



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 28:16-31

“The Last Days of Paul”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege that has been ours over these past many weeks, in the study of the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. We realize Lord, that we have only touched the surface of this great man’s teaching and ministry. We thank Thee for the way in which, throughout it, there has been revealed the sovereign grace and mercy of God. We remember that in the beginning of his ministry Thou didst say that he was a chosen vessel unto Thee. And we thank Thee for the way in which he faithfully carried out the ministry, from the human side. And then looking at it from the divine side, with Paul, we acknowledge that it was the sovereign grace and mercy of God that enabled the apostle to have this great ministry.

And we thank Thee that we are so privileged that we are able, nineteen hundred years later, to follow the apostle in his thinking, in his ministry, in his, in the life that he lived to the glory of the Lord God. And we thank Thee that we’re able to be edified by his teaching, as so many were when he was living physically and carrying out that ministry. And we want to give Thee thanks and praise for the goodness shown to us and we pray that the apostle’s injunction, that we should be imitators of him as he was of the Lord, may grip us and take hold of us and may by Thy grace, be fulfilled in measure in us. We ask that Thou wilt be with us tonight as we look at several portions of the word

of God, and consider some of the things that remain of the apostle’s life to discuss. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] We’re turning tonight to Acts chapter 28 as we consider the last days of Paul. As you know of course, the Book of Acts was written in order to describe the way in which the gospel, beginning in the city of Jerusalem, reached the uttermost parts of the earth. For example, the Lord Jesus said, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Well in Acts chapter 28, the account of the ministry of our Lord reaches its triumphant conclusion. And Acts chapter 1 and verse 8 reaches its triumphant conclusion. In fact, as Paul put it when he wrote to the Colossians, the gospel has been preached to the whole creation under heaven. And you’ll notice the way that the 28th chapter of this book concludes in verse 31 with the words that, “Paul dwelt two years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” That word, which is one word in the Greek text, translated here, “no man forbidding him” falls like a victors cry. Luke sees the accomplishment of the purposes of the Lord Jesus in the ministry of Paul, unfettered in the city of Rome.

The curious might ask, however, what happened ultimately to the Apostle Paul. And it is strange at first glance, that Luke does not tell us what happened to the Apostle Paul. Well that of course would let us know he wasn’t writing a life of Paul, what he was really trying to do was to write a history of the progress of the gospel. And in fact, he doesn’t say anything about what happened to Peter, and he doesn’t say anything about what happened to Barnabas. And he doesn’t say anything about what happened to John. So it’s not surprising that he should not say what happened to Paul. His purpose was to

portray the progress of the gospel from the city of Jerusalem all the way to the four corners of the earth.

And Rome being the capitol of the empire that he knew, it's very appropriate for him to reach a climax in the city of Rome and the ministry there. Rome's golden days were past, when the apostle reached Rome. Rome was no longer a republic; it was now ruled by emperors. The city was under men who were often cruel, lascivious and weak, as Nero was. One could of course speak for a long time about this very wicked man, and what he had done to his wife, Agrippina. Octavia, the city of Rome, of course, had no Saint Peters at that time, but the Temple of Mars was there. The city was filled with slaves. Rome is said to have had two million inhabitants at the time that Paul was there, but one million of them were slaves, so half the city was in slavery. The two great things that people were interested in were bread, for so many were poor, and the circus, which was the place where everyone went to see the exhibitions and of course, the bringing of the people into the circus in order for many kinds of games to be played that were in many cases fatal to those involved.

Well Paul has finally reached the city of Rome and Luke describes his first interview with the Jews in verse 17 through verse 22 of Acts 28 and I'll just read this. He writes,

“And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And

they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, (he’s talking about the Christians of course) we know that every where it is spoken against.”

Well you can see from the account in Acts chapter 28, that the Apostle Paul, in the city of Rome, lived practically as a private resident. He was able to receive visitors, and he did receive visitors. And he was pretty much on his own. He was however, chained to a Roman soldier most of the time, in order that he might not escape.

