

The Preaching of Paul

Chapter Eight

Audio lesson: New Testament 38



Objective: To understand Paul's preaching and how he conducted his ministry.



I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

—Acts 20:24

Some scholars think Paul was ineffective in Athens because he tried to be too clever with his sermons and only a few people believed. Others think he was brilliant in how he used their culture to relate the gospel to them without being offensive. Either way, he seems to have learned a great deal, because at his next stop, in Corinth, he decided simply to announce good news that Jesus had died for our sins and was raised from the dead.

Later, Paul stopped in Miletus to say goodbye to the leaders of the church at Ephesus, where he had ministered for more than three years. He knew he would never see them again and that suffering awaited him in Jerusalem, but he was convinced that God wanted him to go. His heartfelt words to the Ephesian leaders show Paul's compassion and his integrity in the way he conducted his ministry.

Paul longed to share the gospel with everyone he met because he loved them, especially his own people, the Jews. In Jerusalem, he went to the temple to demonstrate that he was not opposed to the law of Moses, as some people claimed. But while he was there, the crowd was stirred up against him. Even then, Paul used the opportunity to proclaim his message. He did all things for the sake of the gospel.

1. True or false? Paul had a very fruitful ministry in Athens.
2. True or false? There were many idols in the city of Athens.
3. True or false? After his experience in Athens, Paul's normal approach was simply to announce the gospel.
4. True or false? The primary message of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead.



Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. How did the people of Athens respond to Paul's claim that Jesus had risen from the dead?
 - a. They enthusiastically believed the message.
 - b. Many believed and many wanted to hear more.
 - c. Some wanted to hear more, but many others mocked him.
 - d. They dragged him out of the city and tried to stone him.

6. How long did Paul spend in Ephesus?
 - a. Only a few days
 - b. About six months
 - c. The same as he spent in Corinth
 - d. Three and a half years

7. Who did Paul meet with in Miletus on his way to Jerusalem?
 - a. Lydia, Timothy, and the Philippian jailer
 - b. Some philosophers from Athens
 - c. A Roman emperor
 - d. Some pastors and leaders from the Ephesian church

8. What awaited Paul in Jerusalem?
 - a. Bondage and suffering
 - b. A welcome celebration
 - c. A council of apostles who wanted to correct him
 - d. Another opportunity to start a church

9. How was Paul supported while he was in Ephesus?
 - a. The Ephesian church hired him as their pastor.
 - b. He worked hard, often making tents, so he would not be a liability to them.
 - c. The Corinthian church kept sending money to him.
 - d. God miraculously fed him with manna from heaven.

10. How did Paul respond when the Christian leaders in Jerusalem asked him to show that he had not rejected the law of Moses?

- a. He agreed to do so and went to the temple with some men who were making vows and sacrifices.
- b. He agreed to do so and affirmed that Christians are still obligated to keep the law.
- c. He refused because Christians are not obligated to keep the law of Moses.
- d. He rejected Judaism completely and left Jerusalem immediately.

11. What did Paul do when a crowd at the temple turned against him and tried to kill him?

- a. He fled and vowed never to visit Jerusalem again.
- b. He got angry and began insulting the crowd.
- c. He took advantage of the attention and preached a sermon.
- d. He urged all Christians to take up weapons and fight to the death.



Paul did all things for the sake of the gospel. How would your life change if you decided to do the same? What decisions would you need to make? How would your relationships change? Is there anything you would need to give up in order to devote yourself entirely to God and His purposes? If so, what?



Thank God for helping you grow in your faith and for teaching you His truth. Offer to Him more and more of your life each day. Ask Him if there is anything in your life that needs to change for you to serve Him with your whole heart.



Going Deeper

1. While reading through all of the great sermons of Paul in the book of Acts, in what significant ways do you think Paul's preaching was different after his experiences in Athens and Corinth? (Consider Acts 17, 18: 9, 10; 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5; 15: 1-4) _____

2. When you carefully study his sermon on Areopagus as recorded in Acts 17, and when you compare it to 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5, do you think that he clearly used "enticing words of man's wisdom" when he quoted their Greek poets and philosophers? If so, how does the fact that he did not preach that way again strengthen the argument that he learned much in Athens about how to preach the Gospel? _____

3. Do you think men like Timothy could have attended Paul's classes in the School of Tyrannus in Ephesus, which might have been like a seminary in which Paul trained pastors? (Consider 2 Timothy 2:2) Why or why not? _____

4. What was the purpose of the Council in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15, and what was resolved there? _____

5. In Paul's very touching farewell to the Elders in Ephesus (Acts 20: 17-38), what can we learn and apply about the preaching and teaching commitment of this great apostle? _____

6. What can we learn and apply about the way the Church in Ephesus met, was led and organized? _____

7. How can we learn and apply the two things Paul wanted these Elders to remember (20: 35)?
