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Series Review

- Part 1: Introduction to *Rome & the Birth of Christianity*
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- Part 5: The Trial of Jesus Christ
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Audio and PDF notes available online at [Perimeter's Website](#) and [The Jackson Institute's Website](#)

Part 13: Introduction

From the beginning, our interest in studying the history of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire has been motivated by our longing to understand the political, military, social, philosophical, moral, and religious context into which Christianity was born and spread. It was never intended to be a mere intellectual exercise for the curious but a calling to provide the proper context for understanding the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ and how His followers faithfully represented him to the peoples of the Empire. The risen Lord had given to them the task of proclaiming the gospel to all the nations, and they took their assignment seriously, with many paying the price of obedience with their very lives.

Introduction

According to historian Philip Schaff, “Rome united the nations of the world in a colossal empire, stretching from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and from the Libyan desert to the banks of the Rhine. This empire embraced the most fertile and civilized countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and about one hundred millions of human beings, perhaps one-third of the whole race at the time of the introduction of Christianity.” How, then, would these disciples of Jesus ever be able to fulfill the Great Commission across such a vast landscape and lead so many people groups – Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Arabs, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, and Crete – to Him?

in 117 AD, at its greatest extent

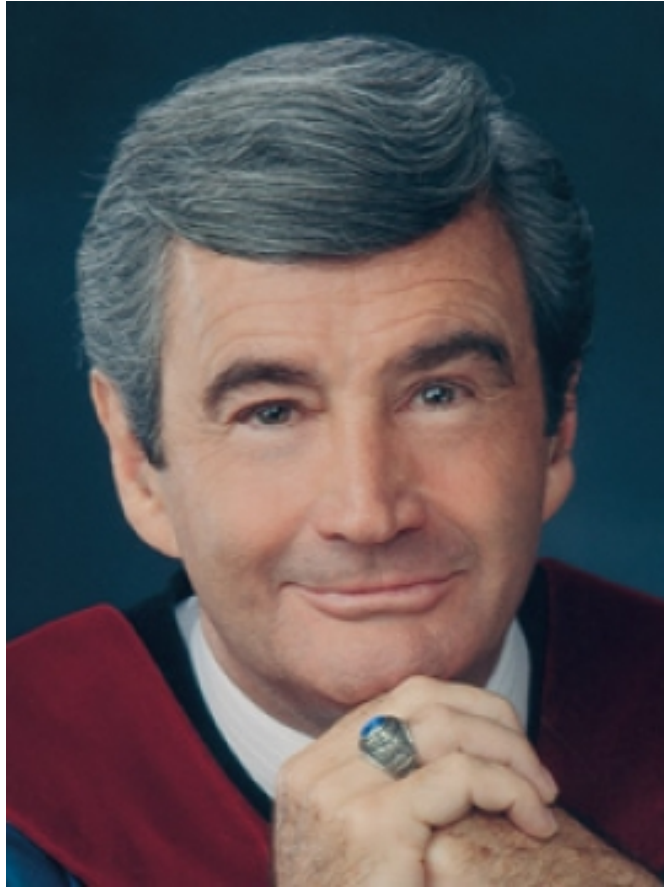




Introduction

Doesn't it seem like an impossible command to obey? Were they adequately prepared for such a gigantic undertaking? A.B. Bruce answers these questions: "Christ expects His disciples to follow Him with integrity of heart, without distraction, without murmuring, envy, or weighing consequences....Christ wants every believer to give himself up to His will with cheerful, exact, habitual obedience. He wants His children to think of all of His orders as wise, all His arrangements good, acknowledging His right to lead as He pleases, content to serve Him in a little place or in a big one, by doing or by suffering, for a long period or a short one, in life or by death, if only He be glorified. This is our duty. It is also our blessing."

D. James Kennedy



D. James Kennedy, PhD

1930 - 2007

“The whole pagan Roman Empire was undercut and overthrown by the power of the gospel of Christ which, on the lips of Christ-conquered disciples, crossed seas and deserts, pierced the darkest jungles, seeped into every city and town, and finally into the senate and the very palace of Rome itself – until a Christian Caesar was placed upon the throne.”



Introduction

A.B. Bruce offers the following comment about the Great Commission: “Surely this is the language of a Divine Being. What mere man ever conceived of such a plan that would include the whole human race in its scope? Who, except One who possessed all power in heaven and on earth, could dare to hope for success in such a gigantic undertaking?”

Entire books have been written about how these early Christians succeeded in sharing the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Their methods, motivations, strategy, character and godly behavior, and how they overcame various obstacles have all been carefully examined. Today, we will investigate an often-overlooked trait that God gave as a gift to these early disciples in order to impact an entire Empire.

