifle the Apostle's sense of duty to go to Jerusalem. Second Corinthians 1:8 mentions that these sufferings were "excessively, beyond [his] strength, so that [he] even despaired of life."

The reason the Apostle could proceed to Jerusalem, not knowing exactly what was to be expected, is given in verse twenty-four. Paul had the right perspective on this temporal life, in order that (ὥς) he could accomplish his ministry and the purpose of his life (τὸν δρόμον μου). Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich categorize ὥς as a final particle, denoting purpose.<sup>2</sup> The method of the Apostle's accomplishment of his life purpose and ministry was not by viewing this earthly temporal life. Paul was ready to relinquish his liberty, and if need be, his life itself, for the sake of the gospel of the grace of God (cf. 2 Cor 4:7ff; 6:4ff; 12:9ff; Phil 1:20; 2:17; 3:8; Col 1:24). George Ploetz asserts that "self-preservation was not a motive highly esteemed by Paul; his main concern was to fulfill the course which Christ had marked out for him, bearing witness to the

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<sup>1</sup>The New Scofield Reference Bible, ed. by E. Schuyler English, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 1195, n.1.

<sup>2</sup>BAGD, s.v. "ὥς," p. 897.

good news of God's free grace in Christ."<sup>1</sup> The middle voice is used in ποιῶμαι τὴν ψυχὴν τιμῶν ἑμαυτῶ. Dana and Mantey, in A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, state:

. . . the significance of the middle ποιῶμαι seems to be "I do not make as far as I am personally concerned, my life dear unto myself." Paul does not at all mean to say that he has no interest in living, but means that he considers his divinely appointed ministry as overshadowing any selfish interest which it would be possible for him to have in life. The middle indicates that however others may regard the matter, this is HIS conclusion. Here the middle is not only intensive, but antithetical in force.<sup>2</sup>

#### His Present Confidence (vv. 25-27)

The positive fulfillment of verses nineteen through twenty-four was the Apostle's present confidence. Once again the writer uses the transitional phrase, καὶ νῦν ἰδοῦ so that the reader does not miss the full effect of his servanthood to the Lord, mentioned in verse nineteen. The confidence the Apostle was asserting was that he had preached "the Kingdom" when he had been among them. Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, in A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles, point out that κηρύσσω τὴν βασιλείαν "serves as a type of summary for the contents of the preceding paragraph."<sup>3</sup> It is important that the

<sup>1</sup>Ploetz, "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . .," p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 159.

<sup>3</sup>Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles, vol. 12 (London: United Bible Societies, 1972), p. 393. For references hereafter, the entry will read Handbook on Acts.

reader notice the wording, "the gospel" in verse twenty-four and "the kingdom" in verse twenty-five. These are not two opposing terms. Dr. Everett F. Harrison observes that "another term containing the concept of the Gospel is 'the kingdom' of God" (Acts 19:8; 28:31).<sup>1</sup> George Ploetz takes the position that "the proclaiming of the Kingdom is the same as testifying to the good news of God's grace."<sup>2</sup>

It is the view of this writer that the contents of the preaching of the Kingdom, containing the declaration of "the gospel of the grace of God," is ultimately realized when all things have been subjected to God's eschatological theocratic rule (implicit in Heb 2:8-15). In this regard, compare Acts 19:1-12, especially verse 8 for the "reasoning and persuading" about the kingdom. It appears as if the end of the teaching was the kingdom, an application of the baptism of repentance (v. four) and the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. five). A more fully developed discussion of the various aspects and contents of εὐαγγέλιον and βασιλεία will be discussed in the next chapter.

The conclusion that the Apostle arrives at in verse twenty-six is that because he had preached the all encompassing Kingdom of God, if any should be lost, he could not be held accountable before God. The same idea may be seen more clearly in Acts 18:6.

In verse twenty-seven, the Apostle repeats the

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<sup>1</sup>Harrison, Acts: The Expanding Church, p. 315.

<sup>2</sup>Ploetz, "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . .," p. 25.

same expressions of verse twenty illustrated from the field of navigation. Dr. Christopher Wordsworth states Paul was using the surroundings as an illustration:

. . . the metaphor (of ὑποστέλλω) is taken from Navigation, and was appropriate at a seaport . . . The Apostle, by this metaphor, compares the Church to a ship, and himself to a Mariner or Captain of it, and the doctrines of the Gospel to its sails; and he says that he οὐδεν ὑπεστειλάτο, "lowered or reefed none" of its canvas, but spread it all out boldly to the sun and wind so as to conceal nothing but to display the whole and to give his hearers a perfect, full assurance, certainty, (πληροφορία) of faith in their course over the sea of this world to the haven of life everlasting.<sup>1</sup>

George Ploetz makes the observation that:

. . . there is a correlation between "the things profitable" in verse nineteen, "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus" in verse twenty-one, "the gospel of the grace of God" in verse twenty-four, "the kingdom" in verse twenty-five and "all the counsel of God" in verse twenty-seven. Each casts light on the others.<sup>2</sup>

This is very significant, because as H. A. W. Meyer reveals, the complete realization of τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ, the counsel of God, is τὴν βασιλείαν, the Kingdom, that is, the Messianic Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Meyer also states that "declaring the whole counsel of God" in verse twenty-four, and "preaching the Kingdom" in verse twenty-five, "denote one

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Wordsworth, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Ploetz, "An Interpretation of Paul's Speech . . .," p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles, trans. from the 4th German ed. Rev. Paton J. Gloag, trans., ed. and revised by William P. Dickson (Winona Lake, IN: Alpha Publications, 1979), p. 390.

and the same great contents of the gospel although viewed according to different aspects of its nature,"<sup>1</sup> Newman and Nida assert that πᾶσαν τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ is correctly interpreted as "all that God plans to do or all that God arranges to do."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the Apostle is confidently asserting that he is free from the blood of all mankind for the reason that he has announced the whole purpose of God which is finally fulfilled when the rule and control of the earth and its inhabitants have been returned to God's personal control (1 Cor 15:24-28). The Gospel, in essence, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus, is the foundation or basis of God's revelation to fallen mankind. The Kingdom is the consummation of the mission of God's Son, mediatorially, when this God-man returns the subjection of all things to God, so that He "may be all in all" (1 Cor 10:38). Presently, in a broad sense, the Kingdom of God is the Lordship of Christ.

This message of declaring the whole counsel of God included the positive elements or benefits of the gospel as well as the negative elements or warnings of the gospel. Dr. Everett Harrison teaches that the Apostle "resisted the temptation to withhold that rejection of the Gospel of God's grace can only bring judgment."<sup>3</sup> This is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 391.

<sup>2</sup>Newman and Nida, Handbook on Acts, p. 393.

<sup>3</sup>Harrison, Acts: The Expanding Church, p. 315.

significant even to contemporary Christianity because this "consequently underlines the integrity of the church's preaching."<sup>1</sup>

This therefore initiates the Apostolic discussion of heresy against which Christian leaders are to guard.

### III. Paul's Exhortation for the Elders

#### Future Ministry vv. 28-30

##### Take Heed (v. 28)

The Apostle is explicitly wedding the two concepts of personal life and personal ministry in the imperative, προσέχω. The implication is that the Christian leader is first to be concerned about his own spiritual integrity while he is also concerned about the corporate integrity of the flock. Dr. John Davis, in The Perfect Shepherd, mentions that:

A good shepherd is a knowledgeable man. He knows his own capabilities and strengths. Perhaps equally important, he knows the terrain over which he must travel and feed his sheep . . . He must know the sheep. Without being aware of their capabilities and limitations, he could easily destroy the flock.<sup>2</sup>

The Shepherd is a good provider, protector and a strong but defensive guide for his sheep. Dr. Earl Radmacher says that the priority must "be given to the provision of

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), p. 492.

<sup>2</sup>John J. Davis, The Perfect Shepherd, Studies in the Twenty-Third Psalm (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1979), p. 38.

food."<sup>1</sup> Although there was no direct reference to the Trinity as a complete unit, Paul uses "the activities of the persons of the Trinity as authority and as motivating factors."<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit was the one who was calling and appointing the overseers (ἐπιλοκόπους). The latter part of the verse refers to the blood as the price for mankind's redemption. Dr. Leon Morris in The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, in direct reference to διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου, says that "whether we translate it 'by the blood of His Own' or retain as the Revised Version 'with His own blood', the reference is clearly to the action of Christ in dying for man's redemption."<sup>3</sup> The possessive genitive of ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ gives implicit reference to ownership or possession, indicating that God is the one who possesses the church which is bought by the blood of His own. These were motivating factors for Paul's ministry.

