

Episode #10-43 The Flow of Truth Part 4-The Gentiles Will Hear

I. All truth flows out of the Old Testament into the gospels. It flows out of the gospels into the book of Acts. It flows out of the book of Acts into Paul's final epistles. That is the flow of truth. We are studying this flow and how it can teach us about God's work with us today and how it differs from His work with others in the past and future.

II. Acts 28:28. It has been my conviction for 35 years that this passage is an important dividing line in God's work, the last dividing line separating His works in the past from His current work today. Therefore it becomes critical that we understand it, and that understanding depends on understanding four important words: salvation, sent, Gentiles, and hear. These might be "easy" words in English, but to understand what the Spirit meant by them we need to study them in Greek. Salvation is in Greek an adjective, *soterion*, that means salvation-bringing. In the context, it refers to the salvation-bringing message of God, or word, utterance, declaration, or gospel. The subject; something was done with this. What? The verb *apostello*. Connects to *apostolos*, one sent or commissioned with authority. When used of animals or inanimate objects, it means to grant or allow by proper authority, to authorize. This is what happened to the salvation-bringing message: it was made available without restrictions. Next question: to whom was it authorized?

III. Consideration of the next word, Gentiles, *ethnos*.

- A. *Ethnos* is preceded by the definite article. It is in the dative case, plural, neuter.
- B. Evidently, all scholars, lexicographers, and commenters agree that it means nation, even though they feel at times it signifies those who are not of Israel, and should be in such places rendered Gentile. But that is an interpretation, not a translation.
- C. Without doubt, there are passages where "the nations" includes the nation of Israel, and to translate it the Gentiles would exclude that nation.
- D. Matthew 12:18-21. Without a doubt, the term "the nations" includes Israel. For example, in verses 18 and 21. It is not right to translate it Gentiles there.
- E. Acts 28:28. *Tois ethnesin* should be translated "to the nations."
- F. Since it is evident from Acts 10:36 and Acts 13:26 that God's salvation-bringing message had been authorized to Israel since the day of Pentecost, Israel cannot be included in the nations in this passage. Therefore, by interpretation this can be read, "to the Gentiles" and no damage would be done to the truth. Paul is not announcing that the salvation-bringing message of God has been authorized to all nations, since it had been authorized to Israel long before this, so we do not include Israel here. Therefore, we can render it "to the Gentiles" here, no damage will be done, and it will be a little easier to understand.
- G. When any Jew heard the term "the nations," he was forced to do a quick bit of mental work to determine if the nation of Israel was included or not. He could do that almost automatically, but now we can only do it after careful thought and careful study.
- H. Here we determine it does not include Israel, since what Paul declares here was already true of Israel, and now he makes this true of all nations. What had been true only of Israel now becomes true of all other nations.

IV. Consideration of the next word, hear, *akouo*, another verb.

- A. That it means "to hear" cannot be questioned. But what does hear mean in this context? If each of the 437 occurrences of this word in the New Testament are considered, we will get the connection that this word often means getting through to a person.

- B. Matthew 18:15. Hear means to get through to him. As a rule hearing is related to the ear, yet one can be said to have heard what he has read.
- C. In Acts 28:28, “they will hear it” means “it will get through to them.” That is God’s guarantee made by His spokesman Paul.

V. Literal, honest translation of Acts 28:28, trying not to paraphrase.

- A. “Let it then be made known unto you that the salvation-bringing message of God has been authorized to the nations, and what is more, they will hear it (it will get through to them).”
- B. Expanded and amplified paraphrase. “Let it then be known unto you that the salvation-bringing message of God, that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, has been authorized, that is, made freely available, to the nations, that is, the Gentiles, and what is more, it will get to them for their benefit.” Repeat.
- C. The words “has been authorized” declare an accomplished fact. The words “they will hear it” declare a future effect, something yet to be realized. The former the tense is the second aorist, the latter it is the future. The aorist is not the past, as many try to make it. This did not happen many years before since it is in the past. That is not right. This is not the past. It is indefinite as far as time is concerned. It states a fact without any reference to time.
- D. We know verb tenses in English: the past, the present, and the future. We go beyond that and people have some difficulty since you are getting involved in grammar. The Greeks had a tense called the aorist. We have a great deal of difficulty making the aorist plain since we have no such tense. As an English illustration, “He cleansed me” is past, “He has cleansed me” is perfect, and in reference to God states something He did that continues right to the present time. He not only did it, but that work continues, and I am clean today. If He simply cleansed me, He did it, but whether it continues or not is open to question. Yet if we say He has cleansed me, that means He not only did it, but that work continues and I am clean today. We can’t always do that in English. Try it with some other words and you will run into difficulty. But aorist declares a fact without any reference to time.

