

Helping Our Children Develop a Vision for the World Part 3

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 22**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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The Church Spreads in Asia

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the Word of God accurately so that they can help others come to Christ and then grow in their spiritual understanding. We saw that Aquila and Priscilla helped Apollos and other brethren in Ephesus learn about Christ and put their trust in Him. Then they helped them grow in their understanding. In our topic today, we will see that Paul returned to Ephesus and that he met certain disciples who knew only about the teaching of John the Baptist. They had heard nothing about the death and resurrection of Christ.

Acts 19:1-4 says, "And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." Apollos had been taught by Aquila and Priscilla and had then traveled from Ephesus to the city of Corinth. Some time after Apollos left, we see that Paul returned to Ephesus.

When Paul came to Ephesus we read that he found some disciples. The word translated "disciple" means a learner or a follower. In John 1:35-36 we read, "Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Here we see that John and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist because they were learning from John and following his teachings. Once they met Christ they began to follow Christ instead. John the Baptist also had other disciples who had learned from him and followed his teachings. Here we see that that these men in Ephesus were followers of John the Baptist and they knew that he was preparing the way for Christ. However, they had learned nothing about the coming of Christ, His teachings, His death or His resurrection. As a result, they were still disciples of John the Baptist and were actually Old Testament saints.

Paul asked these saints if they had received the Holy Spirit. This question gave Paul the opportunity to understand quickly how much they knew about Christ. They said that they had not even heard if there was a Holy Spirit. Then Paul asked them into what they had been baptized. They said that they had been baptized by John the Baptist. Paul immediately knew that they had never heard the death and resurrection of Christ explained to them. However, Paul began with what they understood in order to teach them further. He reminded them that John had said that his baptism was a baptism of repentance. John had told people to believe on the One that would come after him. John had taught that Christ Jesus was the One who would come after him. This then gave Paul the opportunity to tell them about the life, death and resurrection of Christ so that they could understand how Christ had paid the penalty for sin.

Acts 19:5-7 says, "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all." John the Baptist had said that he was preparing the way for Christ. Now these men had heard how Jesus had paid the penalty for sin and that the Father had showed that He was satisfied with that payment by raising Christ from the dead. Once these men understood that Jesus was the Christ that John had promised, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Here we see that they immediately wanted to be identified with Jesus, the One about whom John the Baptist had preached.

Then we see that Paul laid hands on them and they became the last group in the book of Acts to receive the Holy Spirit as a group. In Acts 2 we see that the 120 Jews gathered in the upper room received the Holy Spirit as a group. Then in Acts 8 we saw that the Samaritans who were part Jewish and part Gentile received the Holy Spirit as a group. In Acts 10 the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit as a group. Now here in Acts 19 we see that the followers of John the Baptist (Old Testament saints) were the last group that received the Holy Spirit as a group.

When these men received the Holy Spirit as a group we read that they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 1 Corinthians 1:22 says, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom.” We see that the Jews required a sign. In fact, John 20:30-31 says, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” Christ did certain signs for the Jews to prove that He is the Son of God. God used tongues (known languages) as a sign to the Jews in the book of Acts that the Gospel is for all people. Each time a new group of people received the Holy Spirit as a group, we see that there were apostles present to verify what had happened. Here we see that this is the last group that was provided a sign to show that the Gospel is for all people. This group of Old Testament saints was the final group that received the Holy Spirit as a group and was about twelve men.

Acts 19:8-10 says, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Aquila and Priscilla had led a group of people to Christ in Ephesus and now Paul had returned to begin his public ministry in that city.

The Jews in the synagogue had earlier asked Paul to return and teach him more about Christ. As a result, the first place that Paul began his public ministry in Ephesus was the Jewish synagogue. Paul later asked the Ephesians to pray that he would speak with boldness when he said in Ephesians 6:19-20, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul could speak with boldness because others were already praying that prayer for him.

We see that Paul was reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. The word translated “reasoning” means to discuss, to compare different thoughts or to talk together. The word translated “persuading” means to persuade to believe, place confidence in or to trust. The Lord caused the people to really talk and think about the things that Paul was explaining before they either accepted or rejected the message about the death and resurrection of Christ. However, during that three month period some had their hearts become hardened and they chose to reject the message of the Gospel. Then they began to speak evil of the Way to the rest of the people in the synagogue.

Instead of trying to argue with those who rejected and were speaking evil about the Way, Paul chose to move out of the synagogue and separate the disciples from those who rejected. The schools in that day took a break during the hottest part of the day and so Paul was able to obtain the use of the school of Tyrannus during those hours. There he continued to reason daily with those who had believed. Paul explained how he trained the disciples the rest of the day in Acts 20:20-21 where we read, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks,

repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Putting these verses together we see that Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus during the heat of the day and answered the questions of the disciples. Then he trained them and showed them how to do effective ministry as he took them with him to the homes of people in Ephesus.

We see that Paul combined this ministry of teaching and training in Ephesus for a period of two years. In Colossians 2:1 we read, “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” Those who were taught in the school of Tyrannus and trained and shown how to minister effectively in the homes of people in Ephesus were then able to take what they learned and go back to share what they learned with the people of their home areas. The cities of Colosse and Laodicea were located about 100 miles from the city of Ephesus. Colossians 4:12-13 says, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.” Here we see that Epaphras took what he learned and was shown and shared that message in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

We see the results of Paul teaching and training many different people in Ephesus. These people took what they had learned back to their home town and the surrounding area. That is what made it possible for the Gospel to spread throughout the entire province of Asia while Paul was teaching and training in Ephesus. Paul developed godly reproducing Christians because he taught them the Word of God, he showed them by his own example how to develop godly character, and then he showed them how to develop ministry skills as he showed them how to minister in the homes of people. Here we see a key example of how we teach and train our physical and spiritual children. As we follow this pattern, our children will learn to serve the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you do these same things to help your children become godly reproducing Christians.

The Lord Deals With False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children become godly reproducing Christians. We see that Paul did three things to help those who became Christians in Ephesus to become reproducing Christians. He taught them the Word of God and discussed their questions during the hottest part of the day in the school of Tyrannus. Then Paul took those that he had taught with him and showed them how to minister to people in their homes throughout the city of Ephesus. Paul showed them by his own example how to develop godly character. At the same time he showed them how to develop ministry skills as he took them from house to house

God chose to do unusual miracles by Paul while he was in Ephesus. Acts 19:11-12 says, "Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them." Here we see that people were cured of diseases when Paul laid his hands on people. However, God also chose to heal people of these diseases in a very unusual way. God chose to use handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had touched and had been taken by others to people with diseases to heal those diseases and to cause the evil spirits (demons) to leave those who were demon possessed.

Acts 5:12 says, "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch." God verified the message of the apostles about the resurrection of Christ through signs and wonders. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" The apostles had been able to do many signs and wonders in the city of Jerusalem.

Peter was the leader of the apostles to the Jews and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Acts 5:14-15 says, "And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them." In Acts 5 that God chose to do unusual miracles among the Jews through Peter. Here in Acts 19 we see that God chose to do unusual miracles among the Gentiles through Paul. God chose to do these unusual miracles among both the Jews and the Gentiles by apostles to prove that the Gospel was for all people.

However, at the same time God also chose to expose those who were false teachers. Acts 19:13-16 says, "Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, 'We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.' Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?' Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Here we see that certain Jews traveled from place to place and claimed that they could cast out evil spirits or demons.

There were seven sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva who said that they had this power to cast out demons. As a result, we see what happened when they went to cast a demon out of a man that was actually demon possessed. Since these men were false teachers, Jesus was not going to

give them the opportunity to use His name for their own purposes. When the seven men commanded the demon to come out of the man in the name of Jesus that Paul preaches, the evil spirit answered them through the mouth of the man that was possessed by the evil spirit. The evil spirit told them, “Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you.” As a result, the evil spirit made it clear that these men were not followers of Christ.

In fact, the evil spirit gave the man in whom the demon was living great power. Then the demon possessed man leaped on these seven brothers. As a result, one man overpowered the seven brothers. Here we see that demons do have great power. That is why it is important for true Christians to remember that 1 John 4:4 promises, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Because we have the Holy Spirit in our lives we do not need to fear those who are demon possessed. Since these seven men were false teachers the demon possessed man had power over them. In fact, he was able to fight against all seven and defeat all of them. He tore their clothes from them and injured them. They quickly ran from the house naked and wounded because of what the demon possessed man was able to do to them. God chose to make it very clear to all that these men were false teachers.

This event had a great impact on many people in the city of Ephesus. Acts 19:17-20 says, “This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.” The news of the thing that had happened to these seven brothers quickly spread among the people of Ephesus. Both the Jews and the Greeks quickly began talking about this event that had happened to the seven men.

However, the people did more than just talk about what happened to the seven men. God caused fear to fall on all of the people. The word translated “fear” means fear, dread or terror. This word is used in Hebrews 2:14-15 where we read, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Hebrews points out that people are held in slavery by their fear of death. Here in Acts the people were filled with fear as they saw what the demon possessed man did to the seven sons of Sceva. In 1 John 4:18-19 we see that the love of Christ is what defeats such fear. Those verses say, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” This fear caused the name of the Lord to be magnified in the city of Ephesus.

We see that this event also had a great impact on many of the new Christians in that city. This caused many that believed to come and confess their deeds. James 5:16 says, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Suddenly the new believers realized the need to get rid of secret sins that were present in their lives. They came and confessed those sins and prayed for one another. As a result, this one event caused many Christians to really examine their own lives and led to a real desire to live godly lives that would not be hindered by secret sins.

In the city of Ephesus there were many that had practiced magic. As people had become Christians they had kept the books that told how to perform secret magical spells. The seven sons of Sceva were trying to practice such magic when the man overcame them and they fled wounded and naked. Suddenly the Christians realized that the spells in such books were

actually a part of demonic activity. This caused the Christians that had such books to realize that they needed to get rid of these books. As a result, many people that had such books brought them to a public place and burned them. They wanted to make sure that they were not tempted to use the books again.

Before burning these books, the people totaled up the value of the books that were going to be burned. They found that the total value of the books was 50,000 pieces of silver. A piece of silver was a day's wage for a worker. As a result, we can see that the practice of witchcraft through the practice of casting magic spells was a very common practice in the city of Ephesus. People had spent large amounts of money to buy these books. Now they realized that such activity depended on demons and they did not want the magical books any longer.

Here we see that the people wanted to separate themselves from the sinful practices that accompanied demonic activity. We see the results of this choice. We see that the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The power of the Word of God caused the people to examine their hearts. The people wanted the Lord to transform their lives so that they could enjoy the liberty that we have in Christ. Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." The new Christians realized that they did not want to be burdened with a yoke of slavery.

We also want to encourage our physical and spiritual children to ask the Lord to guide them and show them the things in their lives that they need to ask the Lord to give them the strength to change. When it is the Lord that is changing them their lives will be truly transformed from within. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be guided by the Lord.

Businessmen Stir Up Opposition Against the Gospel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to examine their lives and confess any secret sins that they have not confessed to the Lord. That way they can enjoy the liberty that Christ wants each Christian to experience. We also saw that the Lord is able to give them the strength to change. Today, we are going to see that the power of the Gospel to change and transform lives may cause businessmen who make their living through businesses that provide services to those who reject Christ will become angry when those people are transformed by Christ because it will cause them to lose part of the income from their businesses.

Acts 19:21-22 says, “When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.” Paul had seen how the Gospel had changed and transformed many people in the city of Ephesus. As a result, Paul realized that it would soon be time for him to leave Ephesus. His plan was to go and revisit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia and to take the offerings that the saints in those regions had collected to help the needy saints in the city of Jerusalem. Then Paul wanted to go to the city of Rome.

Paul sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia. These men were part of the team that was ministering in Ephesus with Paul. They were sent ahead to Macedonia to give the churches in Macedonia a little time to prepare their offerings for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Paul had earlier sent Titus to Corinth to encourage the Christians in that city to prepare their offering that they had promised to send for the needy Christians in Jerusalem. Since these men had been sent to Macedonia and Achaia, Paul stayed in Ephesus for a time to complete his ministry in that city.

We read what happened in Ephesus during that time. Acts 19:23-25 says, “And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.” The early Christians were sometimes called the people of the Way. In an earlier verse in this chapter Acts 19:9 says, “But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.” The Christians were called the people of the Way because Christ said in John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Here we see that some in the city were getting very upset about the transformation that was happening in the lives of the Christians.

Ephesus was the center of the worship of the Greek god named Diana (Artemis). In fact, the city of Ephesus had built a great temple for the idol of Diana which was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Each year the city held a great festival to honor their idol and people came from throughout the Roman Empire to worship the idol during this spring festival. A major business in this city was making silver images of Diana to sell to these people that came to worship this idol.

The power of the Gospel to change and transform lives caused Demetrius and the other silversmiths in the city to become very angry. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 says, “For they

themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” As people in Ephesus were becoming Christians, they were doing exactly what these verses say. They were turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God. That was why the silversmiths were so angry because it meant that they could no longer sell their silver images of Diana to those who became Christians.

The making of these silver idols provided a large income to the silversmiths and they did not want to lose that money. As a result, Demetrius called together all of the silversmiths. He reminded them that the thing that had made it possible for them to become prosperous and gain their wealth was the sale of these silver idols. If people stopped worshiping Diana they would not want a silver image of Diana sitting in their houses and so that was going to hurt the business of these men.

Acts 19:26-27 says, “Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.” Here we see that Demetrius decided to make a personal attack on the things that Paul was teaching in order to stir up the anger of the other silversmiths.

Demetrius wanted to get the silversmiths so angry that they would join him in a riot to try and destroy Paul. He reminded them that Paul had already turned away many people from the worship of Diana by his teaching. This teaching was affecting more than just the people in Ephesus. In fact, people throughout the whole Roman province of Asia were turning away from the worship of Diana. As a result, Demetrius reminded the men of three things that he knew would stir up their anger.

First, he reminded them that their trade of making silver images of Diana was in danger of falling into disrepute. The word translated “disrepute” means to become worthless. He had already reminded the men that they had gained their wealth from the sale of the silver images of Diana. Here Demetrius told them that those images would become worthless and no one would buy them if people continued listening to the teaching of Paul. Then these men would lose both their wealth and their jobs.

Second, Demetrius said that the temple of Diana would be despised and the magnificence of that temple would be destroyed. Here we see that Demetrius appealed to the religious beliefs of the silversmiths by telling them that the religion that had provided their wealth would be destroyed. Their temple which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world would be treated like it no longer had any value. The word translated “magnificence” meant the splendor or glory of their temple. In Luke 9:43 we read, “And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples.” Then 2 Peter 1:16 says, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” In both of these verses the word is used to speak of the majesty of God. Demetrius tried to compare the temple of Diana to the majesty of God.

Third, Demetrius used the glory of their city as a way to stir up the silversmiths. The reason why Ephesus was such a great city was due to the fact that the temple of Diana was located in that city. People came from all over Asia and even from other parts of the Roman Empire to their city to see the temple and participate in the festival to Diana. These people would stop

coming to their city and the city would lose its glory and power. Here we see that Demetrius appealed to the civic pride of the silversmiths.

Acts 19:28-29 tells us how the silversmiths reacted. Those verses say, "Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions." Here we see that Demetrius accomplished his purpose as the men who were silversmiths were filled with wrath. The word translated "wrath" means anger that boils up. In Luke 4:28-29 we read, "So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff." Here we see that the people in the synagogue of Nazareth became so angry that they tried to throw Christ off a cliff because He said that He fulfilled the scripture that He had just read. These men became so angry that they were ready to kill Paul to stop his preaching.

The silversmiths immediately began to shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Soon they had the whole city filled with confusion. They were doing whatever they could to stir up a riot. They immediately rushed into the theater which was the place where public meetings were held. Since they could not find Paul, they seized Gaius and Aristarchus. These two men were both from Macedonia which is Northern Greece. Since Ephesus was in the province of Asia (Western Turkey today) these two men were considered foreigners by the people of Ephesus. We will see in our next topic more that happened that day. However, we see that the businessmen who made silver images of the idol were the men who started the opposition against Paul in the city of Ephesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that business people who make money from false teaching or from various kinds of sin will not be happy when the Gospel begins to transform the lives of people. Such people may do anything to try to protect their riches that they make from false worship or sin. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children for opposition from those who reject Christ.

The Businessmen Are Told to Follow the Law

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to expect opposition from people who use false teaching or other sin to make money. Such individuals do not like anything that will hinder them from getting richer. As a result, they will certainly oppose the Gospel when they see that it begins to change and transform the lives of those who are placing their faith in Christ. We saw that the silversmiths had seized Gaius and Aristarchus when they could not find Paul. Today, we will learn more about the opposition that Paul and the other Christians faced in Ephesus.

In Acts 19:30-32 we read, “And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.” Here we see that Paul wanted to go out and speak to the people of Ephesus who had stirred up the uproar against the Christians. However, the other Christians pleaded with Paul not to go into the theater because they were afraid that he would be immediately killed.

The word translated “officials” is the word that meant the president of Asia. A man from among the most prominent people in the city would be given this title and he would preside over the games that were held in the city that year. Then he would continue to have that title for life. Those men who had been given this title were the men who promoted the interests of the Roman government among the people. Here we see that some of the men who had been given this title had a great respect for Paul and they pleaded with Paul not to go into the theater. The fact that these men had become friends of Paul showed that they did not feel that Paul had committed any crime or that his teachings were false. As a result, Paul did not enter the theater.

Meanwhile the people in the theater were crying various things. This resulted in great confusion among the people that had gathered because most of the people that had come together did not even know why they had gathered. The word translated “confusion” means to disturb the mind or to stir up tumult. Acts 21:27 says, “Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him.” In this verse, the word is translated stirred up. Just four verses later Acts 21:31 says, “Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.” Here the word is translated was in an uproar. In the same way, the city of Ephesus was in an uproar and would have been quick to kill Paul if he had entered the theater. The interesting thing that we see is that most of the people did not even realize why they had come together.

Acts 19:33-34 says, “And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”” Here we see that a man by the name of Alexander was selected by the Jews to speak for them. The book of Acts does not say whether Alexander was a Christian or not. It is possible that the non-Christian Jews were fearful that the mob would attack them and they did not want to be associated with Paul. In contrast, it is possible that he was a Jewish Christian and was chosen to speak to protect the Christians from the mob.

Alexander held up his hand to get the attention of the crowd. If he was not a Christian, he probably wanted to inform the Ephesians that the Jews also rejected Christ in order to protect

himself and the other Jews that were not Christians. If he was a Christian, he probably wanted to share that no one was being forced to become a Christian but that each person had a choice. Whether he was a Christian or not, when the Ephesians recognized that he was a Jew, they began to shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" They continued to shout this statement over and over for a period of two hours.

Finally after two hours the city clerk spoke to the people. The first words of the clerk are recorded in Acts 19:35-37 which say, And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess." The clerk assured the people of Ephesus that their city was the guardian of the temple of Diana. The clerk (mayor of the city) then reminded the people of their tradition of how they had received the goddess Diana. They believed that Diana had fallen from the sky. This probably explains why meteorites were incorporated into the worship of Diana.

After saying these words to soothe the angry mob, the clerk went on to tell the people that day that they should be quiet and do nothing rashly. The clerk gave the people two reasons why their actions that day were out of order. First, the Christians had never robbed the temples of any of the idols that were worshipped in Ephesus. Second, the Christians had never blasphemed Diana. Here we see an important lesson about effective witness to those who are not Christians. The word translated "blasphemed" means to speak evil of. Instead of spending their time speaking evil of lifeless idols, the Christians spent their time teaching about the true and living God.

The Christians spent their time teaching about the death and resurrection of Christ. As a result of spending their time talking about Christ, Acts 19:10 says, "And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." The concern of Paul, the rest of the team with him and of those who became Christians was to make certain that everyone heard about Christ and not to fight against lifeless idols. In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul wrote, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." We need to remember that the message of Christ is our message. We need to know what we stand for and how to explain what we stand for much more than we need to know what we stand against.

Acts 19:38-41 says, "Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering. And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly." The city clerk then told the mob the proper way to bring their complaints rather than try to use the power of a mob to carry out their own opinions.

