

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson # 106

COMMENTARY ON: 28:12-22

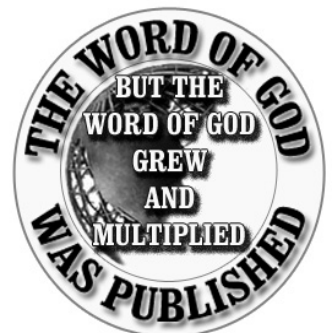
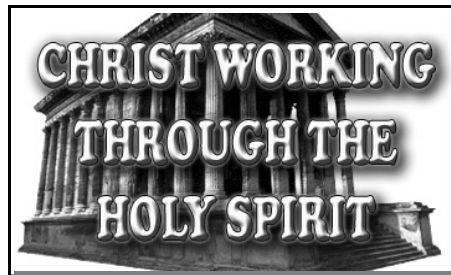
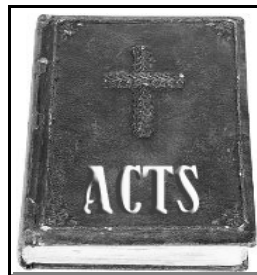
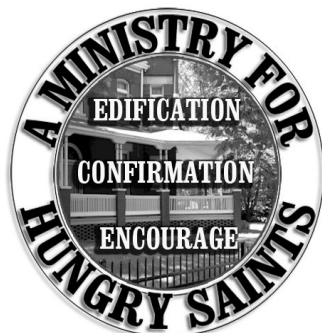
PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME

On the way to Rome there were refreshing visits with brethren in Puteoli and The Three Taverns. The closeness of the saints of God during that time was very evident, and there was a certain reliance upon them for encouragement and refreshment. Having arrived in Rome, special provisions were made for Paul to dwell alone – an extraordinary benefit for a prisoner. This was not like solitary confinement, but was a provision that allowed him to have visitors. Paul first called the chief of the Jews together to explain the reason for his presence. He sought to dispel any false rumors about his circumstance, acquainting the Jews with the truth of the matter. The Jews made clear that they had not received any special reports about him, but were desirous to know more. They particularly wanted to know more about "this sect," elsewhere called "the way." Apparently, among the Jews, there was not much familiarity in Rome with the nature of those who were ardent followers of Jesus. Christ

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

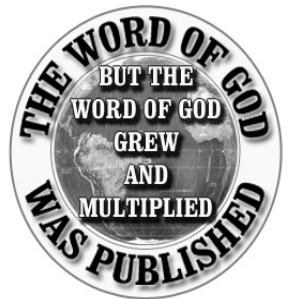
" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ

The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 106



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), L.ITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME

“ 28:12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. ¹³ And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: ¹⁴ Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. ¹⁵ And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. ¹⁶ And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. ¹⁷ And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸ Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. ¹⁹ But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. ²⁰ For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. ²¹ And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. ²² But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.” (Acts 28:12-22)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

On the way to Rome there were refreshing visits with brethren in Puteopli, Appii Forum, and The Three Taverns. The closeness of the saints of God during that time was very evident, and there was a certain reliance upon them for encouragement and refreshment. Believers were not only eager to be with those through

whom grace was ministered, but were willing to inconvenience themselves for that benefit. Having arrived in Rome, special provisions were made for Paul to dwell alone – an extraordinary benefit for a prisoner. This was not like solitary confinement, but was a provision that allowed him to have visitors. Paul first called the chief of the Jews together to explain the reason for his

presence. He sought to dispel any false rumors about his circumstance, acquainting the Jews with the truth of the matter. The Jews made clear that they had not received any bad reports about him, but were desirous to know more. They particularly wanted to know more about “*this sect*,” elsewhere called “*the way*.” Apparently, among the Jews, there was not much familiarity in

After the passing of considerable time, and enduring all manner of adversity, Paul finally arrives in Rome – by Given O. Blakely

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Rome with the nature of those who were ardent followers of Jesus. Christ.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SAINTS

Here is a Kingdom benefit that has not been properly presented or lived out in our times. Much of what is being offered to professed believers conveniently ignores the people themselves, focusing on some popular speaker, or some form of religious entertainment. In the Christian media, the thrust is not the people being addressed, but to the various ministries that are doing the presentation. As a result, the modern church is much like a Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, which were scattered and very dry.

However, this is not at all what salvation is calculated to do. One of the primary things we learn about the real "church" is that it is "the body of Christ." That is, it is the means through which Christ expresses Himself. There the church, or His body, is referred to as "the fulness of Him which filleth all in all" (Eph 1:23).

⇒ **Our personal identity is tied to the church – Christ's body.** "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor 12:27). It is true that each member is "joined unto the Lord" (1 Cor 6:17), and is personally responsible for "holding the Head" (Col 2:19). The effectiveness of that personal union, however, is wrought out within the body of Christ. This is so because all the fulness of Christ is not given to a single member. Each member of the body has a "measure" of faith that is designed to benefit the other members (Rom 12:3).

⇒ **In the capacity of Head over all**

things, Christ has been given to the church – His body. "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1:22-23). Jesus has not been made the Head over all things for the individual. The target of His ministry is the whole body – not necessarily simultaneously, but within the grand scope of fulfilling God's eternal purpose.

⇒ **The various teaching ministries Jesus has given, have been given to the church – Christ's body.** "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). Spiritual growth and maturity are not intended to be realized independently of Christ's body, the church. That is why believers are "added to the church" (Acts 2:47), and "set . . . in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor 12:18).

⇒ **Nourishment is ministered to the church – Christ's body.** "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph 5:30). There is a personal aspect to salvation. As Paul well stated, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). This, however, is from the viewpoint of output, not input. While Jesus does minister to the individual, it is the church as a whole that is His "body," is presently betrothed to Him (2 Cor 11:2), and is destined to be His "wife" (Rev 19:7).

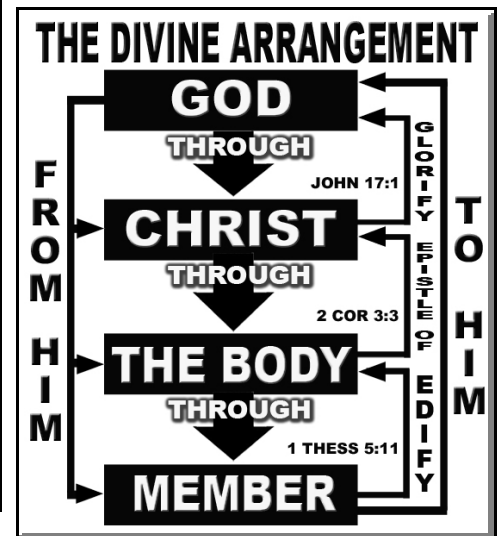
Because of the deficiency of, and corruption within, the modern church, an inappropriate attitude toward the collective people of God is being developed. More and more, because it is so difficult to find a gathering of devoted disciples of Jesus, serious people are withdrawing from the assembly of the godly. However, as will be demonstrated in our text, those in Christ Jesus must seek out kindred spirits in order that proper spiritual growth may be realized.