#### False Teachers Shall Come (vv. 29-30)

The Apostle predicts that immediately after his departure, heresy and troubles would come into the Church at Ephesus. His prediction was fulfilled. First Timothy

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<sup>1</sup>Earl Radmacher, What the Church Is All About (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 304.

<sup>2</sup>D. A. Huffines, Jr., "Apostolic Preaching: A Study of the Sermons in the Acts" (Doctor of Theology dissertation, Richmond, VA: Union Theological Seminary, 1952), p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 124.

1:3-7 mentions what happened later, as contrasted with the Apostolic goal of instruction to be a "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5). The Apostle John alludes, in Revelation 2:2-4, to the fact that the church was "testing those who call themselves apostles" but they had left (ἀφίημι) their first love. Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich describe the use of ἀφίημι here as "giving up or abandoning."<sup>1</sup> This implies an intentional and not an accidental abandonment. Earlier the church had been commended for its love (Eph 1:15,16). George Ploetz asserts that:

. . . some sort of Gnosticism was prevalent in the province of Asia, but it seems more probable that the real trouble was with Jews or Judaizing Christians. The Gnostic heresy, for all its pretensions to rigorous piety, was a demonic denial of the goodness of God's creation.<sup>2</sup>

In reference to the Gnostics from without, Newman and Nida render "not sparing the flock" as "not leaving the flock uninjured."<sup>3</sup> But the fact is that it was probably the Judaizing Christians, from within the church, who were probably the ones drawing away the disciples. Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich state that this drawing away could be correctly translated tearing away the disciples after them and thereby alienating them.<sup>4</sup> There may be a reference here to Judaizers

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<sup>1</sup>BAGD, s.v. "ἀφίημι," p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Ploetz, "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . . ," p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Newman and Nida, Handbook on Acts, p. 395.

<sup>4</sup>BAGD, s.v. "ἀποσπάω," p. 98.

drawing the disciples back to the O.T. shadows of old Judaism and away from sole faith in Jesus Christ, the substance of all Messianic truth (Heb 6:1-4). Therefore, the Apostle asserts that overseers must be ready to expeditiously handle false doctrine and all types of heresy. This still has great application for present day Christian leadership.

#### IV. Paul's Example--the People's Stimulus:

##### Remembrance of His Ministry vv. 31-35

##### His Past Admonition in Ephesus (v. 31)

The Apostle has now concluded his defense of his private and public ministry and warnings, and appears to return to his beginning statements to allow the elders to reflect on the "heart beat" of his Ephesian ministry recorded in verse nineteen. Διὸ γρηγορεῖτε is an inferential conjunction with a present active imperative, implying that the overseers were to be watchful and on the alert. They should come to this conclusion by reflecting on the exemplary ministry of the Apostle. The present and continuing application to the overseers' ministry was a reflection on the three year ministry of the apostolic admonition and instruction.

##### His Present Commendation (v. 32)

Parallel to the Apostle's confidence of his innocence of the blood of all men is the Apostle's present ability to commend the Ephesian believers "to God and to the Word of His grace" (v. 32). W. H. Griffith Thomas draws attention to the three important elements of the Christian life in this verse which come through the possession of the Word of God:

1. edification--"able to build you up"
2. inheritance--"able to give you an inheritance"
3. sanctification--"among all those who are sanctified."<sup>1</sup>

I. Howard Marshall observes that the obscure phrase τῷ δυναμένῳ . . . δοῦναι τὴν κληρονομίαν may be based on Deuteronomy 33:3f, and that it "appears to refer to God's gift of a share in the blessings of His kingly rule which Paul's hearers will enjoy along with God's people as a whole."<sup>2</sup> He also asserts that:

. . . it is significant that these blessings come through commitment to the Word. Paul and Luke knew nothing of the idea that church leaders stand over the Word committed to them (2 Tim 1:14) and are in control of it; on the contrary, they stand under it.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant also to notice that the inheritance κληρονομία, is articular, without any modifiers, giving the implication that the Apostle assumed that the readers automatically would understand what was meant by "the inheritance." George Ploetz takes the position that "the inheritance is the Kingdom of God with all its blessings, both present and eschatological . . . wholly the gift of God's grace."<sup>4</sup> This same writer brings to one's attention that

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<sup>1</sup>W. H. Griffith Thomas, Outline Studies in Acts, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup>I. Howard Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. 335.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ploetz, "An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . . ," p. 36.

"within the New Testament, the inheritance is connected with the person and work of the risen Christ who is the heir by virtue of His being the Son (1 Pet 1:3,4)."<sup>1</sup> Some ancient expositors attribute τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ to be "Christ, who is full of grace and from whom all grace has come to man (John 1:14,16)."<sup>2</sup> A strong evidence to this assertion is that much that is personal is ascribed to the λόγος. Therefore, "how can what is not personal be said to give τὴν κληρονομία?"<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that τῆς χάριτος, a descriptive genitive, gives the essential quality and characteristic of the λόγος.<sup>4</sup> In 1 John 1:1, τοῦ λογοῦ τῆς ζωῆς--another descriptive genitive--describes the essential quality or characteristic of the λόγος to be "life."

When one ties these grace qualities together with the λόγος of verse 32 and the εὐαγγέλιον of verse 24, it is easy to see the connection between the essential gospel message and the person of Christ. Christ does not abide physically today on earth. Consequently, this gives added impetus to the Apostolic commendation of the Word, used of Jesus as the Revelation of God (John 1:1) and which gives regeneration to all who believe (1 Pet 1:23; Eph 1:13). Ephesians 1:10,11 ties the inheritance to Christ in "ἐν αὐτῷ

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Wordsworth, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν." It is interesting to notice the correlation of εὐαγγέλιον and βασιλεία in Acts 8:12 and likewise in 14:21-23. Likewise it is interesting to notice that the inheritance is tied in with the purpose of God, βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. With these implicit New Testament correlations between εὐαγγέλιον, βασιλεία, and βουλή, it is necessary to give a summary discussion of the three concepts and their contents. This will be accomplished in the next chapter, although on a very limited scale due to the limited scope of this study.

#### His Attitude (vv. 33,34)

Continuing the Pauline reflection upon the Ephesian ministry, Luke records the Apostle's attitude toward the ministry. A. T. Robertson mentions that "one of the slanders against Paul was that he was raising the collection (for Jerusalem), ostensibly for the poor, really for himself (2 Cor 12:17f)."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Homer A. Kent, Jr. in Jerusalem to Rome, states that:

Paul himself had engaged in this work for three years. In so doing, he had carefully avoided any appearance of monetary covetousness and had exemplified the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than receive" (verse thirty-five).<sup>2</sup>

Ἱματισμός raiment or clothing is mentioned because Oriental wealth consisted partly in changes of clothing (Gen 45:22; 2 Kings 5:5,22). Hence, New Testament references to the

<sup>1</sup>A. T. Robertson, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 355.

<sup>2</sup>Homer A. Kent, Jr., Jerusalem to Rome, Studies in the Book of Acts (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972), p. 158.

moth in Matthew 6:19 and James 5:3 is a warning to the rich and worldly.<sup>1</sup> In 1 Corinthians 4:12 the Apostle writes, "and we labor, working with our hands." George Ploetz points out, it is interesting that:

. . . in light of this Corinthian accusation, that 1 Corinthians was probably written from Ephesus. Paul's message and conduct were consistent in every place that he ministers while most of his earnings were invested in the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle reminds them of his ministry in Ephesus as a proof that he cared both for his own personal needs and for those ministering with him. Paul's message and conduct were most consistent.

