

100 - Serving the Lord in Chains - Acts 28:16-31 - 2014-01-12

Call to Worship: Psalm 107:1-2

Scripture Reading: Judges 16:23-30

Sermon: "Serving the Lord in Chains" Acts 28:16-31

Benediction: Psalm 107:13-15

The apostle of Jesus Christ has arrived in Rome.

-this was what he had planned to do

-this is what the word of the Lord Jesus had told him he would do

But he has arrived in Rome in chains

-he was arrested unjustly

-he has been kept in Roman chains more than two years

He had a system for preaching the good news of Jesus Christ

-he would go to the Jewish synagogue, or other gathering place (where there would also be God-fearing gentiles)

-or if there wasn't a Jewish gathering, he would go to where the gentiles were gathering to talk about philosophy or religion

-he would preach the good news of Jesus Christ to them until they threw him out

-then he would preach someplace else in the gatherings of the new Christians

-meanwhile, if he didn't have money already, he would work at his trade of tent-making to earn his living

-he used this system for years all over that part of the world

That plan is not going to work at all while he is in chains; but the Lord shows Paul, and through him shows us, how faithful He is to us in helping us, and how he grants that we may serve the Lord even in chains, so that no matter what happens to us in this life, the good news of Jesus Christ keeps spreading

I. The Lord granted His servant favor with those who had him in chains (16)

Act 28:16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

A. we remember that the Lord has done the same for his servants in the past

1. Joseph gained the favor of Potiphar and of the jailer
2. Daniel and his three friends gained the favor of the steward who was in charge of them
3. even Samson's request of the boy in charge of him was granted

B. in Paul's case the Lord actually accomplished this by means of the storm, the shipwreck, and the snakebit

Consider that if the journey had been all smooth sailing, what would Julius have had to say about Paul? Not much, I suppose, and Paul may have been thrown in a common prison. But through the storm and shipwreck, Julius came to understand that Paul was far from being a criminal, and so he was able to speak to the commanders in Rome, and have Paul assigned to custody in a private home.

C. APPLICATION: You may never be under arrest by the government; yet again you might; but in many ways as a Christian you may find yourself in a situation that is not just how you would prefer it to be, with people in authority over you, or in control of your life to some extent; for example, you might be under the care of a doctor, or you might be under the authority of a sergeant or petty officer

1. but consider that whatever hardships the Lord Jesus sends you through now may be the means by which he grants you favor with your jailer or someone else in authority over you in the future
2. be encouraged through your present difficulty; the Lord is at work making things ready for what comes next in your service to Him

II. The Lord Jesus Christ provided That His Apostle Could communicate the good news of Jesus Christ to people beyond the walls of his prison (16-22)

A. the soldiers who guarded him (16b)

Philippians 1:13 It has become known throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ

B. the local Jews (17)

C. the local believers

Php 1:14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

D. the runaway slave Onesimus and the church in Colossae

Phm 1:10-12 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, (11) who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. (12) I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart,

E. APPLICATION: We tend to see our problems, our limitations, as preventing our

serving the Lord, or communicating the gospel to people. Here we see the apostle with a severe limitation, yet the Lord Jesus Christ provided that he could serve even in that state. The Lord provided him ways to communicate outside the walls of his prison. Maybe he served better with that limitation. He had to serve differently, but he could still serve

F. APPLICATION: We tend to see unjust arrest and detention by a corrupt government as one of the most horrible things that could befall a person. Yet, think how powerfully people have been used of the Lord while in prison or under house arrest.

-warm-up *Don Quixote, The Travels of Marco Polo*

-Hugo Grotius' bible commentaries;

-Martin Luther's New Testament translation;

-*Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*,

-Cory Ten Boom's story of Jesus Christ's faithfulness is largely about her family's experiences in a Nazi concentration camp

-During this imprisonment, Paul wrote several New Testament letters, known as the prison epistles. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. I plan to preach from one of them, Ephesians, beginning two weeks from now (or so)

So let us not fear arrest or imprisonment. Do not fear those who can harm the body.

G. APPLICATION:

III. The Lord granted His servant opportunity to speak about the Kingdom of God even while in chains

Act 28:23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

A. It is a kingdom different from all others

1. it is spiritual; not something with pomp and splendor to be seen; but it is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
2. it will fill the whole world
3. it will never end

It is told in the scriptures Daniel 9,24

B. The King God has appointed is Jesus

1. He declares what God requires to be a part of this kingdom
 1. repent
 2. believe in Him
2. God has made Jesus the judge for this kingdom
 1. we know Jesus has said, "repent" and has said the thing God requires is that we believe in Him
 2. consider now how it will be when you face God's final judgment; you will stand before Jesus as judge; while He was here on earth, He told you these were the two things God required

3. you might protest that you have done many good things
4. but did you come to hate your sins, to turn from them to follow the Lord Jesus?
5. did you trust yourself entirely to Jesus Christ, depending on His death and resurrection for your salvation?

IV. As Always, Some Were Persuaded, and Some Disbelieved

Act 28:24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

- A. When some of those believed, it was the gift of God to them
- B. Whose fault, then, was it that some disbelieved?

V. The Lord's Apostle in Chains Warned the Unbelievers

Act 28:25-27 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, (26) saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY: "HEARING YOU WILL HEAR, AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE, AND NOT PERCEIVE; (27) FOR THE HEARTS OF THIS PEOPLE HAVE GROWN DULL. THEIR EARS ARE HARD OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM." '

VI. The Lord's Apostle in Chains Proclaimed that the Gentiles Would Hear the Gospel

Act 28:28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

- A. Gentiles, you who have heard the gospel and believed, praise God for His grace, for the great love with which he loved a sinful wretch, a foreigner, an alien
- B. Gentiles, you have heard the gospel and have not believed,

VII. The Jews Had a Great Dispute Among Themselves

Act 28:29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

- A. Sometimes we must engage in disputes
- B. But these were disputing over whether or not to believe the Gospel
What good does that do?

VIII. The Lord Jesus provided that while His servant was in chains, he had sufficient money to keep up the physical necessities of his preaching ministry (30)

Where did he get it?

Php 1:3-5 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, (4) always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, (5) for your fellowship [koinoneia] in the gospel from the first day until now,

Php 4:14-19 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared [sun-koinoneo] in my distress. (15) Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. (16) For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. (17) Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. (18) Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. (19) And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

APPLICATION: Let us share together in the distress of the gospel ministry.

- a. if you are the one distressed, depend on the Lord providing
- b. if you are the one who gives to share in the distress, trust that the Lord will provide

IX. The Preaching and Teaching of the Kingdom of God in the Lord Jesus Christ goes on (31)

- A. this book of Acts is a history, but it is the history of the preaching of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ
- B. Do not let this study end without believing what it is all about

CONCLUSION

2Ti 2:8-9 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, (9) for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.

- I. The Lord brought him benefits from previous suffering (16)
- II. The Lord granted him freedom even in prison
- III.

Waiting for trial before Nero for two years.

- VI. with favor from other people (16a)
 - The Lord is able to make anyone favorable to His servants

- VII. sometimes with freedom even in prison (16b)

- A. He is under arrest, even though it is only house arrest; he has a Roman soldier in the house guarding him all the time

- B. Think of what Christ's servant is free from

- Is a fellow prisoner going to harm him?

- Are the Jews going to harm him?

- Will common criminals break in and harm him?

- C. He is free to witness to the Roman soldiers!

- D. He is free to encourage the Roman Christians

- Php 1:12-14 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, (13) so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; (14) and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.