The number of disciples that come together is not the most important factor. Jesus pledged His presence wherever "two or three are gathered together in My name" (Matt 18:20).

There is no substitute for the assembly of the saints of God. This is indicated in the 133rd Psalm, which speaks of God commanding a blessing upon His people. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. (Psa 133:1-3).

Matters that needed to be resolved before the disciples were "endued with power" were addressed when continuing in "one accord," the number of them being "about an hundred and twenty" (Acts 1:14). When the day of Pentecost arrived, and the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled, the disciples were "all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). After the three thousand were baptized "all that believed were together" (Acts 2:44). When the disciples were empowered to preach the Word in the face of persecution, "they were assembled together" (Acts 4:31).

When Paul met with the brethren in Troaz, "they were gathered together" (Acts 20:8). Paul wrote to the brethren in Rome about being "comforted together with you by the mutual faith of both you and me" (Rom 1:12). This confirms there is participation in the assembly, as opposed to there being a kind of one-man show for the people. Paul twice spoke to the Corinthians about being "gathered together" "into one place" (1 Cor



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11:20; 14:23). He also wrote to them of a kind of spiritual productivity that should take place when they came together: *“How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a*

doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor 14:26). Everything that was spoken was to be understandable, even if it required an interpreter (1 Cor 14:27-28).

All of this was known very well by Paul, and accounts for his constant recourse to the brethren. There is a certain consistency in this manner of life throughout the revealed history of Paul.

LANDING IN SYRACUSE

^{28:12} *And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.* Other versions read, *“We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days,”*^{NIV} and *“We landed at Syracuse and remained there three days.”*^{AMPLIFIED}



Having resumed their journey after the passing of winter, they sailed about one hundred miles to the capital city of Sicily,

Syracuse.

LANDING IN SYRACUSE

Syracuse was the capital city of Sicily, which was an island of Italy, “the largest and one of the most densely populated in the Mediterranean Sea.”^{BRITANNICA} Adam Clarke says of this city, “Syracuse is one of the most famous cities of antiquity: it is the capital of the island of Sicily, and was built about 730 years before the Christian era. It lies 72 miles S. by E. of Messina, and about 112 of Palermo . . . In its ancient state, it was about 22 English miles in circumference; and was highly celebrated for the martial spirit of its inhabitants. . . . This city was almost totally destroyed by an earthquake in 1693: its present population amounts to but about 18,000. Christianity, in some form or other, has existed here ever since St. Paul spent the three days in it, mentioned in the text.”

Although this was a prominent city, you will note that there is no mention of the group sight-seeing, or casual meanderings about the city, which was twenty-two miles in circumference. I understand that Paul was a prisoner, yet we

will find occasions when he was allowed to spend time with various brethren. This is a clear indication of his preferred company.

WE TARRIED THERE THREE DAYS

During this period, we do not know if Paul spoke the word of the Lord, or reasoned with some people concerning the things of God. I would not be surprised if he did so. The period apparently has no immediate relevance to the mission of Paul. The three day layover was probably related to unloading and loading cargo.

We learn from this that there are incidentals of life that do not require elaboration. In making reports of works being done for the Lord, it is important to confine ourselves to relevant matters so as not to arouse a kind of fleshly curiosity. In the Kingdom of God, mere incidentals are distracting, and tend to hide the realities that are required to sustain life. Frankly, some things are not worth talking about.

WE FOUND BRETHREN

¹³ *And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: ¹⁴ Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.”*

WE FETCHED A COMPASS

“And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium . . .” Other versions read, *“From there we circled round and reached Rhegium,”*^{NKJV} *“we sailed around and arrived,”*^{NASB} *“we set sail and arrived,”*^{NIV} *“we weighed anchor and came,”*^{NRSV} *“we made a circuit and arrived,”*^{RSV} *“going about in a curve. We came,”*^{BBE} *“we arrived at Rhegium by tacking,”*^{CSB} *“going in a circuitous course, we arrived,”*^{DARBY} *“compassing by the shore, we came,”*^{DOUAY}

“we sailed round the coast and arrived,”^{NAB} *“we cast off and arrived,”*^{NET} *“we set sail and arrived,”*^{NIB} *“we followed the coast up to Rhegium,”*^{NJB} *“we set a compass and came to,”*^{TNT} and *“we made a circuit [following the coast] and reached.”*^{AMPLIFIED}



Here, the word “compass” does **not** refer to “a device for determining directions by means of a magnetic needle or group of needles turning freely on a

pivot and pointing to the magnetic north.”^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} It is realized in the second definition of the noun: “: a curved or roundabout course; i.e. a compass of seven days’ journey.”^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

As indicated in the graphic marked “To Rhegium,” apparently there was no safe direct course from Syracuse to Rhegium. Therefore they sailed close to Sicilia, following its shoreline until they arrived at Rhegium. The phrase *“from thence we fetched a compass,”* is translated from two Greek words, and is standard sea-faring terminology (θεν περιελόντες). The first word means “from which,” that is, from Syracuse. The second word means “made a circuit,” or moved from that location, circuiting, or following the shoreline to their next location.

It also appears from the text that this particular routing was dictated by the manner in which the wind was blowing, as

indicated in the next clause. There was an apparent shift in the wind that made the last leg of the trip less difficult. After they had arrived in Rhegium, they were able to sail the more easily to Puteoli.

A Spiritual Application

In this brief account, there is a vivid depiction of the manner in which we are changed from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18), pressing toward the mark (Phil 3:14), running the race set before us (Heb 12:1-2), and working out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12-13). While the Lord is directing us, leading us, and bringing us, we are not being pulled along by some irresistible force. We have been brought into the process. That involvement is so significant that sometimes it appears that we are in the total charge of it, even though that is not at all the case.

Just as it was necessary for the pilot of the ship on which Paul was sailing to navigate through the waters wisely, so it is essential that those in Christ know how to live wisely. It is imperative that they remain close to what they can see – like the ship following the path of the shoreline of Sicilia. Believers must be “wise unto that which is good” (Rom 16:12). They are to “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Eph 5:15). They are to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without” (Col 4:5), “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess 5:22), and “be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17).

Those who being brought to glory are required to “follow after the things that make for peace” (Rom 14:19), “follow after charity” (1 Cor 14:1), and “ever follow that which is good” (1 Thess 5:15). They are to “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness” (1 Tim 6:11). It is also required that they “follow peace with all men, and holiness” (Heb 12:14). When it comes to the inevitability of suffering, the saints are to “follow” in the “steps” of Jesus (1 Pet 2:21).

All of this is akin to navigating a ship with discretion. Many a professing believer has, so to speak, steered their ship into dangerous waters, as when the managers of the voyage decided to ignore Paul’s advice, and attempt to sail to a more convenient location.