His Overall Analysis of His Example--Their Necessary Obligation (v. 35)

In this concluding verse of the Pauline address to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle states the overall analysis of his example. The result of this is that it is only logical that the church leaders follow suit. Dr. John Sproule in "The Epistle to the Hebrews" class lecture notes states that δεῖ is "logical necessity" translated "it is necessary" and must be differentiated from "moral necessity" indicated by ὀφείλω, translated "ought

<sup>1</sup>Wordsworth, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Ploetz, An Interpretation of St. Paul's Speech . . ., " p. 37.

or must."<sup>1</sup> It is δεῖ that is used here. But a moral obligation must be recognized in conjunction with the motivation of the trinity mentioned before. Christian leaders are indebted to Christ who accomplished the work of the atonement. They as overseers, are commissioned by the Holy Spirit to preach. It is also imperative to recognize that God is the one who is the owner of the ἐκκλησία (Acts 20:28) of which they are overseers. This is moral obligation. But in remembrance of the Apostle's example, the only logical conclusion is to follow his Apostolic pattern. Ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι τῶν ἀσθενούντων, helping the weak, is toiling not just for ourselves but to help by holding ourselves in the end, indicative of the very spirit of Christ (1 Thess 5:14; 1 Cor 12:28; Rom 5:6; 14:1).<sup>2</sup> The Apostle implies in μνημονεύειν τε τῶν λόγων τοῦ κηρύου Ἰησοῦ ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶπεν that if Church leaders cannot remember the Apostolic pattern or example for what it is, they are morally obligated to remember the Divine example of the ministry. But Luke, under divine inspiration, asserts the Apostolic authority by recording τε τῶν λόγων indicating the binding effect between the Apostolic and the Divine pattern for ministry. Consequently, the entire Pauline Farewell Address may be followed with utmost confidence as well as

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<sup>1</sup>John Sproule, "Epistle to the Hebrews" class lecture notes, Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>A. T. Robertson, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 356.

the entire Acts of the Apostles as a type of textbook for contemporary ecclesiology and methodology in personal and public ministry. Consequently, to show the priority example, Luke uses the emphatic αὐτός with the Beatitude of Jesus. A. T. Robertson, in A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, states that the αὐτός was inserted to show that κύριος Ἰησοῦς is the important example.<sup>1</sup> Christian leaders must continuously remember as well as remind themselves that, "It is more blessed to give than receive." Newman and Nida indicate that this blessedness or happiness "refers to the kind of joy one experiences when God rules in one's life and when one's values are based upon the values of the Kingdom of God rather than on the values of this world."<sup>2</sup>

In summary, from the exposition of this Pauline Farewell Address, one is to recognize the logical, as well as the moral obligation a Christian leader has in the conveyance of the message of the εὐαγγέλιον and the βασιλεία, two aspects of πᾶσαν τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ. The εὐαγγέλιον is the foundation of the message of God's revelation to fallen mankind. The βασιλεία is the finale or consummation of the mission of God's revelation to mankind through His Son, mediatorially. The heralding of the εὐαγγέλιον was seen to be the heralding of the βασιλεία and vice versa.

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<sup>1</sup>A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 708.

<sup>2</sup>Newman and Nida, Handbook on Acts, p. 398.

The contents of this Farewell Address therefore indicate the necessary intensity of Christian leaders for the ministry. This is indicative of a life above reproach, in conduct and character (1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:6-9).

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY OF THREE MAJOR TERMS

In this message to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle records three very important terms critical to an understanding of his ministry and its implications to believers and Christian leaders today. They are εὐαγγέλιον, βασιλεία, and βουλή. It would be futility to say that, in the confines of this limited study, one could give a complete exegetical study of these three terms. Of the first two, several lengthy books have been published. Of the latter, very little has been written. This writer wishes to give a brief overview of each, limiting "the Gospel" to Paul's Gospel in 1 Cor 15:3-8; Rom 1:1-4,16,17; 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim 2:8. The brief discussion of "the Kingdom" will follow the outline of Dr. Alva J. McClain in The Greatness of the Kingdom.

This writer's discussion of "the counsel of God," following a discussion of the meaning of βουλή, seeks to show how the New American Standard translation, "purpose," for βουλή is a better translation and interpretation of βουλή than "counsel." The word "counsel" in its common usage today does not mean the same thing it did when the King James Version was originally translated. Webster

indicates it would today be considered an archaic usage.<sup>1</sup>

### Paul's Gospel

Most of the New Testament εὐαγγέλιον passages are Pauline.<sup>2</sup> Paul even refers to the gospel as "my gospel" in Rom 2:16, and 2 Tim 2:8 or as the "gospel which I preached" (1 Cor 15:1) or which "was preached by me" (Gal 1:11). This reference to "my gospel" is said to lay emphasis upon the human instrument who was especially commissioned to carry this message to the Gentiles.<sup>3</sup> Paul was the Apostle, who under divine inspiration, "thought out the Gospel systematically."<sup>4</sup> The result of part of this system is the Book of Romans, which presents "the most comprehensive and outstanding interpretation of the facts of the Gospels and Acts."<sup>5</sup>

### The Meaning of Εὐαγγέλιον

The technical meaning of εὐαγγέλιον itself is:

- a. the reward received by the messenger of victory (his good news brings relief to the recipients; therefore he is rewarded)

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<sup>1</sup>Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, 1972 ed. s.v. "counsel."

<sup>2</sup>TDNT, s.v. "εὐαγγέλιον," by Gerhard Friedrich, 2:729.

<sup>3</sup>Herman A. Hoyt, The Gospel--God's Way in Saving Men (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, Inc., 1974), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Dictionary of the New Testament, s.v. "εὐαγγέλιον," by Xavier Leon-Dufour, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup>Alva J. McClain, The Gospel of God's Grace, comp. and ed. Herman A. Hoyt (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 17.

b. the message itself, chiefly a technical term for the message of victory, but also used of political and private messages bringing joy . . . but

c. chiefly, in connection with oracles (i.e. the promise of some future event). In the imperial cult the εὐαγγέλιον acquires a religious meaning in the news of divine ruler's birth, coming of age or enthronement, along with his speeches, decrees and acts considered glad tidings which bring long hoped-for fulfillment to the longings of the world for happiness and peace.<sup>1</sup>

Ulrich Becker states that, in the Hellenistic world, the proclamation of these oracles was itself the εὐαγγέλιον since the salvation, happiness and peace it proclaimed was already present in it.<sup>2</sup> The New Testament concept of εὐαγγέλιον later simply takes up the term used in the Hellenistic world, loads it with religious concepts, and unites it with the Old Testament promises of salvation.<sup>3</sup>

In the transition period which Acts records, the contents of the New Testament gospel had two stages.<sup>4</sup> First, in the mouth of Christ and of those whom He sent, while He was on earth, was the proclamation of the Kingdom (Matt 24:14) inseparably associated with His person. Second, after Christ's death and resurrection it became the

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<sup>1</sup>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s.v. "εὐαγγέλιον" by Ulrich Becker, 2:107-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>A Dictionary of the Bible, Dealing with its Language, Literature, and Contents including the Biblical Theology, s.v. "Gospel--εὐαγγέλιον," by John Massic, 2:233.

good tidings, not so much brought by and proclaimed by Christ and His followers, but about Christ (Rom 1:1; 2 Cor 4:4). The Apostolic use, chiefly Pauline, may be defined as "the good tidings coming from God, of salvation by His free favour through Christ."<sup>1</sup>

In Pauline usage, εὐαγγέλιον has two different senses. One describes the act of proclamation, the other the Gospel and its contents. The twofold sense of this term is particularly noticeable in Rom 1:1.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, from the Old Testament and New Testament concepts, in its broad sense, εὐαγγέλιον simply means "good news" which has been narrowed to the New Testament meaning of the good news of God's action, making available reconciliation between Himself and fallen mankind.

In almost half of the Pauline εὐαγγέλιον passages, the Gospel, το εὐαγγέλιον, is in the absolute sense. The Apostle "doesn't need any noun or adjective to define it. The readers know what it is."<sup>3</sup>

#### Contents of Gospel

Professor Ivan French, of Grace Theological Seminary, states that "within the word εὐαγγέλιον itself, there is no content implied."<sup>4</sup> But, Dr. S. Lewis Johnson in "The Gospel

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. (emphasis added)

<sup>2</sup>Friedrich, "εὐαγγέλιον," p. 729.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ivan French, "Evangelism and Christian Education" class lecture notes (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 1.

that Paul Preached," asserts that:

. . . the interpreter is upon reasonably safe ground in assuming that they are found in First Corinthians 15:1-5. The Gospel is the good news of Christ's death, burial, resurrection and appearances together with the apostolic explanation of the doctrinal significance of these great facts.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph A. Fitzmeyer makes clear that:

The distinctively Pauline conception of the gospel is seen in his description of it as a salvific force let loose by God in the world of man. It is not a mere series of revealed propositions about Christ that men must intellectually apprehend and give assent to.<sup>2</sup>

Romans 1:16 authoritatively instructs that "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (NASB).