There’s an interesting story about Sir David Baird. His mother received a letter when he was in the service of the British army and it was to the effect that he had been taken captive, out in the east. And the British were informed that he and some other British soldiers were now in captivity and they were in the hands of, I’ve forgotten whether it was an Indian, or of others, but anyway, when Sir David Baird’s mother received word that her son, who was an outstanding young Christian man, was now in captivity, she is reported to have said, “Lord help the man who is chained to our Davey.”
[Laughter]

Well, it was very much like that with the Apostle Paul, because later on you know we read in the prison Epistle of Philippians that those who are of Caesar’s household were greeting the Philippians, so it’s evident that the apostle had had an evangelistic ministry while he was in confinement. And here he is so free that he is able to preach the Kingdom of God and teach those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. The second interview that he had with the Jews is described in verse 23 through verse 28, and let’s read these verses,

“And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning

Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.”

This must have been a magnificent occasion because, as you can see, from morning till evening, according to verse 23, the apostle expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. So it was something like a one day long Bible conference, which I assure you was better than attending any theological seminary that I know of, to have the apostle for one whole day, expounding and testifying the Kingdom of God. Isn't it interesting that the subject of his message is the Kingdom of God. And then, concerning Jesus, and he did this out of the Law of Moses and out of the prophets. And then in the last verse, we read also that he spent the two years preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I think of the subject of the Kingdom of God my thoughts go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. The reason they do is that there, promises were given to man that concern the Kingdom of God upon the earth. It was said to Adam, that he would be one who would rule in the earth. Dominion was given to him, over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, over every living thing that creeps upon the earth. So that it was the divine ideal for man to be king of the earth. And that's really the thrust of

the opening chapter of the Book of Genesis. Man is now to be the king of the earth. But of course, the kingdom that Adam was ideally to have, was lost. One might say it was purloined from Adam, when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden.

And then there after, through the Bible, there are a series of remarkable unconditional promises, the Abrahamic covenant being the large all encompassing covenant. And then the Davidic covenant, which touches the kingdom and the king, and finally the new covenant which touches the redemptive sacrifice and forgiveness of sins. These unconditional covenantal promises were designed to restore to man that which Adam had lost in the Garden of Eden and it would be recovered for Adam and for other believers, for the people of God by the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now of course we don't have time to have time to talk about all of that, but nevertheless when the Lord Jesus came, that was the kingdom that was proclaimed, for remember John the Baptist and our Lord offered the same message, repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. Now there's no need to talk about how our Lord proclaimed that. He surely proclaimed that that kingdom was going to come not apart from a cross, as some have sought to suggest, and not that there would be no kingdom at all upon this earth, as others have sought to proclaim, but rather that the kingdom would come by means of a cross. And the order would be first, sufferings and then glory.

Now the Jews who listened to the ministry of the word of God had their minds on that earthly kingdom and they did not appreciate, it had not yet been revealed to them evidently, the seriousness of the necessity of the sufferings of the Messiah, before the kingdom should come. And so their thoughts were attracted to the earthly kingdom. Others thoughts were attracted only to the cross. And the truths concerning the kingdom have been largely lost in their teaching. But our Lord proclaimed a kingdom by means of a cross. And the apostles picked that up in the Book of Acts, and Peter preached the same thing, and the Apostle Paul preached the same thing.

So when we read in verse 31, “Preaching the Kingdom of God” and when we read in verse 23, “Preaching the Kingdom of God” the apostle was not only talking about the fact that the Lord Jesus had come and offered the sacrifice, which confirmed and ratified those ancient covenantal promises, but he also spoke of the fact that that kingdom was the legitimate hope of Christian believers. It’s rather striking that the Apostle Paul rarely talks about the kingdom in the epistles. The reason for that, I think upon reflection, is simply this, that the apostle’s concept of the kingdom was largely a concept of a future messianic kingdom. And so in the preaching that he did in his ministry and in the letters that he wrote, the kingdom assumes a very minor place. The church is preeminent, but the kingdom is minor. When he does mention it, his thoughts move on to the messianic kingdom. And then later on in the New Testament of course, we have more of the fullness of it in the writing of the Book of Revelation.

