

Paul finally arrives in Rome as God promised and he wastes little time before he getting to work as a witness for Jesus Christ. As his habit was when arriving in a new city to preach the gospel, he witnesses to the Jews first, with mixed results. Over the next two years, Paul remains under house arrest but is free to teach and preach to those that come to see him in his rented house.

Verses 1-15: Paul and the others on the ship find themselves shipwrecked on the island of Melita (called Malta today). The natives of the island show great hospitality to their guests and take care of them for three months until the seasonal weather had improved to the point that sailing had become safe again. During that time, Paul healed many sick people and the local population showed their gratitude by providing for their needs. At the end of the three months they board an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

“And when we came to Rome” – After the long arduous journey described in chapter 27, “we” (Paul, Luke, Aristarchus, the centurion and his soldiers, and the prisoners in the centurion’s custody) finally arrive in Rome. God is keeping the promise that Paul would be able to be a witness for Christ in Rome.

“the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard” – Julius, the centurion, had been responsible for transporting a number of prisoners (including Paul) to Rome (Acts 27:1). He now turns over responsibility for these prisoners to the captain of the guard at Rome, with one exception.

“but Paul was suffered [allowed] to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him” – Julius likely had recognized that Paul was not a threat or a flight risk, so he may have used his influence to get permission for Paul to live under house arrest in his own rented dwelling (v. 30) with a single soldier to watch over him instead of being locked up in prison with other prisoners. We can only assume that Julius returned to Caesarea after his responsibilities for transporting the prisoners had been fulfilled.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

After three days of getting settled in his new dwelling in Rome and perhaps inquiring about the local Jews, Paul requests a meeting with the Jewish leaders in Rome. Possible reasons suggested by commentators include the possibility that he wanted to explain himself to the local Jews, that he wanted the opportunity to witness to the Jews first (as was his habit), and that he wanted to see what they had heard about him. Paul begins by informing them that he had committed no crimes against any individuals or the Jewish people as a whole, nor had he done anything to violate the “customs of our fathers” (Jewish laws and religious practices). Despite being innocent of the charges that were made against him at Jerusalem, he had been arrested by the Romans and had become their prisoner.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

“Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me” – The Roman authorities recognized that Paul had done nothing worthy of death and were inclined to release him.

“But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained [compelled] to appeal unto Caesar” – Paul saw that despite the fact that the Roman authorities had recognized his innocence and were willing to release him, the Jews had protested his release, making it necessary for him to appeal to Caesar in order to get justice.

“not that I had ought to accuse my nation of” – In spite of what he’s suffered throughout this ordeal, Paul still does not wish to make any accusations against the Jews. He loves them and wants to see them come to faith in Jesus Christ (**Rom. 10:1** “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved*”).

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

“For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*” – Paul’s love for his fellow Jews motivated him to call for these Jewish leaders to come to him. He wanted the opportunity to see and speak with them concerning Jesus Christ.

“because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” – Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the “hope” (expectation) for Israel that was prophesied about by the OT prophecies. God promised that Christ would come and establish His everlasting kingdom over Israel and the world and that He would bless His people. It was Paul’s belief in Jesus Christ as Israel’s Messiah and his desire to spread the news about Him that caused the Jews to accuse him and have him arrested.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

Some commentators allow for the possibility that these leaders were not being completely honest, but admit that most likely they were being truthful when saying that they had heard nothing about Paul’s innocence or guilt. It is surprising, however, that the Jews who desired that Paul be put to death had not sent letters or messengers to Rome in order to prejudice the Jews there against Paul. Even the Jews that had come to Rome from Jerusalem had said nothing against Paul. Perhaps God providentially prevented such news to reach Rome in order to give Paul the opportunity to witness for Jesus Christ. The result was that these Jewish leaders were relatively neutral toward Paul concerning his guilt or innocence and were willing to listen to what he had to say.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

Apparently at this point these Jews understand that Paul is a Christian and would like to know more about the Christian faith. The Greek word translated “thinkest” refers to Paul’s understanding of the Christian faith and his reasons for believing it. They seem to be open-minded and willing to hear for themselves about what being a Christian means before forming an opinion despite the fact that they had been hearing bad things about it.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of the prophets*, from morning till evening. 24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

“And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging” – Paul and the Jewish leaders agree upon a date for him to make his presentation. There must have been a significant amount of interest in what Paul had to say since many came to listen on the day that had been set.

“to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God,” – Paul was prepared for that day and he used the opportunity to talk about the kingdom of God and how that Jesus of Nazareth was fulfilling the prophesies of the Christ and His coming kingdom.

“persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” – Paul made the case for Jesus being the Christ, using both the law of Moses (which should satisfy the Sadducees, which believed that only the Pentateuch was inspired) and what had been written by the prophets. Paul spent the entire day providing OT evidences that Jesus was the Christ and answering the questions and objections of his listeners.

“And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not” – As with the previous times Paul had witnessed to Jews, some believed while others were not convinced. The unbelieving Jews apparently hardened their hearts against the truth, as Paul comments in the next verses.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

“And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed” – Those that did not believe could not agree with the ones that did. Paul saw that the unbelieving Jews were unwilling to believe and made a comment, after which the visitors left.

“after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers” – Paul acknowledged the truth being played out before him and the fact that it was reflected in what the LORD had inspired the prophet Isaiah to write about Israel centuries earlier. He quotes Isa. 6:9-10.

“Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive” – Receiving and comprehending the truth is more than merely exercising your auditory and visual senses (ears and eyes). The heart must be prepared to accept what the ears hear and the eyes see. Israel was hearing the word of God and yet was not accepting it.

“For the heart of this people is waxed gross [made stupid], and their ears are dull [hard] of hearing, and their eyes have they closed” – The people were hearing the truth but did not recognize it because their rebellious hearts were incapable of doing so. As a result, their ears had become “hard of hearing” and they had closed their eyes to the truth of what the LORD was doing.

“lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart” – The fact that these things had happened prevented them from responding properly to the truth by repenting.

“and should be converted [to turn in repentance], and I should heal [to make whole] them” – Had they understood the truth that they were hearing, they could have turned to the LORD in repentance and He would have made them whole from their sins.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

Paul’s final statement to the unbelieving Jews was that the salvation from God that they were rejecting was also being offered to the Gentiles. The irony is that God’s chosen people (the Jews) were rejecting it but the people who historically have not been God’s people (the Gentiles) will “hear” (receive) it. **John 1:11-12** “*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*”

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

No doubt Paul had given them much to think about. After Paul’s final statement, the Jews leave and begin discussing what they had heard among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

For the next two years Paul rented a house and entertained anyone who came to him to discuss matters concerning Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. Other than being under constant house arrest, Paul was afforded great liberty which allowed him to freely evangelize Rome from his house. Luke ends his documentation of Paul’s life here, but church tradition says that Paul was given his freedom for a short time before he was once again arrested and eventually beheaded for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.