S. Lewis Johnson takes the position that the gospel is "that which the Apostle expounds in Romans, particularly chapters one through eight,"<sup>3</sup> described as "the power of God that leads to complete salvation, salvation from the penalty, power, and ultimately, the presence of sin."<sup>4</sup>

A. J. Mattill, Jr. narrows the focus when he asserts that, in the Acts as well as in the Epistles, the center of the Gospel is "Jesus' atoning death appropriated through faith."<sup>5</sup> Professor Ivan French gives a brief but comprehensive focus on the New Testament Gospel: "However much

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<sup>1</sup>S. Lewis Johnson, "The Gospel that Paul Preached," BSac 128:512 (October-December, 1971): 330.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "Dominant Perspectives" in Pauline Theology, A Brief Sketch (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Johnson, "The Gospel that Paul Preached," p. 330.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>5</sup>Mattill, Jr., "The Value of Acts as a Source for the Study of Paul," p. 82.

or little we pour into the word, the 'gospel' is good news: the good news that God has provided salvation in Christ and that through faith in the Saviour, any man may be saved."<sup>1</sup>

In the narrow sense, it is "the death of Christ for sins . . . resurrection . . . attestation of reliable witnesses."<sup>2</sup> In the broader sense, it is "the Word of God: all the blessings, privileges and responsibilities that are the result of the work of Jesus Christ in this death and resurrection."<sup>3</sup> Archibald M. Hunter correctly asserts that "salvation" is the key word or concept which leads one to the heart of the gospel enabling one to see it as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

J. I. Packer broadens this keyword of the gospel message to four essential ingredients, giving the individual an idea of the range and scope of the gospel message:

1. a message about God--telling who He is; what His character is; what His standards are; and what He requires of His creatures;
2. a message about Sin--telling how man has fallen short of God's standards, how he has become guilty, filthy and helpless in sin and presently stands under the wrath of God;
3. a message about Christ--telling of Christ, the Son of God incarnate; Christ the Lamb of God, dying for sin; Christ the risen Lord; Christ the Perfect Saviour by means of Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, Ascension and Heavenly Intercedings;

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<sup>1</sup>Ivan French, "Evangelism and Christian Education" class lecture notes, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Archibald M. Hunter, Interpreting Paul's Gospel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 21.

4. a summons to repentance and faith--telling mankind that "repentance and faith are rendered matters of duty by God's direct command and hence impenitence and unbelief are singled out in the New Testament as most grievous sins (Lk 13:3,5; 2 Thess 2:11f)."1

#### Pauline Passages Emphasizing Gospel Aspects

There are various features of the Gospel, but the essential message according to Paul includes "foundation contents" summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 as the death and resurrection of Christ. The burial and post-resurrection appearances were divine proofs of the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>2</sup> All other features, of equal importance, are but explanatory, and include elements that are mandatory for present believers. When the Apostle briefly addresses εὐαγγέλιον in his various writings, he is addressing various explanatory emphases of the Gospel.

Most conservative scholars today agree that God's plan of reconciliation, the "good news" to a dying and hopeless world is summarized in the book of Romans. It reveals the problems of mankind plaguing both Jews and Gentiles but offers the divine solution to the problem. Dr. Johnson affirms, concerning the book of Romans, that it "is the only part of Scripture that contains a detailed and systematic

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<sup>1</sup>Summarized from J. I. Packer, Evangelism and The Sovereignty of God (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1961), pp. 58-73.

<sup>2</sup>R. Larry Moyer, What is the Gospel? (Dallas: Evantell, Inc., 1977), p. 13.

exposition and exhibition of the doctrines of Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

Although the exact details or contents of the gospel are not enumerated for mankind, several scholars have attempted to condense the contents of the Pauline gospel.

Frederick P. Wood states that the contents of the Pauline Gospel include justification, adoption, identification, sanctification, glorification, vocation, separation, opposition and evangelization.<sup>2</sup> J. I. Packer includes the Kingdom in the contents of the gospel in stating that "the gospel was the incarnation, the atonement, and the Kingdom--the cradle, the cross and the crown--of the Son of God."<sup>3</sup> Earl C. Smith points out that these "are not given separately."<sup>4</sup> This same writer also states that one cannot accept Christ partly, accepting Christ as Saviour but rejecting Him as Lord. One receives either the whole gospel or no gospel.<sup>5</sup>

In summary, there are numerous contents of the gospel which help to explain and build on the foundation of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. But the

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<sup>1</sup>S. Lewis Johnson, "The Gospel of God," Romans series I, Tape 1, from Believer's Chapel, Dallas, TX.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick P. Wood, The Gospel According to Paul (London: National Young Life Campaign, n.d.), p. vi.

<sup>3</sup>J. I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>Earl C. Smith, Paul's Gospel (New York: Greenwich Book Publishers, Inc., 1960), p. 85.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

message appears to be showing that mankind is by nature away from God and that God has taken initial steps for reconciliation to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ. Consequently, Dr. Herman A. Hoyt asserts that the gospel is essentially Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion of the gospel is that man is morally obligated to positively respond to this initial action of God, receiving it by faith, and as a result living by faith and then announcing this "good news" to others within the world.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Kingdom of God

The close unity between the Gospel and the Kingdom has been shown from the previous discussions of this paper. James Stalker observes the similarity and takes the position that the "Gospel" may be called the "envelope" in which the message of Jesus comes, while "the kingdom" is the message itself.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars state that Paul's Gospel did not contain the concept of the Kingdom in its contents. But this is not true, as Gerhard Friedrich asserts. The fact that

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<sup>1</sup>Herman A. Hoyt, The First Christian Theology, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>For a brief but comprehensive discussion of the contents of the gospel, see Harold Lindsell's, An Evangelical Theology of Missions, pp. 68ff.

<sup>3</sup>James Stalker, The Ethic of Jesus According to the Synoptic Gospels (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1909), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>Friedrich, "εὐαγγέλιον," p. 730.

"in Paul we never have βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ as the content, as in Matthew or Luke, is purely accidental (occurring by chance or unexpectedly, nonessential) since [the Apostle] knows the concept and very seldom defines any specific content."<sup>1</sup> It has been indicated that εὐαγγέλιον itself implied "the blessings of the Kingdom which was a part of its message."<sup>2</sup> One should notice that the Apostle did not exclude it from his ministry because he "preaches the Kingdom" (Acts 20:25). Karl Ludwig Schmidt states:

. . . from all the synonyms [describing the βασιλεία] we may see that the concern of the βασιλεία as God's action towards man is soteriological, so that our explanation of it stands or falls with an explanation of soteriology generally in the preaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles. [This statement] makes it plain that the Kingdom of God implies the whole of the preaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Alva J. McClain states, "the concept of the 'kingdom' envisages a total situation containing at least three elements: first, a RULER with adequate authority and power; second, a REALM of subjects to be ruled; and third, the actual exercise of the function of RULERSHIP."<sup>4</sup> In a broad sense, the Kingdom of God is the "rule of God over His

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich, "εὐαγγέλιον," p. 730.

<sup>2</sup>Crump, "The Gospel in . . . the Greek NT," p. 112.

<sup>3</sup>TDNT, s.v. "βασιλεία," by Karl Ludwig Schmidt, 1:583.

<sup>4</sup>Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), p. 443.

creation."<sup>1</sup> The Messiah is directly related to each of these three essential elements. The Kingdom "has come into history in the person of Christ to break the power of death and Satan; it will come in power and glory with the return of Christ to complete the destruction of these enemies."<sup>2</sup> Just as the Gospel centers on the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:3), likewise, the Kingdom centers on the person of Jesus Christ. A. E. Baker goes to the extent to say that the Kingdom is Jesus, the Messiah.<sup>3</sup> It is essential, therefore, to recognize that "the personal and glorious coming of the Messiah will bring in the Kingdom, and without such a coming there can be no Messianic Kingdom."<sup>4</sup> Dr. John Whitcomb indicates that of the three essential Kingdom elements:

. . . the primary and most important element is that of a ruler with authority. The ruler may withdraw from his realm, or the function of ruling may be temporarily interrupted. But all three elements are present . . . and there can be no Kingdom in the total sense without all three.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Kingdom of God," by George E. Ladd.

