



## LESSON 39

*Paul testifies to the gospel in Rome*

ACTS 28:11-31



**The gospel keeps spreading,  
but only those who believe it are  
saved.**



*“From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (Acts 28:23b).*

## Supporting Truths      Objectives

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The gospel will go out.</li> <li>2. The gospel is good news.</li> <li>3. The gospel spreads through faithful witnesses.</li> <li>4. The gospel requires a decision.</li> <li>5. The gospel saves those who believe.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe how openly Paul could talk about Jesus while a prisoner in Rome.</li> <li>2. List three aspects Paul preached: the hope of Israel, the Kingdom of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.</li> <li>3. Explain why Paul defended his innocence.</li> <li>4. Contrast the responses of Jews and Gentiles.</li> <li>5. Contrast the results for those who believe and those who do not.</li> </ol> |
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# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

*Paul testifies to the gospel in Rome • Acts 28:11–31*



## Lesson Summary

Even though Paul was a prisoner, he had freedom to teach anyone who would come to him. He kindly preached to Jews first, but most left without being convinced. Paul rebuked them for not having ears to hear the truth. Then Paul began teaching Gentiles, many of whom believed, and Paul kept teaching the gospel for two years in Rome. God used his imprisonment to powerfully spread the gospel.

## Spotlight on the Gospel

The gospel is the good news of the hope of Israel, the kingdom of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ. As the hope of Israel, it is the way to receive new, eternal life from God. As the kingdom of God, it is being rescued by Jesus from the kingdom of sin and Satan so that we can live with God. Finally, the gospel is about the Lord Jesus Christ: how the ruler of the universe suffered and died as a human to rescue everyone who trusts in Him.

LAST WEEK



**God protects Paul**  
*Acts 27:1–44*

THIS WEEK



**Paul testifies to the  
gospel in Rome**  
*Acts 28:11–31*

NEXT WEEK



**John testifies to the  
exalted Jesus**  
*Revelation 1:1–20*

THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## Lesson Commentary

*The gospel keeps spreading, but only those who believe it are saved.*

Jesus was first preached in Jerusalem, then throughout Judea and Samaria, and then, starting in Acts 10, to Gentiles as well. Paul continued to spread the gospel farther and farther west, until in Acts 28 he preached Christ in Rome. By concluding the book with Paul's testimony in Rome, Luke emphasized that the Gospel will continue to spread, no matter the obstacles. As the news of Jesus spreads, those who hear must decide how to respond to Jesus.

### Paul kindly invited Jews to hear the hope of Israel (28:16–22)

Paul and his companions had been shipwrecked on the island of Malta (Acts 28:1). After spending three months there, Paul finally arrived in Rome (28:11–16). God had protected and provided for Paul all along the way, and now in Rome God gave Paul great freedom. Even though still a prisoner, Paul was able to stay in his own rented house (28:16, 30). God's purpose in all these arrangements was to allow Paul to proclaim Jesus in Rome (27:24).

Just as he did in all his missionary journeys, Paul spoke to the Jews first, because the gospel belongs first to the Jews (Rom 1:16). God's promises came to them first, and He will never forget His love for them (Gen 12:2; Jer 31:35–36). When the Jewish leaders came, Paul first said he was innocent of the charges the Jews in Jerusalem had brought against him (Acts 28:17). Paul proved this by explaining how even the Roman governors found him innocent but could not set him free because of pressure from the Jews (25:18–19; 28:18–19). Paul's innocence was important because Paul did not want his testimony of Jesus to be spoiled by rumors that Paul was a wicked person. A believer's life should never give unbelievers a reason to dishonor Jesus (1 Pet 3:16).

Because Paul desired to lead the Jews to faith in Jesus, Paul *evangelized* (shared the gospel) in a careful

and kind way. He made it clear that his appeal to Caesar was not an attack on the Jews. In fact, Paul showed he loved them very much because he was willing to be chained as a prisoner “for the *hope of Israel*” (Acts 28:20). In the Old Testament, man's “hope” almost always referred either to God Himself or to the life that comes from God. Ezekiel used this word in his vision of dry bones (Ezek 37:11). Ezekiel's vision of God's Spirit breathing new life into dry bones showed that Israel's hope was in God's promise to breath new, eternal life into Israel and restore them to their land (37:11–14; Acts 23:6). Despite the Jews' unbelief, the gospel has not changed, and one day the hope of Israel will come true (Rom 11:26–31).