THE SOUTH WIND BLEW

“... and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli . . .” Other versions read, “a south

wind sprang up,”^{NASB} “a south wind came up,”^{NIV} “the wind having changed to south,”^{DARBY} “the south wind blowing,”^{DOUAY} “a south wind began to blow”^{GWN}

With the aid of the south wind, they were able to sail to Puteoli in two days – a distance of about 375 miles. It had taken one day to sail from Syracuse to Rhegium, a distance of around 100 miles. Speaking from a general mathematical view, the trip from Syracuse to Rhegium found them traveling at around four miles an hour. From Rhegium to Puteoli, they traveled at around seven miles per hour – almost twice as fast. The difference – a favorable wind.



A Spiritual Application

The above circumstance perfectly fits the nature of spiritual progress, which is always toward a final destination.

Sometimes progress is slow, with contrary winds, and the necessity of carefully following what can be more clearly seen. Other times, there are “times of refreshing” (Acts 3:19), that are like south winds that move us toward “the mark” more quickly.

During such times, frequent docking is out of order. For example, as far as I can detect, there were fifteen places to stop between Rhegium and Puteoli. From the practical point of view, had they docked

- RHEGIUM
- 01–Scylla
- 02–Medma
- 03–Bruttius Sinus
- 04–Hipponium
- 05–Temesa
- 06–Clampetia
- 07–Cerillae
- 08–Laus
- 09–Buxentum
- 10–elia
- 11–Paestum
- 12–Picentia
- 13–Salernum
- 14–Neapolis
- 15–Pompeii
- PUTEOLI

frequently for convenience, they may not have arrived at their destination at all. If they did arrive, it would not have been in a timely manner.

Suffice it to say, Satan will tempt those in Christ to stop their progress in the Lord for one reason or another. The reason may appear to be innocent and harmless. Yet, when the favorable wind of grace is blowing, it is not a time for distracting docking. **Those who are serious about following the Lord have learned that the winds that carry us to Zion cannot be scheduled, nor is it wise to use the advantages they yield for only a brief time.**

Take the assembly of the godly for an example – assemblies where two or more people “are gathered together” in the name of the Lord (Matt 18:20). They have gathered together “in one place,” and are with “one accord” (Acts 2:1). If the apostle Paul is in their midst, they will listen carefully with him “until midnight” (Acts 20:7). If it is a large body of people listening to the Son of God, they will go three days without eating for the privilege of hearing Him (Matt 15:32).

If, when the saints come together and are so described: “every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation,” and all things are being “done unto edifying” (1 Cor 14:26), **the wind is blowing!** If, by the grace of God, this is happening frequently, is it really proper to allow for brief spiritual excursions and frequent cessations of periods of progress? **Of, is it wiser to continue the trip while the wind is blowing, and make as much progress as possible?**

I realize that care must be taken when speaking about things like this, for there may very well be a lack of kindred perception. **But notwithstanding the possibility of disagreement, the thrust of apostolic doctrine is in favor of capitalizing upon spiritual advantage.** Each person must arrive at their own conclusion. However, in arriving at it, it seems to me that there is a solemn obligation to consider both the nature and purpose of spiritual life and holy gatherings. No person can afford to overlook the fact that life is really like a voyage on the sea, and how we sail it is a critical factor.

WE FOUND BRETHREN

“... Where we found brethren . . .” Other versions read, “we found some brothers,”^{NIV} “we found believers,”^{NRSV}

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"came across some of the brothers,"^{BBE} "discovered some believers,"^{GWN} "found some [Christian] brethren,"^{AMPLIFIED} "found some of the Lord's followers,"^{CEV} and "found Christian friends."^{MESSAGE}

PAUL'S CONTACT WITH BRETHREN

- ⇒ Disciples in Iconium filled with joy (Acts 13:52).
- ⇒ When stoned at Lystra, the disciples stood around Paul (Acts 14:20).
- ⇒ Confirmed souls of the disciples (Acts 14:20).
- ⇒ Confirmed the souls of the disciples in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts 14:22).
- ⇒ Abode a long time with the disciples in Antioch (Acts 14:28).
- ⇒ Caused great joy among the brethren Phenice and Samaria (Acts 15:3).
- ⇒ Determined to visit the brethren in every where they had preached (Acts 15:36).
- ⇒ Confirmed the churches in Syria and Celia (Acts 15:41).
- ⇒ Established the churches as they went through the cities (Acts 16:5).
- ⇒ Comforted the brethren in the house of Lydia (Acts 16:40).
- ⇒ The brethren in Thessalonica protected Paul and Silas (Acts 17:10).
- ⇒ Brethren in Berea protected Paul (Acts 17:14).
- ⇒ Spent a year and six months with brethren in Corinth (Acts 18:11).
- ⇒ Continued with the brethren in Corinth for as good while (Acts 18:18).
- ⇒ Spent sometime with the brethren in Antioch (Acts 18:23a).
- ⇒ Went over the regions of Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the disciples (Acts 18:23b).
- ⇒ Spent two years in Ephesus at the school of Tyrannus with the disciples (Acts 19:9).
- ⇒ Disciples in Ephesus protected Paul (Acts 19:30).
- ⇒ In Ephesus, Paul called the disciples and embraced them (Acts 20:1).
- ⇒ Abode seven days with the disciples in Troas (Acts 20:6-7).
- ⇒ From Miletus called the elders from Ephesus and admonished them (Acts 20:17-32).
- ⇒ Found disciples in Tyre, and tarried seven days with them (Acts 21:4).
- ⇒ Spent a day with the disciples in Ptolemais (Acts 21:7).
- ⇒ Disciples from Caesarea joined Paul in his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 21:16).
- ⇒ Received by the brethren in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17).
- ⇒ Found brethren in Puteoli, and spent seven days with them (Acts 28:14).
- ⇒ Brethren from Rome came to meet Paul as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns (Acts 28:15).

These words captured my attention: "Where we found brethren!" This involved some kind of quest or search, as the various versions suggest: "came across some of the brothers,"^{BBE} and "discovered some believers."^{GWN} The Greek word translated "found" is εὑρίσκω, which, as it is used here, has the following lexical meaning: "to find . . . to come upon, hit upon, to meet with; after searching, to find a thing sought,"^{THAYER} "to find after searching discover,

come on,"^{FRIBERG} and "to learn the whereabouts of something, to find, to discover."^{LOUW-NIDA}

Keeping in mind that Paul was a prisoner, and probably was not allowed to roam about at will, the value of Luke and Aristarchus being with him is now seen even more clearly. Not only were they good companions to him, fellowshiping in the Lord, and speaking of things that made for edification. They were also key factors in finding kindred brethren in Italy, hundreds of miles from their own homeland. Paul was from Judea. Aristarchus was a "Macedonian from Thessalonica" (Acts 27:2), which was in Asia, at least 750 miles from Puteoli, as the crow flies, and probably well over 1,000 miles by ship. There is no evidence that any of this group had ever been in Italy.

