

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-44 Paul Preaches in Rome

I have a friend, who, although he is not a great orator, is one of the most effective witnesses I have ever known. This is because he focuses his life on Jesus Christ. He seldom passes up an opportunity to tell others about his Lord. In today's story from the Book of Acts, Paul does the same thing. He uses an unlikely opportunity to tell others about Christ.

The people of Malta showered Paul and his team with gifts and sent them on their way. Sailing northward the missionaries soon arrived at Puteoli, a city on the western coast of Italy. To their delight, they encountered some brothers and sisters in Christ there and were permitted to spend a full a week with them. Then they headed north on the road to Rome.

When the brothers and sisters in Rome got word that Paul and the others were coming, they sent out a welcoming party to meet them. Paul was deeply touched by this kind gesture. His heart was so filled with joy that he began to thank God in the presence of everyone. Together, they all headed out for Rome. When they arrived, Paul was allowed to stay in his own private quarters, where a soldier was assigned to guard him.

After three days, Paul called for some Jewish leaders to meet with him. When they came, he explained to them his situation. "Brothers," he said, "As you may have heard, I have been accused of crimes against our people and customs. However, none of this is true. In Jerusalem, I was arrested and handed over to the Romans. They thoroughly investigated all the charges the Jewish leaders had levelled against me and concluded that I had done nothing wrong. The Romans wanted to let me go. The Jews so strenuously objected, however, that I was forced to appeal to Caesar. So, that's why I asked you to come and hear me out. I also wanted to explain to you why I am bound in these chains. It is because I believe in the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:11-20).

The Jews replied, "Paul, this is the first time we've heard anything about you. We didn't even know you were coming. However, everything we have heard about your Christian friends in Rome has been bad. We'd like to hear what you have to say about them." They then arranged to meet with Paul on another day.

When the appointed day arrived, a large number of people came to hear what Paul had to say. From morning to evening he taught them about the kingdom of God. Quoting the Scriptures, he tried to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. Some were persuaded, but others were stubborn and refused to believe. The two groups began to argue with one another.

That's when Paul interrupted them and said, "The Holy Spirit was right when he said through Isaiah the prophet, 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them'" (Acts 28:26-27).

Concluding his message, Paul looked straight at his Jewish visitors, and said, “Listen to me. This salvation from God is now being offered to the Gentiles, and unlike some of you, they will accept it!”

After that, Paul stayed for two years in his own rented house in Rome. During those days, he welcomed everyone who wanted to come and see him. When they did, he boldly proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught them about the Lord Jesus Christ. No one tried to stop him.

In today’s story, Paul told the Jews in Rome that he was in chains because of “the hope of Israel.” In using this phrase, Paul was speaking of the Jewish hope that someday God would raise the dead. Weeks earlier, Paul had told the mob in Jerusalem, “I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.” God confirmed that hope when he raised Jesus the Messiah from the dead. Paul told the Corinthians, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.... For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1Cor 15:20-22). Because we have put our faith in Christ, we have hope of a resurrection to eternal life.

From Paul’s ministry in Rome, we can learn four important guidelines for our preaching today.

First, we learn that we should faithfully preach the gospel regardless of our situation. Even though Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he still preached the gospel. He was not allowed to go out to preach, so he called others to come to him. When they came, he preached to them. We should do the same. No matter what happens to us, we must preach the gospel. We must boldly walk through any open door, even if the door is barely cracked open. Like Paul in Rome, we should make the most of every opportunity. We should always be prepared to preach the word “in season and out of season” (2Tim 4:2).

Secondly, we learn that when we do preach or teach, we must base everything we say on Scripture. In Rome Paul “tried to convince [the Jews] about Jesus from the law of Moses and from the Prophets.” In other words, Paul used Scripture to teach them about their Messiah, Jesus Christ. We must do the same today. We must always and only preach and teach what is written in the Bible, the word of God.

Third, from Paul’s example in Rome, we learn that we must faithfully proclaim the kingdom of God. The Bible says that Paul “preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus, the Book of Acts began with Jesus teaching about the kingdom of God, and it ends with Paul doing the same. The kingdom of God is thus the overarching theme of the entire book. To preach the kingdom of God is to tell people that Jesus, the King, has come to establish his rule in the world and in the hearts of people.

Finally, from today’s story we learn that Jesus must remain the central theme of all our preaching. Not only did Paul preach about the kingdom of God, the Bible also says he “taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.” In the same way, our preaching must focus on Christ. We are to tell

everyone that Jesus died on the cross for their sins and that God raised him from the dead. Then, we are to call on them to repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ alone for salvation.

That is how the Book of Acts ends. According to Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:8, the gospel has been preached in the power of the Spirit "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In tomorrow's lesson, we will review some powerful truths we should take from our study of Acts.

This lesson is **important** because we learn four guidelines for our preaching today.

The **main truths** we learn from this lesson are that we are to do as Paul did in Rome. Like him, we must preach the gospel regardless of our situation. When we do preach, we must preach only what is in the Word of God. And, our preaching must focus on the good news about Jesus Christ.

Let us **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. What did Paul do when he was put under house arrest in Rome?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that he called the Jews to his house and told them about Jesus Christ, you answered correctly.
2. On what source did Paul base all of his teaching and preaching?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that Paul based all of his teaching and preaching on Scripture, you are right.
3. What was the central message of Paul's preaching in Rome?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it two or three times, or until you can accurately tell others the story of Paul's ministry in Rome. You should also be able to recite from memory the four guidelines on preaching. Then, take these four guidelines and apply them to your own teaching and preaching ministry.