The clerk said that if Demetrius and the other silversmiths had a case against anyone that there was a court system to deal with any violations of the law. Later Paul would write to the Christians in Rome in Romans 13:3-4, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." God has established governments to control evil. Those who do evil will be judged. In most cases those who do what is good and right do not have to fear governments because they are established to maintain order in the various countries of the world. Here we

see that the city clerk became a protector of the Christians whether he knew what they taught or not.

In fact, the city clerk made it clear that Demetrius and the other silversmiths were actually violating the law by starting a riot. He said that any violation of the law that they saw must be decided before a lawful assembly. In saying that the clerk made it clear that the gathering of the crowd to riot and their actions definitely was not considered a lawful assembly. He said that the use of proper judicial procedure was necessary in order to settle any dispute. The word translated “determined” means to settle or to decide. This meant that the silversmiths were forced to use the judicial system rather than to try and show their opposition by starting a riot.

The city clerk also warned that the city was in danger of being called into question by the Roman government because of the riot that had been started by the silversmiths. He said that the city leaders would not have any reason that they could give to the Roman officials for the disorderly way that the people had acted that day. The clerk knew that this riot could produce serious consequences for the city of Ephesus if it was reported to the government in Rome. The silversmiths were given a similar warning to Romans 13:4 which says, “For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” The clerk was actually protecting the silversmiths from the Romans by encouraging them to follow the law.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of being in submission to the governments that God has allowed in each country. Those governments may be evil but God will still use them to maintain civil authority in a country. The maintenance of order in a country will usually help Christians to be able to share the message of the Gospel more easily. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children why it is important to submit to and even respect evil governments.

Paul Spent Time in Troas

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why God has allowed governments, both good and evil, to be established in the various countries of the world. Those governments are there to make sure that civil order and justice are carried out in that country. That does not mean that such governments may not be evil. Instead, we see that God can work even through evil governments to maintain civil order. Today, we will see what happened as Paul began a trip to return to the city of Jerusalem.

In Acts 20:1-3 we read, “After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.” Because of the riot in the city of Ephesus Paul along with all of the Christians knew that it was necessary for Paul to leave Ephesus. As a result, Paul called the disciples to himself and embraced them. Then he traveled from Ephesus and went to Macedonia.

We see that Paul then traveled throughout the region of Macedonia and encouraged the Christians in the various cities of Macedonia. We see that in each place where Paul went that he encouraged the Christians with many words. Throughout his ministry Paul realized that one of his key ministries when he returned to visit Christians was to encourage them. Acts 14:21-22 says, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” Paul knew that Christians needed encouragement.

Once Paul had traveled throughout Macedonia, he came to Greece. We see that Paul then spent three months in Greece encouraging the Christians there. It was during this time that Paul was in Macedonia and Greece (Achaia) that he was receiving the offering that the Christians in these areas had collected for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Romans 15:25-26 says, “But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.” Then 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 says, “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” These saints considered it a privilege to give to needy Christians in other areas. Paul was ready to sail for Syria and Jerusalem when the Jews plotted against him and so he returned through Macedonia instead.

Acts 20:4-6 says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.” Here we see seven of the men that were traveling with Paul on that trip. These men went ahead and waited for Paul in Troas. This group does not include any others who traveled with Paul when he made a short stop at Philippi. Since Luke wrote the book of Acts we see that Luke rejoined Paul in the stop at Philippi. These verses remind us that Paul followed the example of Christ and developed additional leaders by taking other men with him

as he ministered.

After Paul and Luke rejoined the other seven men on the team at Troas, we see that they stayed in that city for seven days. When Sunday (the first day of the week) came, we see that the team joined the other disciples in the city of Troas to break bread. Acts 20:7-9 says, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead." Here we see that it was on the first day of the week that the disciples gathered to break bread (have a meal and communion service together). The fact that they gathered on the first day of the week was to remember the resurrection of our Lord.

Paul and the team were planning to leave Troas the next day. Paul was asked to speak to the disciples gathered together that night because they realized this might be the last time that they would see him and they wanted to hear him speak once more. We see that Paul had a rather lengthy message that evening. In fact, we are told that Paul was still speaking at midnight. Homes around the Mediterranean Sea were often built with flat roofs. Often such homes would have one room additional room built on the roof. This upper room was often used as a place to pray, to eat or just to gather together because they would be able to enjoy the breeze because this room was higher than the rest of the house.

This was apparently a fairly large upper room because there were many lamps around the room to give light. Some homes had large upper rooms because Acts 1:13-15 says, "And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said." Here we see that this upper room was able to hold a total of 120 people. Most of the people were probably sitting on the floor but some of them sat in the windows. One young man sitting in a window was named Eutychus. Since Paul spoke until midnight, this young man fell into a deep sleep. As a result, he fell out of the window which was actually the third story of the home in which it was located. When the people reached the ground where his body landed, they lifted up the body and found that he was dead from the fall.

Acts 20:10-12 says, "But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted." Paul also went down to where the body of the young man was. He then embraced the body. After embracing the body, Paul told the people not to be troubled. The word translated "trouble" means to make an uproar or to weep loudly. Mark 5:39-40 says, "When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying." In Mark Christ raised the child back to life. Here Paul restored the life of this young man and told the people not to make a commotion or to weep.

Then the people all went back to the upper room. There they broke bread and remembered the death and resurrection of Christ together. However, since this was the last night that Paul would be with the disciples at Troas, we see that their time was not finished when they

completed their meal and remembered the death and resurrection of Christ. The Christians in Troas realized that this was an opportunity for Paul to answer their questions and so they continued to talk. The word translated “talked” means to spend time with people and talk together. This word is used twice in Luke 24:14-15 where we read, “And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.” In verse 14 the word is translated talked and in verse 15 it is translated conversed. These were the two men on the road to Emmaus and Christ joined them and talked together with them as they walked.

The disciples in Troas talked together with Paul because they realized that this might be the last opportunity that they would have to ask Paul their questions. Answering the questions of Christians should be one of our key ministries because that is something that helps equip people to explain the Word of God to others. Luke 24:45 says, “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Paul wanted to make certain that these Christians in Troas got their questions answered so that their understanding was opened also. As a result, Paul and the people in Troas talked until daybreak before he and the team left Troas.

Here we see a key a way that we want to help our physical and spiritual children. We also want to take the time to talk together with them and help them get their questions answered because that is what makes it possible for them to clearly explain the Word of God to others. That is one of the ways that we help our children to become reproducing Christians. That is how they learn to answer the questions of others in the future and help others understand the Word of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you answer questions and help your children become reproducing Christians.

Paul Summarized His Ministry to the Elders of Ephesus

In our last topic, we saw that we want to talk and discuss questions with our physical and spiritual children so that they learn how to answer the questions of others. Paul spent the entire night answering the questions of the Christians in Troas before leaving to begin the trip to Jerusalem. Paul gave us another example of the importance of talking together and discussing questions in the verses that we will be discussing today. In this topic we will see the beginning of the discussion that Paul had with the elders from Ephesus before Paul left them to go to Jerusalem. We will finish the discussion in the next topic

In Acts 20:13-16 we read, “Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.”

There were probably still other questions that the Christians in Troas wanted to ask Paul. The ship had to travel around a peninsula to get to the next town where it would stop. Since it was only about a 20 mile walk by land, Paul decided that he would walk to Assos instead of taking the longer boat ride. This made it possible for Christians from Troas to walk with him and continue their discussion that had lasted all night. The ship arrived in Assos and Paul met the ship. There he boarded the ship and the ship stopped at Mitylene, Chios, and Samos, cities on islands along the coast of western Asia. The ship also passed by Trogyllium which was a city on the western coast of Asia between Samos and Miletus. Paul had chosen a ship that did not stop at Ephesus because he wanted to reach Jerusalem in time for the Day of Pentecost. The ship stopped at Miletus instead.

In Acts 20:17-21 we read, “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Miletus was about 30 miles south of Ephesus. The ship was going to be in Miletus for a few days. As a result, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus and asked the elders of the church in Ephesus to come to Miletus so that he could talk to them one last time.

We see that Paul gave a summary of his ministry in Ephesus as he talked to the elders. First, Paul told how he had served the Lord in Ephesus. He had served the Lord with all humility. Paul later wrote to the church at Philippi and explained what it meant to serve with all humility. The word translated “humility” means to have a humble opinion of self. The Greek language did not even have such a word in its vocabulary so this was probably a word created by the Christians.

As a result, Paul explained the meaning of this word in Philippians 2:3 which says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” In this verse, the word is translated lowliness of mind. Then Paul pointed out the fact that Christ had given them the example of what this means in Philippians 2:5-8

which says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” True humility is willingly taking the form of a bondservant to serve the Lord.

Here in Acts 20:19 Paul reminded the elders from Ephesus that when he had lived among them that he had served the Lord with all humility. He did this even though it meant that he experienced many tears and trials as a result of the plotting of the Jews. Christ described bondservant leadership when he told the Twelve in Mark 10:44-45, “And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Bondservant leadership means becoming a slave to all by serving the Lord and everyone that He brings across our path. This is the kind of leadership that Christ calls us to exercise.

Paul explained how he modeled bondservant leadership to the elders in the next two verses. First, he taught them all that was helpful. Acts 20:27 says, “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” Here we see that all that is helpful includes the whole counsel of God. We saw in Acts 19:8-10 that Paul explained these things publicly (the whole counsel of God) in the school of Tyrannus during the hot part of the day. Second, Paul modeled what he taught as he took the elders with him as he went from house to house throughout the rest of the day. This gave him the opportunity to model Godly character. It also gave him the opportunity to model ministry skills.

We see that Paul showed them how to share the same message both with the Jews and with the Greeks. That message was repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance toward God is defined in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 where we read, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” People either believe God or they believe Satan and the things that Satan develops for them to serve.

The best illustration of the need for repentance is shown with the first couple in the Bible. God told Adam in Genesis 2:17 that he could eat the fruit of every tree except the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God said that Adam would die the day that he ate of that fruit. In Genesis 3:4 Satan told Eve, “You shall not surely die.” Instead of believing God, Adam and Eve believed Satan. Repentance is turning from the sin of unbelief and turning to God. Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is best defined by 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 which says, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.” We accept this payment for our sins by the faith that God has given to us so that we can believe this message (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Paul went on to tell the elders in Acts 20:22-27, “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” We see, in these verses, that Paul explained what it means to be a bondservant of Jesus Christ.

When we have the attitude of a bondservant, we look beyond the chains or the suffering and even death that might come in our lives. Instead, we look to the glory that will be found when we finish the race. Paul was prepared to experience being imprisoned in chains and suffering other forms of tribulation if that was what the Lord had for him. In fact, he was willing to sacrifice his life if necessary for Christ. His primary concern was to finish the race that the Lord had for him with joy. A few years later as Paul came to the final days of his life he said in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Here we see that Paul could say that he had finished with joy the race that the Lord had for him.

Paul realized that he would probably not see the elders from the city of Ephesus again. He fully understood that he might be put to death for his faith. However, he was able to testify to them that he was innocent of the blood of all men. Ezekiel 33:8-9 says, "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul." Paul knew that he had been faithful to warn the wicked to turn from their evil and come to the Father through Christ.

Paul could also say that he had shared the whole counsel of God. The word translated "counsel" means purpose or counsel. In Acts 22:14-15 Paul said, "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.'" Paul had been a faithful witness of all that he had seen and heard. In Ephesus Paul had taught the elders all that the Lord had taught him so that they now knew what to teach to others. In the same way, we want to teach our physical and spiritual children the whole purpose of God so that they can teach others also. In this way we will help them become equipped for the ministry that the Lord has for each one of them in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you faithfully explain to your children the whole counsel of God.

Paul Gave a Warning to the Elders of Ephesus

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the whole counsel of God so that they will be equipped to serve the Lord in any way that He has for them. We saw that Paul had reminded the elders of the church of Ephesus that he had equipped them to share with others the things that Paul had taught and shown them. He had done this by teaching them the Word and then showing them how to share the Word of God with others in their homes. We want to do the same with our children.

As Paul concluded his time with the elders of the church at Ephesus he warned them of two different kinds of false teachers that they would face in the future. The first kind of false teacher is mentioned in Acts 20:28-29 where we read, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” Before warning about the false teachers, Paul reminded the elders of their responsibility as leaders of the church at Ephesus.

The word translated “take heed” means to give attention to or to examine. First, the elders were to examine their own lives. Paul used this word in 1 Timothy 4:13 when he told Timothy, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” Here we see that Timothy was to give attention to reading, exhortation and doctrine. Then 1 Timothy 4:16 adds, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” Timothy was to pay attention both to his personal life and to his teaching. Paul told the elders to do the same.

Second, the elders were to pay attention to the flock (the Christians) for whom the Holy Spirit had given them the oversight. The word translated “overseers” is everywhere else translated bishop. Here we see that the elders as a group were the bishops or overseers of the Christians in the church in Ephesus. Peter told the elders in 1 Peter 5:2-4, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Those who are overseers are to do it willingly, they are not to do it for self gain and they are to lead by example.

Paul told the elders to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. That is why Paul told the elders here that they were to protect the Christians from false teachers. Paul described false teachers as savage wolves. The words translated “savage wolves” mean cruel or greedy men who destroy others. Here we see that false teachers are those who try to come into the flock from the outside.

Second Paul warned them about a second kind of false teacher or self seeking leader in Acts 20:30-31 where we read, “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Here we see that false teachers and self seeking leaders will also arise from within the church. The word translated “perverse things” means to turn aside from the right path or to pervert or corrupt. It spoke of those who would twist the truth of the Word of God to reach their own goals.

The goal of these self seeking leaders is to draw away the disciples after themselves. In 1

Timothy 6:3-5 we read, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” Instead of teaching the Word of God, these verses show that such individuals teach their own opinions. Their goal is self gain.

As a result of the danger of false teachers from outside the church or of self seeking leaders within the church, Paul told the elders to watch and be alert for such individuals. The word translated “watch” means to be vigilant and to keep alert. Here we see that church leaders are to be constantly alert for those who seek to lead weaker Christians astray. Paul had spent his entire three years in Ephesus warning the Christians about the dangers of being deceived and led astray. The elders were to have that same concern.

Paul concluded his words to the elders from Ephesus by saying in Acts 20:32-35, “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" The word translated “commend” means to entrust or to commit to one’s charge. Here we see that Paul now expected the Lord and the Word of God to work through the elders of the church at Ephesus to protect the Christians in that city.

Paul said that the Lord and the Word of God would continue to build them up in their spiritual lives. The word translated “to build up” means to continue to produce continuing spiritual growth. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” As we continue to walk in Christ, He also causes us to be rooted and built up in Him so that we are established and strengthened in the faith. Paul also reminded the elders in Ephesus that they could look forward to the eternal inheritance that they would receive.

Then Paul reminded the elders of the example that he had provided for them throughout the three years that he was in the city of Ephesus. Paul said that he had not coveted the silver, the gold or the clothing of any person. That is a great contrast from false teachers and the self seeking leaders about whom Paul had warned. As we saw in 1 Timothy 6:5 that was quoted above, self seeking leaders think that godliness is a means of gain. That is why Paul went on to warn in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here we see that a love of money will cause people to stray from the true faith because of their greediness and then destroy themselves with many sorrows.

Instead of coveting the silver or gold of others, Paul had worked to provide for his own needs. Acts 18:3 describes another place where Paul said that he worked to meet his own needs as that verse says, “So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” Later Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:18, “What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.” In this verse in 1 Corinthians, we see that Paul chose to work so that no one could say that he abused his authority in the Gospel. Here in Acts

we see that in addition to providing for his own needs, Paul also provided for the needs of those who were with him.

Paul had shown the elders in Ephesus by his own example that it is a privilege for Christians to work to supply their own needs as well as to be able to support the weak. The word translated “weak” means those without strength, the poor, those with physical infirmities or those who are powerless. The word translated “support” means to provide help of various kinds to those who are in need. Paul also reminded the elders of the words of the Lord Jesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” This statement is not recorded in any of the Gospels. In fact, this statement is the only direct quote, from the earthly ministry of Christ, that is recorded by a book other than the Gospels. The fact that Paul mentioned it here meant that many of the Christians had quoted this statement as they spoke to others about what Christ had said.

Acts 20:36-38 says, “And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.” Here we see that Paul gave his final farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus. This was a time of sorrow as well as encouragement because Paul had said that they would probably not see him again on this earth. They knew that they were going to miss his words of encouragement on this earth but they also knew that they would see him again in the presence of the Lord. We see that Paul concluded this time with the elders of Ephesus with a time of prayer before they walked with him to the ship so that he could travel on to Jerusalem.

Just as Paul warned the elders of Ephesus about the dangers of false teachers and self seeking leaders, we want to warn our physical and spiritual children about the danger of such leaders. We realize that our children will also meet such leaders and we want them to be prepared to recognize and be able to warn weaker Christians about the dangers of such leaders trying to deceive the weaker Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children to protect other Christians from deception.

Paul Was Warned of Coming Imprisonment

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize false teachers and self seeking leaders so that they can protect weaker Christians from deception. False teachers and self seeking leaders are really only seeking personal gain. It may be money or it may be power that they seek. However, their goal is not to bring glory to Christ. Instead, their goal is to control people for personal gain. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul began his trip from Ephesus to Jerusalem. Along the way he was warned that he was going to be imprisoned in the near future.

Acts 21:1-6 says, “Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.” We see that Paul was traveling on a ship that stopped at each of the main cities along the way.

However, when Paul was at the city of Patara he and the team transferred to a larger ship that was sailing straight for Phoenicia. We saw in an earlier topic that Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost if possible. Acts 20:16 says, “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.” The main city of Phoenicia was the city of Tyre and that was where the larger ship was to deliver part of its cargo. Along the way they saw the island of Cyprus but did not stop on that island but went on the left (north) side of the island. Then the ship continued on and landed at Tyre so that the ship could unload its cargo. As a result, the ship stayed at Tyre for seven days.

Paul and those with him found that there were disciples living in Tyre and so they were able to spend the time with them. The Holy Spirit revealed to these believers at Tyre that Paul would experience suffering if he went to Jerusalem. As a result, they encouraged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul already knew that he would suffer in Jerusalem but he was prepared to finish the work that the Lord had for him there. Earlier Paul had told the elders from Ephesus in Acts 20:22-24, “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Paul was not afraid of chains. His concern was to finish the ministry that the Lord had given to him.

When the ship was ready to leave Tyre, the disciples in Tyre including the women and children all accompanied him to the ship. Before Paul got on the ship this group all knelt down together and had a time of prayer. Then Paul and those traveling with him boarded the ship and the disciples from Tyre returned to their homes. The ship then traveled from Tyre to Ptolemais and then on to Caesarea.

Acts 21:7-12 says, “And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais,

greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" "Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem." Even though the ship only stopped at Ptolemais for one day, Paul and those with him used that opportunity to greet the Christians who lived in that city.

Ptolemais was only about 25 miles from Caesarea. When Paul and those traveling with him came to Caesarea, they stayed with Philip, the evangelist. The word translated "evangelist" is only used three times in the New Testament and means to share the good news of the Gospel. Ephesians 4:11-12 explains the ministry of an evangelist. Those verses say, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Here we see that an evangelist is an elder that is a part of a church leadership team that God gives to each church to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The evangelist is to equip the saints to share the Gospel.

In Acts 8 we see that Philip had taken the Gospel to Samaria. Then he had shared the Gospel with the eunuch from Ethiopia. Then Acts 8:39-40 says, "Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea." We see that Philip had then spent many years in that city equipping the Christians there to share the Gospel including his four virgin daughters that prophesied. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 we read, "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." Philip had shown his daughters how to share the Word of God as they talked with individuals.

One day Agabus came to the home of Philip from Judea. Many years earlier Agabus had come to Antioch while Paul was in that city. Acts 11:27-28 says, "And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar." Here we see that this man was a prophet. We see that when Agabus arrived he did a very unusual thing. Acts 21:11 says, "When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" The Christians at the house of Philip immediately began to plead with Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:13-16 says, "Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge." The attitude that Paul shows here shows the fact that Paul had complete peace about the way that the Lord would work through him whether it was by life or by death.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Paul wrote, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no

longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Paul could have complete peace because he understood the love of Christ for him as an individual. He knew that Christ had died for all. He also knew that Christ had died for him personally. 1 Timothy 1:12-14 says, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Paul understood that the love of Christ was not based on Paul’s past. Instead, that love was based on the grace of our Lord.