So Paul then, in verse 23, expounded and testified the Kingdom of God. That word expounded is a word that means “to set out” literally. So what he did was to talk about all of the aspects of the Kingdom of God and he had a longer time than I do to talk about it because it began in the morning and didn’t finish until late in the afternoon. And he also spoke of the things concerning Jesus. He gave them what, to him, might be called an Old Testament Christology. What did the Old Testament Scriptures say concerning him?

I think that is something that is very important for us as Bible students to be acquainted with. What do the Old Testament Scriptures say concerning the Messiah to come? What Paul did evidently, was to go through those passages of the word of God, he didn’t have the completed New Testament, and then he matched up those promises with the facts of the historical appearance of the Lord Jesus, and the experiences that he had and particularly of course, his death, burial and resurrection. The response that the apostle received was the response that the gospel always receives. In the 24th verse we read, “Some believed, some believed not.” In other words, the apostle who gave us a

magnificently clear exposition of the purpose of the ages, found the same problem in his audience, the wickedness and sinfulness and rebellion of the human heart. No one could say that the apostle was not clear.

I have friends who like to say, “The world is waiting for a clear presentation of the gospel.” I even have a friend who likes to say, “If the gospel is presented clearly, men will respond.” Now it is true some do respond by the grace of God, but let me say this, no one could present the gospel more clearly than the Apostle Paul, and he had a limited response. Not everyone responded, some did some didn't, and that is characteristic of the gospel. Paul explains why in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 when he says, “We are a savor of life unto life. And we are a savor of death unto death” that's the way the gospel is, it goes out to people who are all dead, but as the word goes forth, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the people of God, and from time to time they respond until all of them are gathered into the one body of Christ.

Now Paul then speaks of judgment. He said, when it was evident that a message had been proclaimed, there'd only been a partial response, he said, well, Isaiah, when he spoke in Isaiah chapter 6, “certainly spoke to the same difficulty that I see here in your response to the gospel. Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers” and then he sites again that great passage from Isaiah 6, in which it is stated, that when the message of God goes out, unless the Holy Spirit works, there will be inevitable failure to respond and further, retributive judgment from the Lord God. I think it's very striking that the Lord Jesus cited this very passage to the generation to whom he spoke. You'll find it in Matthew chapter 13. He spoke to them, he said that these very words found fulfillment there. The Apostle Paul also speaks of these words as finding fulfillment in their generation. We could really go on and, at least by way of application, say that they are words that continually find fulfillment as the word of God is preached.

Now then, finally, in the, I should mention this, that he concludes verse 28 by saying, “Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles

and that they will hear it, not everyone, but that some from the Gentiles will hear.” If you had a pencil and you wanted to put down a text and a section after verse 28, now in my Bible here it says, “Romans 11:11.” That is a very carefully selected text, because that is the text that makes plain what is happening here. For in Romans 11 the apostle points out that the reason that the gospel has gone out to the Gentiles at the present time, is not simply that the Gentiles may respond, but that the Gentiles may respond and provoke the nation Israel to jealousy, so that ultimately Israel shall return to the center of the will of God and receive the ancient promises. Romans 11:11 makes that very plain. We don’t have time to talk about it, if you’re interested further I suggest you read Romans chapter 11.

Well finally, in verse 30 and 31, we have Paul’s continuing ministry. The prison Epistles of Paul fall into this part of Paul’s life, “Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him.” Luke could write, “and he also wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon then.” Paul may have thought, “Well this is a disruption of the plan of God for me to be in prison.” But the facts are, that he gave some of his most magnificent teaching while he was chained to the Roman soldiers. And furthermore, he explained the significance of the ministry to the Gentiles, probably as plainly as in any other place, in that same Epistle to the Ephesians, in chapter 2 and chapter 3. So Paul was thinking about that and he wrote about it.