Like Paul, true evangelists show love and care because they desire the very best for others. After Paul's defense, the Jews were willing to listen, but it seems that they were skeptical. All they say about Christianity is that “everywhere it is spoken against” (Acts 28:22).

### The Jews rejected Paul's testimony about Jesus (28:23–27)

Since they were willing to listen, Paul taught them all day, showing that evangelism requires persistence (28:23). He taught them the gospel: **God's Kingdom** and Jesus. God's kingdom includes God's rule over all things (Ps 145:13), but here in the context of the gospel it more specifically refers to the kingdom of the redeemed, of those rescued by Jesus from the kingdom of sin and Satan (Col 1:13). Paul was thus teaching the whole gospel: God's kingship, man's sinful rebellion against God's authority, man's need to be rescued from slavery to sin, Jesus the Messiah who died and rose again in order

#### THINK ABOUT IT

Like Jesus before him, Paul was unjustly accused by the Jewish religious leaders.



#### THINK ABOUT IT

God delivers Christians from the kingdom of Satan and places them in the kingdom of Jesus (Col 1:13).



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to rescue man, and the promise of eternal life in God's kingdom. This *gospel* is the good news that Jesus died and rose again to bring people back to God, their King.

In order to persuade the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, Paul taught them from “both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (Acts 28:23). Jesus, Peter, and Paul each used Scripture to prove that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 24:44–47; Acts 2:17–36; 13:32–39), and the sermons in Acts are saturated with Scripture. When speaking to those who knew no Scripture, Paul still spoke the truth of Scripture even

## THINK ABOUT IT

Christians are people of the Book—the Bible.



though he did not quote it (17:22–31). If you want to speak the gospel to others, you must know and use Scripture, because Scripture testifies of Jesus.

Unfortunately, although some Jews were starting to be persuaded, most left unconvinced (28:24–25). As they were leaving, Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9–10 to rebuke them for responding to God's Word just like their ancestors had (Acts 28:26–27). God's Word entered their

## THINK ABOUT IT

The demons know many truths about the gospel and Jesus, but they are not saved (Jas 2:19).



ears but did not change their lives. It is not enough to know the gospel; the gospel only saves those who are willing to trust it with their lives (2:38). That takes great humility (Matt 11:25).

## Paul taught about Jesus openly in Rome for two years (28:28–31)

Because the Jews resisted the gospel, Paul explained that “this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen” (Acts 28:28). This shows how God can turn a terrible thing—Israel rejecting their own Messiah—into a great blessing: it was through the Jews' unbelief that the gospel spread to Gentiles (Rom

11:11–30). Even though the majority of Jews continue to reject the gospel, they will not always do so. Israel did not “stumble” so as to fall (11:11), Israel's hardness is partial (11:25), the salvation of Gentiles is designed to draw Israel to salvation (11:11), all Israel will one day be saved (11:26), and Israel's coming salvation will bring about even greater blessing for Gentiles than before (11:12). Despite rejection by the Jews in Rome, God's gospel cannot be stopped.

For two years Paul continued to teach about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught “all who came to him” (Acts 28:30), and his message spread even to Caesar's soldiers (Phil 1:13) and Caesar's household (4:22).

Besides teaching, Paul also used his imprisonment to write Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Even though he was in prison, Paul had both confidence and freedom to teach the full gospel (Acts 28:31). Like Paul, we also should make the most of every opportunity to proclaim Jesus.

In some ways, Acts ends abruptly. What happened to Paul and his appeal before Caesar? But the ending of Acts is the perfect conclusion to God's record of how He spread the good news of His Son by faithful evangelists empowered by the Spirit to preach God's word. Acts ends by showing that none of the gospel's opponents could stop the gospel's spread. At the same time, the end of Acts is not meant to be the end. The gospel had spread to Rome, but there are still many places where the gospel still needs to spread. So as Acts ends, Paul's mission becomes ours. Like runners in a great relay race, the baton has passed from Paul to us, and it is our turn to take the good news of the gospel to anyone who will listen, whether Jew or Gentile.

## THINK ABOUT IT

Paul did not see prison as an obstacle to speaking about Jesus.



## Lesson Outline

*The gospel keeps spreading, but only those who believe it are saved.*

### AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Paul told Jews in Rome about eternal life in Jesus (28:16–22).
2. Most Jews rejected Paul's message about Jesus (28:23–27).
3. Paul taught Gentiles in Rome about eternal life in Jesus (28:28–31).

### AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Paul kindly invited Jews to hear the hope of Israel (28:16–22).
  - Paul had freedom to talk to people (28:16, 30).
  - Paul defended his innocence (28:17–19).
  - Paul desired to speak of the hope of Israel (28:20).
  - The Jewish leaders wanted to hear (28:21–22).
2. The Jews rejected Paul's testimony about Jesus (28:23–27).
  - Many Jews came and listened to Paul all day (28:23a).
  - Paul used Scripture to teach about Jesus and God's kingdom (28:23b).
  - Some were being persuaded, but others did not believe (28:24–25).
  - Paul rebuked them for being unwilling to believe (28:26–27).
3. Paul taught about Jesus openly in Rome for two years (28:28–31).
  - Because the Jews refused, salvation would go to Gentiles (28:28).
  - Paul taught openly about Jesus for two years (28:30–31).



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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## Lesson Questions

*Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.*



### Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **Where was Paul a prisoner?**  
Rome.
2. **Who did Paul tell about Jesus first?**  
The Jews in Rome.
3. **Did they believe him?**  
A few did, but most did not.
4. **So who did Paul tell about Jesus after that?**  
Gentiles—and many believed.



### Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **Why could Paul tell about Jesus so much even though he was a prisoner in Rome?**  
He was allowed to live in a house, so anyone could come talk to him.
2. **Why did Paul defend his innocence to the Jews?**  
So that his testimony of Jesus would not be spoiled by rumors that he was a wicked person.
3. **How did Paul first describe the gospel to the Jews?**  
He called it the hope of Israel, God's promise of new, eternal life with Him forever.
4. **How did Paul next describe the gospel to the Jews?**  
He called it the Kingdom of God. This is God's reign over all those Jesus has rescued from slavery to sin and Satan and death.
5. **What did Paul use to explain the gospel to the Jews?**  
He used Scripture.
6. **According to Isaiah, why did most of the Jews refuse to believe?**  
They were not willing to listen. They heard the truth over and over, but their hearts were hard. They did not want to be changed.
7. **By not believing, what did the Jews lose?**  
They lost out on spiritual healing and salvation.
8. **Did prison or rejection stop Paul from telling about Jesus?**  
No. For two years he told many people about the kingdom of God, and during that time he also wrote several books of the Bible.

# Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

## CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

Using real chains or chains made from paper, chain yourself to a helper or another child (guard). Ask the children how they would feel if they were chained to another person all day. Show them how hard it would be to move around. After talking about all the bad parts, ask if there are any good parts about being chained to someone. Show them how Paul could minister to his “captive audience.” Any time he talked, prayed, or wrote a letter, the guard would see it.

## GREEN MEANS GO

Make a traffic light out of black and green construction paper. However, make each of the three circles green to show that that gospel is unstoppable. When showing the traffic light to the children, hide the top two circles behind another paper. Ask the children what other two colors appear on a traffic light and what they mean. Show the top two circles to the children and ask how this traffic light is different—it is all green! Explain that the “light” is always green for the gospel. Nothing can stop it. Not even prison, as we will see in today's lesson.



ILLUSTRATE

## GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES

God used Paul for a very special mission—he preached the gospel to the Gentiles. A Gentile was any person who was not a Jew. The Old Testament focuses almost entirely on the Jews. Part of the new and exciting message of the New Testament was that God had a special plan for the Gentiles as well. God wanted to bless the Gentiles by allowing them to be saved and to have a relationship with Him, just like the kind of relationship He wanted to have with the Jews. Do the children know what adoption is? Explain that God graciously chose to adopt the Gentiles even though He already had some very special children.

## EARS STOPPED AND EYES SHUT

Paul said the Jews were just like their parents: even though they had heard and seen the gospel many times, they refused to listen and obey it. Illustrate this with a pair of earmuffs used to block out sound and a blindfold. Put these on and have the children try to tell or show you something. Can you understand it? This is how the Jews responded to the gospel.



APPLY

## MORNING AND EVENING

See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2*.

**Materials:** Craft sheets, crayons, scissor, glue stick.

**Directions:** Color the two sides of the door hanger. Cut them and glue them together. (For the “evening” side, you can décor with sticker stars.)

