

## 42. Learning How God Verified the Ministry of Paul

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to accept one another so that we can have unity in the body of Christ. We saw that whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we have the same unity in Christ. We saw that whether we are strong or weak, we have that same hope in Christ. As a result, we saw that we can accept the fact that as Christians we may have different opinions and even different convictions and still have unity with one another, because we all have the same hope in Christ and we all have the same Holy Spirit working in each of our lives. In our topic today, we want to learn to show our children how God verified the ministry of Paul.

Romans 15:14-16 says, “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some* points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Paul did not help start the church at Rome. In fact, he had not even visited Rome at the point he wrote this letter. However, we see that he had great confidence in the Christians that were in the church at Rome. We will see when we get to chapter sixteen that he knew many Christians in Rome even though he had never visited there.

Paul said he was confident that the Christians in Rome were full of goodness. The word that is translated “goodness” speaks of being upright in heart and life. This word is only used four times in the New Testament. Twice, it is used to speak of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 and Ephesians 5:9. The other place this word is used is in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, where we read, “Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power.” Here, we see that as Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, he prayed that the goodness of God would be seen in their lives. In the same way, we want the goodness of God to be seen in the lives of our children.

In addition, Paul believed that the Christians in Rome were filled with all knowledge. Peter used this same word in 2 Peter 3:18 where we read, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.” Peter wanted those to whom he wrote to grow in knowledge. Here, we see that Paul believed that many of the Christians in Rome were mature and filled with all knowledge. Paul also felt that the Christians in Rome were equipped to admonish one another. The word “admonish” means *to encourage or warn*. Colossians 3:16-17 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Here, we see that all Christians are able to minister to one another by sharing the Word of God with one another, as well as giving thanks and ministering to one another through music.

Although Paul knew all of these things about the Romans, he also told them why he had written

this letter to them. He wanted to remind them of the fact that God had called him to minister to all Gentiles. The other apostles had also recognized the call of Paul to the Gentiles. Galatians 2:9 says, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” As we see the number of names listed in chapter sixteen, we see that Paul had probably led quite a number of the Christians in Rome to Christ when they lived in other cities. We realize, in our own lives, that we need to be reminded of the things that we have learned in the past, so that we continue to practice them. Paul looked forward to the day when he would have the opportunity to present some of these Christians to the Lord.

Romans 15:17-19 says, “Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things *which pertain* to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient--in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” Here, we see that Paul was thankful for the things that the Lord had accomplished through his life. The word that is translated “glory” is translated by the word “rejoicing” in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 where we read, “For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.” Paul was filled with rejoicing, because of the fact that the Lord had chosen to use his life in such a way that others would also stand in the presence of the Lord.

Paul wanted to make sure that he did not try to take credit for the work that the Lord had done through the lives of others. Paul also realized that what Christ had accomplished through his life was the work of the Lord. He viewed himself as the bondservant of the Lord who was just being obedient to what the Lord had told him to do. This is illustrated by Romans 1:1 where we read, “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” The concern of Paul was to be obedient to the Lord by taking the Gospel to the Gentiles who had not heard the Gospel.

Paul realized that the Lord had worked through his life, both by the words that Paul spoke and the miracles that the Holy Spirit had accomplished through Paul, to verify his ministry as an apostle. In order to bring the Gentiles to obedience in Christ, the Lord had performed mighty signs and wonders through the life of Paul by the power of the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 12:11-12 says, “I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” God verified the message and ministry of the apostles by signs and wonders. The Lord confirmed that Paul was an apostle by doing signs and wonders through him.

The Lord had also used Paul to preach the Gospel from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum (the region north of Greece and across the Adriatic Sea from Italy). That meant that Paul had preached the Gospel across a region that stretched about 1400 miles. Although Paul had not been to Rome at the time he wrote this letter, he had almost reached Italy in his travels to share the Gospel.

We also see that Paul had a goal or an aim as he shared the Gospel in the various places where he had taken the Gospel. Romans 15:20-22 says, “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.’ For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.” Here, we see that the goal of Paul was to take the Gospel to places where the Gospel had not yet been preached. We see that Paul did not want to build on the foundation that others had established. Instead, he wanted to take the Gospel to places where the people had never heard the Gospel.

To illustrate his goal, Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15 which says, “So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.” Chapter 52 of Isaiah talks about the time when Christ will rule in Jerusalem. However, before that can happen, it was necessary for the Gospel to be taken to the whole earth. That is why chapter 53 of Isaiah talks about the sufferings and death of Christ. Salvation had to be provided and then proclaimed to all nations before the day will come when Christ will rule in Jerusalem. As a result, Paul said that he had a great desire to take the Gospel where the Gospel had never been preached. He wanted the people of the nations who had never heard to hear. He wanted the people of many nations to see and understand the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Paul also said that he had been hindered from coming to Rome because his goal was to take the Gospel to places where people had never heard the Gospel. People from every part of the Roman Empire had moved to Rome and settled there. As we see in chapter 16, some of the people who had moved to Roman were people that had become Christians in other places. Because Paul knew that these Christians had moved to Rome, he knew that the Gospel was being preached in Rome. Romans 16:3-5 says, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.” Priscilla and Aquila had been part of the team that had shared the Gospel with Paul both in the city of Corinth and later in the city of Ephesus. Here, we see that he knew they were now in Rome and a church had developed that met in their house in Rome. He also knew of churches in other homes.

The Holy Spirit had verified the fact that Paul was an apostle by doing signs and wonders through him. God had used his ministry to take the Gospel to a wide area from Jerusalem to Illyricum. In the same way, the Lord wants to use our physical and spiritual children to take the Gospel too many places. This will happen as we help them grow to spiritual maturity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop a vision to share the Gospel in different parts of the world.