

THE MILETUS SPEECH

JOHN B. POLHILL

Literary Setting:

Paul's Miletus Sermon is the third and final example of Paul's preaching supplied by Luke and formally functions as a "farewell address" giving the legacy of the Apostle. The speech concludes the Ephesian ministry of the Third Missionary Journey as Paul is on his way to his fateful destiny in Jerusalem attempting to deliver the collection he has secured from his Gentile converts. The content of this message has more in common with the Pauline letters than any other of the Pauline speeches in Acts, with the most striking parallels in 1 and 2 Timothy. The close parallels probably are due to the similarity of audience (Christian assembly) and that perhaps this message personally was auditioned by Luke—part of a "we section" in Acts (Bruce).

Outline:

- I. Paul's Relationship to the Ephesians (20:18–27)**
 - A. His Past Example (20:18–21)
 - B. His Present Plans and Future Prospects (20:22–27)
- II. Paul's Exhortation to Church Leaders (20:28–35)**
 - A. His Warning of Future Heresies (20:28–31)
 - B. His Blessing and Final Admonition (20:32–35)

Theological Significance (Stevens):

The figure of Paul serves a vital role at this point after the missionary crown jewel of the Ephesian ministry. For Luke, Paul theologically functions as the official link to the Gentile mission of the church. Paul's life work for Luke is the realization of the vision of the new people of God and is a fulfillment of the deeper meaning of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Further, Paul's life work will continue to meet the opposition that characterized Paul's ministry as the themes of the Stephen Speech continue to play themselves out in the narrative of Acts. This word to the Ephesian elders then becomes a word to Luke's own church tied theologically with the Eutychus story just narrated by Luke. As Paul throws down the gauntlet to the Ephesian elders, Luke throws down the gauntlet to his own church. So, concisely stated, the theological significance of this Miletus Speech in terms of the overall structure and purpose of Acts is that, for Luke, Paul:

- (1) fulfills the Hellenist movement and the intent and ministry of Jesus
- (2) best illustrates the themes of the Stephen Speech
- (3) challenges the church to take up the Gentile mission and thereby embrace her divine destiny