<sup>3</sup>A. E. Baker, St. Paul and His Gospel (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1940), p. 133.

<sup>4</sup>McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 443.

<sup>5</sup>Alva J. McClain, "Christian Theology: The Kingdom and the Church," class syllabus, revised by John C. Whitcomb (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 6. For reference hereafter, the entry will read, "Kingdom and Church."

In describing this Kingdom rule of God over His creation, Dr. McClain mentions five Biblical distinctives which at first sight appear almost contradictory:

First, as something which always existed yet seems to have a definite historical beginning among men (cf. Ps 10:16 with Dan 2:44).

Second, as something which is universal in its scope, outside of which there is no created thing yet a local rule established on earth (cf. Ps 103:19 with Is 24:23).

Third, as something which appears as the direct rule of God with no intermediary, yet also the rule of God through a mediator who serves as a channel (cf. Ps 54:13 with Ps 2:4-6).

Fourth, as something which is wholly future, yet is a present reality (cf. Zech 14:9 with Ps 29:10).

Fifth, as an unconditional rule arising out of the sovereign nature of God Himself, yet as a Kingdom based on a covenant made by God with man (cf. Dan 4:34,35 with Ps 89:27-29).<sup>1</sup>

Many scholars have taken these dual distinctives and used them to speak of two kingdoms.

It would not be wholly wrong to speak of two kingdoms revealed in the Bible. But we must at the same time guard carefully against the notion that these two kingdoms are absolutely distinct, one from the other. There is value and instruction in thinking of them as two aspects or phases of the one rule of one sovereign God.<sup>2</sup>

In describing these two aspects or phases, Dr. McClain describes them as the "universal" and the "mediatorial" phases, the first referring to the "extent of rule" and the latter to the "method of rule."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Condensed from McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

One has pointed out that "God's purposes through the ages is revealed in the concept of the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup> These purposes are correctly viewed through the universal phase and the mediatorial phase of the Kingdom.

#### Universal Phase of the Kingdom

The universal phase of the Kingdom is the primary phase where God rules solely, the phase which has always existed and which is unconditional in its nature.

Dr. John C. Whitcomb indicates seven great facts about this phase of God's purpose in the βασιλεία:

1. This universal kingdom exists without interruption throughout all time;
2. The universal kingdom includes all that exists;
3. The divine control in the universal kingdom is generally providential--indirect causality of God by means of second causes;
4. The divine control may be exercised at times by supernatural means--direct activity of God;
5. The universal kingdom always exists efficaciously regardless of the attitudes of its subjects;
6. The rule of the universal kingdom is administered through the Eternal Son--Christ; but
7. This universal kingdom is not identical with that [mediatorial] kingdom for which our Lord taught His disciples to pray.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Doug K. Shannep, "The Goal of Evangelism: The Kingdom of God" (Master of Divinity thesis, La Mirada, CA: Talbot Theological Seminary, June, 1975), p. 59. For references hereafter, the entry will read, "Goal of Evangelism."

<sup>2</sup>McClain, "Kingdom and Church," pp. 10-14.

It is necessary to emphasize the last fact mentioned above. The universal phase has always existed and still exists, yet the phase of the Kingdom the Lord taught His disciples was yet future, for which they were to pray (Matt 6:10). Christ, the Messiah, God's Son was the one who was to fulfill this future mediatorial phase, merging it again with the universal phase, returning the rulership back to the Father after all rebellion has been put down (1 Cor 15:24).<sup>1</sup>

The Mediatorial Kingdom has been defined as:

- a. the rule of God through a divinely chosen representative who not only speaks and acts for God but also represents the people before God.
- b. a rule which has especial reference to the earth; and
- c. having as its mediatorial ruler one who is always a member of the human race.<sup>2</sup>

The Universal Kingdom was God's perfect plan.

But because of rebellion, originating with Satan, He sovereignly chose to work through human mediators.

#### Mediatorial Phase of the Kingdom

Dr. McClain shows that:

The Bible presents the mediatorial idea in connection with three different functions: that of prophet, of priest, and of ruler. Occasionally two of these functions may be found together in the same person

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A for a visual relationship between the Universal and Mediatorial Aspects of the whole Kingdom of God.

<sup>2</sup>McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 41.

. . . But only in God's own Messiah can be found truly and fully all three of the mediatorial functions of prophet-priest-king.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. John C. Whitcomb reveals that the Mediatorial Kingdom from the biblical material, in the Old Testament History rises and develops imperfectly; in Old Testament prophecy forecasts its future form; in the period of the Gospels announces its character in the ministry of the Lord; in the apostolic period unfolds its place in history; the present age shows its unique form, the millennial age will disclose its visible and established form; and the eternal Kingdom will unveil its final mergence in and complete identification with the universal and everlasting Kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Kingdom of God in Acts

The concept of the Kingdom of God within the Acts of the Apostles must be approached with the recognition that like the Gospels, it consists primarily of history. Furthermore, it is evident that the historical events are closely related with the preceding events. They are in actuality a continuation of them.

In the Book of Acts the commission of Christ originated in Matthew 28:19,20 takes on new elements. Dr. Whitcomb draws attention to the new elements of the commissions

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup>McClain and Whitcomb, "Kingdom and Church" class lecture notes, pp. 16-17. (Emphasis added.)

of Christ. There is now a gospel message to herald: Christ's death and resurrection. There is now a world-wide witness, going beyond Jerusalem, engulfing the whole world. There is now a special empowering for service by the Holy Spirit. Finally, there is a new hope for the future, a looking for the return of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

In the Gospels the Kingdom was proclaimed as being "'at hand' because the Mediatorial King, Christ Jesus had arrived. Without such a King there could be no kingdom established on earth in the Biblical sense."<sup>2</sup> To reject this King was to reject the Kingdom itself because the King was viewed as the whole of the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> The Jews, who were the primary objects of the message and ministry of Christ recorded in the Gospels (Matt 10:5,6; 15:24), rejected the King. Therefore James Orr indicates:

In passing from the Gospels and especially the Synoptics, to the remaining writings of the New Testament, we are sensible at once of a great difference in the use made of this conception of the Kingdom of God. It is no longer the central and all-comprehending nation which it was in the popular teaching of Jesus, but sinks comparatively into the background, where it does not altogether disappear, and is employed so far as retained in an almost exclusively eschatological sense.<sup>4</sup>

In Acts 3:12-26 Peter reoffers the Kingdom to Israel as a nation, stating that they must meet the spiritual demands, repent and turn their mind's consideration of Christ

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<sup>1</sup>McClain, "Kingdom and Church," p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 304.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>A Dictionary of the Bible, s.v. "Kingdom of God," by James Orr, 2:855.

as the King being equal to the Kingdom (v. 19). If they as a nation take this step Jesus will be sent back from heaven (v. 20).

The "signs and wonders" (Acts 2:43;5:12) recorded in the early part of Acts, by some scholars are those promised in the Old Testament prophecies of the Kingdom, and similar to those recorded to have been in the ministry of Jesus. The miracles in the Gospel period, understood eschatologically, were illustrations of the fact that in Christ the new age was at that time invading the present evil age. The power of the Kingdom of God was present and doing battle with the present evil power of this age, and therefore Christ's miracles were to be understood as the mighty works of the Kingdom of God (Heb 6:5) by which Jesus loosed the grip of Satan.<sup>1</sup> Dr. McClain points out that during the period of the Acts of the Apostles these signs and wonders were, "intended to authenticate the offer of the Kingdom to Israel, a genuine offer although conditioned on the repentance of the nation."<sup>2</sup> First Corinthians 1:22 gives credence to this assertion. But following the signs and wonders performed during the period of the Acts there was a Jewish rejection parallel to that during the period

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<sup>1</sup>John Bright, The Kingdom of God, The Biblical Concept and its Meaning for the Church (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), pp. 217-218.