Christ had shown that love by dying for Paul while Paul was still living in his sin and rebellion against God. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” As Paul spoke of the fact that he was willing to die for Christ, he was only responding to the love of Christ. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” The more we grow in our understanding of the love of Christ for us, the more we will have the same attitude that Paul showed. When the other Christians saw the attitude of Paul toward Christ, they responded, “The will of the Lord be done.” We will also want the will of the Lord to be done in our lives and through our lives as we understand the love of Christ for us.

The Paul and those who traveled with him packed the things they had with them and went to Jerusalem. In addition, some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with them. This included one man that had been one of the early Christians by the name of Mnason. He was originally from the island of Cyprus. His home was in Jerusalem and Paul and the team that traveled with him were going to stay in the home of Mnason while they were in the city of Jerusalem. We see that Paul provides us with an example of understanding the love of God for our own lives. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the love of Christ by the example that we provide for them. Our children will grow in their understanding of the love of Christ as they see us grow in our understanding of that love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the love of Christ by your example.

Paul Took a Vow in Jerusalem

In our last topic, we saw that we want to provide an example for our physical and spiritual children of the love of Christ for us. They will grow in their understanding of that love as they see that it is that love that motivates us to live for Christ. They will also grow in their understanding of that love as they experience that love because we serve them with the love of Christ. In this topic we are going to see Paul gave a report to the Jews in Jerusalem about the things that the Lord was doing among the Gentiles.

Acts 21:17-19 says, “And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.” The Christians in the church at Jerusalem had heard much about the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles. Now they were able to see some of the results of that ministry. In Acts 21:8 we read, “On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.” Here we are reminded that a group had traveled to Jerusalem with Paul. The church had the opportunity to meet Gentile Christians from various cities as well as receive the gift that this group had brought for the needy Christians in Jerusalem.

Paul and the group traveling with him met with the elders from the church in the city of Jerusalem. Paul had the opportunity to share in detail what the Lord had done among the Gentiles. Regarding an earlier visit of Paul, Acts 15:4 says, “And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.” Here we see that Paul did the same thing this time because we read that Paul told in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. We see that the focus was on what God had done. This would be in agreement with Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31 where we read, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” In the same way, we are to give all glory to God for whatever He has chosen to do through our lives.

Acts 21:20-22 says, “And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.” The elders in Jerusalem all glorified God when they heard what the Lord had been doing among the Gentiles. At the same time the elders also realized that there was a possible problem.

The number of Jews that had become Christians had grown so large that their number could no longer be counted. Three thousand had become Christians on the day of Pentecost. Later Acts 5:14 says, “And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” Then Acts 6:7 adds, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” By Acts 21 we see that the elders did not know how many Jews were now Christians.

The elders also recognized that the Jewish Christians were all zealous for the law. The word translated “zealous” means one with a strong desire to uphold a thing. God told Abraham in Genesis 17:14, “And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his

foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” God had made an everlasting covenant with Abraham. That covenant is summarized in Genesis 17:7-8 where we read, “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

The Jewish Christians recognized that God had given certain promises to Abraham for all Jews which were not cancelled when Jews became Christians. When these Jews recognized that God had also given repentance to the Gentiles Acts 11:18 says, “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” The Jewish Christians recognized that the repentance of Gentiles did not cancel the promises that God had made to them as Jews. Instead, they rejoiced when they heard that the Gentiles who become Christians could also look forward to eternal life.

However, the Judaizers with their false teaching that said that Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved had also spoken evil about Paul to the Jewish Christians. In verse 21 we see that the Jewish Christians had been told that Paul was teaching “all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.” In actual fact what Paul had done and taught is clearly explained in 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 where we read, “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law.” Paul wanted to have a ministry to both Jews and Gentiles in every city where he went.

The elders recognized that the rest of the Christian Jews would hear that Paul had come to the city of Jerusalem. As a result, the elders asked Paul in Acts 21:23-24, “Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.” Paul had shown that he also obeyed the Jewish law because Acts 18:18 says, “So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.” Paul had made it clear by his own actions that a Jewish Christian was still free to keep the Jewish law and make Jewish vows.

The elders of the church in Jerusalem realized that the false teaching about Paul would be quickly stopped among the Christians if he took a Jewish vow again. At that time they also had four other Jewish Christians who had also taken a vow. The elders suggested that Paul purify himself with them and pay their expenses. That would be clear evidence to the Jewish Christians that the Judaizers had spread lies about Paul. They would see he lived his life in agreement with the commandments of God. They would see that he also obeyed the Jewish law to minister to the Jews.

At the same time, we read in Acts 21:25-26, “But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.” The elders also made it clear that none of the Gentiles had to follow the Jewish law.

In Acts 15, we saw that the Jerusalem Council had said that there were only four things that the Gentile Christians were not to do. Those four things all came from the first nine chapters of Genesis long before the call of Abraham. They were to keep themselves from idols. In Genesis 4:3 we read, "And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord." Here we see that Cain was the first idol worshiper because he tried to present his own efforts to God.

The Gentile Christians were also to keep themselves from blood and from things strangled. Genesis 9:3-4 says, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood." Here we see that the eating of blood was forbidden when God gave Noah and his family permission to eat animals. That would include both blood and things strangled. Then Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." This is a principle for all mankind because Adam and Eve had no parents to leave. This excludes immorality of any kind. Here we see that God explained what a godly marriage should be like.

Paul followed the advice of the elders of the church at Jerusalem. Here we see again that Paul was a Jew and was willing to do whatever was best to help both additional Jews and additional Gentiles come to Christ. Paul explained his motivation in 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 where we read, "To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you." Paul was willing to do whatever was best for the sake of the Gospel. In the same way, we want to provide an example for our physical and spiritual children by being willing to do whatever is best for the Gospel. In that way we provide an example for our children so that they can also learn to do what is best for the sake of the Gospel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why Paul did what he did.

Paul Was Seized in Jerusalem

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why the elders of the church at Jerusalem asked Paul to take a Jewish vow. We saw that Paul was willing to follow their advice because he was willing to do whatever was best to spread the Gospel among both the Jews and the Gentiles. We have also seen that Paul had been warned in every city that he would face bondage and imprisonment in Jerusalem. Today, we will see how those warnings were fulfilled.

Acts 21:27-30 says, "Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut." Paul had spent time on the third and the seventh day in the temple to fulfill the Jewish vow that he had taken. On the seventh day some of the Jews from Asia saw Paul in the temple.

Paul had spent about three years in Ephesus which was the main city of Asia. After three months many of the Jews had turned against Paul. Later the silversmiths that made images of the idol Diana also stirred up the Gentiles against Paul. As a result, it was Jews from Asia that suddenly stirred up the whole crowd in the temple courtyard against Paul. Then the Jews from Asia seized Paul and cried out to the other Jews in the temple courtyard, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." We see that the Jews from Asia made four accusations against Paul. They said that everywhere Paul went he taught against the Jewish people. They said that he taught against the law. They said that he taught against the temple. They said that he had brought Greeks into the temple and defiled the temple.

The Jews from Asia has seen Trophimus who was from Ephesus with Paul in Jerusalem. Those Jews were in Jerusalem just like Paul for the celebration of Pentecost. They immediately assumed that Paul had also brought Trophimus into the temple. Here we see that the Jews from Asia saw an opportunity to take out their anger against Paul. Word quickly spread through the city. As a result, the people began to run together to the temple. Then the Jews seized Paul and started dragging him out of the temple. Once they had him out of the temple, they immediately shut the doors of the temple.

Acts 21:31-36 says, "Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!" Here we see that the goal of the Jews was to kill Paul quickly before anyone could stop them.

The commander of the garrison of Roman soldiers in Jerusalem heard that the entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar and he was afraid that a riot might quickly start. Fort Antonia where the soldiers lived was right next to the temple courtyard and overlooked the grounds. As a result, the commander quickly took all of the soldiers available and rushed to the place where they had just dragged Paul from the temple. When the Jews saw the commander they immediately stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came to Paul. He assumed that Paul had committed some great crime and ordered the soldiers to bind him with two chains. Then the commander asked the people who this man was and what he had done.

The people began to shout different things because most of them had no idea what Paul had done. Here we see one of the things that happens when people make assumptions. They react even though they do not know the truth. The people were trying to kill Paul and most of them had no idea if he had even committed a crime. This was forbidden by the Jewish law. Deuteronomy 19:15 says, "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established." The following verses in Deuteronomy also required that the judges had to make diligent inquiry before anything was done to make certain that there were no false witnesses.

The Roman commander could not determine the truth because of everything that was happening at that moment. As a result, the commander decided that Paul should be taken into the barracks. The commander realized that as long as the people were so angry that both Paul and his own soldiers were in danger. As the commander and the soldiers started to take Paul to the barracks, the whole crowd followed them. The mob was so violent that it became necessary for the soldiers to carry Paul to protect him from the crowd as they approached the stairs that led into the barracks.

The leaders of the mob were eager to kill Paul. Even though the Roman soldiers were carrying him, the people did not stop. Instead, they continued to follow the soldiers as they carried Paul. They were crying out, "Away with him!" This was the same thing that the Jews had said about Christ. John 19:15 says, "But they cried out, "Away with *Him*, away with *Him*! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Here we see that the leaders of this mob had the same hatred for Paul that had been shown against Christ. Religion often uses power and control to get what it desires. Mature Christianity will always act out of love. Paul had earlier said in Acts 21:13, "Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul had such a love for both Jews and Gentiles that he was willing and ready to die for his faith.

Acts 21:37-40 says, "Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?" But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people." So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying." We will see in our next two topics what Paul said that day.

Here we see that Paul spoke to the commander as he was about to be taken into the barracks. Paul said in Greek, "May I speak to you?" Greek was the language of the educated people not the language of criminals. As a result, the Roman commander was surprised. The Roman commander had made the assumption that Paul was the Egyptian that had earlier stirred up a rebellion. That Egyptian had four thousand followers that he led out into the wilderness. That Egyptian had promised to drive out the Romans. He had been defeated and several hundred of

his followers had been killed. However, he and the rest had escaped and like terrorist groups today would kill individuals whenever they had the opportunity.

Paul explained to the Roman commander that he was a Jew from the city of Tarsus in the Roman province of Cilicia. The city of Tarsus was a well known city because it had one of the leading universities in the Roman Empire. He said that he was a citizen of a well known country. He would explain later to the chief captain that he was a Roman citizen because he was the son of a Roman citizen. Then Paul made a request of the commander. He asked if he could have permission to speak to the people. The commander then gave him the permission that he had requested.

Paul was standing on the stairs that led into the Roman fortress. Since he was on the stairs he was above the people and they could all see him. Then Paul motioned to the crowd of Jews that had followed the Roman soldiers as they brought Paul to the fortress. When Paul motioned with his hand the crowd suddenly became very quiet. The Jews in the land of Israel during the New Testament time spoke the modern Hebrew (Aramaic) language rather than the original Hebrew. 2 Kings 8:26 says, "Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.'" From this verse the Aramaic language had already become common among the leaders of the Jews more than 600 years earlier.

In this passage we see that several people had made assumptions rather than asking questions to learn the truth. Both the Jews and the Roman commander had made assumptions and we see that Paul was nearly killed as a result. We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize the danger of making assumptions because such assumptions can cause many problems. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to seek the truth instead of making assumptions.

Paul Told How the Lord Stopped Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn about the danger of making assumptions instead of seeking the truth. Paul had nearly been killed by a mob of Jews because someone made the assumption that Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple. The Roman commander rescued Paul from the mob. He then took him to Fort Antonia which overlooked the temple courtyard. As they were going up the steps into the fort Paul asked to speak to the people. In this topic and the next we will see what Paul said to the people that day.

Acts 22:1-3 says, "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today." Paul referred to the people gathered there that day as brethren and fathers. He asked them to hear his defense. Paul knew that many people in that crowd had no idea about his background. This was especially true because many were there from other lands because of the Feast of Pentecost. As a result, Paul began by giving them a little of the history of his personal life.

Paul chose to speak in the Modern Hebrew or Aramaic language that was common in the land of Israel in that day. When they heard that he spoke in the language that everyone living in Jerusalem spoke, they all kept silent and listened to what Paul had to say. Paul said that he was a Jew just like most of the people that were gathered there that day. He had been born in Tarsus in the Roman province of Cilicia. The Jews who lived in other countries were called the Diaspora because most of the Jews were scattered in other countries of the world. However, Paul said that he had been brought up in the city of Jerusalem. The word translated "brought up" had the thought of the forming of the mind. As a result, Paul said that he received his training or education in Jerusalem.

Paul said that he had received this training at the feet of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was the most respected Jewish rabbi of that day. Acts 5:34 says, "Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while." Here we see that Gamaliel, in addition to being a Pharisee and a teacher of the law, was held in high respect by all of the people. This meant that Paul had been taught according to the strictest interpretation of the fathers' law. The fathers' law included both the teaching of the Old Testament and all of the rabbinic traditions that had been added by well known rabbis through the years. This immediately showed that the charge that Paul opposed the law was certainly a false charge.

Paul also said that he was zealous toward God just as all of those who were gathered there that day. Paul had described that he was zealous toward God and the law when he had written in Galatians 1:13-14, "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." Since Galatians had been written several years earlier, there were many older Jews who knew the background of Paul.

In fact, part of the people gathered there that day had known Paul when he was a leader in the stoning of Stephen many years earlier. Paul went on to talk about that time. Acts 22:4-6 says,

“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.” In addition to killing Stephen, Acts 8:3 says, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” Paul had arrested and put many Christians in jail in that earlier time.

Paul said that the things that he was saying could be verified by the high priest and all of the council of the elders (the Sanhedrin). It was the Sanhedrin that had given Paul letters to take to the Jews in Damascus that gave Paul permission to arrest, put in chains and bring to Jerusalem to be punished any Jews in that city who had become followers of the Way. The Way was the name that the Jews called the followers of Christ during that time. Paul said that he was on his way to Damascus to arrest such followers. In fact, he had almost reached the city of Damascus. Suddenly about the middle of the day he had been stopped by a great light that shown from heaven.

Acts 22:7-11 says, “And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.” We see that Paul described what happened after he saw that great light from heaven. He said that he fell to the ground and heard a voice.

Paul said that the voice from heaven spoke to him and said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Paul had really thought until that time that he was serving God by persecuting the followers of Jesus. As a result, Paul said that he asked two questions that day. The first question was, “Who are You, Lord?” Paul recognized that the voice from heaven had to be God. The word translated “Lord” means the owner, master or ruler. This title is used to refer to God the Father or Jesus the Son, the Messiah, a total of 667 times out of the 748 times that the word is used in the New Testament. The voice from heaven answered Paul, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.” Here we see that Jesus is God and He personally identified with His followers. Jesus said that as Paul was persecuting followers of Jesus that he was actually persecuting Jesus.

Paul said that those who were traveling with him also saw the light. This light caused those who were traveling with him to be filled with great fear. However, they did not hear the voice of the One that spoke to Paul that day. Paul said that when He heard that the voice was the voice of Jesus of Nazareth whom he was persecuting that he asked a second question. That second question was, “What shall I do, Lord?” We see what was happening at that moment in Acts 9:6 where we read, “So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” Here we see that Paul had suddenly realized that Jesus is God and that he must immediately recognize Him as God.

However, Jesus also wanted Paul to recognize that the church is His body and also help the church realize that Paul had become a part of that body. As a result, Jesus told him to, “Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.” Jesus had performed the miracle that no human could do. He had changed the heart of Paul.

Now it was time for a believer to do what believers are to do and that is help a person learn how to follow Christ.

As we know from Acts 9 the Lord also had to convince Ananias to go and talk to Paul. Acts 9:15-17 says, "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."" In these verses, we see what Ananias was instructed what to tell Paul.

We also see that the other Christians had a part in helping Paul to learn how to follow Christ. Acts 9:18-19 says, "Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus." Paul had the opportunity to learn both from Ananias and also from the other disciples that were in the city of Damascus. We see how greatly his life was changed in Acts 9:20 where we read, "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." Here we see that Paul immediately began to prove to the other Jews living in Damascus that Jesus is the Son of God. We will learn more about that change in our next topic as we finish what Paul said to the Jews in Jerusalem.

We see here in Acts 22:11 that Paul also had to be led into the city of Damascus because he could no longer see because of the glory of that light. The very Jews who were going with him to arrest the Christians saw what had happened to Paul because they were the ones that had to lead him into the city. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the glory of the One who saved them. Ephesians 3:20-21 says that God is able to do more in their lives than they can imagine as they see His glory. Those verses say, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the glory of the One who saved them.

Paul Said the Lord Called Him to the Gentiles

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to see the glory of the Lord. We saw that Paul explained how the glory of Jesus as He spoke from heaven to Paul totally changed his life. We want to help our children understand that the Lord also wants to change and transform their lives. In this topic we will see that Paul finished sharing how Jesus of Nazareth had changed his life. We also see that the Lord had told him what he would do in the future.

Acts 22:12-16 says, “Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’” As we continue the testimony of Paul to the Jews in Jerusalem, we see that Paul told them about Ananias.

We see that Ananias was a devout man according to the law. Ananias was a Jew that was a godly man. All of the Jews who lived in the city of Damascus knew and respected Ananias because of the fact that he lived a godly life. Paul said that Ananias was the man that came and spoke to him when he had been blind for three days because of the light that had shown from heaven when he was getting close to Damascus. He said that Ananias had called him brother Saul. Paul had come to arrest the Christians in Damascus. The first recorded words that Paul heard from a Christian were, “Brother Saul”. Here we see one of the great changes that also happened in each of our lives at the moment of salvation. At that moment we became a part of the family of God.

That Ananias told Saul to receive his sight and immediately his vision was restored. However, Paul went on to tell a few of the other things that Ananias said to him. First, we learn why a person is changed and becomes a part of the family of God. Ananias said, “The God of our fathers has chosen you.” This is a key thing for every new Christian to understand. Ephesians 1:4 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” The Father chose us to be in Christ before the world was ever created. Second, we see that God chose Paul to know His will. Ephesians 1:9 says, “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.” Here we see that it is the desire of the Father for every Christian to know the will of God.

Third, God chose Paul to see the Just One. Fourth, God chose Paul to hear the voice of His mouth. In these two statements we see that Ananias told what had happened to Paul on the road to Damascus. He had both seen Jesus and he had heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him. Paul made a similar statement in Acts 26:16 where we read, “But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.” Paul had seen Jesus (the Just One) as well as heard His voice that day on the road to Damascus.

Then Ananias invited Paul to give testimony of the fact that he had repented of his sin of unbelief. Paul had repented and placed His faith in the death and resurrection of Christ and so Ananias invited him to give testimony of his salvation by being baptized. Paul had shown his

repentance when He said on the road to Damascus, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” Romans 10:13 promises, “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Paul had been calling on the Lord for three days as he prayed without His sight. Acts 9:18 says, “Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.” This verse shows us that Paul was baptized that day.

Acts 22:17-18 says, “Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’” After a period of time Paul had returned to Jerusalem. Galatians 1:15-18 says, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.” Here we see that it was a period of three years before Paul had returned to the city of Jerusalem. During this time Jesus had taught him personally in the desert.

When Paul had returned to Jerusalem, he had been praying in the temple. While he was praying there, we see that Paul was in a trance. The word translated “trance” means a condition in which the ordinary understanding of circumstances is not happening so that the person can focus totally on a vision that is given by God. In Acts 10:10-12 we read, “Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.” Peter was the other person in Acts that had fallen into a trance and God had shown him that he was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles gathered in the house of Cornelius.

Here we see that Paul experienced the same kind of a trance in the temple. The Lord gave a message for Paul just as He had earlier given a message to Peter. In this message Paul said that the Lord had told him to get out of the city of Jerusalem. Acts 9:29 says, “And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.” Here we see that when Paul had returned to Jerusalem that he had boldly shared the Gospel with the very group of people that he had led and for whom he held the coats when they stoned Stephen to death. That was why the Lord warned him to get out of Jerusalem quickly. The Lord knew that his former friends would not receive the message of Paul.

