

LEADERSHIP AND LIFESTYLE:
LUKE'S PAUL, LUKE'S JESUS AND THE PAUL
OF 1 THESSALONIANS¹

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Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:18-35) is important for two interlocking debates: first, concerning the relationship between the portrait of Paul found in Acts and that derived from the epistles; and second, concerning Luke's sources—specifically, whether Luke had knowledge of the Pauline epistles. This thesis contributes to both debates by a careful examination of the speech, and a comparison with speeches by Jesus in Luke's Gospel (to see how Lukan the Miletus speech is) and 1 Thessalonians (to see how Pauline the speech is).

An initial chapter reviews the history of scholarship on the address to the Ephesians elders—a speech which has been used as a 'set piece' for most forms of modern critical study of Acts. The next chapter outlines the approach adopted here. This includes a discussion of how parallels are to be recognised, in the light of the relative lack of discussion of criteria in past scholarship on Luke-Acts. This gap in methodological discussion is surprising given the wide recognition of the phenomenon of parallelism in Luke's writings. Whilst there is an inevitable subjective element in seeking parallels, I seek a measure of objectivity by using a hierarchical approach, beginning with lexical parallels (including cognate words and compound forms) before moving to consider synonyms, conceptual parallels, and parallel styles

¹Stephen John Walton, *Paul in Acts and Epistles: The Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians as a Test Case* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1997); supervisors: Professor Andrew T. Lincoln, Dr. Loveday C.A. Alexander.

of argumentation. Further, ‘clustering’ of such parallels in particular passages is likely to be significant.

Turning to examine the Miletus speech in the context of Acts (ch. 3), consideration of ancient ‘farewell speeches’ suggests that it has much in common with members of this genre—although care needs to be taken not to assume that our speech shares all the features of the genre, bearing in mind that a genre is a construct from the extant examples.

On turning to consider structure, the speech to the Ephesian elders appears on first sight to be well-organised. A number of features reinforce this view: the repetitions of key words and phrases, the time references, and the change of subject. However, the lack of any scholarly consensus on the sub-divisions of speech suggests that this appearance may be deceptive, and I conclude that it is better to see the speech as like a tapestry, where the major themes are like threads interwoven with each other, often in subtle ways. Further, like a tapestry, it is the overall picture which provides the ‘structure’, by contrast with the sequential structures sought by past scholarship.

Consideration of the contents of the speech therefore takes two forms: first, a consecutive reading through the speech, seeing its main threads; and second, tracing the four major themes through the whole speech (leadership, suffering, wealth and work, and the death of Jesus), to get a view of the whole picture.

In the light of this reading of the speech, I then seek parallel passages in Luke’s Gospel (ch. 4), finding three extensive and suggestive parallel passages (22:14-38; 12:1-53; 21:5-36). The Last Supper discourse (22:14-38) in particular is part of a similar ‘farewell’ scene, but the parallels with the Miletus speech go well beyond generic similarities, echoing the four major Miletus themes in both structure and sequence, including reference to the redemptive significance of the death of Jesus—a rare explicit mention of this theme in Luke-Acts. The discourse on discipleship (12:1-53) offers considerable parallels to the Miletus speech on the themes of leadership, suffering and wealth, as well as providing parallels to some unusual words in Luke-Acts. The Lukan apocalypse (21:5-36)

contains a 'cluster' of parallels to Paul's speech. Finally, four briefer passages (7:38, 44; 9:2; 10:3; 13:32) offer suggestive individual points of comparison with the speech.

A sharply-focused portrait of Christian leadership as Luke understands it emerges—a portrait seen first in the life and teaching of Jesus, and then reflected in the ministry and teaching of Paul. Key features of this portrait include: the heart of Christian leadership being the imitation of Jesus, following in the path of servanthood which he walked; facing suffering as an inevitable concomitant of leadership, suffering which ultimately leads to glory; and expressing faithful following in handling money and work. The Miletus meeting presents Paul calling the next generation of Christian leaders to imitate this model. One fresh contribution of this study is to show that a key aim of Paul's address is the presentation of a model of leadership for imitation, by contrast with the focus in previous studies on questions about ministerial *office*.

The portrait of Christian leadership emerging from the study up to this point gives particular interest to a comparison of the Miletus speech and 1 Thessalonians (ch. 5). The value of considering this letter stems from its virtually universally-agreed authenticity as a Pauline letter (thus providing a sound database for comparison), from its pastoral nature, and from *prima facie* evidence of similar themes (including Paul's past conduct, suffering and leadership). An initial orientation to this letter confirms its indubitably Pauline nature and outlines its likely date and occasion. The letter serves as a substitute for a visit which the missionary team of Paul, Silas and Timothy was unable to make, responds to the news of persecution with encouragement and support, and responds to questions raised by the Thessalonian Christians.

My examination of the letter for parallels with the Miletus address begins by observing the presence of the four major Miletus themes in 1 Thessalonians, often using the same or similar vocabulary. The parallel is particularly clear in considering leadership, but it is also evident concerning suffering, money and work, and the death of Jesus. I then consider whether other emphases in the letter appear in the address, and find several examples, which reinforce the parallel.

Turning to the major theme of leadership, where a striking portrait emerged from Luke-Acts, I observe a similar picture in the letter. The evidence of this study of 1 Thessalonians suggests that the Paul of this letter and the Paul of the Miletus speech sound very similar to each other – and these similarities extend to vocabulary and to manner and style of teaching.

The concluding chapter (ch. 6) asks what implications this study has for our initial questions. Regarding the speech's place in Acts, it seems clear that the speech is a farewell for *Paul the missionary*; for although Paul continues to be centre-stage for the remainder of the book, he is in captivity for the large majority of the time. Further, the speech offers Luke's (albeit small-scale) portrait of Paul the pastor, in conjunction with his ministry earlier in the chapter (20:7-12).

Concerning Luke's sources, the thesis considers and critiques the proposal of Lars Aejmelaes (*Die Rezeption der Paulusbrieve in der Miletrede (Apg. 20:18-35)* [Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987]) that Luke has used the Pauline epistles in composing the Miletus speech, particularly 1 Thessalonians, Philippians and Ephesians, and 1 Clement. Three theses about Luke and Paul are probable, that: Luke knows Pauline tradition independently of the epistles; Luke knows Pauline tradition rather better than is often suggested; and Luke is passing on and commending the Pauline tradition, especially concerning leadership, to his generation. The latter is seen particularly in the way that Luke's Paul 'mirrors' Luke's Jesus.

Finally, the thesis considers the debate over the portrait of Paul in Acts and the epistles, arguing that at this point of comparison the two portraits show remarkable similarities. Luke does not only know the individual threads from the Pauline sewing-basket, but also understands how Paul combines them into tapestries.