<sup>2</sup>McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, p. 412.

of the Gospels. As a result, the sovereign plan of God turns to the Gentiles and the building of the ἐκκλησία. This change of emphasis focuses primarily upon the ministry of the Apostle Paul recorded in the latter part of the book of the Acts. Dr. McClain points out:

Preaching during the period of Acts displays a twofold aspect: first, there was the proclamation of the Kingdom in established form as an impending possibility, contingent upon the attitude of Israel toward the King; and second, there was the testimony concerning the Church, begun on Pentecost, as the spiritual and royal nucleus of the coming Kingdom . . . Contemporaneously there is a shift from emphasis upon Jewish national primacy toward a universality in which national distinctions tend to disappear.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore most important that one see the period of the Acts of the Apostles as, "transitional in character displaying certain characteristics which belong to both the Kingdom and the Church. This is especially true of its preaching and teaching."<sup>2</sup>

#### The Kingdom Usage in Acts 20

The primary question is "What is the Apostle's usage of the Kingdom in Acts 20:25?" It is very difficult to be sure but in relation to the seven other usages in Acts, the Kingdom as stated earlier appears in "an almost exclusively eschatological sense."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this writer believes

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

<sup>2</sup>McClain, "Kingdom and Church," p. 78. See Appendix B which gives a graphic illustration of the transitional character of the Acts of the Apostles.

<sup>3</sup>Orr, "Kingdom of God," p. 855.

that the usage of the Kingdom in the Apostle's Farewell Address is primarily the universal eschatological kingdom in its reality. But as the finale of the Gospel both the mediatorial and universal aspects are the believer's hope upon which the believer is to focus his attention. To reject the finale in both aspects is to reject the foundation (the Gospel) because they are realized in the person of the Messiah.

In summary, the concept of τὴν βασιλείαν in the Acts of the Apostles is seen to be transitional in character, where the priority of the Kingdom appears to fall into the background following the rejection by the Jewish nation of the Messiah Jesus. The emphasis therefore shifts to the building of the Church, including the Gentiles as a spiritual nucleus and ruling aristocracy of the eschatological Kingdom. The miracles or signs and wonders which were required by Jews (1 Cor 1:22) were intended as verifications and authentications to the offer of the Kingdom to the Jewish people, but they as a nation rejected the Messiah. Therefore the Messiah turns to "whosoever" to be included in this future Kingdom (John 1:11,12).

Concerning the present aspect of the Mediatorial Kingdom, the actuality is being held "in abeyance" in the sense of its present establishment on earth. This present period is "'a period of preparation' for the future reality of the Mediatorial Kingdom of the Messiah, historically

established at His Second Coming."<sup>1</sup> This is likewise the Pauline usage in Acts 20.

#### The Counsel of God

It is the contention of this writer that τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θεοῦ would be better translated, "the purpose of God," as in the New American Standard Bible, or "the will of God" as in the New International Version. The King James Version renders the phrase, "the counsel of God," which in today's terminology would be archaic implying more suggestions for actions without the idea of individual responsibility for application. The whole purpose of the Apostle was to impress upon the minds of the Ephesian elders their logical and moral obligation to feed, protect and guide the churches of which they were overseers. Therefore "purpose" or "will" would be a preferable translation. From a brief study of βουλή and the association of the word within the immediate context of Paul's message, which focuses upon the responsibility of Christian leadership, the writer shows the correctness of the translation of βουλή as "purpose" or "will."

#### Etymology of βουλή

The noun βουλή is derived from the verb βούλομαι which denotes an intention or a deliberation, besides indicating the result of a deliberation in the sense of a decision of the will, a resolution, a counsel or an

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<sup>1</sup>McClain, "Kingdom and Church," pp. 78-79.

edict.<sup>1</sup> The New Testament use of βούλομαι (37 times) has been greatly "suppressed" by the usage of θέλω (207 times) but the terms are almost presently entirely interchangeable. Schrenk states that:

. . . in most of the NT passages, as in LXX, Aristeas, Josephus and Philo, the sense is that of 'wishing,' 'desiring,' or 'intending,' often with something of all three . . . In the sense of the economy of salvation it is argued in Heb 6:17 that God willed to manifest more fully to the heirs of promise the immutable nature of His counsel. Here βούλομαι expresses the eternal divine purpose. Similarly in 2 Pet 3:9 the word expresses the divine will to save.<sup>2</sup>

Thus from βούλομαι, the root of βουλή, one may see the idea of purpose or will.

As stated earlier, θέλω is viewed as almost entirely interchangeable with βούλομαι. However, Dr. Charles Smith of Grace Theological Seminary distinguishes between God's decreed "will" (βούλομαι) and God's "desire" (θέλω):

God's decreed 'will'--the overall program or any aspect of it when viewed as a part of that program is the will of God--God is looking at the end result.

God's 'desire'--the attitude toward the whole program or any individual event of the program viewed apart from the program--God's attitude toward one aspect of that decree.<sup>3</sup>

In many places the terms may be used interchangeably but this does not always give satisfaction to the Biblical text.

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<sup>1</sup>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, s.v. "βουλόμαι," by Dietrich Müller, 3:1015.

<sup>2</sup>TDNT, s.v. "βουλόμαι-βουλή," by Gottlob Schrenk, 1:632.

<sup>3</sup>Alva J. McClain, "Christian Theology: God and the World" class syllabus, revised by Charles R. Smith (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1980), p. 6, with class notes as added by this writer.

Thus from these distinctives one may see the idea of a program or more specifically an individual event of a program.

#### The New Testament Occurrences of Βουλή

Βουλή is used twelve times in the New Testament, and with an investigation of these usages one will discover a closeness to the root meanings as translated in the NASB, "purpose." In the majority of these passages βουλή in the New International Version is translated "purpose" or "plan" although in Acts 27:12 it is used of a majority decision (ἔθεντο βουλήν). In Ephesians 1:11 it even places βουλή and θέλημα side by side: "Who works out everything in conformity with the purpose (βουλή) of His will (θέλημα). 1 Corinthians 4:5 translates it in reference to "motives." Luke 23:51 is used in reference to a "plan."

According to Schrenk, "βουλή denotes 'deliberation' and 'taking counsel' in all its stages and effects up to 'resolve' and 'decree.'"<sup>1</sup> Another writer adds that the theological significance of βουλή and βούλομαι ". . . is found in those passages where the word-group speaks of the counsel, intention or will of God (or Jesus or the Holy Spirit). It is always a case of an irrefragable determination."<sup>2</sup> "In Lucan writings [of which we are concerned] the terms boulomai and boulē elucidate vital aspects of

<sup>1</sup>Schrenk, "βούλομαι-βουλή," p. 633.

<sup>2</sup>Müller, "βούλομαι," p. 1017.

Luke's christological proclamation as the fulfillment of God's purpose."<sup>1</sup>

### The Immediate Context of βουλή

in Acts 20:27

This passage reveals the responsibility of the Christian leadership to deal with false doctrine and any type of heresy. Ernst Haenchen mentions concerning 20:20:

Paul has proclaimed to the leaders of the communities (ὁμῶν) the complete decree of God [emphasis added]-- there is no Pauline teaching deviating from it and handed down alongside it. This repetition of v. 20 consequently underlines the integrity of the Church's preaching.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, if the primary emphasis of the Pauline "Farewell Address" was to instruct the Ephesian elders as to their responsibility to the flock for which they were responsible the whole "purpose" or "will" of God would be a better rendering for βουλή than "counsel." Newman and Nida assert that the phrase is often translated as "all that God plans to do" or "all that God arranges to do."<sup>3</sup> "Purpose" or "will" is more in line with the entire scope and/or relationship between εὐαγγέλιον (the foundation of God's revelation to fallen mankind) and βασιλεία (the finale, the ultimate completion of the mission of God's revelation to mankind through His Son, mediatorially). "Counsel" as

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., (emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 592.

<sup>3</sup>Newman and Nida, Handbook on Acts, p. 393.

stated earlier, would imply, in today's terminology, suggestions for action or application without the idea of individual responsibility for application. The whole purpose of the Apostle was to impress upon the minds of the Ephesian elders their logical and moral obligation to feed, protect and guide the churches of which they were overseers.

Therefore, the evidence, in the opinion of this writer, should lead the reader to the conclusion that βουλή would be better rendered "purpose" as the New American Standard Version translates it, rather than "counsel" as does the King James Version.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ACTS 20:18-35 TO CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The range of the Apostle's ministry was the teaching of the whole "purpose" of God. Paul was consequently "free from the blood of all men" (20:26). This was the result of his ministry. From the study of this passage the reader should notice several implications to the present ministry of Christians, individually and corporately.

1. The overall and greatest implication is that the church, the body of Christ, is to teach, preach and practice the whole "purpose" of God. This has as its foundation the "Gospel of the grace of God," and as its finale, "the Kingdom of God."