Paul then shared the answer that he had given to the Lord. Acts 22:19-20 says, “So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’” Paul had a great concern to share the Gospel with his friends. He had probably thought that they would listen to him because of the way that the Lord had changed his life.

Those friends had known how Paul had gone to many synagogues to imprison those who had placed their faith in Jesus. They knew how he had beaten them in his efforts to destroy the church. Acts 8:3 says, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” Paul had been so eager to stop the followers of Jesus that he did not even care whether they were men or women. Whoever he found that was a follower of Christ he would imprison that person whether it was a man or a woman.

Paul said that his friends knew how he had participated with them in the stoning of Stephen to death. They knew that he had guarded the clothes of his friends who had done that stoning of Stephen. Acts 7:58-59 says, "And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'" However, the Lord had told Paul to get out of the city of Jerusalem quickly because these fellow partners in the death of Stephen would not listen to him. Instead, the Lord knew that they would kill him just as they had killed Stephen. These people were no longer his friends. Instead, they had become his enemies.

Paul then told the crowd the final thing that the Lord had told him in that trance in the temple. Acts 22:21 says, "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'" Here Paul told the crowd in Jerusalem the commission that the Lord had given him. The Lord had said that He would send Paul far from Jerusalem to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. This reminds us that both the trance given to Peter and the trance given to Paul in the book of Acts were direct messages from God for them to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews had been listening to Paul with a great silence that day until he said the word "Gentiles". Acts 22:22 says, "And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" Here we see that the Jews gathered there that day were immediately ready to kill Paul when he mentioned the Gentiles. We will learn more about what happened that day in our next topic.

We see a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. We want them to understand that God has also chosen them for a purpose. John 15:16 says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." Just as the Lord chose Paul to bear fruit among the Gentiles, the Lord has also chosen each of us to bear fruit. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children discover the purpose that the Lord has given them for their lives.

Paul Said He Was a Roman Citizen

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children discover the purpose that God has for their lives just as the Lord showed Paul the purpose that He had for the life of Paul. When Christians realize that Christ has a purpose for each one of our lives we will find great joy as we discover that purpose that gives our lives great meaning and purpose. Paul was willing to die and almost did during the day that is covered in the last part of Acts 21 and all of Acts 22. The last words that Paul spoke to the Jews that day were, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles." In this topic we will see what happened to Paul during the rest of that day.

Acts 22:22-24 says, "And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air, the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him." The moment that Paul mentioned the Gentiles the Jews immediately stopped listening to him. Since the Jews that tried to kill Paul that day had rejected Jesus, they did not have the love of Christ in their lives. Instead, they were filled with hatred as soon as Paul mentioned the Gentiles to them. In fact, they were again ready to kill Paul.

We see that the Jews showed their anger in two ways. First, they showed their anger by the words that they spoke. Their words were actually the statement of a death penalty. They said that his life should be taken off the earth. They said that he was not even fit to continue to live. The only other place the word "fit" is used in the New Testament is Romans 1:28 where we read, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting." Then we have a list of sins that are the result of a debased mind. As a result, in this passage the Jews said that Paul was so evil that he should not be allowed to live.

Second, they showed their anger by their actions. In their anger they tore off their clothes. This was the very same thing that the Jews had done when they stoned Stephen. The Jews had taken off their outer robes and laid them at the feet of Paul so that they could stone Stephen. Acts 7:58 says, "And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul." They also threw dust into the air. This had been one of the ways that Jews had shown their anger for at least a thousand years. 2 Samuel 16:13 says, "And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust." Their actions made it very clear that they were ready to stone Paul immediately even though there were Roman soldiers right there.

The chief captain immediately ordered the soldiers to bring Paul into the barracks. He had not understood what Paul had said since he spoke in the Aramaic language. However, he could see by the anger of the people that they were ready to kill him. As a result, the chief captain ordered his men to examine Paul by scourging him. A Roman scourging was one of the ways that the Romans got prisoners to confess to their crimes. The whip that was used for this kind of a beating had pieces of sharp metal tied to the pieces of leather. These pieces of sharp metal would severely cut the prisoner and many prisoners died from a Roman scourging. The chief captain felt that this would cause Paul to confess to a crime that would give him a reason to put Paul to death and please the Jews because he had seen the great hatred that the Jewish leaders

had for Paul.

Acts 22:25-26 says, “And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.”” The Romans had a law that if anyone claimed to be a Roman citizen when the person was not that the person would be put to death. As a result, no one claimed to be a Roman citizen unless the claim was true. Paul immediately asked the Roman centurion who was in charge, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?” Suddenly that question changed everything.

The centurion immediately went to the commander and said, “Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.” The Romans also had a very severe penalty for anyone who would order the scourging of a Roman citizen. Acts 16:37-38 says, “But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out." And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.” The reason that the Roman commanders were fearful in both situations was due to the fact that such an offense could result in the ending of a military career and even included the possibility of death. As a result, this statement brought great fear to the commander since he had ordered Paul bound.

The commander immediately came to talk to Paul. Acts 22:27-29 says, “Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.” Here we see that the first thing that the Roman commander wanted to know was if Paul was really a Roman citizen. As a result, the commander said, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” Paul replied and told him that he was a Roman citizen.

Lysias, the Roman commander, said that he had paid a large amount of money in order to buy his Roman citizenship. It was not actually legal to buy Roman citizenship but sometimes Roman officials could be bribed by a large amount of money to give citizenship to a person especially if that person was a high ranking officer. Lysias said that it had cost him a large amount of money to become a Roman citizen so he had probably bribed some other Roman official who had granted him that citizenship.

Paul said that he had been born a Roman citizen. This meant that the father of Paul had also been a Roman citizen. The city of Tarsus had been granted a charter for their city by Julius Caesar called “Juliopolis”. Some think that this charter may also have included Roman citizenship. There were also some Jews that had earned Roman citizenship by bravery in the military. We do not know for sure how the father of Paul or some earlier relative had gained Roman citizenship but through whatever way it happened the father of Paul was a Roman citizen. As a result, Paul was already a citizen at the time he was born because his father was a Roman citizen.

As soon as Paul told the commander that he was a Roman citizen, the soldiers that were going to examine him by scourging immediately left Paul and the commander. They did not want to be held accountable for the scourging of a Roman citizen. The Roman commander was also afraid. He knew the possible consequences for even putting chains on a Roman citizen. He certainly did not want to be responsible for scourging him as well. Here we see that the commander was forced to act with fear because of what he had already done to Paul by putting

him in chains.

However, it was necessary for the Roman commander to find out what crimes the Jewish people were accusing Paul of committing so that he could tell the Roman governor. Acts 22:30 says, “The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.” The Roman commander wanted to find out as quickly as possible the crimes that the Jewish religious leaders were accusing Paul of committing.

The very next day the Roman commander commanded the chief priests and the entire council to appear before him. Here we see that the Roman commander had now called a meeting of the entire Sanhedrin to meet with him so that he could try and find out what crimes they were accusing Paul of committing. This was the same council of 70 that had beaten the other apostles many years earlier. Acts 5:40 says, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.” Gamaliel had warned the earlier council that they could not stop the apostles if what they were teaching was of God. Some of the older men may have even remembered what Gamaliel had said many years earlier. However, that did not stop them from trying to kill Paul at this time.

The Roman commander brought Paul the next day from the Roman fortress to examine him before the Jewish Sanhedrin. We will see that Paul is given the opportunity to speak to the Sanhedrin. Paul had probably known many of the men that were now on the Sanhedrin when he was a young man. Some of the men on the Sanhedrin had probably even helped him in his efforts to persecute the early followers of Jesus in order to try and stop them from teaching about the death and resurrection of Christ. We will see that Paul was not afraid as he spoke to them. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to yield to the Lord moment by moment so that they can speak about the death and resurrection of Christ with great courage. The Lord will work mightily through their lives as they speak about the resurrection of Christ with boldness and not with fear. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how you depend on the Lord so that you speak about Christ with boldness.

Paul Spoke to the Sanhedrin

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to speak with boldness about the death and resurrection of Christ. We also saw that Paul asked the Roman soldiers if they were allowed to give a Roman citizen a scourging when that person had not been condemned. The soldiers immediately told the Roman commander that Paul was a Roman citizen. Today, we will see that Paul was brought to speak to the Sanhedrin so the commander could see why the Jews were so eager to have Paul put to death. The Roman commander wanted to know what Paul had done.

Acts 23:1-3 says, "Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" Here we see that Paul fixed his eyes on the Sanhedrin as he spoke to them. He also called them brethren which pointed out the fact that he was also a Jew.

Paul began his words after his greeting by saying, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." A good conscience is a conscience that is clear before God and feels no guilt. Paul repeats this same thought in Acts 24:16 where he says, "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." Paul wanted to know that his conscience was clear before God. This is also an attitude that we want to have in our own lives because then we know that we are doing the things that are pleasing to God.

However, the high priest, Ananias, was very upset at this statement of Paul. As a result, he immediately ordered one of the men standing close to Paul to strike him on the mouth. This high priest was one of the most corrupt high priests in the history of Israel. He was also known as a very cruel man. In fact, he was so cruel that he was murdered by the Jews when they rebelled against the Roman government about five years later. The word translated "strike" means to strike with the fist or with a whip. It is used in Luke 22:64 where we read, "And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?"" In this verse, the word was used of the men who struck Christ across the face as he was blindfolded. Here we see that the Jewish high priest ordered Paul to be struck in the mouth with a fist.

The Jewish law said that it was illegal to strike a man that had not been condemned. However, Ananias had no regard for the law. Paul then spoke to him and made a very important statement. Paul said, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" Here we see that Paul called the high priest a whitewashed wall. That same word is used in Matthew 23:27 where Christ said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Although Ananias may have appeared beautiful in his priestly robes, on the inside he was also full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

Paul told the high priest that he was supposed to be judging Paul by the Jewish law and he had just commanded Paul to be hit in the mouth which was against the law. Paul told the high priest that God would judge him for his sin. As we saw above that was exactly what God did when God allowed the people to murder the high priest five years later. Here we see that a Jewish

religious leader had no respect for the Jewish law and God chose to use Paul to explain the fact that God would judge him.

Acts 23:4-5 says, "And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" Here we see that some of the other men who were standing there immediately told Paul that Ananias was the high priest. Then Paul apologized and quoted Exodus 22:28 which says, "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people." Here we see that Paul apologized to the high priest because he recognized his position even though he could not respect the individual that was holding that position. Paul showed by his example that he respected the Jewish law even when the high priest failed to respect that law.

Acts 23:6-9 says, "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." Paul recognized that of the men on the Sanhedrin part were Sadducees and part were Pharisees.

As a result, Paul reminded the men on the Sanhedrin that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They did not believe in angels. In contrast, the Pharisees had a strong belief in the resurrection as well as a belief in angels. Paul said that it was because of his belief and hope in the resurrection that he was being judged. Throughout the Gospels it was the Pharisees that spent the most time rejecting Christ because they focused on keeping the law and did not believe that Christ was keeping their laws. In contrast, in the book of Acts the greatest opposition to the early church came from the Sadducees because of their rejection of the resurrection.

Although Paul was no longer trying to earn his salvation by keeping the Jewish law, he was eagerly looking forward to the resurrection. He certainly still held to that key belief of the Pharisees. Suddenly the Sanhedrin was totally divided. Immediately there was a great conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. By what they said it showed that some of the Pharisees still remembered one of the statements made by Gamaliel many years earlier. Gamaliel had said in Acts 5:38-39, "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God." Gamaliel had warned that if the apostles were telling the truth when they said that Jesus had risen from the dead that they would be fighting against God.

As a result, the Pharisees immediately began to defend Paul. They said that they did not find any evil in Paul. They said that they thought that it was possible that a spirit or an angel might have spoken to Paul. The belief in the resurrection was one of their key disagreements with the Sadducees. They had remembered the words of Gamaliel. That was why God caused the Pharisees to defend Paul and turn against the Sadducees. The scribes who were Pharisees defended Paul and said that they did not find any evil in Paul.

In fact, some of the Pharisees had even placed their faith in Jesus. Acts 15:5 says, "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." By the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council those Pharisees were in total agreement with the rest of the Christians. Acts 15:22 says, "Then

it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.” The whole church including the Pharisees that had believed had reached agreement that the Gentiles were not under the law.

The Roman commander had been watching what was happening as Paul spoke to the Sanhedrin. Acts 23:10-11 says, “Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks. But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”” The Roman commander realized that there was a great conflict going on among the men of the Sanhedrin. He saw that some were for Paul and others were against Paul. He was afraid that Paul might be pulled in pieces by the two groups. The commander quickly sent soldiers down to rescue Paul and to bring him back into the barracks.

The following night the Lord came to Paul in the barracks and stood by him. Then the Lord spoke to Paul to encourage him. The word translated “be of good cheer” means to be filled with courage or to be comforted. The Lord told Paul that he had been faithful in speaking for the Lord in the city of Jerusalem. The Lord knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed in just a few years and wanted the leaders to have one more opportunity to choose to either accept or reject Jesus. The Lord also told Paul that he would also have the opportunity to give this same witness in the city of Rome.

In the same way, we want to encourage our physical and spiritual children to be faithful in speaking for the Lord. As they are faithful the Lord will also open up additional opportunities for them to share the Word of God in other places. The Lord is looking for people who will be faithful and He will greatly use such individuals. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the importance of being faithful to the Lord.

Paul Was Informed of a Conspiracy Against Him

In our last topic, we saw that Paul was faithful in speak about the resurrection of Christ even when he was brought before the Sanhedrin. In the same way, we want to show our children how to be faithful and speak about the resurrection of Christ at every opportunity including times when people are in opposition to that message. In our topic today, we are going to see that there was great opposition to the message of Paul. In fact, there were a group of more than forty Jews that agreed together that they would not eat until they had killed Paul. We will also see how the Lord protected Paul from that mob.

Acts 23:12-13 says, "And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy." We see that some of Jews were very determined to put Paul to death. The next day a group of these Jews that were determined to kill Paul gathered together to make their plans to kill Paul. They actually bound themselves together with an oath. This is a very strong oath because Galatians 1:8-9 says, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." Here we see that the root word of the word used by these forty men meant to be accursed or to be judged.

These men agreed together that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. This was a large group because we see that more than forty men were a part of this group. This reminds us of how strong the hatred was of these people against the Gentiles. They were ready to kill Paul because he said that God had sent him to the Gentiles. This group of men also wanted the backing of the chief priests and elders.

Acts 23:14-15 says, "They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near." In order for these men to carry out their plan they needed the help of the chief priests and elders because they had to have some way to get Paul out of the Roman barracks so that they could kill him.

These men told the chief priests and elders about the vow that they had made. They said that they had made an oath that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul. Then they made their request for help from the chief priests and elders. They asked the chief priests and elders to gather the whole council and make a request of the Roman commander to bring Paul down to talk to them again the next day. The chief priests were to act like they wanted to ask some additional questions of Paul. However, the men said that they would kill Paul before he could be brought before the council. Here we see that there were many people in addition to the forty that had become a part of this plan to kill Paul because of his concern to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

However, the Lord had made a promise to Paul that he would also share the Gospel in the city of Rome. As a result, we see the way that the Lord arranged protection for Paul. Acts 23:16-18 says, "So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man

to you. He has something to say to you.”” The Lord put the nephew of Paul in the right place at the right time to hear about the plan of these men to ambush and kill Paul.

We have no idea why this nephew was in the city of Jerusalem at this time since the family lived in the city of Tarsus. However, we see that the Lord had a reason for leading this young man to Jerusalem at this particular time. Then the Lord made it possible for him to hear some of the men talking about what they planned to do to Paul. The nephew also chose to act rather than just hear because he realized that the life of his uncle was in danger. We are not even told whether this nephew had become a Christian or was just led by the Lord to protect His uncle. We are reminded that the Lord will carry out His promises and the plans of people cannot stop the fulfillment of those promises. God was going to carry out His plan to make it possible for Paul to share the Gospel in Rome.

Then the nephew of Paul went to the Roman barracks and told Paul what he had overheard. Paul immediately called a Roman centurion and asked him to take the young man to the Roman commander. Paul said that the young man had something to tell the commander that was very important. The centurion did as Paul requested and brought the young man to the commander. Then the centurion explained to the commander the request that Paul had made. He told the commander that the young man had something important to tell the commander.

Acts 23:19-22 says, “Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside and asked privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?” And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.” So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, “Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me.”” Here we see the great difference in the attitude that the Roman commander had toward Paul once he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen. The commander was ready to do whatever Paul requested.

Then the commander took the nephew to a place where they could speak privately and no one would hear them. The commander asked the nephew what Paul wanted his nephew to tell the commander. The nephew immediately began to tell about the plot of the Jews to kill Paul. He said that the Jews had agreed to ask the commander to bring Paul down to the Sanhedrin the next day. The leaders of the Sanhedrin were going to act like they wanted to ask some additional questions of Paul. The nephew said that they would make it sound like they just wanted to get some additional questions answered.

However, the nephew said that the real plan of the Jews was to kill Paul before he could even be brought into the meeting of the council. This shows one of the common things that people try to do when they want to do evil to others. They may even try to make it look like they are interested and have further questions. The Word of God gives us some wonderful promises if people would ever to do something like this to us. Hebrews 13:5-6 says, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* So we may boldly say: “The LORD *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”” Here we see that the Lord would never forsake us.

As Christians, we are also promised that nothing will ever separate us from the love of God. Romans 8:37-39 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The reason

that nothing can separate us from the love of God is due to the fact that God has already shown His love to us when He gave His Son to pay the penalty for our sin and set us free from the consequences of that sin.

Then the nephew asked the Roman commander not to yield to the request of the Jewish religious leaders. The nephew then explained about the plan of the group of Jews that had together promised that they would not even eat or drink until they had killed Paul. As a result, the commander learned that there were more than forty men that had agreed together that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul. Here we see the sinful condition of the heart of mankind. Jeremiah 17:9-10 says, ““The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, *I* test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.” Without the love of Christ leading a person, that person is capable of any sin.

That is why the Lord gives each person a new nature at the time of salvation. 2 Peter 1:4 says, “By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” We want to help every Christian understand the fact that they were given a new nature at the time they received forgiveness of sins. The Roman commander listened carefully to the words of the nephew of Paul. Then the commander told him not to tell anyone what he had said to the commander.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children grow in their understanding of the fact that their new nature gives them the desire to please God and the Holy Spirit gives them the power to please God as they yield to Him. We also want to help them understand how the Lord protected Paul by giving his nephew the opportunity to hear of the plot against Paul. We can also trust the Lord to carry out His plan to use our lives whether it is by life or by death. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in their understanding of how the Lord works in and through our lives.

Paul Was Taken to Caesarea

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that nothing happens in our lives unless the Lord allows it. This means that we can trust the Lord to work through our lives either by life or by death. Christians who have this trust in the Lord will never need to fear what evil men will do to them because the Lord will complete His plan for each of our lives. Today, we are going to see how the Lord protected Paul by getting him out of the city of Jerusalem during the night so that the evil mob that planned to kill Paul was not able to carry out its evil plan.

We saw in our last topic that more than forty men had agreed that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. However, the nephew of Paul heard about the plan of these men and told Lysias, the Roman commander. Acts 23:23-25 tells us how the Roman commander responded. Those verses say, “And he called for two centurions, saying, “Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor.” He wrote a letter in the following manner.” Here we see that Lysias immediately developed a plan that the Lord used to protect Paul.

Lysias had one thousand soldiers with various responsibilities with him in Jerusalem. In order to protect Paul from the Jews, Lysias decided that the safest thing to do was send Paul to the Roman governor at Caesarea. The city of Caesarea was about sixty miles from Jerusalem and the governor had a larger army there. Lysias immediately called two of his centurions (a centurion was in charge of 100 soldiers). Lysias told the two centurions to take their two hundred soldiers plus an additional seventy horsemen and two hundred additional spearmen. At that time the soldiers under a Roman centurion were so well trained that no other armies could compare with the Roman soldiers. Here we see that Lysias decided to send nearly half of the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem to protect Paul from the Jews as they took him to Caesarea.