Brethren in Puteoli

How is it that "brethren" were found in Italy? The truth of the matter is that we do not know. There is absolutely no record of anyone carrying the Gospel this far. When the believers were "scattered abroad" by persecution in Jerusalem, they "went every where preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4). Philip "went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5). Others, we are told, "traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only" (Acts 11:19). There was also a period of two years in which "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). However, all of those places were a great distance from Italy.

It is precisely at this point that the nature of spiritual life is once again confirmed. Jesus affirmed, "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt 5:14). Paul declared to the faithful brethren at Philippi that they were shining "as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15). He wrote to the brethren at Rome affirming that their faith their faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom 1:8). He wrote to the Thessalonians, "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing" (1 Thess 1:8).

Newness of life cannot be hidden! Wherever God is genuinely at work, the word will get out, and kingdom initiatives will be carried out without human organization and programs. The book of Acts is a sterling example of this truth. The God who leads the work will see to it that proper reports of it are made

known.

I cannot help but note the difficulty with which the modern church spreads. There is a need for all manner of programs and the development of techniques. The religious air is filled with constant pleas for money to do the Lord's work. Great sections of the world, according to modern claims, have still not heard the Gospel. This condition has stretched over sixty years of which I have personal knowledge. Yet, 30-35 years after Pentecost Paul wrote to the Colossians, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and **which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister**" (Col 1:23). Men may choose to mitigate this by saying the "then known world" was meant. But that does not diminish the power of the statement one whit. The truth of the matter is that by the middle of the first century the Gospel had proliferated more extensively than it has in the nearly two thousand years that followed.

Why was this so? **It was because the people had real spiritual life – newness of life.** They were not in the grip of human organization, but were being led by the Holy Spirit. They really were "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13-14). The disciples that they made (Matt 28:19) were the kind that left all to follow Jesus. The Gospel they preached was "power of God unto salvation."

The truth of the matter is that when the emphasis was switched to recruitment instead of edifying the body of Christ, the rapid spread of the Gospel was halted. I do not know of any pattern of sound thought that can successfully negate that proposition. If this is not the case, then the blessing God somehow has been diminished, and the power of the Gospel dissipated.

The brethren in Puteoli, and others who will surface from Rome are powerful confirmations of the nature of spiritual life and the power of the Gospel.

Paul's Contact with Brethren

The details of Paul's contact with "brethren" are numerous throughout Luke's record of his travels. His most lengthy periods of time were spent among brethren. Often he would extend his stay in a place to be with the brethren, as when he was among the disciples in Antioch (Acts 14:28), Ephesus (Acts 19:10; 20:31), Corinth (Acts 18:11),

Troas (Acts 20:7), Tyre (Acts 21:4), and now in the city of Puteoli (Acts 28:14). He spent time visiting the churches in large regions (Acts 15:3,41; 16:5; 18:5,23).

The Priority of Brethren

Somehow, with the popularity of religious recruitment and the quest for numerical church growth, the priority of the people of God has been overlooked – and that is a very charitable statement of the situation. When we refer to “brethren,” we are speaking of those who are in Christ Jesus. They are primarily HIS brethren (Heb 2:11). Ponder what He said about this unique body of people.

- ⇒ When told that His mother and brethren wanted to speak with him, He replied, “*Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!*” (Mat 12:48-49).
- ⇒ “*But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*” (Mat 23:8).
- ⇒ “*And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me*” (Mat 25:40).
- ⇒ “*My mother and My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it*” (Luke 8:21).

One of the signs that we have “*passed from death unto life: is that “we love the brethren*” (1 John 3:14).

When writing to the churches, Paul referred to believers as “brethren” **over one hundred times**. As a cluster of people those in Christ are referred to as “the brethren” **forty-six times** from Acts through Third John. By way of comparison, no inspired man ever addressed those in Christ as “Christians.” They are called “followers of God” (Eph 5:1), “the body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12), and those who “are sanctified” (Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 2:11; 10:10,14; Jude 1:1). Twenty-five times they are identified as “disciples.” Thirty-nine times they are referred to as “the saints,” and twenty-one times as simply “saints.”

The Manner of Closeness

The manner of closeness between brethren in Christ Jesus transcends all other

relationships. **It is deeper than the bond realized in marriage and family associations.** There are social and political causes that knit men together, but they are vastly inferior to brethren in Christ, whose hearts are “*knit together in love*” (Col 2:2). By demonstration, Jesus confirmed that He was closer to those who did the will of His Father than He was to His own mother and half-brothers (Matt 12:50). Stretching forth His hand toward His disciples He said, “*Behold my mother and my brethren!*” (Mat 12:49).

Speaking of the superior relationship believers have with one another, apostolic doctrine affirms, “*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*” (Rom 12:5). And again, “*we are members one of another*” (Eph 4:25).

These are the people who enjoy “*the unity of the Spirit*” (Eph 4:3), and “*the unity of the faith*” (Eph 4:13). Together, they are described as “*the household of faith*” (Gal 6:10), “*the household of God*” (Eph 2:19), and

John summarized the commandment that we have received from God: “*And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also*” (1 John 4:21).

The eternal destiny of all men will, in part, be determined by how they viewed the brethren of Jesus – those who were begotten of God (Matt 25:40,45).

There is such a unanimity of proclamation on this matter that it is astounding so little is made of it in our time. It is commonly taught that our affiliation with God is confirmed by our response to the poor of this world, how friendly we are with the ungodly, and how we blend in with humanitarian causes. That there is a place for such expressions we cannot deny. That they are where the test is applied concerning the validity of identity with God is emphatically denied. In his first epistle the apostle John refers to the necessity of loving one’s brother in Christ (2:9-11; 3:10,12,14,15,17; 4:20,21,21; 5:16).

This body of people is not distinguished by their attitude toward men in general, or the kindness they may express toward sinners – although they are noted for such things. Their real mark of distinction is that they “love the brethren”

Christ’s own “house” (Heb 3:6). As a group of people, they are “*the body of Christ*” (1 Cor 12:27), “*the temple of God*” (1 Cor 3:16-17), and “*the whole family in heaven and earth*” (Eph 3:15). They are “*the people of God*” (1 Pet 2:10), “*the children of God*” (Rom 8:16), “*the children of Abraham*” (Gal 3:7), “*the children of promise*” (Gal 4:28), and “*the children of light*” (Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:5).

This body of people is not distinguished by their attitude toward men in general, or the kindness they may express toward sinners – although they are noted for such things. Their real mark of distinction is that they “*love the brethren*” (1 John 3:14). Jesus said the mark of distinction among them that would identify them as His disciples was “*if ye have love one for another*” (John 13:35). As careful as they are to be about honoring God in their conduct toward sinners, the acid test of whether or not they are the children of God is whether or not he “*loves his brother*” (1 John 4:20).

Let no man come short in the duty of “*doing good unto all men.*” But let them do so remembering that good is to be done “*especially unto them that are of the household of faith*” (Gal 6:10).

