

## PAUL IN ROME (Acts 28:15-31)

Having left the ship behind in Puteoli, Paul and his companions were heading towards Rome, <sup>14</sup> ... and so *[at last!]* we went toward Rome. They were travelling along the main thoroughfare to the city, <sup>15</sup> ... when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns. The Appian Way was one of the earliest and most strategically important Roman roads in the Empire, connecting Rome to southeast Italy. It took its name from Appius Claudius Caecus, the Roman censor (magistrate) who completed the first section as a military road to the south in 312 BC. Thirty miles outside of Rome they were greeted at The Three Taverns by the brethren from the church in the city.

It was three years since he had written to them from Corinth (57 AD) and he was unsure how he would be received by the Roman brethren, but when he met them his concerns were dispelled for he was well-encouraged and grateful to God for them (v.15).

Arriving in Rome he was led by his military escort under the command of the centurion and handed into the custody of the captain of the guard. God has taken him, - despite all the obstacles and trials, - from the mobs in Jerusalem, and his appearances before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa in Caesarea, to Sidon and past the north-eastern coast of Cyprus to along the southern coastline of Asia Minor, and south and westwards to Fair Havens on Crete, and out beyond Claudia through the treacherous storms to Malta, and then to Syracuse on Sicily and to Rhegium on 'the toe' of southern Italy, and then sailing up north to Puteoli, near Naples. ... And in the will of God, Paul arrived where God promised he would.

He was given his own dwelling, chained (v.20) under a twenty-four hour guard (v.16), in a godless and pagan city, at the mercy of a cruel emperor Nero. By this time, the empire had been in decline, however, it would have been a mistake to understate its power. Nevertheless, "to the Jew first", of which there were many in Rome. Since he, - a prisoner, - could not go to them, he invited the leading Jews to come to him, and when they arrived, <sup>7</sup> he said unto them, Men and *Imy Jewish!* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. <sup>18</sup> Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. *[The case against me should have been dismissed]* <sup>19</sup> But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained *[compelled]* to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of *[I am not accusing my own people, nation, the Jews, or using this as an opportunity to attack them in front of the Gentiles ... but I am simply defending myself]*. <sup>20</sup> For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel *[the Gospel, 23:6]* I am bound with this chain. ... He simply informed them of the facts, some of which they might

have heard from their fellow-Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. In particular, he shared with them the hope of Israel, the Messiah, the Anointed One, Jesus Christ.

However, they had not heard *anything*! They were completely at a loss to understand, <sup>21</sup> And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. <sup>22</sup> But *we desire to hear of thee* what thou thinkest *I we want to hear all about it!* for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. ... God was working, - He was opening wide the door, - and this was His purpose in bringing Paul to Rome ... to make known the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ in the most important city in all of the ancient world! ... It is what he had declared and hoped for in his epistle to them, ... God was making it happen, and Paul's prayer was being answered, **Rom. 1:15** So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. regardless of being chained to a Roman soldier!

They arranged a time with Paul when they could return and listen and learn, and he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening (v.23). Paul taught them with passion and with power, and some received the Gospel, and some would not (v.24). He taught and preached to them the true Kingdom of God, and Christ from the Old Testament, His coming, His sacrificial death, His resurrection, His ascension, and glorification.

Their time with Paul concluded with the prophecy from Isaiah, **Is. 6:9** Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. <sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Paul was aware some would believe, and some would not (cf. Rom. 9-11). He was 'straight' with them for he let them know he had also preached this same Gospel to the Gentiles because it was for all, both Jews and non-Jews. Indeed, his incarceration did not hinder him <sup>31</sup> Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. ... He preached throughout those next two years ... with the Roman soldiers chained to him, a 'captive audience' (v. 30,31). ... No man forbidding him, what a miracle in God's plan!

While there in prison, he wrote the epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians. He was extremely busy! ... He told the Colossians Aristarchus is with him, and Luke, and John Mark, and Justus, Epaphras, and Demas. He wrote about the blessings among the Philippian

believers (1:1), and how the Gospel was spreading (2:24). Without any doubt, he was convinced that prison, at that time, was the place God had for him to be!

And at the end of his imprisonment and trial, lasting about another two years, the Biblical evidence points to how he was found innocent and released and for a further two years he was free to minister.

However, he was arrested again (64-67 AD), and he wrote two epistles to Timothy and another to Titus. Writing to Timothy, he realised his remaining time on earth was short, **II Tim. 4:6** For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Yet, even then, he had saints from Caesar's household with him, **II Tim. 4:21** Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. ... People were being saved who never would have had the opportunity if Paul had not been imprisoned. And at no point in his service for the Lord did his resolve weaken, but throughout he kept pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14).

While there is no Biblical account of Paul's death, Tertullian, in the early second century, became the first to claim the Emperor Nero had Paul beheaded in Rome, as was appropriate for Roman citizens, rather than being burned or thrown to the lions. This tradition was confirmed in the fourth century by Eusebius, the eminent early church historian.

For certain, when Paul's lifework had ended and the Lord called him into His presence, by God's grace he could confidently declare, **II Tim. 4:7** I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.