Lysias told the centurions that they were to leave at the third hour of the night. This would make it possible to remove Paul secretly so that the Jews would not even know that Paul was no longer in Jerusalem until he was almost to Caesarea. The centurions were to provide a horse for Paul to ride. We also see that Lysias wrote a letter to the Roman governor. We will see that they some of the things that he said in the letter were not exactly accurate but Lysias wrote what he wanted so that the governor would think that he was doing a good job of keeping order in the city of Jerusalem. As Christians we know that we are to “speak the truth in love” but speaking the truth was not a concern of Lysias. He was most concerned to make the governor think he was doing his job.

The letter that Lysias wrote to Felix, the governor, is recorded for us in Acts 23:26-30 where we read, “Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.” We see that Lysias called the governor, “the most excellent governor Felix.” This was a title that was commonly used for a person that had a high rank or office.

Lysias told Felix that Paul had been seized by the Jews and said the Jews were about to kill Paul. He said that he came with troops because he had learned that Paul was a Roman. Acts 22:24-26 says, "The commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." In actual fact, Lysias only found out that Paul was a Roman when the soldiers that were preparing to give Paul a scourging were asked if it was legal to scourge a Roman citizen who had not been condemned. However, Lysias did not want the Roman governor to find out that he had ordered Paul to be scourged and so he did not report what had happened accurately.

Lysias did tell what he had done to try and find out why the Jews wanted to kill Paul. To try and find out what Paul had done, Lysias brought Paul before their council (the Sanhedrin). It was before the Sanhedrin that Lysias suddenly realized that Paul was not guilty of breaking any Roman laws. Instead, Lysias said, "I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains." Since Paul was not guilty of breaking any Roman laws, Lysias was actually saying that Paul was innocent as far as the Romans were concerned. Everything of which he was accused related to the Jewish law.

Lysias said that he had heard that the Jews had developed a plot to put Paul to death. That was the reason that he was sending Paul to the Felix. Lysias also said he had commanded those who had accused Paul to state their charge before Felix so that Felix could determine what accusations the Jews had against Paul. Here we see that Lysias actually told Felix what he was going to tell the Jews the next morning after Paul was already most of the way to Caesarea.

Lysias went on to tell Felix that he had been told that there was a plot by the Jews to lay in wait for Paul. The word translated "to lay in wait" means to plot to kill a person. The word is used four times in the book of Acts. Each time it talks about a group of people waiting to kill Paul. Acts 20:19 says, "Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews." Here the word is translated "by the plotting". Lysias said that this was the reason why he was sending Paul to Felix. The plan by the Jews to kill Paul made it unsafe for Paul to remain in the city of Jerusalem. Lysias said that he decided to send Paul to Felix as soon as he heard about the plot. Lysias also said that he had commanded the accusers of Paul to go to Felix and state their charges against Paul. Since the plan to send Paul was kept a secret to avoid an immediate attempt to put him to death as he was taken from Jerusalem, this was actually what Lysias planned to do the next day.

Acts 23:31-35 says, "Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium." The soldiers did as they were commanded and took Paul as far as Antipatris that night. Antipatris was nearly forty miles from Jerusalem. That meant that the soldiers had to make a long hard march that night especially the foot soldiers.

However, that long march that night got the soldiers out of the hills where it would have been easier for those plotting the death of Paul to have killed him more easily. Once the road passed Antipatris the country was much more level and it would have been hard for anyone to hide along the road to attempt to kill Paul. As a result, the two hundred soldiers and the two hundred spearmen then returned to Jerusalem and the seventy men on horses took Paul the rest of the

way to the city of Caesarea.

When the men on the horses arrived in Caesarea, they presented Paul to Felix, the Roman governor. They also gave the letter to the Roman governor. The governor immediately read the letter and then asked Paul a question. Felix asked Paul the name of the Roman province from which he came. Tarsus was located in the Roman province of Cilicia. At that time the province of Cilicia as well as the area of Judea were both a part of the region over which Felix had the authority. As a result, that meant that Felix could hear the charges of the accusers of Paul once those accusers came to Caesarea.

We see that the accusers of Paul were very eager to bring their charges against Paul. Acts 24:1 says, "Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul." Caesarea was between sixty and seventy miles from Jerusalem. Here we see that it was not the men who planned to kill Paul that came to Caesarea to accuse Paul. Instead, it was the Jewish high priest and a group of men from the Sanhedrin that came to bring the charges against Paul. Until they arrived, Paul was kept as a prisoner in Herod's Praetorium. The Praetorium was called Herod's Praetorium because that palace had become the official residence of the Roman governor during the time that Herod the Great ruled this entire region for Rome.

We see how the Lord protected Paul by getting him out of the city of Jerusalem before the men who had made the plot against Paul had the time to try and kill him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that the Lord will protect us as long as the Lord still has work for us to do on this earth. That is why we do not need to live in fear but can trust the Lord in faith. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to walk by faith.

Paul Had False Accusations Made Against Him

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to learn to walk by faith even if people who reject Christ are trying to destroy them. The Lord has given each Christian a purpose for life and He will keep us alive on this earth until we have completed the purpose that He has for each one of us on this earth. The Lord protected Paul from those who wanted to kill him. In our topic today, we are going to see that the Lord continued to protect him when the Jewish religious leaders brought false charges against him.

Acts 24:1-3 says, "Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness." Here we see that the Jewish religious leaders were eager to present their charges against Paul. They did not waste any time getting to Caesarea after they had decided what they were going to say against Paul. They also brought an orator with them to present their case against Paul.

Tertullus, the orator, began what he said by trying to flatter Felix and make him feel good. Tertullus said that Felix had made it possible for them to enjoy great peace. He said that Felix also caused their land to enjoy prosperity because of the planning and foresight of Felix. He said that they were very thankful for all that Felix had done for their country. In actual fact Felix was a very brutal man who his own historians said was both a bad man and a bad governor. However, we see that Tertullus was trying to use flattery and tell Felix how good he was in order to get him to side with them against Paul. Here we see something that many people will do in order to try and get their own way. They will tell people what will make them feel good whether what they say is true or not.

In Acts 24:4-6 we read, "Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law." Here we see that the Jews had asked Tertullus to make four charges against Paul.

First, they said that they found that Paul was a plague. The word translated "plague" means a pestilence, a plague or a person that is a pest. The only other two places translated the word pestilences as both Matthew and Luke record a statement made by Christ. The disciples had asked Christ what was going to happen in the future. Christ answered in Luke 21:10-11, "Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven." Here and in Matthew 24:7 Christ said that that the earth would experience pestilences. By the use of this word Tertullus was saying that Paul was like a deadly disease.

Second, Tertullus said that Paul was a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world. The word translated "dissension" means insurrection or strife. This is the same charge that was against Barabbas when the Jews chose to have him released instead of Christ. It is also the word that the city clerk used to describe the riot that the silversmiths had caused in Ephesus. Acts 19:4 says, "For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." Here the word is

translated uproar.

The words of Paul did cause dissension between these very men in Acts 23:6-7 where we read, "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided." Acts 23:10 uses the word again when that verse says, "Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks." The Pharisees and the Sadducees almost got in a fight when Paul said that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. However, it was others who wanted to destroy Paul that caused the dissension.

Third, Tertullus said that Paul was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. The word translated "sect" means a group of people who follow a system of beliefs. Both the Sadducees and Pharisees were also called sects and so this accusation meant nothing. Acts 5:17 says, "Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation." Then Acts 15:5 says, "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."" In fact, Paul himself said in Acts 26:5, "They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." Paul had followed the system of beliefs of the Pharisees before he became a Christian.

Later the Jews in Rome said in Acts 28:22, "But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere." Paul then spent an entire day explaining what the Old Testament taught about the fact that Jesus is the Christ. Acts 28:24 tells the result when that verse says, "And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved." It was not a crime to believe a system of beliefs whether that was the belief system of the Pharisees, the Sadducees or the beliefs of those who followed Jesus of Nazareth.

Fourth, Tertullus said that Paul had tried to profane the temple. In Acts 21:27-28 we see that Jews from Asia had started a riot by saying, "Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."" Paul later told Felix that these were the Jews that should have been accusing him that day. Acts 24:17-19 says, "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me." Paul said that this statement could be easily verified.

Tertullus went on to say that this was why the Jews had seized Paul and wanted to judge him according to the Jewish law but were stopped by Lysias. Acts 24:7-9 says, "But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him." And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so." Here we see that Tertullus actually tried to accuse Lysias of preventing them from judging Paul according to the Jewish law.

Tertullus said that Lysias had come and stopped them. He said that Lysias had used great violence to take Paul out of their hands. The Jews were not trying to judge Paul according to

their law. Because of the words of the Jews from Asia, the Jews were trying to kill Paul. Acts 21:30 says, "And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut." Here we see that it was a mob that was trying to kill Paul as quickly as they could. Then Acts 21:32 says, "He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul." Lysias did not use any violence because the mob stopped beating Paul as soon as they saw the commander and the soldiers. Tertullus and the Jews who had told him what to say were just looking for an excuse to get Felix to condemn Paul.

It was true that Lysias had commanded the accusers to come and present their case to Felix. Tertullus said that all Felix would have to do was examine Paul himself and he would see that the charges that he had made against him were true. Actually the only charge that meant anything to the Romans was the charge that Paul was a creator of dissension. However, they had given no evidence regarding that charge. All they said was that he had created dissension among the Jews throughout the world. What was actually happening was God was fulfilling a promise that He had given to Ananias about Paul at the time of his salvation. Acts 9:15 says, "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." Paul was now going to have the opportunity to speak about Jesus to kings and others in authority including the emperor of the Roman Empire. We will see that Paul was given the opportunity to tell Felix about Jesus that day.

Here we see that one of the things that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand is the fact that God can turn around the plans of evil men and provide the opportunity for God to give us the opportunity to speak for Him. We can help them understand that the Lord uses everything that happens in our lives as Christians for good to make it possible for Him to carry out His purpose for our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how God work in and through our lives.

Paul Gave His Defense Before Felix

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how God is even able to work through the plans of evil men to carry out His plan and purpose for our lives. The Jews planned to kill Paul. Instead, God took their plan and used it to give Paul the opportunity to speak before kings and rulers and tell them about Christ and the hope that we have as Christians because of the resurrection. In this topic, we will see that Paul is invited to give his defense regarding the charges brought against him by the Jews. Paul used the opportunity to talk about the hope that we have in Christ because of His resurrection.

Acts 24:10-13 says, "Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me." Here we see that Paul began by recognizing that Felix had served for many years as a judge over the Jews. That included both his time as governor and the years before when he had lesser positions of leadership over the Jews.

Paul was very thankful for the opportunity to be able to speak to Felix and give an answer to the charges that had been made by the Jews against Paul. Paul said that Felix could check and find out that Paul had only reached Jerusalem twelve days earlier. Paul had stayed in Caesarea just before he went to Jerusalem. Acts 21:8 says, "On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him." We see that Paul then traveled directly from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Acts 21:17-18 says, "And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present."

Paul talked to the elders of the church the day after he arrived in Jerusalem. They encouraged him to take a seven day Jewish vow which he did the next day. Acts 21:27 says, "Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him." As a result, Paul only spent seven days in Jerusalem. Then he had spent the previous five days being brought to Caesarea and in Caesarea. Since Paul had taken a vow and was fulfilling the vow, he could not have been inciting the crowd either in the synagogues of the city or the temple. That made it very clear that Paul did not even have the time in Jerusalem to organize any dissension against the Roman government. This made it very clear that the Jews could not prove the first charge that they had made against him (which was the only one that really mattered to the Romans anyway).

Paul was eager to take the opportunity to talk about the hope that he had in Christ. As a result, he did not even spend any more time trying to defend himself against that charge. Acts 24:14-16 says, "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men." Paul agreed that the Jews called the Way a sect (the sect of the Nazarene) just as they called the Pharisees and the Sadducees sects. Each of the three groups had a system of beliefs that they believed and followed.

He then went on to explain what he believed. Paul said that he worshiped the God of his

fathers. He said that he believed all that was written in the Law and the Prophets. Here we see that Paul made it clear that he believed the entire Old Testament. On the day of His resurrection Christ had used the Law and the Prophets to show His disciples what they taught about His resurrection. Luke 24:27 says, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Later that night Luke 24:44 says, "Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."” Christ used the whole Old Testament to explain what the Old Testament taught about His death and resurrection. Paul said that he also believed the whole Old Testament.

Paul said that because he did believe the whole Old Testament that he had hope in God. He said that he believed the same thing that the Jews as a whole claimed to believe. He said that he believed in the resurrection. This included both the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust. 2 Peter 2:9 says, "Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." Paul also said that the things that he believed caused his actions to be changed. Paul had made it his goal for many years to have conscience without offence either toward God or toward men. In fact, Paul had told these very leaders that were accusing him a few days earlier in Jerusalem in Acts 23:1, "Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."” Paul knew that he had a clear conscience both before God and men.

Paul went on to say in Acts 24:17-21, "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'" Here we see that Paul explained why he had come to Jerusalem. He had come to bring alms and offerings to the Jewish nation.

After arriving in Jerusalem, Paul had taken a vow and purified himself with four other Jews. It was during the time that he had taken this vow that the Jews from Asia had found Paul. He was purified. There was no mob of people with him. There was no noise or tumult. Instead Paul was just fulfilling the requirements of the vow that he had taken. In fact, Paul said that it was the Jews from Asia that should have been there that day if they had any charge that they could bring against Paul. Their very absence showed that they had no charge to bring against Paul.

Since the people that were present in Caesarea that day were from the Sanhedrin, then they should be the ones who should have been giving testimony of any wrongdoing that Paul had committed when he was brought before the Sanhedrin. Acts 23:6b gives the statement that he had made before the Sanhedrin. In that verse we read, "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"” Paul had made it clear before the council that it was his hope in the resurrection of the dead that he was being judged.

The message of the resurrection was the very message that divided the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Acts 23:8 says, "For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." The Pharisees there that day had defended Paul. In fact, the exact words that the Pharisees had spoken are recorded in Acts 23:9b where they said, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against

God.” The Pharisees had declared Paul innocent before the council because they also believed in the resurrection. They had said that they did not want to fight against God.

Paul then told Felix, “Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.” Felix knew what the Christians believed. He knew that Paul had spoken the truth and that this was the real reason why Paul had almost been killed. We will see in our next topic how Felix had to deal with this statement in his own life. Here we see the message that sets Christianity apart from every other religion. Every religion has a founder. If that religion has existed long enough, the founder has died. Most religions now have a tomb where the body of their founder is buried. In fact, in many religions that tomb is almost like a sacred shrine.

It is that very fact of the resurrection that makes Christianity different from every other religion. The founders of all other religions are dead. 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 says, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” Like Paul, it is the message of the resurrection by which we stand.

That is why it is so important that we help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. Only a person that is alive can give life to others. Only a person that is alive can offer forgiveness of sin. That is the message that we have to share with the world around us. That is the message that we want to help our children learn to explain clearly. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how they know that Christ is risen from the dead.

Paul Was Kept in Caesarea for Two Years

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain the importance of the resurrection of Christ. Instead, of spending all of his time trying to defend himself from the false charges of the Jews, Paul made it clear that the real reason why he was standing before Felix was due to the fact that he believed and had his faith and hope in the resurrection. Felix knew that was the thing that made the beliefs of the Christians different. They had a hope in Christ. We will see how Felix reacted when he had to face the reality of that message for his own life.

Acts 24:22-23 says, "But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him." Felix had heard the charges that the Jews had brought against Paul. He had also heard the defense of Paul. However, he gave an excuse to postpone a decision.

One of the things that we see is that Felix had more accurate knowledge of the Way. We have said that the Way is what Christianity was called at that time. The wife of Felix was the youngest daughter of Agrippa I and was Jewish so she could have explained Christianity to him. In addition, Felix had been in that area for many years. This meant that he had probably heard much about Christianity and the death and resurrection of Christ. We see one of the main reasons why Felix postponed a decision in Acts 24:26 where we read, "Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him." Here we see that one reason that Felix did not declare Paul innocent was due to the fact that he hoped Paul would pay him money to be set free.

Felix gave as his excuse for postponing the decision the fact that he would wait until Lysias, the Roman commander in Jerusalem, came to Caesarea. Lysias has already written in his letter in Acts 23:28-29, "And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains." Lysias had said that the reason Paul was accused was due to questions concerning the Jewish law. He said that there was no charge that would cause Paul to deserve death. In addition, there was not even a charge that meant he should be kept in prison. By this letter Lysias said that he thought Paul was innocent. There is no written record that Lysias was ever asked to come to Caesarea about the case of Paul.

One other thing that we see that is unusual about this case is the fact that those who made the original accusations against Paul were Jews from Asia. Acts 21:27-28 says, "Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." These accusers from Asia had not even come to Caesarea. The high priest and the other Jewish leaders had not been able to prove any crime. Paul was innocent and should have been set free.

The real reason why Felix postponed the decision about Paul was his own fear. He knew that the Jewish religious leaders wanted Paul killed. He was afraid that they might stir up much opposition if Felix allowed Paul to go free. Here we see that just like Pilate that Felix was more

concerned to please the Jews than to do what he knew was legal and right. Mark 15:14-15 says, "Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!" So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified." Pilate wanted to please the Jewish religious leaders. Here we see that Felix also wanted to please the Jewish religious leaders instead of doing what was right.

The Jewish leaders returned to Jerusalem since Felix was going to keep Paul in prison. Felix did tell the centurion that was given the responsibility to guard Paul that he was to let Paul have liberty. The particular word translated "liberty" meant that he was to be free from chains even though he was in prison. The centurion was also told that he was to allow the friends of Paul to come and visit him. This way they could provide for his needs and also visit him to learn more from him.

Acts 24:24-25 says, "And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." Several days later Felix and his wife, Drusilla, sent for Paul so that they could hear from him concerning the teaching about Christ and what it meant to have faith in Him. His wife was Jewish and so she had probably heard people speak both for and against Christianity. Both Felix and Drusilla wanted to know more about faith in Christ.

We see that Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. Here we see that Paul understood clearly how to work with the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit could bring conviction of sin. John 16:8-11 says, "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." The word translated "reasoned" means to talk together or to discuss. We see that Paul talked together with Felix about the very areas where the Holy Spirit brings conviction to the non-Christian.

The word translated "righteousness" means the condition of being acceptable to God. In John 16:10 we see that the Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness as we share Scriptures about the fact that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One who could pay the penalty for sin because He was without sin. It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to convict people in this area because Christ is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father. He is not here on the earth where people could see and hear Christ and so the Holy Spirit convicts them through the Word of God. The fact that Felix had not lived a life that was acceptable to God meant that he needed to come to God through Christ.

Paul also talked with Felix and Drusilla about self-control. The word translated "self-control" means one who masters his desires and passions. Felix had certainly not exercised self-control as Drusilla was his third wife and Felix had talked her into leaving her husband to become his wife. The only way that Felix could have self-control was to repent of his sin of unbelief and place his faith in Christ. In John 16:9 Christ said, "Of sin, because they do not believe in Me." As Paul and Felix talked together Paul let him know that the only way that he could come to God was through Christ.

Paul also talked together with Felix about the judgment to come. John 16:11 says, "Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." When Christ died Satan thought that he had won. When Christ rose from dead Satan knew that he had lost, that he was condemned and faced judgment. As Paul talked with Felix, he spoke about the fact that Satan and all those who continued to follow him would face that judgment to come. As Felix heard those words his

heart was filled with fear. He knew that he deserved that judgment. He told Paul to go away for the present and that when he had a more convenient time that he would call for Paul again. This fear was the result of the conviction of the Holy Spirit but we see that Felix did not respond to Christ.

Acts 24:26-27 says, “Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.” Although Felix did call for Paul and did talk with him many times over the next two years, we never read that he repented of his sin of unbelief. The Holy Spirit convicted Felix and filled his life with fear. However, that did not bring him to the place where he ever repented of his sin.

Instead, we see that the reason why Felix called more often for Paul was because he hoped that Paul would give him money to gain his freedom. Here we see that Felix was so controlled by his sin that he had developed a very destructive root in his life. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 says, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” The desire of Felix to gain worldly riches and the temporary pleasures that come from those riches caused him to call for Paul many times.