It is Paul’s perception of these priorities that led him and those with him to seek out the company of those who were reconciled to God, and members of the household of faith. This is an unvarying trait of the Kingdom of God.

DESIRED TO TARRY WITH THEM

“*... and were desired to tarry with them seven days . . .*” Other versions read, “*were invited to stay,*” ^{NKJV} “*invited us to spend a week,*” ^{NIV} “*were entreated to tarry,*” ^{ASV} “*who kept us with them,*” ^{BBE} “*begged us to stay,*” ^{DARBY} “*urged us to stay,*” ^{NAB} “*had the great encouragement of staying,*” ^{NJB} “*were called upon to remain with them,*” ^{YLT} “*asked us to stay,*” ^{IE} and “*we were appealed upon by them.*” ^{ABP}

This was no doubt the first time these particular brethren had met Paul. Prior to this, his global fame was realized in both Asia and Greece, but not, so far as we know, in Italy. Yet here, as well as everywhere else Paul went, the love of the brethren was clearly possessed. They had doubtless heard of Paul, and now they had the advantage of being with him for a brief period of time. They made a strong appeal to him to remain with them for seven days, apparently the period of time in which their ship would be docked at that port.

This kind of brotherly love was often exhibited during the journeys of Paul.

- ⇒ Sergius Paulus called for Barnabas and Saul, desiring to hear the word of the Lord (Acts 13:7).
- ⇒ Lydia asked Paul and Silas to abide in her house (Acts 16:15).
- ⇒ Brethren in Ephesus desired that he remain with them (Acts 18:20).
- ⇒ He tarried with disciples at Tyre (Acts 21:4).
- ⇒ Paul and company remained at the house of Philip for "many days" (Acts 21:10).
- ⇒ The brethren in Puteoli begged them to remain for one week (Acts 28:14).

This is not to mention converted Jews from throughout the world who chose to remain in Jerusalem with the brethren after their conversion (Acts 2:44; 4:32). After ministering to many people at the house of Cornelius, the people asked Peter to remain with them for "certain days" (Acts 10:48). There were also the extended stays of Paul with the brethren in Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and Troas.

Wherever there is a record of an increase of believers, there is the expression of brotherly love – a demonstrable preference for the people of God. This sort of thing is becoming more and more rare in the Christian world of our day. There is considerable pressure placed on some of God's people to meet with less frequency and in more brief gatherings. In my judgment, there is no way to reconcile this kind of circumstance with the reports of genuine conversions that are record in Scripture.

AND SO

"... and so ..." Other versions read, "and thus,"^{NASB} "then,"^{MRD} and "in this way,"^{NET/WILLIAMS}

The words "and so" are not a mere English filler. They are translated from the Greek word οὕτως, which has the following lexical meaning: "in this manner, thus,"^{GINGRICH} "in the manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was done; in this manner; in such a manner; thus, so,"^{THAYER} "in the same way, like this,"^{UBS} and "so, in this way (referring to what precedes)."^{LEH}

"From Puteoli they would go twelve miles eastward to intersect the great Appian Way at Capua, (see map,) the luxurious city which melted away the hardihood of Hannibal's veteran army. The Appian Way was titled in ancient times the "Queen of Great Thoroughfares." It was built by Appius Claudius four hundred and eleven years after the founding of the city. It stretched from Rome, the length of southern Italy, until, as seen on the map, it reached Brundisium at the extremity of the heel of the boot-like shape of Italy."^{DANIEL WHEDON}

Some understand that the group journeyed by foot from Puteoli to Three Taverns, and from there took a ship to Rome. Others are of the persuasion that they journeyed all the way to Rome by foot, or on the land, taking the great Appian Way.



"Three Taverns was a place in the Appian way, thirty miles from Rome."^{TSK} I gather, therefore, that "so" indicates the following. They continued their travels on the ground, AND with various encouragements from the brethren who accompanied them.

This is also a confirmation of the Lord moving the heart of Julius the centurion. How is it that he was so gracious toward Paul, permitting him and his brethren to remain a whole week in Puteoli?

That would require care of the other prisoners, of which no mention is made. The walk on the road would also appear to introduce the danger of prisoners escaping. If the soldiers were concerned about them escaping from a ship during a vicious storm, what about them escaping while walking on the open road? These are all matters that were governed by the Lord in the interest of His servant, Paul, getting to Rome. The steps of a good man are, of a truth, "ordered by the Lord" (Psa 37:23).

WE WENT TOWARD ROME

"... we went toward Rome." Other versions read, "we came,"^{NASB/NIV} "we went on toward,"^{CJB} "we proceeded towards,"^{MRD} "we came,"^{NET} and "we finally reached."^{WILLIAMS}

This verse does not say that they actually arrived in Rome at that time, something that is declared in several versions (NET, WILLIAMS, ASV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, RSV, CSB, ERV, ESV, NAB, NAU, NIB, NJB, NLT, TNT, YLT, IE, WEYMOUTH, ISV, MONTGOMERY, AMPLIFIED). The word translated "toward" can also be translated "into," or "to."^{STRONG'S} Here, however, the meaning of "unto" or "towards" is the proper rendering. The idea is first that they resumed their journey to Rome, and secondarily that their journey was marked by contact with the brethren.

The particular point to be seen here is that as the journey drew to a close, Paul was being encouraged and strengthened by the brethren. This was in order that when he arrived he would be in a sound state of mind, and ready to engage in the work of the Lord immediately. He was aware that the real purpose for going to Rome was to "bear witness" of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 23:11). This would be the ultimate reason for him appearing "before Caesar" (Acts 27:24).

I do not doubt that from the beginning of his arrest until this last leg of the journey, Satan buffeted Paul with all manner of tempting thoughts. **However, his efforts were all neutralized by Paul's timely contact with Christ's brethren.** It must have been similar to his experience when he came into Macedonia. At that time, Paul wrote, "For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. **Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his**

coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (2 Cor 7:5-7).

You see the effects of timely contact with the saints of the Lord. Not only

is their personal presence and words of encouragement comforting, but their reports of the working of the Lord added strength and joy to the apostle. It readied him to enter into the work to which he had been called.

All of this activity was directed by the Lord, and is indicative of the manner in

which he leads His people. **Those who are reconciled to God and walking in the Spirit have an incalculable effect upon Kingdom laborers – and designedly so.** This is precisely why the Spirit makes much of the love of, and fellowship with, the people of God. They are nothing less than the extension of Jesus Himself – His body.

THEY CAME TO MEET US

"¹⁵ And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."

On the last leg of the journey brethren will come to Paul, instead of Paul finding them as he has done throughout the journey. It is important that he arrive in Rome in a proper frame of mind, and the fellowship of the saints and the expression of their mutual faith is a powerful means of accomplishing this.

FROM THENCE

"And from thence . . ." Other versions read, "and from there," ^{NKJV} "Believers in Rome," ^{GWN} "The brothers and sisters in Rome," ^{NLT} and "the brothers in

anyone preaching the Gospel there. This circumstance again confirms the relative rapidity with which the Word of God spread during the first 25-30 years of church history.