So he preached the Kingdom of God. Rome was the mistress of the world at the time. Nero was the emperor, but there really was another kingdom and there was another empire, and there was another king, which was, and they were all more important than Nero. And to the disciples, he taught “those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” The apostle was very much interested in the disciples attaining to maturity. Oscar Wild once said, “You’re young only once, but you can stay immature indefinitely.” Well the apostle did not want his converts to remain immature. And so he taught them, expounding the contents no doubt of the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle

to the Ephesians, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Epistle to the Philippians and Philemon as well. And “no man forbidding them” Paul is in prison, but he was unhindered. Nero is on the throne. Paul is still unhindered because God accomplishes his purposes in spite of the activities of men. One cannot frustrate God in his purposes. Now, Arminian cows may think so, but [Laughter] it’s really impossible to do that.

Now I’d like just for the sake of our concluding study of the Apostle Paul, to say a few things about the final days of Paul, because so far as Luke was concerned, this was the end of the ministry of Paul. And strictly speaking, we cannot prove, and I underline the word prove, that the apostle had any further ministry. There are some indications of other things and I’m going to present them as I think they should be presented. That is, not as dogmatic truth, but only as possibility and in some case, probabilities. So, what happened to Paul after this period of time? Acts 28, verse 31 is the last that Luke, the historian of the Christian church, says anything about Paul. We know that he was to remain in prison for two years because that’s what Luke says, “He dwelt two whole years in his own hired house.” We know further that it was customary for the Romans to bring a man up for preliminary hearing of the appeal that an individual would make, and then later on would have the trial. There is no clear information regarding the results of Paul’s appeal. We do know some things that bear on this.

Rome remember, was burned, in 64 A.D. Nero was the emperor. He was a very unpopular man really. But when the city was burned Nero, seeking to find a scapegoat, thought that the finest scapegoat would be the Christians, because they already had some bad things being said about them. Let me read you one of them. Tacitus was a Roman historian when I was going through high school and college. As many of you know, I took eight years of Latin, and there were very few of these Latin writers that I did not read. Not necessarily everything, but at least something of them, and Tacitus was one of the men that I read. He wrote a work called *The Annals*, and it was a history work. In it he says, concerning Nero, “Therefore to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted his culprits

and punished with the upmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men loathed for their vices, whom the crowds styled, Christians. Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilot, when Tiberius was emperor. And the pernicious superstition was checked for a short time, only to break out afresh. Not only in Judea, the home of the plague, but in Rome itself, where all the horrible and shameful things in the world collect and find a home.”

Tacitus did not have a great idea of the moral conditions in the city of Rome. “First of all, those who confessed were arrested. Then on their information a huge multitude was convicted. Not so much on the ground of incendiarism, as for hatred of the human race. Their execution was made a matter of sport. Some were sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and savaged to death by dogs. Others were fastened to crosses as living torches, to serve as lights when daylight failed. Nero made his gardens available for the show and held games in the circus, mingling with the crowd or standing in his chariot, in charioteer’s uniform. Hence, although the victims were criminals deserving the severest punishment, pity began to be felt for them because it seemed that they were being sacrificed to gratify one man’s lust for cruelty rather than for the public wheel.” Suetonius, another Latin author, says, “Punishment was inflicted on the Christians a class of men addicted to a novel, and mischievous superstition.” That probably was their Calvinistic views that they held of course, that he was speaking about.

Well now, we do know so far as Paul’s history was concerned, that tradition had Paul as being executed in Rome in 64 or 65 A.D. And so far as we can tell, there was no indication of the apostle’s execution before that time. The pastoral epistles have been thought by many to have been written after Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment. And so it was generally thought, by many Bible scholars of orthodox background, that the apostle had his second examination, he was acquitted of the charges against him, he then went free, and he was able to continue his missionary activity. He wanted, remember, to go to Spain very much. He spoke in the Roman epistle of wanting

to preach the gospel to the west, which would be in Spain. And so many feel that he went he engaged in missionary activity, he was finally arrested again, and he was imprisoned in Rome a second time. And thus would be martyred around 64 or 65 A. D.