After two years Porcius Festus was appointed as the next governor to replace Felix. Even after talking to Paul many times, Felix continued to harden his heart. He did not respond and receive the message regarding the death and resurrection of Christ. Instead, he made the choice to please the Jews and left Paul in prison when the new governor came into office. Here we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that some will accept and others will reject when we share about the death and resurrection of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn that such individuals are either responding to or rejecting the convicting of the Holy Spirit.

Paul Appealed His Case to Caesar

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how the Holy Spirit convicts those who are not Christians of sin, righteousness and judgment. We saw that as Paul spoke to the Roman governor Felix that this conviction of the Holy Spirit caused Felix to fear but it did not cause him to repent of his sin of unbelief. Instead, Felix kept Paul as a prisoner even though he knew that Paul was innocent because he hoped that Paul would give him money to gain his freedom. He also left Paul as a prisoner when Festus became the next governor. In our topic today, we will see that Paul appealed his case to Caesar.

In Acts 25:1-5 we read, “Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while *they* lay in ambush along the road to kill him. But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going *there* shortly. “Therefore,” he said, “let those who have authority among you go down with *me* and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him.” Here we see that one of the first things that Festus did after he became the new governor was go to Jerusalem for a visit to that city. In fact, he had only been in Caesarea three days.

The high priest and the chief men of the Jews immediately spoke to Festus and spoke against Paul. Here we see that the Jewish religious leaders did not waste any time but immediately began to speak against Paul to the new governor. Then they made a request of the governor. They asked the governor if he would send soldiers to Caesarea to bring Paul back to the city of Jerusalem. Their plan was to ambush the soldiers that would be bringing Paul to Jerusalem and kill Paul. Here we see that this is a very different plot than the previous plot. In Acts 23:12 we read, “And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.” Here we see that the plot two years earlier was led by some of the Jews probably the Jews from Asia. In contrast, this plot against Paul to kill him was led by the chief priest and the Sanhedrin.

Instead of honoring their request, Festus said that he would be returning to Caesarea in a short time. He told the chief priest and the Sanhedrin to send some men who had authority with him so that they could bring their accusations against Paul. He said that he would see if there was any fault in Paul. Festus realized that he would have a much easier time governing the Jews if he could please the Jewish religious leaders. As a result, he told them to go with him back to Caesarea and he would immediately hear the accusations that they had against Paul.

Acts 25:6-8 says, “And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought. When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.” Here we see that Festus stayed about ten more days in Jerusalem and then he returned to Caesarea.

Festus was very anxious to please the Jews and gain favor with them. As a result, the very next day Festus sat on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought. The judgment seat was the official place where Roman trials were held. John 19:13 says, “When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is

called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.” Here we see that Pilate sat on the judgment seat because it was an official trial of Christ. In the same way, when Festus sat on the judgment seat it meant that it was an official trial of Paul and Festus was ready to hear any formal accusations against Paul.

When Paul was brought before the judgment seat, the Jews immediately began to make charges against Paul. In fact, the Jews brought serious charges against Paul. However, they were not able to prove any of these charges. Lysias had sent a letter with the soldiers that brought Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Lysias wrote in that letter in Acts 23:28-29, “And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.” Lysias said that Paul was not guilty of any crime that would result in death or even imprisonment.

When Felix found that Paul had committed no crime, he used the excuse that he would wait until Lysias came before he would make a judgment. Over the next two years Felix talked with Paul many times. Acts 24:25-26 says, “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.” Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.” Here we see that Felix knew that Paul was innocent. Festus could also see that Paul was innocent. He could see that Paul had not violated the Jewish law. He had not defiled the temple. He had not committed any crime against Caesar that would make him subject to Roman law.

However, Festus was more concerned about gaining favor with the Jewish leaders than he was about carrying out justice. As a result, Acts 25:9-12 says, “But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?” So Paul said, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. “For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.” Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!” Here we see that Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor.

As a result, Festus asked Paul a question, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?” Festus had just traveled the road from Caesarea to Jerusalem twice. If he was paying any attention at all as he traveled from Caesarea to Jerusalem he recognized that there were places among the way where it would be possible to kill a prisoner. In his concern to please the Jews he was willing to put Paul in a situation where it would be easy for them to kill him.

Paul recognized that Festus was willing to sacrifice the life of Paul in order to gain favor with the Jews. The nephew of Paul had told him about the plot of the Jews when he had earlier been in Jerusalem. As a result Paul said, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged.” Here we see that Paul claimed his right as a Roman citizen. Every Roman citizen had a right to appeal their case to Caesar. Paul went on to tell Festus when he had chosen to appeal his case to Caesar.

Paul said that he had done nothing wrong to the Jews and that Festus knew that very well. Paul had clearly recognized that Festus was trying to gain favor with the Jews. Here we see that Felix and Festus both had the same defect in their character. Acts 24:27 says, “But after two

years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.” Both governors were willing to break the law in order to gain favor with the Jews.

Paul went on to tell Festus, “For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying.” Paul was not afraid of death. In fact, he would later write in Philippians 1:21-24, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.” Paul was very willing to die for Christ. He said here that he was also willing to die if he was guilty of an offence and deserved to die.

However, Paul was not ready to let Festus participate in his murder by delivering Paul to the Jews. Paul made this clear by his statement, “I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar.” Festus knew by this statement that Paul understood exactly what Festus was doing by asking him to go to Jerusalem to be judged. By his statement Festus actually condemned his own character. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Here we see that Festus showed the fact that his heart was deceitful and that he was desperately wicked. Once Paul had appealed to Caesar Festus knew that he could not participate in the murder of Paul to please the Jews. Each of the Roman governors had a board of advisors that they consulted before they gave their final judgment. As a result, Festus talked to these advisors and then told Paul and the others there that day that Paul would be sent to Caesar.

In this topic we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how the Lord used even the evil plan of Festus to carry out the plan of God to give Paul the opportunity to present the Gospel to the Roman emperor. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how God defeats the evil plans of people.

Agrippa Was Told About the Case of Paul

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that God can even take the evil plans of men and change them in such a way that He carries out His plans instead. Festus wanted to gain favor with the Jews by making it possible for the Jews to murder Paul. Instead, God worked through his sinful choice to make it possible for Paul to present the Gospel to the emperor of the Roman Empire. In our topic today, we are going to see that Festus told Agrippa that it seemed unreasonable to him to send a prisoner to the emperor and not be able to list any crime. Agrippa agreed to help him figure out what charge to write against Paul.

Acts 25:13 says, “And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.” Here we see the last of the members of the family of Herod that are mentioned in the New Testament. This King Agrippa is the son of King Agrippa so is actually Agrippa 2. He is the great grandson of Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus when Jesus was a baby. His great uncle was the ruler who murdered John the Baptist and later had Christ sent to him by Pilate. He was the son of Herod Agrippa who killed James and put Peter in prison. Acts 12:2-3 says about his father, “Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.” Because of his background this Agrippa was very familiar with Jewish law.

Bernice was the sister of both Agrippa and Drusilla, the wife of the former governor, Felix. Agrippa and Bernice had both spent part of their lives in Rome. While in Rome Drusilla had been the mistress of the Roman emperor Vespasian and then later the mistress of his son Titus. Here we see that Agrippa and Drusilla were now living in an incestuous relationship. As we can see, even though this family was familiar with the Old Testament the entire family lived in total rebellion against God.

Acts 25:14-22 says, “When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.' Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."” Here we see that one day Festus told Agrippa about Paul and his appeal to Caesar.

Festus told Agrippa that Felix had left a prisoner in Caesarea when he completed his time as the governor. Then he told how the Jewish chief priests and elders had informed him about this prisoner when he had gone up to Jerusalem. Festus said that the Jewish leaders asked for judgment against him. The word translated “judgment” means a sentence given usually a death sentence. This word is used in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 where we read, “These shall be punished

with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” Here the word is translated judgment.

Festus said that he told the Jews that the Roman legal system did not deliver any man to death until the person that was accused had the opportunity to meet his accusers face to face. He said that any prisoner had the opportunity to defend himself against the charge that was brought against him. Of course this was especially true when the prisoner was a Roman citizen. Festus said that the Jews immediately came to Caesarea without any delay so that the Jews could bring their accusations against the prisoner.

Festus said he sat on the judgment seat the very next day. When the Jews got up to accuse the prisoner Festus said that he suddenly got a surprise. The Jews did not bring a charge like murder, insurrection or any other crime. Instead the Jews asked some questions of the prisoner about their own religion. Festus said that these questions were about a man named Jesus. The Jews said that this Jesus had died. In contrast, Paul said that this Jesus was alive. Here we see that the thing that makes Christianity different from any religion is the resurrection. Every religion has a founder. Once that religion has existed long enough the founder of that religion has died. It is true that Christ also died. However, the difference is that Christ has risen from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:19-20 says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” The resurrection is what makes Christianity different than any religion.

Festus then tried to cover up efforts to please the Jews and put Paul in a situation where the Jews could kill him. Instead, Festus told Agrippa that because he was uncertain of such questions that he had asked the prisoner if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged on such matters. This statement by Festus actually makes no sense. Since the accusers and Paul were both in Caesarea, a change of location to Jerusalem would not add any new facts about the questions. In addition, a change of location would not suddenly make the questions about the resurrection a crime for which a Roman governor could give the death penalty. Here we see that Festus was just trying to cover up his own hypocrisy.

Festus then said that the prisoner was unwilling to go to Jerusalem. Instead, he had appealed his case to Augustus. The word “Augustus” was a title which actually means the “revered one or the worshiped one”. Several of the Caesars added it to their name. The actual Caesar ruling at this time was Nero. Festus said that he had commanded Paul to be kept until he could be sent to Caesar. Agrippa answered that he had wanted to hear Paul for a long time. This probably filled Festus with happiness because he did not have any crimes that he could list for Paul. As a result, Festus told Agrippa that he would have the opportunity to hear Paul the next day.

Acts 25:23-27 says, “So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in. And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.” The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with a great showy appearance. Festus also had instructed all of his commanders and the leading men of the city of Caesarea to be there also. Then Paul was brought in.

In the rest of this chapter, we see that Festus gave his speech. Then in our next topic, we will see that Paul is asked to speak. Here we see that Festus wanted to impress Agrippa and all of those who were gathered there that day. After Paul was brought in Festus said, “King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us.” Then Festus went on to describe the prisoner. He said that a large crowd of Jews had petitioned him about his prisoner. The word translated “petitioned” means to request, pray or make intercession. He said that the Jews had made their request both in Jerusalem and Caesarea. Festus said that all the Jews said that Paul was not fit to live any longer. The word “translated” fit means it is necessary, right or proper. As a result, Festus made it very clear that this great multitude of Jews all wanted Paul put to death.

Festus said that after examining Paul that he found no reason why Paul should be put to death. What Festus did not say is that he had been seeking a way please the Jews by giving them an opportunity to murder Paul. Paul had understood exactly what Festus was doing and that was why he had appealed to Caesar. Although Paul had appealed to Caesar, here we see that Festus used the title of Augustus to show his reverence and worship of Caesar. Festus said that he had decided to send Paul to Augustus.

However, then Festus said that he had a problem. He wanted the help of the people there and especially the help of Agrippa to determine what he should write to his lord. Festus said he had no charge to write against Paul. As a result, he wanted Agrippa and the others to help examine Paul and then tell him what charges to write to Caesar. Then Festus said, “For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.” By this statement Festus shows that his only concern had been to please the Jews. He knew that Paul was innocent and that he should have released Paul. We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that there will be times when people will seek to please others instead of doing what they know is right in the sight of God. This happens because they are driven by fear instead of being led by the love of Christ. We want to help our children learn to be led by the love of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to please God rather than people.

Paul Told About His Life Before Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be led by the love of Christ, instead of being driven by the fear of people. Festus had to ask Agrippa to help him determine what charges to write in his letter to Caesar since Festus had no charges to write. We saw that the real problem was that Festus had tried to please the Jews instead of declaring Paul innocent and setting him free. In this topic, and the next two, we will see that Paul used this opportunity to present the Gospel to Agrippa.

Acts 26:1-3 says, "Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently." Since Festus had already introduced Paul to Agrippa in the previous chapter, we see that Agrippa now invites Paul to speak for himself.

The Lord had told Ananias about the future ministry of Paul in Acts 9:15 where we read, "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." As a result, Paul knew that it was a part of the plan of the Lord for him to speak to various kings and rulers. Paul was happy to speak to King Agrippa because Paul knew that was a part of the plan of the Lord for him. The Lord wants all people to have the opportunity to hear the Gospel including all kings and rulers. That is why the Lord gives certain people opportunities to speak to rulers.

Paul said that he was thankful to speak concerning all of the things of which he was accused by the Jews. Earlier the Jews had accused Paul of many things in Acts 24:5-6 where we read, "For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law." Felix had heard these charges but the Jews were unable to prove any of them. Festus was more concerned to please the Jews than to listen to Paul. As a result, Paul was thankful for the opportunity to speak to King Agrippa.

Paul knew that Agrippa was an expert in the customs of the Jews and was able to answer the questions of other government officials about the Jews. Festus had recognized that Agrippa had this knowledge. That is why Festus had said in Acts 25:26, "I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write." Paul saw this as an opportunity to present the Gospel both to Festus and to Agrippa. As a result, Paul made a request to Agrippa to hear him patiently. Paul was led by the Lord to tell about his background and his salvation.

Acts 26:4-8 says, "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?" Paul said that he had come to Jerusalem during the time of his youth.

The word translated “youth” talks about one who is a young adult. The word is used five times. The rich young ruler is quoted in Matthew, Mark and Luke when he says about the commandments of God, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” Then the word is used here. The fifth place where the word is used is 1 Timothy 4:12 where we read, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Timothy is still called a youth even though he had already traveled with Paul for several years when Timothy would have been in his thirties. As a young man he had to earn respect by his example.

Paul said that many of the Jews knew about him and his life during the years that he was a young man in Jerusalem. He had become well known for several reasons. Paul said that if these Jews would be willing to testify that they would have to say that he had lived as a Pharisee which was the strictest sect within the Jewish religion. Pharisees on the Sanhedrin had demonstrated that knowledge when Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin by Felix. In Acts 23:6-7 Paul had said to the Sanhedrin, “But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!” And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.” In fact, in Acts 23:9 the Pharisees declared Paul innocent. That verse says, “Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, “We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.” Since Agrippa understood the Pharisees, he understood exactly what Paul was saying.

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection while the Sadducees rejected the resurrection. Paul went on to say, “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.” The Pharisees on the Sanhedrin had defended Paul before the Sanhedrin because of that hope of the resurrection. That was due to the fact that the Pharisees did look forward to the resurrection. Paul said that he was being judged because of that hope in the resurrection. He said that Jews from all twelve tribes served God night and day because they wanted to be a part of that resurrection. Paul said that it was due to this fact that he believed in the resurrection that he was now accused by the Jews and especially the Sadducees.

Then Paul asked Agrippa a question, “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?” Paul saw this time before Agrippa as an opportunity to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ and that was his great concern. Here we see a key example for our own lives. 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” Paul was able to share that the reason that he had hope in his life was due to the resurrection. This is the same reason we can have great hope in our lives.

Agrippa was very familiar with Jewish beliefs. No one could be around the Jews without forming an opinion about Jesus of Nazareth whether that opinion was for Jesus or against Him. Acts 26:9-11 says, “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.” Paul went on to say that he had done everything possible to try and stop the teaching that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

Paul had begun his persecution of the followers of Jesus in the city of Jerusalem. He had arrested and imprisoned many of the saints in that city. Acts 8:3 says, “As for Saul, he made

havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” Paul said that he had done this under the authority of the chief priests. Paul also said that when Stephen and other individuals were put to death that he cast his vote against them. Since the Sanhedrin was the group that would condemn a person, this is a possible indication that Paul had been a member of the Sanhedrin before he met Christ on the road to Damascus. Paul had also held the coats of those who had stoned Stephen.

Paul went on to tell Agrippa that he looked for every opportunity to punish the followers of Jesus. He said that he punished them often in every synagogue. At that time there were about 400 synagogues just in the city of Jerusalem. From this we see that he would go into the various synagogues and look for people that had become followers of Jesus. When he found followers, he would punish them. He would even force them to blaspheme and speak against the name of Jesus. This meant that he would force them to renounce the name of Jesus or they would be severely punished, imprisoned or even put to death.

Paul described to Agrippa what this hatred of Jesus did to him. He said that he was exceedingly enraged against the followers of Jesus. The word translated “enraged against” comes from a root word that means to be so angry that the person seems to be out of their right mind. This rage of Paul was so great that he had even requested permission from the high priest to arrest Jews that had become followers of Jesus in foreign cities. He will describe that activity in more detail in our next topic.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children really be able to explain the tremendous change that happened in the life of Paul when he was stopped by Jesus on the road to Damascus. In order to understand that change fully, they need to understand the rage that he had against the followers of Jesus before Jesus stopped him. The better they understand the change in Paul the more they will be able to help others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the change that happened to Paul.

Paul Told How He Became a Christian

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the transformation that happened in the life of Paul when he became a Christian. We saw in our last topic that Paul described the rage that he had toward the followers of Jesus before he met Christ on the road to Damascus. In this topic we are going to see how Paul described what happened as he traveled toward Damascus to arrest and imprison the followers of Christ in that city. We will see the transformation that happened in the life of Paul when Jesus spoke to him on that road.

Acts 26:12-15 says, "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'" Here we see that Paul described how Jesus changed his life. Paul was traveling to the city of Damascus. As we mentioned in our last topic he had been given permission and authority from the chief priests to arrest and imprison any followers of Jesus that he found in the synagogues in the city of Damascus.

However, something happened that changed the life of Paul forever as he approached the city of Damascus. Suddenly about noon he saw a very bright light that came directly from heaven. In fact, that light was brighter than the light of the sun at noontime. This light was shining like a searchlight on Paul and on all those traveling with him. That light was so bright that no one could continue to stand and Paul and the men with him all fell to the ground. Then a voice began to speak to Paul in the Hebrew language.

Acts 9:4-5 says, "Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'" Here we see that Paul could still remember the exact words that the voice had spoken to him many years earlier. Paul could also remember the exact words that he answered. However, the thing that Paul remembered the most was when the voice said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Paul had thought that he was serving God by arresting and imprisoning the followers of Jesus. Suddenly he realized that Jesus is God and that he was fighting against God.

The desire of Paul was to see Agrippa and all those gathered there that day also recognize that Jesus is God and receive Jesus. A short time later when Festus accused Paul of being insane, Paul made a personal appeal to Agrippa. Acts 26:26-28 says, "For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian.'" We see that Agrippa had to face his own choice that day and he made the choice not to believe.

Acts 26:16-18 says, "But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." Here we see that Paul went

on to tell Agrippa what else Jesus had said to him.

Jesus told Paul to get up and stand on his feet. Jesus said that he had appeared to Paul for a very important purpose. Jesus told Paul that he had stopped him to make Paul a minister and a witness. He was to become a servant of Jesus. In addition, Jesus told Paul that he would be an official witness of Jesus. He would be an official witness of the things that he had already seen. Jesus told him that he would also be an official witness of the things that would be revealed to him at a later time. The time when those things would be revealed is described in Galatians 1:15-17 which says, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.” Jesus revealed many things personally to Paul while he was in the desert of Arabia.

Paul also said that Jesus gave him both a promise and a commission. Jesus promised Paul that he would deliver him from both the Jews and the Gentiles. In addition, Jesus gave him a commission to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. Jesus also revealed that commission to Ananias when Jesus told Ananias in Acts 9:15-16, “But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.” Jesus told Paul what his message would be to the Gentiles.

Jesus told Paul that He would use him to do five things as he went to the Gentiles. First, Paul would tell the Gentiles how to have their spiritual eyes opened so that they could understand spiritual truth. Second, Paul would turn the Gentiles from darkness to light. John 3:19 says, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Jesus promised to use Paul to turn many Gentiles to this light. Third, Paul would turn Gentiles from Satan to God. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Jesus did use Paul to turn Gentiles from Satan and his idols to serve the living and true God. Fourth, Paul told many Gentiles how to have forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Fifth, Paul told many Gentiles how to receive an eternal inheritance through faith in Jesus.

