

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
November 25, 2012

Paul Evangelizes in Rome

Read Acts 28:23-31

Key verse: “Therefore, be certain of this: God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen!” (Acts 28:28).

For a long time, Paul had wanted to proclaim the gospel in Rome, the capitol of the Roman Empire. Even though Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner in chains, after many trials, and having barely survived a shipwreck, the opportunity had at last been given. Now Paul would make the most of it, even though he was living under house arrest.

As was his pattern, Paul witnessed “first to the Jews.” Some of the Jewish leaders in Rome wanted to hear what Paul had to say about Christianity (Acts 28:21-22). So, “on the day scheduled for this purpose, many people came to the place where he was staying. From morning until evening, he explained and testified concerning God’s kingdom and tried to convince them about Jesus through appealing to the Law of Moses and the Prophets” (28:23).

At the end of the day, seeing a lack of receptivity to his message, Paul announced: “Therefore, be certain of this: God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen!” (28:28)

For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome under house arrest. But he continued to make the most of his time and opportunities: “Unhindered and with complete confidence, he continued to preach God’s kingdom and to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:31).

During those two years under house arrest, Paul wrote the New Testament books of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. He shared the gospel of Jesus with the whole Roman guard (Philippians 1:13). And Paul “welcomed everyone who came to see him” (Acts 28:30), strengthening believers and witnessing to those who did not yet know Christ.

At the end of those two years, it appears that Paul was released. He continued to travel, preach, and evangelize. He was eventually imprisoned again, probably in Rome, where he wrote his last letter, 2 Timothy. Tradition says Paul was executed at the end of this final imprisonment.

So much could be said about the inspiration of this man Paul, his life and ministry. Here in Acts 28, we who follow Jesus are challenged by Paul’s

determination to share Christ with others at every opportunity, even in the face of great adversity.

Our ways of sharing faith will differ according to our unique personalities and gifts. Some will mainly “plant the seeds,” while others will “reap the harvest”—helping lost people “cross the line” into saving faith. But every Christ follower should pray for opportunities to share Jesus with people who do not yet know Him. When those opportunities come, may we—like Paul—make the most of them!

Imagine the impact on our world if churches full of believers cared about lost people as Paul did. Sam Shoemaker’s “So I Stay Near the Door” says it well:

*I stay near the door.
I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out,
The door is the most important door in the world—
It is the door through which people walk when they find God.
There’s no use my going way inside, and staying there,
When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,
Crave to know where the door is.
And all that so many ever find
Is only the wall where a door ought to be.
They creep along the wall like blind people,
With outstretched, groping hands,
Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,
Yet they never find it.... So I stay near the door.
The most tremendous thing in the world
Is for people to find that door—the door to God.
The most important thing anyone can do
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands,
And to put it on the latch—the latch that only clicks
And opens to the person’s own touch.
People die outside that door, as starving beggars die
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter—
Die for want of what is within their grasp.
They live, on the other side of it—live because they found it.
Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,
And open it, and walk in, and find Him....
So I stay near the door.*

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