The goal of the whole purpose of God includes all things that are necessary for mankind to come to the full knowledge of God until they arrive at the place of complete "observation of all things" which God has commanded (Matt 28:19). This includes the necessary ingredients for a well balanced ministry, both evangelism and discipleship, to the exclusion of neither. Likewise, the same thought carries over to the emphasis of "pet doctrines or philosophies" to the exclusion of aspects of the ministry which

are necessary for the flock to come to the full knowledge of God (John 17:3; Eph 1:17-19a). The priority of the ministry is feeding and protecting the flock, not indoctrinating into the Biblical authenticity of the overseer's personal or the church's denominational "set doctrine and/or philosophy."

2. The Christian leader is to proclaim both the Gospel and the Kingdom as a corporate entity which is equal to the whole purpose of God. Proclamation of "the gospel of God's grace" is being done in a general sense but the proclamation of the Kingdom is infrequently heard.

Dr. I. Howard Marshall gives two possible reasons why "the Kingdom of God" is seldom proclaimed. First, "we no longer stand in the crisis-situation of the ministry of Jesus" and second, "the concept is such a vague and ill-defined one."<sup>1</sup> The Christian leader is to be acquainted with the major contents of both the Gospel and the subject of the Kingdom and then preach them.

Springing directly from the first implication is that the preaching of "the gospel of God's grace" and "the Kingdom" will be the fulfillment of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19,20. Acts 20:24 states that the Apostle "solemnly testifies of the gospel of the grace of God." Acts 14:21 asserts that after they had preached the gospel many disciples were made (μαθητεύσαντες). Prof. Charles

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<sup>1</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "Preaching the Kingdom of God," The Expository Times 89 (October 1977):13-14.

Ashman of Grace Theological Seminary quotes A. T. Robertson who affirms that μαθητεύσαντες "is indubitable evidence that Paul and the Apostles knew the command of Matthew 28:19,20 and were carrying it out."<sup>1</sup>

The phrase, "making disciples" in Matthew 28:19,20 implicitly speaks of the act of proclaiming or evangelization. F. Pieper, asserting the validity of evangelization, states that Paul's words, including "the Gospel of the Grace of God" (Acts 20:24), is what Christ has commanded His church to teach and preach.<sup>2</sup> Doug K. Shannep adds the Kingdom aspect to the gospel which Paul included in verse twenty-five. Mr. Shannep states that "the church is to proclaim the gospel of God's grace whose ultimate fulfillment is found in the Kingdom of God." Its representative and deliverer is Jesus Christ, the central figure of Gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Michael Green states:

. . . there can be no doubt that the expectation of the imminent return of Christ gave a powerful impetus to evangelism in the earliest days of the church . . . set in the context of an urgent eschatological hope, as they awaited the return of God's Son from heaven. The primitive preaching . . . frequently came to its climax in a proclamation of the imminent return of Christ

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<sup>1</sup>Charles A. Ashman, "Denominational Beliefs and Practices" class syllabus (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 10 in section on baptism.

<sup>2</sup>F. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), pp. 105-106.

<sup>3</sup>Shannep, "The Goal of Evangelism," p. 43.

[the Person of the Kingdom hope], and a challenge to repentance and faith in the light of the culmination of all things.<sup>1</sup>

Evangelism, is therefore an imperative of fulfilling the whole purpose of God.

The phrase, "making disciples" similarly explicitly speaks of the ministry of discipleship. When someone states that they have taught their "disciple" everything, the question to be asked is whether that "disciple" is fully observing all commands of God. Discipling is more than sharing content. It is sharing the heart (1 Thess 2:8; 1:5) as the reader has seen in the intensity of the Apostle's "heart" in Acts 20:18-21,31. C. E. Autrey, alluding to the essential combination of evangelism and discipleship states that:

. . . evangelism and theology [an integral part of the discipling process] are complimentary to each other and utterly dependent upon each other. The heart of the New Testament is theological.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently for a well-balanced ministry, evangelism must not have a lesser emphasis than discipleship. Discipleship must not be excluded to the emphasis of evangelism. It is to be one complete package. It is either the whole purpose of God or His purpose is compromised and weakened.

3. Christians are to preach the Kingdom of God as a future actuality with a present aspect--the believers are

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 265f, (emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup>C. E. Autrey, Basic Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 30.

the spiritual nucleus of the coming mediatorial kingdom. An understanding of this gives impetus to the present reality of the doctrine of the Lordship of Christ (Luke 2:11; Acts 2:36). Jim Petersen asserts,

. . . that Jesus, in His teachings, was introducing a truly radical order. He was introducing a new life-style with new values, new attitudes, new relationships--in short, a new culture: the kingdom culture . . . just as God raised up Israel to amplify His voice through the world, He has assigned [the church] the same function (1 Pet 2:9,12) . . . How this works out in practice has been, and is one of the most difficult issues the church struggles with.<sup>1</sup>

4. Springing from Paul's desire concerning the collection for the Jerusalem church, one is to demonstrate Christian charity, understand the solidarity of the Christian fellowship and the importance of each individual in God's sight (Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἕλλησιν).

5. Verse nineteen teaches that the overseer is to be a servant of the Lord to his people. The order of priority must be kept in balance--first the Lord, then the people. But the overseer must recognize that this ministry is accomplished through tears and trials, with humility.

Verse twenty-four adds that to serve the flock to the utmost, meeting God's purpose for his life and ministry, the overseer must have the right perspective on this life. It is only temporal, and seeking self-preservation will kill or greatly diminish the potential of the ministry.

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<sup>1</sup>Jim Petersen, Evangelism as a Lifestyle, (Colorado Springs, CO: NAVPRESS, 1980), pp. 61-2.

In this act of serving, verse twenty-eight conveys the idea that the overseer of the flock (the church) has the responsibility to feed, protect and guide the flock. The priority is the feeding of the sheep, in a sense, "preventative maintenance," from false doctrine and heresy. Likewise, in this act of serving the flock, the overseer is to be ready to expeditiously confront and handle all false doctrine and heresy from within and from without that local church. To carry this out, the overseer is to be on guard for himself, making sure that his doctrine, teaching, and lifestyle are not heretical. Consequently, he can then irreproachably handle the heresy.

The shepherd-servant motif from verses nineteen and twenty-eight points to the fact that the overseer must recognize that God is the owner of the church (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ). The overseer is not an overlord but an "undershepherd" of the Master Shepherd who "lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:10-18).

6. From verses twenty and twenty-seven, the message of the gospel and the kingdom, pointing fallen men to the way of salvation (εὐαγγέλιον) and to the eschatological finale of that message (βασιλεία) will at times be couched in terms of rebuke and reproof. It will not always be pleasant to deliver. However, it is necessary to fulfill the whole "purpose" of God. Rejection of the Gospel and the Kingdom can only bring judgment. Man is morally obligated to repent and live by faith. Both believers

and unbelievers fall under these terms.

7. From verse twenty one, the implication is that the same message must be proclaimed, defended, taught to everyone and "lived out" before everyone regardless of status, race, acceptability, or ability. The gospel message includes, at the minimum, repentance and faith which are one unit. One cannot live by "faith toward our Lord, Jesus Christ" (Hab 2:4; 2 Cor 5:7) until one has first made "repentance toward God." W. H. Griffith Thomas reminds the reader that these two doctrines are fundamental requirements of the Gospel letting go of sin [εἰς τὸν θεὸν μετάνοιαν] and laying hold of Christ [πίστιν εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν].<sup>1</sup>

8. The message of the Gospel and the Kingdom are centered in the person of Christ. Since the King and Messiah are not present physically, the ministry of the Word of God is today's manifestation of God and His purpose (verse thirty-two; John 1:1,4-5,15,18). Dr. Earl Radmacher states that "in the spiritual care of God's flock, the process of feeding from the Word of God is the constant and regular necessity; it is to have the foremost place."<sup>2</sup>

9. Verses thirty-three and thirty-four allude that the believer's message and conduct (lifestyle) are to be synonymous and always consistent. Therefore, verse

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas, Outline Studies in Acts, p. 390.