On the day of Pentecost, "Rome" is one of the places from which people had come to Jerusalem for the Passover and Pentecost feasts: "Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes" (Acts 2:10). The fact that they are called "strangers" suggests they were proselytes. Church tradition says that Peter founded the church, but the claim cannot be substantiated. If this were the case, Paul would certainly have mentioned him in his letter to the Romans.

Priscilla and Aquila were also there, who were Paul's "helpers in Christ Jesus" (Rom 16:3).

Thus we are left with no sure word concerning those involved in the formation of this notable church, whose faith was reported throughout the world (Rom 1:8). **In the church in Rome we have an example of the gravitation of believers to one another, just as occurred on the day of Pentecost** (Acts 2:44,46; 4:31; 5:12). Neither Jesus nor His apostles instructed men in a methodology to be used in establishing a church. Men have imagined, however, that there is a need for such strategy, and have therefore introduced various approaches to the matter, even marketing them.

But here we are faced with a church that sprang up, becoming prominent in the Christian world, and having numerous laborers among them (Rom 16:3-15). No apostles were involved in its beginning, and it is even possible that some proselytes were involved in its start. That is the effect of newness of life! **It exposes the profound inferiority of the professed church of our time.**

WHEN THE BRETHREN HEARD OF US

"... when the brethren heard of us . . ." Other versions read, "heard about us," ^{NKJV} "heard that we were coming," ^{NIV} "had news of us," ^{BBE} "heard the news about us," ^{CSB} "hearing [of our approach]," ^{MRD} "having heard the things concerning us," ^{YLT} "hearing of our movements," ^{WEYMOUTH} "having had news of us," ^{AMPLIFIED} "heard about our circumstances," ^{EMTV} and "heard we were on the way." ^{MESSAGE}

Behold the love of the brethren made known in their communications concerning the circumstances of their brethren. It is exceeding difficult to imagine this happening in our time, even though there are advanced means of communication.



Rome." ^{LIVING}

The words "from thence" refer to the "Rome" of the previous verse: "... and so we went toward Rome" (Acts 28:14). Here again, brethren were found, even though, to this point, there is no Scriptural record of

In his letter to Rome, Paul mentions a couple there who were in Christ before him: "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me" (Rom 16:7).

After the passing of considerable time, and enduring all manner of adversity, Paul finally arrives in Rome – by Given O. Blakely

However, a great falling away has occurred in which professed believers are divided, and thus their interest in the whole body has been mitigated, if not altogether eradicated.

Ponder how much is said about the saints sharing knowledge about key people, whether friend or foe, and issues that needed to be known among the saints.

- ⇒ The suicide of Judas was known throughout Jerusalem (Acts 1:19).
- ⇒ The events that took place on the day of Pentecost were “noised abroad” (Acts 2:6).
- ⇒ When Peter and John were released from prison, they went to “*their own*” and “*reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them*” (Acts 4:23).
- ⇒ The sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira was heard throughout Jerusalem (Acts 5:5,11).
- ⇒ Word concerning the conversion of the city of Samaria was heard in Jerusalem (Acts 8:14).
- ⇒ The disciples in Damascus had heard about the threat of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:13).
- ⇒ The disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda (Acts 38).
- ⇒ It was known throughout Joppa that many had believed in the Lord (Acts 9:42).
- ⇒ The brethren in Judea heard about the conversion of those who met at the house of Cornelius to hear Peter (Acts 11:1).
- ⇒ When certain from Jerusalem troubled the Gentile believers, they determined to do something about it (Acts 15:24).
- ⇒ Timothy was well reported of by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2).
- ⇒ All in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:10).
- ⇒ The event in which a demon possessed man overcame the seven sons of Sceva was known throughout the region (Acts 19:17).

- ⇒ The faith of the church at Rome was spoken of throughout the world (Rom 1:8).
- ⇒ Paul said there were some who had slanderously reported that he was saying we ought to do evil that good may come, adding that their damnation was just (Rom 3:8).
- ⇒ It was reported that a fornicator was in the Corinthian church, and was guilty of a sin so reprehensible that even the Gentiles avoided such an involvement (1 Cor 5:1).
- ⇒ Paul heard about the divisions at Corinth (1 Cor 11:18).
- ⇒ Paul heard that some in Corinth were saying there is no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:17).
- ⇒ Brethren had heard of Paul’s past (Gal

⇒ John report that Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence among the brethren (3 John 1:9).

Among those early saints, newness of life was prominent, and people and matters that touched upon the Lord and His people were reported without shame or fear. Their life centered in Christ, and their love for one another compelled them to report the working of the Lord, as well as special initiative of the wicked one.

In our times, many of the things that I have listed would be considered nothing more than gossip, or prying into matters that were none of their business. Notwithstanding these foolish charges, the record of such reports have been written, and are to be duly noted.

When a person or people are living unto the Lord, there is no difficulty with

There should be no hesitancy to report matters that bring glory to God, things tend to clarify the truth, and things that bring a certain jeopardy to the saints. People who build up the saints are to be recommended, and those who spread spiritual poison are to be exposed.

- 1:13,23)
- ⇒ Paul had heard of the Ephesians faith and love (Eph 1:15).
- ⇒ Brethren had heard of the dispensation of grace that had been given to Paul (Eph 3:2).
- ⇒ The brethren at Philippi had heard that Epaphroditus was sick (Phil 2:26).
- ⇒ Paul had heard of the faith and love of the Colossian brethren (Col 1:4).
- ⇒ Paul reported that Hymenaeus and Alexander had made shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim 1:20).
- ⇒ Paul identified the false doctrine being taught by Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim 2:17).
- ⇒ Paul reported the evil Alexander did to him (2 Tim 4:14).

these matters. However, when such buy into the world’s system of values, and the psychological jargon of the times, a certain disdain will be held for those reporting such things. **There should be no hesitancy to report matters that bring glory to God, things tend to clarify the truth, and things that bring a certain jeopardy to the saints.** People who build up the saints are to be recommended, and those who spread spiritual poison are to be exposed.

Word Got Out Paul was Coming

We do not know exactly how word got out that Paul and those with him were coming. It certainly was not because of a daily newspaper, electronic media, the Internet, telephone, or some other electronic media. Rather, it was because the people were not only doctrinally members one of another (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:25), but were experientially that as well. They had “*the same care one for another*” (1 Cor 12:25). They placed a high value on laborers such as Paul. Of course, that is what believers are admonished to do. As it is written, “*And we*

beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess 5:13).

All of this postulates that the people are not neglecting "so great salvation" (Heb 2:3), are fighting "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12), and pressing "toward the mark" (Phil 3:14).