Eusebius, who wrote in the 4th century, is the first of the early writes to speak of a second imprisonment of Paul. He supports the release, the arrest, and the imprisonment a second time. There are some things in 2 Timothy that might suggest that the apostle was free for a time. And I'm just going to read these passages. We don't have time to discuss them in great detail, but the first one is 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 16 through verse 18. And here we read,

“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.”

Now just to comment on this, it is thought by many who read these words that they indicate that the apostle did not have quite the freedom that is described in the last chapter of the Book of Acts. And therefore, that this is likely to have been a second Roman imprisonment, approximately two years or so later. Turn over to the 4th chapter, we'll read verses 16 and 17 there. Here Paul says,

“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”

And again, it seems that the apostle in this imprisonment, had lost all of his friends and was alone, and that again seems to be out of harmony with the end of the Book of Acts and so, many feel, that this is a second Roman imprisonment, and that the pastorals were written during the time after the apostle had been in prison the first time, he'd been released, acquitted, but then arrested again, brought back to Rome for another charge and

then finally, was executed about 64 or 64 A.D. And the tradition is almost totally to the fact that the apostle was executed as a martyr in Rome. His last words are words in chapter 4, verse 6 through verse 8, so far as his ministry is concerned he says, “For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all them also that love is appearing.” Tradition generally supports this.

Clement, the Bishop of Rome around 95 A.D., wrote a letter to the Corinthians. He knew about Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, and he reminded them of the exhortations that the apostle had addressed to the Corinthians. And he states that the apostle had died at Rome under Nero. So we can at least, have some support from secular history, well not secular so much because Clement was a Christian Bishop, but at least from history beyond New Testament times, that the apostle was released from his first imprisonment.

Later on, a collection of the New Testament books were listed and in this canon of Muratori, as the name is, it’s a 2nd century document, near the latter part of the 2nd century. In that particular document, it is stated that the apostle took a journey to Spain. So the fact that he was able to get to Spain is taken for granted by the Muratorian Canon. There are a number of Roman antiquities that support the idea that Paul was released, that he came back to Rome, that he was put to death there, such as churches dedicated to him, monuments that evidently were in the city of Rome, representing later tradition about the apostle’s end.

I’d like to just close with a few words concerning the influence of Paul, in general, and first a word about his personality. Paul we know from the New Testament, was not an impressive man in either appearance or speech. He makes the statement in 2 Corinthians 10:10 to that affect, and there’s no reason to believe that he was not saying precisely what people said about Paul. That text, I’m sure you have read. I’ll read it

again just in case it has slipped your mind. Well this is what he says, 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 10, the apostle writes, now of course he's describing what people say about him, “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.”

One of the writers describing the Apostle Paul said that he was an imminently clubbable man. That's a British expression. Samuel Johnson said with reference to someone, that he was an un-clubbable man. Now you can never get along in Britain if you weren't a member of some club. So an un-clubbable man is not a person that you cannot hit over the head with a club, but a person who does not want to join any of their clubs, in other words, a person who likes to live by himself.

Well Paul was not like that. He was a person who loved the fellowship of others, and particularly, the fellowship of believers. And one can sense in the apostle's ministry that he was a sociable man, he was a gregarious man. He was a man who particularly was concerned for the well being of the Christian church. Someone has said, he travels the fastest who travels alone. But Paul knew nothing about a theory like that. He was concerned for his converts. And particularly that they enjoy the freedom that he had. He was very unhappy with those for whom rules are more comfortable than principles. There are people like that, they cannot seem to bring themselves to live by the principles taught in the word of God, but they must have some legalistic rule, or set of rules by which they live. Well Paul was very concerned that his converts be delivered by that kind of legalism.

He was an unusual man physically, evidently an extremely tough individual, physically. One can see that in the Book of Acts in one place particularly, in Acts chapter 14 and verse 20. We studied this a long time ago and of course you may have forgotten about it, as I have too. But here we read, the apostle now is on his first missionary journey, and we read in verse 20, “Howbeit,” now in verse 19, “And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned

Paul, they drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, came into the city:” and then after a time of a week or two in the hospital, he departed with Barnabas to Derbe, no, of course as you read he says, the very, “next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.” In other words, here is a man who is stoned almost to death. People thought he was dead, the next day he’s out on the road traveling to another place.

