

96. Paul Ministered for Two Years in Rome

In our last topic, we saw that Paul explained to the Jews in Rome that it was the message of the hope of the resurrection that caused the Jews to want him killed and forced him to appeal his case to Caesar. We saw that we also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain the message of the death and resurrection from the Word of God. In our topic today, we will see that the Lord gave Paul the opportunity to explain that message to many of the Jews in Rome. However, first we will see that the Jewish leaders in Rome had heard nothing about Paul from the Jews in Jerusalem.

Acts 28:21-24 says, “Then they said to him, ‘We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.’ 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. And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.” Here, we see that the Jewish leaders in the city of Rome had heard nothing from the Jews that were in Judea.

There were two ways that the Jews in Rome could have known about the charges that the Jewish high priest and the other Jewish leaders had made against Paul. First, the Jews who were the leaders in the synagogues in Rome had not received any letters from Judea about Paul. Second, every Jew wanted to go to Jerusalem at least once for the various feasts. During the Feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, Acts 2:5 notes, “And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.” Jews, who had been to Jerusalem and returned to Rome, had not reported anything that the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem had said. In fact, none of those returning from Jerusalem had spoken any evil about Paul.

However, the Jews in Rome did want to learn more about Jesus and the Christians. The word translated “desire” means *to think worthy or to be deserving*. 2 Thessalonians 1:11 says, “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.” In this verse, the word is translated “count you worthy”. Here, in Acts, we see that the Jews in Rome had heard so many people speak about the followers of Jesus and the message of His resurrection that they felt that they deserved the opportunity to hear this message as well. The Jews in Rome also knew that Jews in many different places were speaking against Jesus and the Christians.

Then, Paul and the Jewish leaders set a day when they could come and discuss with Paul what Paul thought and taught. On that day, many Jews came to Paul at the house he was renting. Paul explained what the Old Testament taught about the kingdom of God. The word translated “solemn testimony” means *to give testimony, to charge or to give witness*. The word is translated “charge” in 2 Timothy 4:1, where we read, “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” Paul gave the Jews in Rome solemn testimony about the kingdom of God. He wanted them to believe what the Old

Testament said about Jesus so he showed them prophecies that pointed to Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Here, we see that Paul showed passages from various parts of the Old Testament that taught about the Christ and then showed how Jesus fulfilled those promises. This is a key for us to teach the Word of God effectively.

Since Paul showed the Jews what the Old Testament said, the Jews had to make a choice that day. Some believed that those passages spoke about Jesus and some did not believe that those passages spoke about Jesus. Paul gave one final summary statement in Acts 28:25-29. “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, saying, “Go to this people and say: ‘Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 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.’” Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!’ And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.” Here, we see that Paul quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10 to show the Jews why they did not agree among themselves.

The Holy Spirit had spoken to Isaiah and told him that the people of his day would not listen to the message that the Lord had for them. They would hear the words but they would not be able to understand the message. They would see but they would not understand. The Holy Spirit told Isaiah that the reason this would happen to the people of Israel was due to the fact that the hearts of the people had grown dull. The word translated “grown dull” is used twice in the New Testament. Christ used the word, in Matthew 13:15, when he quoted this same passage from Isaiah. In that passage, the disciples had questioned why Christ spoke to the crowds in parables. Christ said that the people of Israel were fulfilling exactly what Isaiah had prophesied about them. We see that Paul does this same thing with the Jews in Rome. In both cases, the Jews were told that they had made their hearts hard so that they could not understand.

Paul also told the Jews that day that the Gentiles would hear the message that Jesus is the Christ. Many of the Gentiles would hear and accept the message about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul always began his ministry in every city first by sharing the message of the Gospel with the Jews first. Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” When most of the Jews rejected that message, Paul would turn to the Gentiles. Acts 13:46-47 says, “Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: “I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’””

The Jews left the house where Paul lived after this final statement. We see that the Jews could not agree among themselves. This caused them to have a great dispute among themselves as they departed. The word translated “dispute” means *mutual questioning, discussion or dispute*. This word is used twice in Acts 15. First, it was used when certain Jews from Judea came to Antioch

and taught that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they were circumcised. Then, at the Jerusalem Council, we see Acts 15:7 says, “And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up *and* said to them: ‘Men *and* brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.’” Here, we see that as the Jews left the house where Paul was imprisoned, there were strong opinions on both sides.

Acts 28:30-31 says, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” Here, we see that it was two entire years before Paul had his hearing before Caesar. During this time, Paul was free to receive all who came to him. He was also free to preach and teach about the kingdom of God.

We see that God had a greater purpose for Paul than just to share the Gospel with Caesar. Philippians 1:12-14 says, “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Roman soldiers from the Praetorian Guard were given the responsibility to guard Paul. These were the elite Roman soldiers who protected the Roman emperor. Since these men had to guard Paul while he shared the Gospel, these men also heard the Gospel as they guarded Paul. In addition, the courage of Paul provided an example that encouraged the other Christians to become bolder as they shared the Gospel.

Paul was able to preach the Gospel to all who came to visit him that were not Christians. He also had the opportunity to teach more about the Lord Jesus Christ to all of the Christians who visited him. This provided a great opportunity to teach and strengthen the leaders of the various congregations of the church in Rome. They were able to come and visit Paul at any time and there was no person who tried to forbid Paul from teaching all that came to him. Chapter sixteen of Romans shows us that Paul had worked with many Christians in other cities who eventually moved to Rome. This provided them the opportunity to continue to learn from Paul in Rome.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how God worked in the life of Paul to give him a great ministry in Rome during those two years. We also want to show them by our example that the Lord uses everything that happens in our lives to give us opportunities to share the Word of God with others. Then, they can see that the Lord will also use their lives and they will become bolder in the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to serve the Lord with boldness.