VI. The Acts 28:28 dispensational change.

- A. The dispensational change that took place at Acts 28:28 is stated in the words, “has been authorized to the Gentiles.”
- B. Some try to say there is nothing new in this statement. Over and over in Acts, Paul goes to the Jews first and when they did not believe he turned to the Gentiles. Statements such as these reveal an ignorance of the true character of the Acts period and the ministry carried on by God’s messengers at that time. Without understanding these things, the full force and meaning of Acts 28:28 will never be understood.
- C. Laying the foundation. Consider the ministry of Jesus Christ while He was on earth. Luke describes his gospel in Acts 1:1 as being the account of what Jesus began to do and teach until the day of His ascension. It set the stage for all that was done in the Acts period, and demands careful consideration.
- D. John 6:66. Jesus declared certain truths that caused many of His disciples to turn back from following Him. Their defection caused Him to turn to His twelve and ask if they also would go away. Peter responded in John 6:68-69. Peter was entirely right. There was only one upon the earth Who could utter a message that one by believing could get the guarantee of eternal life. No one could turn from Him and go to the Old

- Testament instead and expect to find God speaking to them there to bring them a guarantee of life. From the moment Christ began His ministry, no one could turn from Him to the Old Testament and think to find God speaking to them there and find a message there that would give them eternal life. Peter was entirely right.
- E. Before this time, the Lord commissioned the twelve as heralds. Matthew 10:1. If the Lord had given me that authority, I could do it as well as anyone, but He has not given me, you, or anyone else that authority. This was not based on their holiness or piety, for Judas Iscariot was included in this number.
 - F. Matthew 10:5-6. Jesus *apostello*, commissioned them. He barred them from taking any highway to the Gentiles, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Verse 7. He limited their message to a call to submission because the kingdom of the heavens was at hand. Verse 8. They were passing out samples of the kingdom work.
 - G. Note His specific instructions. They did not dare to add to this message, even if they would have liked to have done so. They could not proclaim Jesus as Messiah and speak of the wonderful works He had done. They could not offer people salvation. They were not to preach sermons or teach the Bible. They were to go to busy crossroads, some marketplace of commerce or business, stand there, and shout, "The kingdom of the heavens is at hand." Every Jew knew the meaning of this term; this was God's own government. If anyone questioned their authority to say this, they would prove their claim by the miracles. This was their commission, and they were told exactly what to say and what to do.
 - H. Sir Robert Anderson tells the story of an incident in the French chamber concerning trouble caused in a certain district through the general in command having communicated a war-office order in his own words. When the minister of war was challenged in parliament for having punished him, he said, "He committed an offense, and I removed him. He paraphrased an order which it was his duty only to read." The Lord's orders to the twelve were explicit. They did not paraphrase them to pad their commission and proclaim a more spectacular message. They had accepted the call to submission with absolute sincerity. They did not go forth with the salvation-bringing, life-giving message to all men everywhere without exception, as later interpreters try to claim. That was not their commission at that time. Only the Lord Jesus Christ had that privilege at that time.
 - I. Later interpreters would like to pad their commission and have them carrying the salvation-bringing message to all men in all places without exception, but that is a false interpretation that has no basis in the Word of God. This was not their privilege at that time. Later it will be, but not during the three years of the Lord's ministry.
- VII. Conclusion: Acts 28:28 declares the fact that the salvation-bringing message, authorized to Isarel previously, is now made freely available to all nations, and it would get through to them. During the gospel period, only Jesus Christ had the words of eonian life, as Peter states clearly in John 6. When He sent out His twelve in Matthew 10, He did not send them to take the salvation-bringing message to people, but only to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of God. Next time we will discuss how this continued from the gospels to the Acts period in setting up our understanding of the Acts 28:28 dispensational change.