Paul went on to tell Agrippa how he had responded to that heavenly vision. Acts 26:19-23 says, “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come--that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” Paul said that he had been obedient to that heavenly vision.

He had declared the message of the death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Acts 9:19-20 says, “So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.” Later Paul preached that Jesus is the Christ in Jerusalem and the surrounding area of Judea. Then the Lord provided Paul with the opportunity to share that message among the Gentiles. He said that wherever he went that he preached three things to the people with whom he spoke.

First, Paul preached that people should repent. The word translated “repent” means to change

one's mind for the better. As we saw in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 three paragraphs ago this meant turning from the sin of unbelief that caused people to worship idols. Second, Paul preached that they should turn to God. The way that they came to God was by believing in Jesus. John 14:6 says, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Here we are reminded that the only way that a person can come to the Father is through Christ. Third, Paul preached that they should do works befitting of repentance. Philippians 2:12-13 says, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." When God changes a person at the time of true repentance, every new Christian is also given a new nature that has a desire to please God by being obedient to Him.

Paul said that it was due to the fact that he preached that message to both Jews and Gentiles that the Jews seized him in the temple and tried to kill him. Paul said that he was still able to stand before King Agrippa that day because God had helped him. Paul was able to stand that day as he had done many times before sharing with every person whether that person was well known or unknown the things that both the prophets and Moses had written in the Old Testament. Both Moses and the prophets wrote that Christ would suffer, that he would be the first to rise permanently from the dead and that God wanted this message preached to both the Jews and the Gentiles.

This is also the message that we want to help both our physical children and spiritual children learn to share with others. The message of the death and resurrection of Christ is the only message that will provide salvation to any person whether that person is a Jew or a Gentile. We show our children how to share that message with others as we take them with us as we share that message with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Paul Invited Agrippa to Become a Christian

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. We show them how to share that message with others as we take them with us as we share that message with others. That is the message that is able to change and transform any life. The Lord gave Paul the opportunity to share that message with King Agrippa. In our topic today, we will see that Paul went on to give King Agrippa a personal invitation to both believe the message about the death and resurrection of Christ and to personally receive the eternal life that Christ offers to every person.

Festus had listened silently as Paul had talked to King Agrippa. However, Festus was not willing to keep quiet any longer. Acts 26:24-27 says, "Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." Festus suddenly showed that the message of the death and resurrection of Christ was bringing conviction to him in his own life.

The word translated "you are beside yourself" means one who speaks so that it does not seem that he is in his right mind. He said that Paul was speaking like a man that was insane. We see that Festus had some of the same thinking as the Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in miracles or the resurrection. Festus held these same beliefs. Festus interrupted the words of Paul to tell him that his education had so distorted his mind that it seemed like he was not in his right mind.

Paul took time from speaking to Agrippa to answer Festus. He showed great respect as he called Festus, most noble Festus. The word translated "most noble" was a title of respect for someone who had an important rank or office. Paul said that he spoke words that were words of truth and reason. The Word of God is truth and Paul said that he taught the things that were written by Moses and the prophets. The word translated "reason" means soundness of mind. Paul said that he felt free to speak about these things to King Agrippa because he said that King Agrippa knew about the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul said that none of the things that had happened to Christ had been done in a corner or secret place. Instead, people throughout the entire region were familiar with that message. In Acts 5:28 the Jewish religious leaders had said, "Saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

After answering the statement of Festus, Paul immediately began to speak to King Agrippa again. He asked Agrippa if he believed the prophets. He said that he knew that Agrippa believed. James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!" Agrippa was familiar with what the Jews taught about God, the Father. He was also familiar with what the Jews taught about Jesus. Paul knew that Agrippa believed but that he had not put that belief into practice. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Like the demons, Agrippa believed in God but he had not received Christ and the payment that Christ made for his sins.

Acts 26:28-29 says, "Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today,

might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.”” The word translated “persuade” means to induce or convince one to believe. The word is used in Acts 18:4 where we read, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” This statement of Agrippa can be interpreted two different ways: Almost you persuade men to become a Christian; or Do you think that you can persuade me to become a Christian in this short time? Whichever way Agrippa meant it, we see how Paul responded.

Paul said that he had a great concern both for Agrippa and for all those who were gathered there that day. It was the desire of Paul that each person there would completely place their faith in Christ and His death and resurrection. The only thing that Paul did not desire for the people there that day was the chains that he wore. Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, “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.” Paul knew salvation was the need of every person there that day. That was why it was more important for him to share that message rather than to defend himself regarding any accusations that the Jews had previously made.

Here we see that Paul gives us a great example for our own lives. We also need to have this same concern that each person with whom we talk would come to an understanding of how to repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ so that each person can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” Like Paul we need to be pleading with others that they will be reconciled and brought back together with God through Christ.

Once Agrippa said, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian,” he had made his choice. Acts 26:30-32 says, “When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.” Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”” Once Paul finished his response, Agrippa stood up to let Paul and everyone there realize that the hearing was over.

That day Festus, Agrippa and Bernice all had to make a choice. Festus showed that he had no understanding of the purpose of the death and resurrection of Christ when he cried with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” As a result, Festus made it clear that he had no interest in learning more. In contrast, Paul realized that Agrippa and Bernice had heard enough about Christ through the years that they had a clear understanding of the purpose why Christ died and the Father raised him from the dead. They chose to wait until some other time to believe. We never read that the time ever did come that they did believe.

After Festus, Agrippa and Bernice left the judgment hall, they talked together about Paul and what they had heard that day. Festus did not tell Agrippa that the reason for the hearing that day was the result of the fact that he had tried to please the Jews. Acts 25:7-9 says, “When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.” But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?”” Festus was trying to cover up the fact that he knew that Paul had not broken any Roman laws.

As the three talked together, they said, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.” Here we see that Festus, Agrippa and Bernice realized two things. First, they realized

that Paul had not committed any crime that deserved the death penalty. Festus had actually admitted that earlier when he said in Acts 25:26-27, "I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him." Here we see that Agrippa were in agreement with what Festus had said earlier.

Second, they realized that Paul was not guilty of any crime and that he should not even be in prison. Acts 26:32 says, "Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." Here we see that Agrippa told Festus that Paul deserved to be set free. However, because of the fact that none of the three were willing to repent of their sin of unbelief and turn to Christ, they were not willing to take action and set Paul free. Instead, Agrippa said that Paul could not be set free because he had appealed to Caesar. Paul had to appeal to Caesar because Festus wanted to please the Jews by giving them the opportunity to kill Paul on the way to Jerusalem. Here we see that Agrippa gave his permission to send Paul to Caesar rather than set him free because of the fact that Paul had earlier appealed to Caesar. When people reject Christ, they will often help each other try to cover their sins.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Paul and take each opportunity to invite people to turn to Christ. We will best help our children learn to invite people to repent of their sin and turn to Christ as they hear us regularly encourage people to turn from their sin and turn to Christ. Children learn best by example as we show them by our example the importance of regularly inviting people to repent of their sin of unbelief and trust in the death and resurrection of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you give your children an example to follow.

Paul Began His Trip to Rome

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to present the message of the death and resurrection of Christ and learn to invite people to turn to Christ and receive Him as their Savior. We saw that our children will learn best as they observe us and see that we regularly invite people to receive Christ. We also saw that Festus, Agrippa and Bernice all agreed that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. However, to try to cover their own sins they agreed that Paul should be sent to Caesar rather than set him free.

Acts 27:1-5 says, “And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment. So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care. When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.” Here we see that the decision was made that Paul would travel to Italy by ship rather than traveling the roads that led to Rome. A centurion by the name of Julius was given the responsibility to guard Paul and some other prisoners and take them by ship to Rome.

One of the things that we notice is the other Christians that traveled to Rome with Paul. In Acts 21:18 we read, “On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.” Here we see that Luke had been with Paul when he arrived at Jerusalem since the verse says “us” instead of “them”. We do not read where Luke was from that time until this first verse of Acts 27. Many people think that during this two year period Luke spent time interviewing the people who were still living that knew Christ personally. Luke says in Luke 1:1-4, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” Here we see that Luke received the information that he wrote in the book of Luke from eyewitnesses.

However, we see that Luke has now rejoined Paul as he started his trip toward Rome. We also see that Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica traveled with Paul to Rome. Acts 20:4 says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” Here we see that Aristarchus was one of those who traveled with Paul to take the offering from the churches in Greece to the church in Jerusalem. It is probable that he had been in Caesarea while Paul was in prison for the two years in Caesarea in order to meet the needs that Paul had while he was in prison. Felix had said in Acts 24:23, “So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.” In that time prisoners needed friends to buy food and prepare their meals for them while they were in prison.

The ship made a stop in the city of Sidon which was about 70 miles north of Caesarea. Here we see that Paul had gained the respect of Julius, the Roman centurion who was responsible for him because Julius gave him the freedom to leave the ship so that he visit his friends in that city

and they could provide for his needs for the trip. This also shows that Julius had complete trust in Paul that he would return because a soldier who let a prisoner escape was in very serious trouble. When the ship sailed from Sidon the winds were blowing the wrong way for a sailing ship and so the ship sailed between the island of Cyprus and the mainland to protect them from the strong winds. They traveled past the regions of Cilicia and Pamphylia until they came to the city of Myra which was in the Roman province of Lycia. There they had to change ships.

Acts 27:6-8 says, "There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board. When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea." Many of the ships that stopped at the city of Lycia were ships that carried grain from Egypt to Italy for the Roman government. That was true of this ship. Acts 27:38 says, "So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea." Here we see that it was only when the sailors knew that the ship was going to be wrecked that they finally threw the wheat into the sea to lighten the ship.

As the ship left Lycia, we see that the ship traveled very slowly to the city of Cnidus. Cnidus was almost straight south of the city of Ephesus and the way they were traveling showed that they planned to cross the small piece of land near Corinth on their way to Italy. The reason that they traveled so slowly was due to a strong northwest wind. Instead, of being able to travel in a straight line they had to zigzag with the ship because the wind was blowing against them. The winds got even stronger when they left Cnidus and they finally had to sail south and sail around the south side of the island of Crete so that the island would protect them from the strong winds from the northwest. They actually started to get the protection of the island after they passed Salmone which was on the northeast coast of Crete although it was difficult to get past that point.

Then they sailed along the south side of the island of Crete. There were various cities and harbors on the south side of the island of Crete. Near the city of Lasea there was a bay called Fair Havens. Acts 27:9-13 says, "Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives." Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there. When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete."

Because they had such a difficult time fighting the wind it was late enough into the fall that it was now becoming dangerous to sail. The fast on the Day of Atonement was already past so it was the very end of September or early October and sailing on the Mediterranean Sea was considered dangerous after the middle of September. Paul knew that it was dangerous to sail and so he gave a warning to the centurion, the owner of the ship and the men sailing the ship. Paul said that if they sailed further that the trip would end with disaster and much loss. Paul said that this disaster would bring great injury and loss. In addition to the loss of the cargo and the ship, this loss could even include their own lives.

Paul knew the consequences of sailing a ship after it became dangerous to sail. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:25, "Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea." Three different times Paul had been on a ship when it was shipwrecked. One of those times he had spent a night and a day in the water

before he escaped from the water. Paul also looked to the Lord for guidance and that was why he had given his warning.

However, the helmsman as well as the owner of the ship did not agree with Paul. The helmsman was the one who was in charge of steering the ship. Because of his knowledge of travel on the Mediterranean Sea his opinion was respected. The owner of the ship also felt that they could safely travel a little further. The centurion was more influenced by these two men than he was by Paul. Since the ship was a grain ship that carried grain from Egypt to Italy for the Roman government, the centurion had the right to make the final decision but he listened to the other two men.

The bay at Fair Havens was not an ideal place to spend the winter. A place called Phoenix was at the west end of the island of Crete. That place had a much better harbor. As a result, the helmsman, the owner and most of the rest of the crew thought that would be a much better place to spend the winter. That seaport was only about 40 miles from Fair Havens so the helmsmen and owner thought that they could safely reach that city.

Then the wind changed direction and began to blow softly from the south. A south wind is much safer in that area at that time of year. Since the ship was at a harbor on the south side of the island of Crete and wanted to go to the west, the helmsman and owner thought that it was now safe for them to travel. A south wind would make it easy to stay close to the island of Crete as they traveled the 40 miles. They thought that they could make the trip safely with a south wind.

Those who do not know Christ will usually depend on their own knowledge and wisdom instead of seeking the guidance of the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why it is important to always seek the guidance of the Lord in every situation because He knows all things and we are very limited in our knowledge as humans. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the importance of being guided by the Lord moment by moment by your own dependence on the Lord.

God Spoke to Paul During a Storm

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of depending on the Lord for guidance, instead of depending on our own knowledge. We saw that Paul was being taken by ship to Rome because of his appeal to Caesar. Today, we are going to see why the owner of the ship and the others on board should have listened to Paul and the guidance that he had received from the Lord, instead of depending on their own knowledge.

Acts 27:14-17 says, "Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the "northeaster," swept down from the island. The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure. When the men had hoisted it aboard, they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along." The ship had started sailing along the south side of the island of Crete with a south wind. It was only 40 miles from Fair Havens to Phoenix so they thought that they could make that trip safely.

However, we see that they had only gone a small part of that 40 miles when the wind changed direction. The wind started blowing from the northeast instead of the south. The wind had the force of a hurricane. This kind of wind was greatly feared by those who sailed on the Mediterranean Sea. Everyone on the ship suddenly realized that their lives were in great danger. They could not turn the ship so that it faced the wind. Instead, the wind began to drive the ship and there was nothing that the sailors could do to control the ship.

They received a small break from the wind when they passed south of a small island named Cauda. The sailors had just barely enough time to make the lifeboat secure. Once they had the lifeboat on the ship the sailors immediately put cables around the ship and tightened them with winches in an effort to try and hold the ship together during the storm. However, once they passed that island the sailors on the ship knew that they now faced a much greater danger. They knew that they were being driven toward an area known as the sandbars of Syrtis. In the past many ships had been driven onto those sandbars and then the waves would beat on the ships until the ships were broken apart. They immediately lowered the sails of the ship and put out a sea anchor to try and slow the progress of the ship. Then all they could do was let the ship be driven by the wind.

Acts 27:18-20 says, "We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved." The next day the storm grew even worse. The ship took a violent battering from the storm as the ship was tossed by the waves. They also threw the cargo on the ship overboard in an effort to lighten the ship. The third day the storm continued its violence so then they threw the tackle of the ship into the sea. The word translated "tackle" means the equipment or gear of the ship. They threw the tackle overboard in an effort to make the ship lighter.

However, the storm did not end. Instead, we read that the storm lasted for many days. The storm was so terrible that they did not even see the sun once during those days or any stars at night during that time. As the storm continued day after day, the people on the ship gave up

any hope that they would even survive. The word translated “saved” means to rescue from danger or destruction. It is most often used in the New Testament to talk about salvation from sin. Christ used the word in Luke 19:10 when he said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” However, in this verse, the word is used to speak of being saved from physical death.

Acts 27:21-24 says, “After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’” The men on the ship went many days without food. This was probably due both to their fear and to the fact that the storm was so bad that most of them were seasick from the tossing of the ship in the waves.

Paul had waited a long time to say anything. However, after many days Paul stood up and said that they should have taken his advice not to sail from Crete. He said that would have spared them from the damage and loss that they were experiencing. Most people would stop at this point after they had said, “You should have listened to me.” In contrast, that was just the introduction to what Paul wanted to say. Paul said that he wanted to urge the people on the ship that day to be cheerful and to have courage. Paul went on to tell the men that none of the people on the ship would die. Only the ship would be destroyed. The key is that what Paul said was not his own opinion.

Paul went on to say that an angel spoke to him the previous night. This angel had been sent by the God to whom Paul belonged. This angel had a message for Paul from the God that Paul served. Christ told the Sadducees in Mark 12:26-27, “Now about the dead rising--have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!” Paul had later written in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Paul knew that he served the God of the living because he served the God who created all things.

The angel that had spoken to Paul had stood beside him and gave him a promise. That promise was, “Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.” Paul knew that he did not have to fear. God had said that he must stand trial before Caesar. That was the plan of God to make it possible for Caesar to hear the message of the Gospel. However, the angel also gave Paul a second promise. God was going to show his grace to everyone on that ship by sparing all of their lives from the storm even though the ship would be destroyed. Here we see why Paul told the people on that ship that they could be cheerful instead of being filled with fear.

Paul went on to say in Acts 27:25-26, “So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.” In the middle of the storm Paul assured the men on the ship that they could be cheerful and have courage. Paul had experienced many fears in his past life and he had always found that God was sufficient. In 2 Corinthians 7:5-6 Paul wrote, “For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” Paul had experienced much difficulty in his life. He had seen conflicts around him. He had experienced fears within. He had times in his life when he was downcast. In all of these situations Paul had found that God had given him comfort. Now Paul wanted those on the ship to experience that

same comfort and peace.

The reason that Paul could have that comfort is also given. Paul said that he had faith in God. As a result, he expected God to do exactly as God had promised him. Here we see a very important key for our own lives. We cannot trust in ourselves or our own ideas. However, we can trust in God and His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Everything in the Bible was given by the very breath of God as the Holy Spirit guided the writers that wrote the various books of the Bible. As a result, we can have faith in God and His Word.

The meaning of faith is explained for us in Hebrews 11:1 which says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” We could also say that faith in God means that we know that God will do exactly as He has promised even though we have not seen it happen yet. God had spoken to Paul through the angel. That was why Paul had full confidence that God would preserve the lives of every person on that ship even though the ship would be shipwrecked.

Paul also told those on the ship what would happen to the ship. The angel had said that the ship must run aground on some island. The word that is translated “must” means it is necessary. Here we see that it was the plan of the God that the ship would be destroyed but that all of the people on that ship would have their lives preserved so that each one would have one more opportunity to repent of the sin of unbelief and come to God through faith in Christ. This is an important lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. Many times when people have a close encounter with death they wonder why they were able to escape death. We want to show our children the importance of using such opportunities to share with people that God has given them one more opportunity to repent of their sin. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to see the opportunities that the Lord gives to share the Gospel.

Paul Became the Leader During the Storm

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God will preserve their lives until they have completed the ministry that the Lord has prepared for their lives. When people who are not Christians have a close encounter with death our children can also tell such individuals that God has preserved their lives to give them one more opportunity to repent of their sin of unbelief and turn to God by placing their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. Today, we are going to see how Paul the prisoner became the leader on the ship because of his faith in the Lord.

Acts 27:27-29 says, "Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come." We saw in our last topic that the people on the ship had not seen the sun or the stars for many days. Here we see that the number of days had reached fourteen since they had left the harbor of Fair Havens.

Throughout this time they had been driven up and down in the Adria or Adriatic Sea. At the time of the New Testament the Adria or Adriatic Sea was the area that stretched from the western coast of Greece and Croatia on the east to Italy and the island of Sicily which was southwest of Italy on the west. About midnight the sailors could tell that the ship was getting close to land. When a ship gets close to land the sound of waves crashing against the rocks can be heard especially in a storm when the waves are large.

The sailors immediately took soundings to find out how deep the water was where they were. The first time they found that the water was twenty fathoms (a fathom is six feet) or about 120 feet deep. A short time later the next sounding showed that the water was only 15 fathoms or about 90 feet deep. That immediately brought a new fear to the sailors. They were afraid that the water would get so shallow that the front of the ship would run aground on the rocks or get stuck in the sand and the waves would break the ship into pieces during the night. As a result, the sailors quickly dropped four anchors from the back of the ship to keep the ship from getting any closer to the shore. The word translated "prayed" means to wish or to pray. Some people probably wished for the day and other prayed.

Acts 27:30-32 says, "And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off." The sailors decided that they were going to try and escape from the ship in the small boat. In fact, they had let the small boat down in the water and were pretending that they were going to put out anchors from the front of the boat. Meanwhile they were actually planning to escape from the ship and try to get to land in the small boat.

Paul realized what the sailors were planning to do. Then Paul spoke to the centurion and the soldiers. Paul told them, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." The soldiers took immediate action when they heard the words of Paul. The soldiers cut the ropes that held the small boat and let the small boat fall into the water. Here we see that Paul began to take leadership to protect the people that were on the ship. Paul realized that the sailors would be needed to steer the ship once the daylight came.