The Anatomy of Boldness

In our last lecture, we noted that the author of the *Gospel of Luke* and the book of *Acts* reported that a supernatural phenomenon occurred 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. On the Day of Pentecost, “suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting....And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 2:2,4). From that time on, the Apostles demonstrated a **new-found boldness** to proclaim the gospel. The Greek word for *boldness* occurs **40 times** (apologetics, 18) in the New Testament in its noun and verbal forms, indicating its importance to Christ and His Apostles for the propagation of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Why so important?



Understanding the Language of Boldness

- **Parrhesia**, *n.*, candor, frankness; outspokenness or boldness of speech (OED).
- **Etymology:** this ancient Greek word is formed from the word ***pan***, which means *all* + ***rhesis***, which means *word* or *speech*. Parrhesia, then, means *saying everything* or *freedom of speech*.
- Greek lexicons define the word as ***outspokenness, frankness, plainness of speech***, that conceals nothing and passes over nothing (Arndt & Gingrich). Liddell and Scott add the meanings ***freespokenness* and *openness***. In a bad sense, the word means *license of the tongue*.



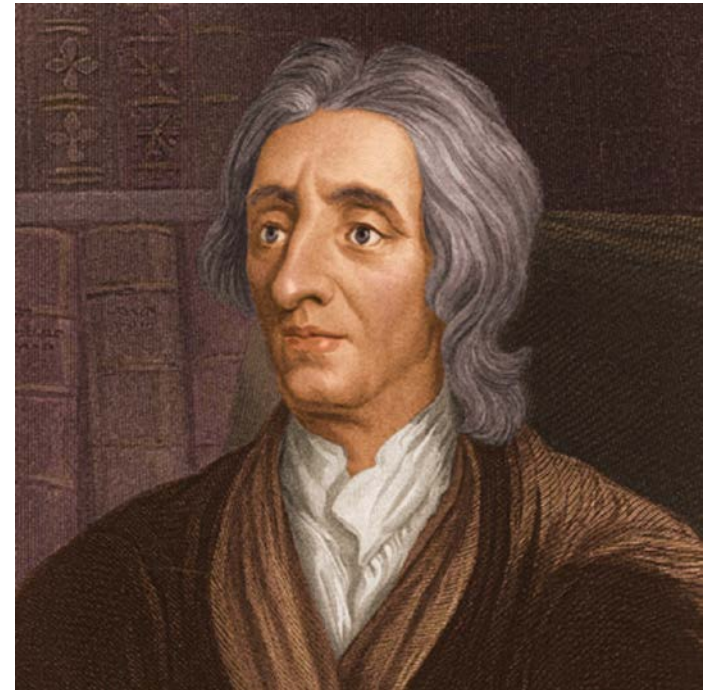
Understanding the Language of Boldness

- The verbal form is *parrhesiádzomai*, meaning to ***speak freely, openly, boldly***, a term we will examine shortly.
- In the political sphere in ancient Greece (the *polis*), it was used with three shades of meaning:
 1. the right to say anything;
 2. the actuality of things is stated, so that there is a close relation to truth (openness to truth); and
 3. that obstacles may be posed to those exercising the full freedom of speech. In the face of these obstacles, *parrhesia* is the courage of openness (Kittel).

Locke's Definition of Boldness

“Boldness is the power to speak or do,
before others, without fear or disorder.”

John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*



John Locke
1632-1704



Parrhesia Before God

- “Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice, at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks” (Prov. 1:20-21). “Four times the poet says that Wisdom goes forth preaching, and four times that she preaches publicly” (Keil & Delitzsch). Divine Wisdom always speaks with boldness.
- *Parrhesia* is the **freedom of the righteous towards God** expressed in prayer and contains joy within itself (Kittel).
- “If you return to the Almighty you will be built up....For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and **lift up your face to God**” (Job 22:26).

Parrhesia Before God

- “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have **confidence** before God” (1 Jn. 3:21).
- “And now, little children, abide in Him, so that if He should appear, we may have **confidence** and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (1 Jn. 2:28).
- “Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our **confidence** and our boasting in our hope” (Heb. 3:6).
- Confidence before God presumes a good conscience before God and man (cf. Acts 24:16).

Confidence Before the Throne



“Let us therefore draw near with **confidence** to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

The Prayer of Tears

“What is it, this Prayer of Tears? It is being ‘cut to the heart’ over our distance and offense to the goodness of God (Acts 2:37). It is weeping over our sins and the sins of the world. It is entering into the liberating shocks of repentance. It is the intimate and ultimate awareness that sin cuts us off from the fullness of God’s presence.”



Richard Foster

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