<sup>2</sup>Earl Radmacher, What the Church is All About, p. 301.

thirty-five infers that it would do well for Christian leaders to study and remind themselves of the example of Paul's ministry as how to conduct the ministry and life in principle. The priority principle is "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The message of Acts 20:17-35 is housed within the overall divine plan for the composition of Acts itself. The book is a treatise dealing with the transition from the message of the Kingdom to the ministry of the church. The idea of the book is to provide a Holy Spirit inspired textbook for church planting and growth, evangelism and discipleship.

The passage itself was divinely recorded to impress upon the readers the full responsibility of Christian leaders and their service in the ministry. The passage is a genuine, inspired summary of Paul's thoughts and ministry which has authority for present day application to Christian education and the ministry.

Luke's recording of the farewell address of the Apostle shows Paul's "heart" for the ministry where he is said in verse twenty-six to be "free from the blood of all men." The reason was that the Apostle had not shrunk back from declaring the "whole purpose of God." This included in verse twenty-four, the solemn testifying to the "gospel of grace of God" and in verse twenty-five, the preaching of "the Kingdom" or "the Kingdom of God."

It is the conclusion of this writer that the "gospel of the grace of God" (εὐαγγέλιον) is the foundation of the message of God's revelation to fallen mankind. The Kingdom (βασιλεία) is the finale or the ultimate culmination of the mission of God's revelation to mankind through His Son, mediatorially. Following the "abolishing all rule and all authority and power" (1 Cor 15:24), the Son will turn the subjection back over to the Father where the mediatorial aspect of the kingdom is merged with the eternal Universal Kingdom, God then once again is the sole ruler of the Universe.

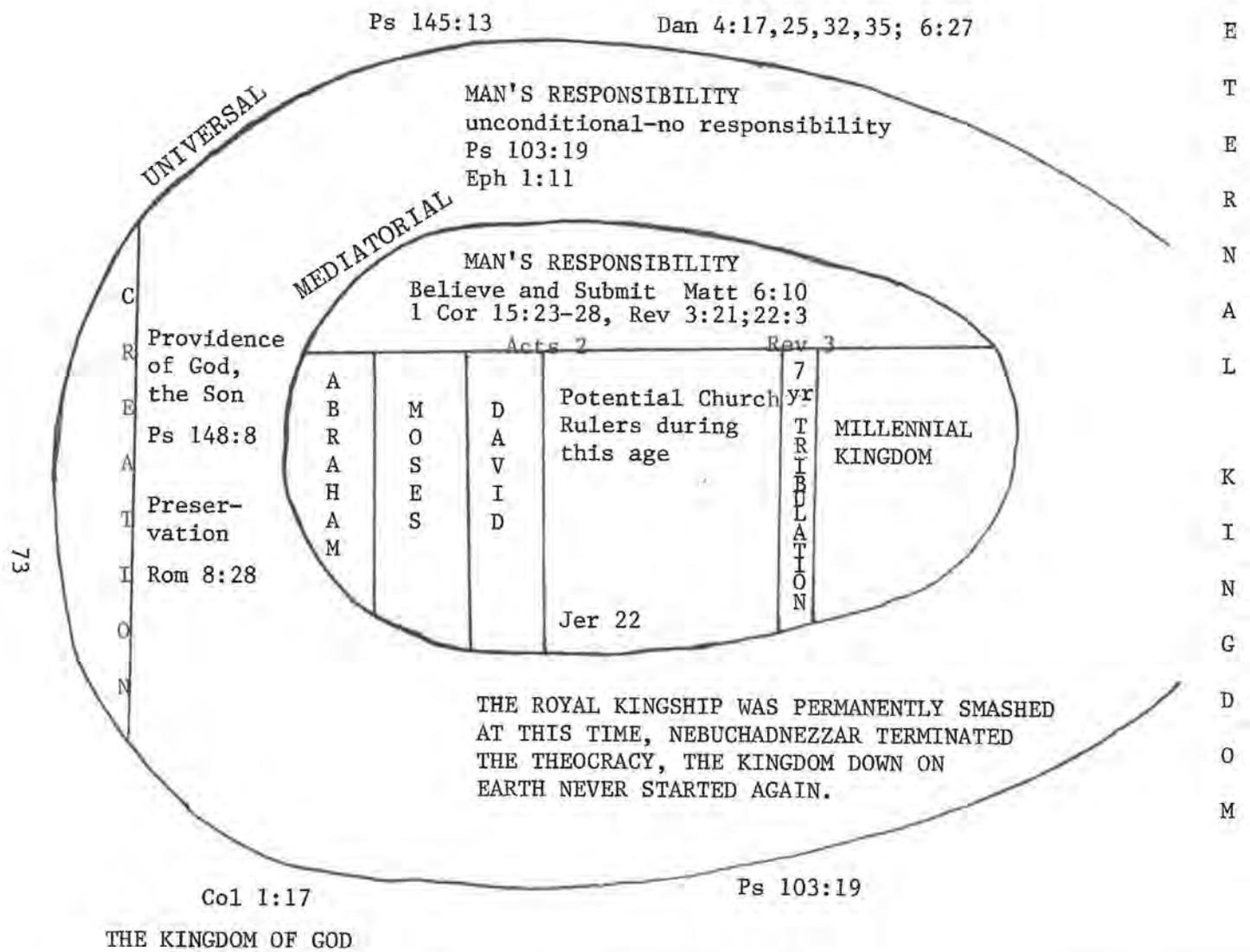
The εὐαγγέλιον has no explicit contents described here, but in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4, the death and resurrection of Christ, may be considered the basic "platform" of the gospel upon which all other εὐαγγέλιον passages are built: they are explanations and/or descriptions. The central focus of the εὐαγγέλιον is the Person of Christ who is the revelation of God and His purpose in physical form (John 1:14,18).

The βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ is primarily an eschatological event in this Pauline address as elsewhere in his writings, with the present age being the formation of the spiritual nucleus of this future mediatorial kingdom. This Kingdom is initiated in the physical second coming of the Messiah, the Person of the Kingdom.

The expression, τὴν βουλήν τοῦ Θεοῦ has been rendered "counsel of God" in the King James Bible but the

conclusion of this writer is that the βουλή τοῦ Θεοῦ is better rendered "purpose," since it is the modern rendering for the archaic meaning of "counsel."

In brief, the church has a divine commentary on the scope and breadth of the ministry from this inspired summary of the Apostle's own personal ministry at Ephesus.



APPENDIX A<sup>1</sup>  
The Relation Between the Universal  
and Mediatorial Kingdom Aspects

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<sup>1</sup>Alva J. McClain, "Christian Theology: The Kingdom and Church" class syllabus, revised by John C. Whitcomb, Grace Theological Seminary, n.d., p. 15A.

Gospel's Period	<u>Peter</u> Pentecost at Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4)	Acts Period	<u>Paul</u> in prison at Rome (Acts 28:16-31) Present Age
THE KINGDOM PROCLAIMED AND OFFERED Matt 4:17; 10:7; Lk 10:9	The KINGDOM proclaimed and re-offered to Israel if they will repent and accept Jesus as the Messianic King (Acts 3:17-21)  <u>PETER</u>	The CHURCH begun on Pentecost as the spiritual nucleus and ruling aristocracy of the coming Kingdom (1 Cor 12:13; 2 Tim 2:12).	THE CHURCH REVEALED FULLY Eph 1-3
To the Jew <u>only</u>  "SIGNS AND WONDERS" (Jn 4:48; Acts 2:19; 4:30; Heb 2:1-4)	To the Jew <u>First</u> .		To <u>both</u> Jew and Gentile without distinction. "We walk by faith" (2 Cor 4:18; 5:7).

APPENDIX B<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alva J. McClain, "Christian Theology: The Kingdom and Church" class syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, n.d., p. 76.

## APPENDIX C

### TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- 1) What is the relationship between "inheriting eternal life" and "entering the kingdom of God" in Mark 10:17,23?
- 2) What is the significance of John's preference for eternal life instead of the Synoptic concept of the Kingdom?
- 3) What are the similarities and relationships between the Kingdom of God and the Lordship of Christ?
- 4) Are there imperatival or hortatory implications to the gospel?
- 5) What is the connection between the Old Testament concept of "inheriting the land" (Ps 25:12-14) and the New Testament teaching of "the Kingdom"?
- 6) What is the significance of the "Kingdom of heaven" and "inheriting the earth" in Matthew 5:3,5,10?
- 7) In what way were the actions and ministries of Jesus declarations of the Kingdom of God?

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