A godly leader is one who sees what needs to be done in order to do what is best for all of the people. Joseph demonstrated this kind of leadership when he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh. He did not just interpret the dreams. Once he had interpreted the dreams then he gave godly counsel. Genesis 41:33-36 says, “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.” Here we see that godly counsel tells people how to prepare for the future.

Paul showed that same godly wisdom as he told the centurion and the soldiers how to prepare for the coming of the morning light. Psalm 119:97-100 tells followers of the Lord how to gain godly wisdom so that we can do what is best for all people. Those verses say, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.” Here we see that we gain godly wisdom from the Word of God. Joshua 1:8 says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” This verse shows that we gain godly wisdom as we meditate on the Word of God.

As we meditate on the Word of God in our own lives we will see that God guides us so that we are able to give godly counsel from the Word and allow God to work in the lives of people through His Word. The Lord promises in Ephesians 3:20-21, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” The previous verses show that God works through His Word as we pray for those that the Lord has called us to lead.

God also used Paul to provide leadership for everyone on board when the light of the morning came. Acts 27:33-37 says, “And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.” And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.” Here we see that Paul took leadership by both his words and his actions.

Paul spoke to everyone on the ship as the day began to dawn. He reminded them that it had been fourteen days since they had eaten very much food. When a ship is being tossed by the waves in a storm most of the people become so seasick that they do not want to eat. In addition, it is very hard to prepare much food when the ship is going up and down. Paul realized that the people on the ship were going to need to get to land and they needed physical strength to reach the land. Paul urged everyone to eat so that they would be able to survive. Then he used a statement that is used several times in the Old Testament and was later quoted by Luke. Luke 21:18 says, “But not a hair of your head shall be lost.” This statement is a statement that God will provide complete protection from the dangers that people face.

The words that Paul spoke were important. However, his actions were even more important.

We have seen that we provide godly leadership both by prayer and by sharing the Word of God. However, true godly leadership also provides an example to follow. That was what Paul did next. He took some bread and gave thanks to God for the bread that God had provided. Then in front of all of the people on the ship Paul began to eat the bread. By his action Paul showed that his full trust was in the Lord and that he knew that the Lord would bring them safely to land.

The other people on the ship saw the actions of Paul and his actions provided great encouragement to them. Then they also took food and began to eat. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:16, "Therefore I urge you, imitate me." Later in 1 Corinthians 11:1 he wrote, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Paul did not speak those words here. Instead, as he began eating the food the other people on the ship were encouraged and they also began to eat food. Christ also showed the importance of leading others by our own example. After washing the feet of the disciples in John 13, Christ said in John 13:15, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." Godly leadership leads by example.

We also see the number of people that were on this ship. We see that there were a total of 276 people on the ship in addition to the load of wheat that the ship was carrying. This meant that this was a very large ship for that day. It also meant that God saved the lives of many people from physical death through the godly leadership of Paul. Here we see the impact of leading by example. We also want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of learning to lead others by their example. As they learn to pray and meditate on the Word of God, then the Lord will give them many opportunities to lead others as they share Biblical principles with others and show others how to apply those Biblical principles by the example of their own lives. Biblical principles that are both taught and then modeled by example are used by the Lord to change and transform the lives of many others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to lead others by their godly example.

Paul Saw God Deliver Them From the Storm

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to provide godly leadership to others. We saw that in order to provide godly leadership that we must pray and meditate on the Word of God so that we know what to do when the opportunity comes. Then when the Lord opens a door of opportunity we are equipped to lead people by our example. Because Paul was praying and meditating on the word of God, he was able to exercise godly leadership and preserve the lives of the 276 people that were on the ship. Today, we will see how God worked to get all of the people on that ship safely to land.

We concluded our last topic by seeing that Paul encouraged the people to eat some food so that they would have the strength needed to get them to the shore. Acts 27:38 says, “So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.” The word that is translated “enough” means to eat until a person is satisfied or full. Here we see that the example provided by Paul so encouraged the people that they ate until they were satisfied. That meant that they would have the strength that they needed that day to reach the land.

We also see that they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat on the ship into the sea so that the ship would float much higher as it neared the land. The transportation of this wheat from Egypt to Rome was the way that the owner of the ship made his living. To him the wheat had great value. However, at this point everyone on the ship realized that it was more important to lighten the ship in order to make it possible for the ship to get closer to the land. As a result, the people on the ship quickly unloaded the entire cargo of wheat from the ship.

Acts 27:39-40 says, “When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore.” For fourteen days the people on the ship had not been able to see the sun or the stars. As a result, they had no idea where the ship had gone during that time. When the full light of the day came none of those on the ship recognized the land that they were approaching.

However, they noticed that there was a bay with a beach. The sailors decided that they would try to sail the ship into the bay and then run the ship into the sand on the beach if they could manage to get the ship into the bay. The word translated “bay” is usually translated bosom and applied to the formed by the upper part of a loose garment that a person wore. This word is translated bosom speaks of the hollow formed by the loose upper part of a garment in each of the five other places that the word is used in the New Testament. However, when it talked about water it came to apply to a bay of the sea.

Then they cut off the ropes that held the anchors and left the anchors in the sea. They also loosened the rudder ropes. Large ships in that day had two rudders. Because of the terrible storm these rudder ropes had been used to lift the rudders out of the water because the rudders could not be used in the storm. When the ropes were loosened the rudders were allowed to fall back into their normal place so that the sailors could use the rudders to steer the ship as they tried to aim the ship into the bay. The sailors also hoisted the main sail of the ship so that the wind would carry them toward the shore.

However, the ship ran into a problem as it was sailing toward the bay. Acts 27:41 says, “But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and

remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.” Many times there will be a sandbar or a reef that forms in the place where the water comes into the bay because of the fact that the water is coming from two different directions as it comes into the bay. At least part of the time the sandbar will be below the surface of the water. Because of the storm, the sailors had no way to see if there was a sandbar between them and the bay.

As a result, when the ship hit the sandbar, the front of the ship became stuck in the sand. There was no way to get the ship loose from the sandbar. The ship was stuck and remained immovable. This meant that the ship was at the mercy of the storm. The waves were coming from two different directions and were beating on the back part of the ship. As the waves continued to beat against the back of the ship, the back part of the ship began to break into pieces. This meant that the centurion and the soldiers had to decide what to do with the men that were prisoners.

Acts 27:42-44 says, “And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.” The soldiers decided that the best thing to do was to kill all of the prisoners.

The reason why the soldiers decided to kill the prisoners was to prevent them from swimming away from the ship and escaping. The soldiers knew the consequences if prisoners escaped. Acts 12:18-19 says, “Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.” In this passage we see that Peter had escaped and so the soldiers who were guarding him were put to death. That was the penalty for allowing a prisoner to escape. To protect themselves from possibly being put to death, the soldiers decided that the safest thing to do was kill all of the prisoners that were on the ship.

However, the Roman centurion that was in charge of the soldiers had a much different idea. The Roman centurion wanted to save the life of Paul. The Roman centurion, Julius, had become a friend of Paul and trusted him. Acts 27:3 says, “And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.” The centurion had even allowed Paul to leave the ship and go and visit his friends when the ship was at Sidon.

The centurion had also learned to depend on Paul for leadership during the storm because Julius saw that the Lord was giving wisdom to Paul. In Acts 27:30-32 we read, “And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.” The fact that the centurion depended on Paul for leadership during the storm meant that the sailors stayed on the ship and were able to bring the ship closer to the shore.

The centurion had also seen how Paul had depended on the Lord and had led by example. The centurion had probably been controlled by fear along with the rest of the people on the ship when Paul shared the message that God had sent His angel that said that God would show His grace and spare the lives of all those who were on the ship with Paul. The centurion saw that Paul showed his faith in the promises of God by taking food, thanking the Lord for it and encouraging all of those on the ship to do the same so that they would have the strength to make it to the shore. The centurion realized that the only reason that his own life was being spared

was due to the fact that Paul had shown real leadership because of his faith in the Lord. As a result, the centurion had a great desire to protect the life of Paul and so he was willing to risk his life by ordering the soldiers to not kill the prisoners but rather let them get to shore any way that they could.

The centurion then commanded the prisoners who could swim to jump overboard first and swim to the land. The centurion felt that because of the example of Paul that none of the other prisoners would attempt to escape once they had reached land. He also told those who did not know how to swim how they could make it to the shore. He told them to find boards or pieces of the ship that were breaking off and to hold on to those pieces of wood and let the waves carry them to the shore.

Everyone on the ship saw that God was true to His promise to Paul because when they got to land the people on the ship found that every person had escaped and had reached the land safely. Here we see a real lesson about the importance of obedience to God. When we are obedient to Him, God will work through whatever circumstances that we face to bring glory to His name. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." It should be our desire in all that we do to bring glory to the name of God. That will happen as we submit our lives to Him and trust the promises that He gives us in the Word of God.

We also want to show our physical and spiritual children how to bring glory to God by trusting Him to work through their lives as they are obedient to Him. As Romans 15:5-6 says, "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We want to provide our children with an example of how to glorify God so that they can also glorify Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to bring glory to God.

Paul Ministered on the Island of Malta

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to bring glory to God. We saw that Paul certainly brought glory to God by the things that he said and did as he used the circumstances of the terrible storm to show the people on the ship that his trust was in the Lord and that because of that trust that they did not need to be fearful but could be encouraged. In this topic we will see that Paul also had a great impact on the people of the island where the ship had been shipwrecked.

Acts 28:1-2 says, “Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.” In the last topic we saw that the ship that Paul was taking to Italy was shipwrecked. However, God had sent His angel to tell Paul that all those traveling with him on the ship would have their lives. Those on the ship had all escaped and they found out that they were on the island of Malta. Malta is a fairly small island only 9 miles wide and 17 miles long.

The people that lived on the island of Malta showed great kindness to the people that had been on the ship. The word translated “natives” was the word used by the Greeks of any foreigner that did not know the Greek language. The natives of the island built a fire so that the people that had been on the ship could get dry. They also made all of the people from the ship feel welcome and accepted because of their kindness. The fire was needed because the rain was continuing to fall and it was cold. Here we see that the Lord can use acts of kindness to make people feel accepted and welcome.

Acts 28:3-6 says, “But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.” But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.” Paul immediately began gathering wood to help the fire continue to burn.

The word translated “viper” is the word used for a poisonous snake. Mark 16:18 had a promise that would apply here, “They will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” We are going to see that nothing happened to Paul. The word is used four other times in the New Testament. John the Baptist used the word in Matthew and Luke to describe the Pharisees and Sadducees and their teaching. Christ also used the word twice to describe the same groups and their false teachings. However, in this verse, it was used to describe a very poisonous snake. As a result, we see that the false teachings of these groups were like the poison of a very poisonous snake.

As Paul was putting the wood that he had gathered on the fire, a viper came up out of the fire and bit the hand of Paul and remained fastened to his hand. The natives who had built the fire to help the people from the ship dry out and get warm immediately thought that Paul must be guilty of murder. Here we are reminded of the fact that many people are quick to judge others when they see something bad happen to a person. Christ said in Matthew 7:1-2, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” Even though it is common in the world to

quickly judge others, as Christians we are not to judge. Instead, we are to leave all judgment to the Lord. The natives said that even though Paul had survived the storm that justice was not going to allow him to live.

Meanwhile, Paul just shook the viper into the fire. The Lord had chosen to protect him and the bite of the viper did not cause anything to happen to Paul. Usually when a person is bitten by a very poisonous snake the body will quickly be swollen in size especially the area close to the bite. The natives watched Paul and waited for him to begin to swell or even to suddenly fall down dead. Instead, nothing happened to Paul. The people of the island were very surprised when they saw that nothing happened and so they continued to watch Paul for a long time.

However, when nothing happened to Paul the people changed their minds and decided that Paul must be a god. This is not the first time that people had come to that conclusion about Paul. The people of Lystra had also decided that Paul was a god when he healed the man that had been born crippled. Acts 14:11 says, "Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!'" The people of Lystra thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods that had come to their city in the form of men. They prepared to offer sacrifices to them until Paul stopped them. Later the people of that city stoned Paul so we see that the minds of people can change very quickly. Here we see that the opposite had happened. The people had thought that Paul was a murderer and then decided that he must be a god instead.

Acts 28:7-10 says, "In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary." In these verses, we see that Paul ministered on that island in other ways during the time that the people from the ship were on the island.

The estate of Publius, the Roman governor of the island, was near the place where the ship was wrecked. Publius invited Paul and those with him to come to his estate. They he entertained them and provided for them. In fact, he showed great kindness for three days. Then Paul learned that the father of Publius was sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul saw this as an opportunity to minister to Publius and his family. Paul went to see the father and prayed for him. Then Paul laid hands on the father and the father was healed by the Lord.

The rest of the people on the island heard that the father of Publius had been healed. Then the people from throughout the island who had diseases came to Paul and they were all healed. Here we see that all were healed. This is an example of the way that the Lord confirmed the ministry of the apostles and their message about the resurrection. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" The same thing had happened earlier in the ministry of Peter. Acts 5:16 says, "Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed." Here we see that God healed all that were sick.

The Scripture also gives instructions for Christians about praying for the sick today in James 5:14-16. Those verses say, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the

prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Here we see that we are to call the elders of the church and together they are to pray for the one who is sick. We are reminded that the Lord is the One who is the Healer. We see that sometimes sickness of caused by sin. In such a case that sin will also be forgiven. Since it is the elders that pray rather than just one person, then all glory will go to God and not to the person.

The people on the island were very thankful for the way that the Lord had worked in the lives of all those who had diseases. As a result, the people of the island showed great kindness to Paul and the team of men with him (which included at least Aristarchus and Luke). The people honored this team in many different ways. This also provided many opportunities for Paul and the others to share the Gospel with the people of the island over the next three months before they left the island. Here we see that one of the reasons that God allowed this terrible storm that caused the ship to be shipwrecked was to give the people of this island the opportunity to hear the Gospel and see the power of God work in their lives.

Three months later the Roman centurion was able to get booking for the soldiers and prisoners on a ship that had spent the winter at the island. When Paul and the others got ready to leave the island on that ship, the people of the island provided the things that were needed by Paul and the team as they made the final part of their trip to the city of Rome. Here we are reminded again of the way that the Lord provides for those who are faithful in their service for Him. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the Lord will provide the things that they need as we let them see how the Lord provides for our needs. That will make it possible for our children learn to trust the Lord to provide their daily needs as they serve the Lord and help others to learn about Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to see how the Lord supplies our daily needs.

Paul Called Together the Jews in Rome

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how the Lord protected and provided for Paul when he was shipwrecked on the island of Malta. He was bitten by a poisonous snake and the Lord kept that snake from harming him. When the governor of the island showed kindness and provided for their needs, Paul was able to minister to the father of the governor. Then the Lord gave Paul the opportunity to heal all those who had diseases on the island. In this topic we are going to see what happened as Paul traveled the last part of the trip to Rome and then called together the Jews that were living in the city of Rome.

Acts 28:11-14 says, “After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome.” During the winter months we have seen that it was very dangerous to travel on the Mediterranean Sea by ship since the ships in that day were very small compared to the ships today. As a result, those who were shipwrecked had to stay on the island of Malta until the early spring when it became safe to travel again.

A ship from Alexandria in Egypt had spent the winter at Malta. This ship had a figurehead called the Twin Brothers. Here we see that the owners of the ship were very familiar with Greek religion. The Greeks said that their Greek God Zeus had twin sons named Castor and Pollux and they were supposed to protect sailors. This is a reminder that belief in the Greek gods was a very common religion in many of the countries around the Mediterranean Sea. The Roman centurion made arrangements for his soldiers and the prisoners to travel on this ship toward Rome.

The first place that they stopped was at the city of Syracuse on the island of Sicily. The ship stayed at that city for three days. From there the ship traveled to the city of Rhegium which is on the southern tip of the country of Italy. They had to stay there for a day until they got a wind that would help them to sail through the straits of Messina which is a narrow water passage between Sicily and Italy. The next day a south wind started blowing which made it possible for them to sail north and a day later they reached the city of Puteoli. The city of Puteoli was the main port for both the country of Italy and the city of Rome even though it was many miles south of Rome. The port closest to Rome was not deep enough for the grain ships to come into the harbor at that time so that was why the grain ships unloaded their grain at Puteoli.

In Puteoli Paul found that there was a group of Christians. Paul and the team with him were invited to stay with these Christians until the Roman centurion and the other prisoners were ready to leave for Rome. As a result, the Lord gave Paul and the team the opportunity to encourage these Christians for a period of seven days. Then they began their trip by foot to the city of Rome.

Acts 28:15-16 says, “And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.” Since Paul had spent seven days in Puteoli before starting toward Rome, the Christians in Rome heard that Paul was coming to Rome. As a result, some of the Christians in Rome came to meet Paul. Some of these Christians reached Appii Forum before they met Paul. That town was over 40 miles

south of Rome. Others met Paul at a town called Three Inns because it was a place where travelers often stayed overnight. It was about 30 miles south of Rome.

Paul was filled with thanks to God when these Christians came to meet him. This was a great encouragement to Paul as he came to the city of Rome. A few years earlier Paul had written the book of Romans to the church in the city of Rome. The fact that these Christians walked that far to meet Paul told him that his letter a few years earlier had been a great encouragement to them. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Now they wanted to be an encouragement to Paul.

When Paul and the other prisoners arrived in the city of Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. Apparently Julius, the centurion, must have told the captain of the guard about Paul because Paul was given different treatment than the rest of the prisoners. We see that Paul was allowed to stay by himself in a house and have a soldier guard him. Acts 28:30 says, "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him." This made it possible for others to freely visit Paul throughout the entire two year period before Caesar heard his case.

Acts 28:17-20 says, "And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." Paul realized that it was very important to talk to the leaders of the Jews that were in Rome. He needed to know if the high priest had contacted them.

The Jewish leaders came to the house that Paul had rented after three days and Paul explained to them why he had been sent to Rome. These leaders would have been the leaders of the various synagogues in the city of Rome and would have represented the entire Jewish population in Rome. When the Romans gained control of the land of Israel in 63 BC, the Roman emperor took part of the Jews as slaves to Rome. Later these slaves had been freed and formed a fairly large Jewish community in Rome.

Paul told these leaders that he had done nothing either against the Jewish people or against the customs of the fathers. Paul had told the Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 22:3, "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today." Then the next day Paul had told the Jewish Sanhedrin in Acts 23:6, "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" By these words to the Jews in Jerusalem Paul had made it clear that he had not broken the customs (traditions) of the Jews. Instead, it was the hope of the resurrection for which he was being judged. In fact, the Pharisees said, "We find no evil in this man." (Acts 23:9)

Paul said that he had been delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. The Romans had examined Paul and wanted to set him free because the Romans did not find any reason to put Paul to death. In fact, Festus and Agrippa agreed in Acts 26:31, "And when

they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains." Festus had earlier said to Agrippa in Acts 25:27, "For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him." These statements made it clear that the Romans did not feel that Paul had committed any crimes.

The Jews had made many accusations against Paul. Acts 25:7 says, "When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove." Here we see that the Jews had not been able to prove any of the things of which they accused Paul. The Jewish religious leaders certainly did not want Paul to be released and so that was why Paul said that he had finally appealed his case to Caesar. Paul also made it clear that his appeal to Caesar did not mean that he was accusing the Jewish nation.

Paul had explained before the Sanhedrin in Acts 23:6 quoted above, "Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" Here we see that Paul was able to summarize for the Jews in Rome the reason why he was in Rome. He was there because of his teaching about the resurrection of Jesus. We are going to see in our next topic that the Jews in Rome wanted to learn more about the resurrection of Jesus. In this discussion with the Jewish religious leaders in Rome, Paul made clear the reason why many of the Jews were opposed to the followers of Christ. That opposition was based on the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

The message of the resurrection is the key message that we are to share with others also. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 says, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain the message of the resurrection from the Word of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how to explain this message so clearly that everyone can understand.

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 that 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. Acts 2:5 says, "And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven." Here we see that there were Jews in Jerusalem from every nation for the Feast of Pentecost at the time the Holy Spirit came. Those 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 which 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 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 that 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 that 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 16 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.