*Morning and Evening*  
See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2*



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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

## 10 SERVINGS A DAY

We all know that it is good to eat lots of fruits and vegetables, but sometimes it is hard to eat as many as we should. But not for you. Proclaim that you eat 10 servings a day! While you talk about all the nutritious food you eat, take bites of different fruits and veggies but spit out each bite in the trash after holding it in your mouth for a few seconds. Continue to do this until the children point out that this doesn't actually help your body—you actually have to swallow the food! Explain that this is how most of the Jews respond to the gospel in today's lesson. They "tasted" the gospel over and over, but they never made it part of their lives.

## UNSTOPPABLE GOSPEL

Give each child a maze to complete. Put a picture of Paul (or write his name) at the beginning of the maze and write "Rome" at the end. Explain that the gospel will spread, no matter what obstacles stand in its way. We will see this in today's lesson. Paul is in prison, but the gospel is not. It continues to spread, even while Paul is in chains.



ILLUSTRATE

## GROUNDED

When people in America are arrested, they are taken to prison. There they live in cells behind bars; however, in Paul's case, he was actually a prisoner inside a normal house. He was not allowed to leave the house, and was probably always chained to one of his guards. This is similar to what it's like being "grounded." Have the children ever been grounded? How does this differ from prison?

## THE GIDEONS

Do the children know about the Gideons? It is a ministry that seeks to share the Scriptures with all people. The ministry began in 1908 by placing Bibles in hotels rooms and still operates today. Have the children ever seen a Bible with the Gideon's logo on it in a hotel room? The Gideons, like Jesus and Peter and Paul, understand that the gospel is based on the Scriptures. Therefore, they do everything they can to get the Scriptures into the hands of as many men and women as possible.



APPLY

## PREACHING ALL DAY

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

**Materials:** Craft sheet, crayons, scissors, paper plate, brad.

**Directions:** Divide the paper plate in two scenes, the evening and the morning. Color the craft sheet and cut it. Unite it to the paper plate with a brad.

Preaching All Day  
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

### ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?

Many of us at some point have tuned out our parents or a teacher as they were talking to us. Demonstrate this by day dreaming, texting on a cell phone, sleeping, or talking with someone else while the children share with you times when they've tuned someone out. Even though we have ears, there are times we fail to hear and heed instruction. Unfortunately, this refusal to listen often brings serious consequences. In today's lesson, Paul experiences this first hand as he interacts with the Jews in Rome. Their refusal to hear the gospel brought serious consequences to both Jews and Gentiles.

### THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

Remind the children that throughout Acts the gospel has spread despite all opposition. Ask them what they think will happen to the spread of the gospel now that Paul is in chains. How can the gospel still spread? Discuss ways the gospel spreads today: the Bible, books, tracts, television, radio, and the internet. Point out that we no longer have to go in person to share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Your pastor may even put his messages online so that anyone can hear them.



ILLUSTRATE

### CLEAN, FRESH, WHITE APRON

Imagine you're out to eat at a restaurant and your server brings your food to the table wearing a filthy, smelly, old apron. Would that be appetizing? Even though the food might be amazing, the presentation would surely impact your appreciation of it. We also make the gospel look bad by living a disobedient, filthy life. What kind of "apron" are you wearing as you serve up the gospel?

### DRY BONES

Paul was in prison "because of the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20). The prophet Ezekiel used this word "hope" in his vision of dry bones (Ezek 37:11). His vision of God's Spirit breathing new life into dry bones showed that Israel's hope was in God's promise to breath new, eternal life into Israel and restore them to their land (37:11–14). Bring a chicken bone to class as an illustration. What would it take to give this bone new life?



APPLY

### THE REST OF THE STORY

Although the outcome of Paul's first imprisonment is unknown, Paul was eventually released. Church history tells that after Paul reached his goal of Spain (Rom 15:24) he was imprisoned in Rome a second time. Before and during his second Roman imprisonment, Paul wrote the letters to Timothy and Titus. The New Testament does not record Paul's death but church history records that Paul was beheaded at the command of Nero. In some ways, Acts ends abruptly. But the ending of Acts is the perfect conclusion to God's record of how He spread the good news of His Son. Acts traces the gospel's spread throughout Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but when the Jews reject the Gospel, God reveals His plan for bringing the gospel to the Gentiles through the apostle Paul (Acts 1:8). At the close of Acts, Paul continues to preach in the power of the Spirit and the gospel continues to advance unhindered. None of the gospel's opponents could stop its spread. The book ends with a clear call to all who are willing, whether Jew or Gentile, to hear God's gospel and turn to Him.