Now Tom Landry likes to tell the Cowboys that it’s important for the Cowboys to learn to play when they’re hurt. If you get a man on a football team and he can only play when he’s feeling absolutely healthy with no soreness, no hurts at all, he’s rarely going to play professional football. What they want is a fellow who can play when he’s hurt, that is he can be counted on. Well Paul was a person who evidently could preach when he was hurting, and so even though he’s sore, even though he’s been stoned, even though he no doubt had many contusions and swellings and whatever from the stoning, he still is the very next day, out on the road.

In the early days I read a quotation from *The Acts of Paul*. This is a 2nd century work, an elder in Alexandria, I believe, gathered together all of the traditions about the Apostle Paul and put them in a little book and he called it *The Acts of Paul*. And this elder incidentally was not from Alexandria, from the province of Asia, but anyway he collected them all together and he describes an incident that is supposed to have happened in Paul’s life. He was on his way to Iconium with a couple of companions, and a man named Onesiphorus, you’ll recognize it’s a biblical name, Onesiphorus had heard that Paul had come to Iconium, and so he went out to meet, with his children, the Apostle Paul, so that he might receive him to his house, evidently to entertain him. Now this is what the elder writes, “Titus had told him what Paul looked like. Thus far Onesiphorus had not seen him in the flesh, but only in the spirit. He went along the royal road that leads to Lystra and stood there waiting for him and looked at those who came, comparing them with Titus’ description. And he saw Paul coming. A man small of stature, with a

bald head, and a crooked legs,” does that mean he was bow legged? “crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness. For now he appeared like a man and now he had a face of an angel.” That’s a famous description of the apostle. There are some things about it that indicate it might well be true, and in fact some of the early Christian writers accepted this as being a very true description of the way the apostle looked. But of course we cannot really know.

In the city of Rome there are other traditions about Paul. Legend has embellished a story of him when he was taken to Naples. And there he was taken to the tomb of the poet Virgil. And it is said that Paul stood before the tomb of Virgil who died in 19 B.C., and wept over Virgil and said, “What a convert I would have made of you had I found you still alive, oh greatest of all the poets.”

Well, those are just traditions of the apostle. We don’t have time to talk about his theology of course. You know the things that moved the apostle, justification by faith, was one of his great doctrines. The idea of the fact that a man could have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the benefits of the saving work of Christ, by faith alone apart from works was something that was no doubt, one of the greatest of Paul’s doctrines. It did away with all of the sacramentalism, which later grew up in the Roman Catholic church and in some Protestant churches, and which has so clouded the doctrine of the pure grace of God down through the centuries. Freedom versus legalism, being a son of God instead of a servant as the Old Testament sayings lived, the personal relationship instead of the sacramental relationship, grace instead of works, these things are the heart of the ministry of Paul.

And one can see Paul, of course, multiplied in the teaching of Augustan, in the teaching of Luther, in the teaching of the Wesleyans and the evangelical revival, and surprisingly, one can even see it in the teaching of a man like Karl Barth, who in spite of what we may say about aspects of Barth’s theology, was nevertheless a man who was

deeply touched by the teaching of the word of God, that man was in himself a lost sinner and could only be reached by the grace of God. The 20th century has been moved by Barth theologically, perhaps, by more than any other academic man. And Barth's teaching is teaching that he himself traced back to Paul. There were things that are and were wrong in Barth's theology, but no doubt, the emphasis of it, which has had such a great impact, particularly on liberal theology, is traceable to the impact that the grace of God in Paul had upon him. Let's close our study with a word of prayer,

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the ministry of the Apostle Paul and for the great stress one finds in his writings upon the grace of God. Freedom as over against bondage, graces over against works, liberty and justification by faith as over against sacramentalism, sons of God as over against servants, living under a moral code of the Mosaic Law. We are grateful to Thee Lord for the freedom and we know that this freedom does not when rightly understood, lead to license but rather leads to holiness, and dedication...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]