

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 28:16-24 | Session 75 | Paul Arrives at Rome | A.D. 63

Verse 16—

The **centurion** (this must still be Julius, 27:1) **delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard** (Greek, *stratopedarches*: *stratopedon*, camp; *arches*, rule over). **Paul was suffered**, in this sense means he was *permitted*. Throughout the entire imprisonment in Caesarea (two years), and on the journey to Rome, Paul was given special liberty and freedom (Acts 24:23; 27:3). The Romans knew Paul was not going to try to escape. The (common) **soldier that kept him** was likely placed over Paul for his own protection since this entire ordeal of his arrest and imprisonment in Caesarea was due to the fact the Jews wanted to kill him (Acts 21:30-31; 23:15, 23-27; 25:1-3). Although Paul was still bound by a chain (see verse 20).

Verse 17,18, 19—

It took **three days** to determine how to **summon** (call) **the chief of the Jews together**. Not the “chief Jew,” but *plural, Greek, protos* the first, or the leading **Jews** in Rome. His message to them: **I have committed nothing against the people, or the customs of our father; I follow the Law of Moses!**

How is it that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, followed the Law? Our entire theme over the past seventy-four sessions has been The Gospel in Transition. When Paul was with the Jews, he became as a Jew (1 Corinthians 9:20), when he was with *them that are without the law*, he did not teach or follow the law. Was Paul double minded? No, the offer of the kingdom was still being put forward to the Jewish Nation all the while the individual Gospel of *salvation by grace through faith and not of yourselves...not of works* was being preached (Acts 13:38,39). In Acts 15:11, the apostle Peter (his last words spoken in Acts) makes the claim that one day **we** (the Jews) **shall be saved, even as they** (the Gentiles). Peter and the other apostles were aware there were two gospels being presented. Because of Paul’s adherence to Torah Law, even King Agrippa and Festus had determined **there was no cause of death in Paul** (Acts 26:31,32).

Paul relates how the Jews would not let him off the hook and **spoke against** him being set free. Therefore, he was **forced (constrained) to appeal to Caesar**. Paul never had a desire to **accuse his nation**. He loved the Jewish nation and the people. Paul wrote in Romans 9:3 regarding the eternal fate of his Jewish *brethren*; “*For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are the Israelites...*” And Paul also understood that it is God who repays, “*Avenger not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*” (Romans 12:19-20, verse 20 quoted from Proverbs 25:21,22).

Verse 20—

Paul desired to make an appeal to the Jews in Rome so he **called for** the Jews (Greek: *parakaleo*, called you to come alongside) to **speak with**, that is *directly to them*. Paul was not **bound with a chain** because the salvation message of *grace through faith and not of yourselves...not of works*. He was bound because of the **Hope of Israel**. That is, *the hope and resurrection of the dead* (Acts 23:6; 26:6-8).

Verse 21—

Paul may have been surprised when the Jews said, **we neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee...** These **brethren** would have been Jews (his kinsmen according to the flesh, Romans 9:3), not believers in Jesus by grace through faith.

Verse 22—

Unlike the Jews in Jerusalem who *gnashed their teeth, ...and stopped their ears* when Stephen tried to reason with them about the Messiah (Acts 7:54,57), these wanted to hear more **concerning this sect**. A **sect** is a group within a larger group with differing ideas. In this case the Jews in Rome have heard about the Jews who have believed in Jesus as the Messiah because **we know that everywhere it is** (that is, the sect) **spoken against**. This is a good indicator, as we have suspected all along our study in the book of Acts, that the early *church/assembly* was made up of Jews who believed in Jesus as Messiah, but were still following the Law of Moses. Also by this time there were non-Jewish believers who did not live under the Law and were gathered in *assemblies* that worshipped and served in a different way than the Jewish brethren (e.g., Ephesus, Colossae). The transition or overlap we have been recognizing throughout most of Acts is even more important to our understanding of how to interpret these Scriptures. Paul’s ministry has to be rightly divided (orthotomeo) *Kingdom | Grace*.

Verse 23—

One of the challenges we have in *rightly dividing* Paul’s message to the Jews, and his message to the individual is that we have always been taught that the book of Acts is the *history of the birth of the church*. We see ourselves in the book from the very first chapter. We have already seen Paul’s desire to see his nation accept the offer of the Kingdom of God which had a prerequisite; they must acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah (*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*, Luke 13:35). As Paul met with his Jewish kinsmen, we don’t see him sharing anything about the mystery given to him by Christ (Ephesians 3:6) i.e., that the Jews and Gentiles would be in one body by grace through faith not of the Law. These Jews in Rome would first have to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. Therefore, Paul **expounds and testifies the kingdom of God...both out of the law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening**.

Verse 24—

Some believed, and some believed not. We saw this same response when Paul was in Athens in chapter 17:32-34, *Some mocked Paul’s message, some wanted to hear more...and some believed*. This is a universal response when a new way of thinking is presented, not only a spiritual message. People are skeptical to new ideas, and are stuck in their ways. When we share the Gospel of *salvation by grace through faith and not of ourselves*, we will get this same response and we shouldn’t be discouraged by it. Our mission is to share the Gospel, it is the Holy Spirit’s role to change a life.