A Spiritual Network Among Believers

There is a kind of spiritual network that links the sons of God together. You have no doubt noted that as soon as you are certain an individual is "born of God," you obtain a keen interest in them, are glad to hear of their well being, and concerned when they are "in any trouble" (2 Cor 1:4). There is also a complementary desire to see these people "face to face," and to enjoy their immediate fellowship. Thus John desired to speak with the "elect lady" "face to face" (2 John 1:12). He wrote to Gaius of the time when he would "speak face to face" with him (3 John 1:14). The elders at Ephesus lamented when they heard they would see Paul's face "no more" (Acts 20:36). Paul declared he "endeavored the more abundantly to see" the face of the Thessalonians "with great desire" (1 Thess 2:17). "Night and day," he wrote, he and his co-laborers were "praying exceedingly that we might see your face" (1 Thess 3:10). Paul wrote to the brethren in Rome, "I long to see you" (Rom 1:11). To the Philippians he wrote, "I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:8).

Paul wrote to the saints in Rome of his desire to be "comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me" (Rom 1:13). He also mentioned his anticipation of being "refreshed" when with them (Rom 15:32). Even the recalcitrant Corinthians were told that Paul could possibly spend the "winter" with them (1 Cor 16:6), and "tarry a while" with them (1 Cor 16:7). Seeking to more firmly establish them in the faith, Paul wrote to the backsliding Galatians, "I desire to be present with you now" (Gal 4:20).

And what shall we say of those who complain about the times they are with fellow believers, or that cast aspersions upon them as though they were seeking their own interests? What of those who are quick to believe the evil reports that are raised by evil people who have defected from the faith? **It may be said of such people that they are a breed of Christians that are**

Whatever moves a person to look with suspicion upon those who are obviously devoted to the Lord, have left the course of the world, and prefer the people of God, cannot be good. Nor, indeed, can it be successfully defended.

nowhere mentioned in Scripture. If they have a penchant for spending time with the ungodly, they may do their best to defend their action. However, that kind of attitude clashes with the Divine mandate to "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" (Rom 12:10). Such benighted souls may chide the people of God for not treating the ungodly with a certain preference, as though blasphemers who once honored the name of Jesus, and those who depart from the faith were innocent victims. God, however, will publically rebuke them for their despicable attitude toward His people. When they take the side of the ungodly, they at once are classed as enemies of God, and will be duly requited by Him.

If this seems rather strong, consider that it is something that needs to be said in this day of ungodly toleration. **Whatever moves a person to look with suspicion upon those who are obviously devoted to the Lord, have left the course of the world, and prefer the people of God, cannot be good.** Nor, indeed, can it be successfully defended.

Tertullian was a noted Christian leader during the second century, being born around 160 A.D. In one of his writings, he made reference how Christians were regarded in his adult life. "See how they love one another"; these are the words Tertullian noted (*Apology* [39.6]) in the Third Century, as spoken by some of the Pagans of the time regarding Christian communities." REGIA ECCLESIA

Septimius Florens Tertullianus anglicised as Tertullian (160 – ca. 220 A.D.) He was a prolific early Christian author from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. He is the first Christian author to produce an extensive corpus of Christian literature. He also was a notable early Christian apologist and a polemicist against heresy. Tertullian has been called "the father of Latin Christianity." WIKIPEDIA

Lest anyone consider this to be a flawed view of those who are in Christ Jesus, the King Himself has spoken on the subject. "By this shall all men know that ye are my

disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). The distinguishing mark of God's people is not their love for the ungodly, but their love for one another. It is not their concern for the poor, or their quest for the young, or their respect for life itself. **None of those things are wrong, but they are not what distinguishes the disciples of Jesus.**

John writes that any person lacking this love lies if he says he loves God (1 John 4:20). He further states that the saints have received a commandment from God. "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:21). He goes so far as to say that the love of the brethren is the proof that we have "passed from death unto life" (1 John 3:14).

The Responsibility of Believers

It is vital that those professing to be followers of Jesus leave the proper testimony with the people around them. The pillars that support that testimony are summarized in a single commandment. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. **And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment**" (1 John 3:22-23).

THEY CAME TO MEET US

"... they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns..."

"Appi Forum" was at least 43 miles from Rome. Some estimate it being farther. "Three Taverns," or "Three Inns,"^{NKJV/NASB} was at least 33 miles from Rome. "Three Taverns" was "the name of a halting place on the Appian way between Rome and the Market of Appius; it was 10 miles (16 km) from the latter place and 33 miles (50 km) from Rome."^{STRONG'S}

Some feel there were two different groups that came – one as far as Three Taverns, and the other as far as Appii Forum. It seems more probable that one group came, stopping at Three Taverns, and meeting Paul at Appii Forum. Keep in mind

After the passing of considerable time, and enduring all manner of adversity, Paul finally arrives in Rome – by Given O. Blakely

that this was a journey on a road, and was probably by foot. I am sure their love for the Lord, and for His servant, caused them to see this as a relatively short trip.

Behind the scenes, the Lord was moving these saints to meet his servant face to face encouraging his heart. To me, any approach to living for the Lord that relegates the saints to the back seat of life cannot possibly be on target. A love for one another is what distinguishes people as Christ's disciples (John 13:35).

Even kindness is focused upon the people of God, **although they are not to**

holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (Col 3:13).

⇒ *“And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to **brotherly kindness** charity”* (2 Pet 1:7).

We do not apologize for this Divine emphasis, nor will we allow other tests of affiliation with Christ to be superimposed

Just the sight of these brethren brought refreshment to Paul – even though he had not been to Rome previously. Perhaps some that he knew were in the number – like “Priscilla and Aquila” who had labored with him; Epaenetus “the firstfruits of Achai;” “Mary, who bestowed much labor” on him, or “Herodion,” a relative of his. He greeted all of these brethren in his letter to Rome, written from Corinth about three years earlier (58 A.D.). At any rate, whether he knew some of them or they clearly identified themselves, Paul saw them, and it had an immediate impact upon him.

Have you not experienced the same thing – seeing someone you knew was a child of God, and the insight itself cheering your heart? A favorable impact would certainly not be realized by Paul if he had seen Hymaenus, Philetus, Hermogenes, or Alexander the coppersmith. This was not his reaction to seeing a company of Jews who had determined to kill him.

This is the kind of effect that is wrought in the hearts of the people of God. When they see kindred spirits who are running the race and fighting the fight, they are refreshed by the sight of them.

Paul Thanked God

Other versions read, “gave praise to God,”^{BBE} “having given thanks to God,”^{YLT} “gave thanks to God,”^{EMTV} and “led us in prayers of thanksgiving.”^{MESSAGE}

In his letter to the brethren in Rome, written three years earlier, he had said, “**I make mention of you in my prayers. . . Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me**” (Rom 1:9-12). Now, an initial answer to those prayers is being realized, as he beholds with his eyes fellow-heirs from Rome approaching unto him. It is no wonder than he gives thanks! If Paul could give thanks at the “remembrance” of holy brethren (Phil 1:3), how much more will he do so when he actually sees them face to face.

It is to be understood that we give thanks to God for what He does. It is inappropriate to give thanks to God for what men of themselves do. To provide a view of the scope of thanksgiving, here are some things for which the apostle Paul gave thanks.

**BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS HE GAVE US COMMANDMENT**

HIS COMMANDMENT

The incontrovertible evidence

**“BY THIS SHALL ALL MEN
KNOW THAT YE ARE MY
DISCIPLES, IF YE HAVE
LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER.”**

John 13:35

be the exclusive recipients of it. Even God is “kind unto the unthankful and the evil” (Lk 6:35b), although that kindness is made known in things common to man. We are to love our enemies, “and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again” (Lk 6:35a). However, throughout these normal kindnesses and civility, there is to be no neglect of the people of God. Kindness is commanded toward them in a higher and more thorough way. Thus it is written:

⇒ *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another”* (Rom 12:10).

⇒ *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Eph 4:32).

⇒ *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God,*

upon this requirement concerning our associations with the people of God. **Let it be clear that we are speaking of emphasis, preference, and superior expressions – not exclusive ones.**

This is what we see being made known in the brethren from Rome, who inconvenienced themselves to meet Paul well before he arrived in their city. It is as though they could not wait to see him.

PAUL THANKED GOD AND TOOK COURAGE

“ . . . whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”

Paul Saw

Other versions read, “at the sight of these men,”^{NIV} “on seeing them,”^{NRSV} “having seen,”^{YLT} and “as soon as Paul caught sight of them.”^{WILLIAMS}

- ⇒ For the **brethren** at Rome (Rom 1:8).
- ⇒ For the prospect of being delivered from the body of this death (Rom 7:24-25).
- ⇒ For **Priscilla and Aquila**, his “*helpers in Christ Jesus*” (Rom 16:4).
- ⇒ For the grace given to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:4).
- ⇒ For the victory God gives us through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:57).
- ⇒ For God causing us to triumph in Christ (2 Cor 2:14).
- ⇒ For those in whose hearts God had placed an earnest care like that of Paul (2 Cor 8:16).
- ⇒ For God’s “*unspeakable gift*” (2 Cor 9:15).
- ⇒ For the **Ephesian brethren** (Eph 1:16).
- ⇒ For the remembrance of the **Philippians** (Phil 1:3).

through them that God strengthened and edified Paul, enabling him to fulfill his ministry with joy.

I have noticed over the years that, with very few exceptions, there is not a lot of thanksgiving for the saints of God among professed believers.

Judging from the expression of many, it appears as though there is frequently more thanksgiving for rain and flowers than for the saints of the living God. This, however, was not the case with Paul. This was owing to his understanding and spiritual insight, as well as a dominating love for the Head of the church.

Paul Took Courage

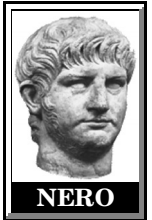
Other versions read, “*was encouraged,*”^{NIV} “*took heart,*”^{BBE} “*waxed bold,*”^{GENEVA} “*felt encouraged,*”^{GWN} “*felt better,*”^{IE} “*received new courage,*”^{AMPLIFIED} “*was greatly encouraged,*”^{GNB} “*brimming over with praise,*”^{MESSAGE} and “*got courage.*”^{INTERLINEAR}

Translated from the Greek word *ἐλάβεν*, and, as used here, the word “*took*” means “*to take . . . to lay hold of . . . anything, to use it,*”^{THAYER} “*take for oneself, take into possession,*”^{FRIBERG}

circumstances where he despaired of life (2 Cor 1:8), and even to fight with beasts after the manner of men (1 Cor 15:32). He did not know if he would face such things in Rome while witnessing of the Lord Jesus.

I see Satan as attempting to cast the mantle of fear upon Paul. But his efforts are overthrown – not by a great display of overt power, but by the coming of some saints from Jerusalem! Who but God can do such a thing?

The principle of living by faith applies here, for faith alone enables the believer to take hold of courage – confident courage! What mere work of man can accomplish this? What routine or human disciple can so strength the person that they can become courageous when about to enter Rome as a prisoner – and do so when Nero is the emperor? He was emperor of Rome from 54-64 A.D., the period covered in this text. His official title was Nero Claudius Augustus Germanicus.



Another example of the role of the saints in ministering comfort and confidence to other believers is found in Paul’s reference to Titus. Paul had been concerned about the state of the Corinthian church, so much so that he had determined not to go anywhere else until he had realized some satisfaction concerning the deteriorating Corinthians. Of that occasion he wrote, “*For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus*” (2 Cor 7:6).

We must not allow ourselves to be robbed of the elixir of comfort and encourage by those who would chide the saints for not paying enough attention to the ungodly. Those who insinuate that devotion to the Lord, and the edifying of the body of Christ jeopardizes the chances of sinners receiving a good witness have only exposed their ignorance. Pay them no heed!

While Paul did know he was going to bear witness of Jesus in Rome, there was little else that had been revealed to him. Speaking as a man, there were a lot of uncertainties, and uncertainty is a field in which Satan can sow seeds of doubt and fear.

- ⇒ For the **Colossian brethren** (Col 1:3).
- ⇒ For the **Thessalonian brethren** (1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 2:13).
- ⇒ For the enablement of God (1 Tim 1:12).
- ⇒ For the remembrance of **Timothy** (2 Tim 1:3).
- ⇒ For the recollection of **Philemon** (Phile 1:4).

Notice the prominence of the brethren in Paul’s thanksgiving. It was

and “*to get, obtain,*”^{UBS} “*seize.*”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

And what is it that Paul took hold of, or seized, when he saw the brethren from Rome? It was “*courage,*” or “*confidence,*”^{THAYER} “*to become confident or courageous in the face of real or possible danger,*”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “*boldness,*”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

While Paul did know he was going to bear witness of Jesus in Rome, there was little else that had been revealed to him. Speaking as a man, there were a lot of uncertainties, and uncertainty is a field in which Satan can sow seeds of doubt and fear. Paul knew what it was like to be beaten mercilessly (Acts 16:37; 2 Cor 11:23-25), be stoned (Acts 14:19), be put into

PAUL PERMITTED TO DWELL BY HIMSELF

“¹⁶ *And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard:*

After the passing of considerable time, and enduring all manner of adversity, Paul finally arrives in Rome – by Given O. Blakely

but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.”

THE TRIP FROM CAESAREA TO ROME

“A day” in Sidon	Acts 27:3
“Many days”	Acts 27:7
“Many days”	Acts 27:20
“Fourteen nights”	Acts 27:35
“Three days”	Acts 28:7
“Three months”	Acts 28:11
“Three days”	Acts 28:12
“One day”	Acts 28:13
“Seven days”	Acts 28:14

Four months are accounted for, with two periods of “many days.” A trip of that length (about 2,000 miles), under ideal conditions, would require approximately half a year.

At last Paul arrived at Rome – something that was promised **three years earlier**, when he was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11). How patient he had been, spending two of those years chained in prison by an unthoughtful and prideful governor. Yet, he was steadfast, refusing to have his faith overthrown, or to despair of hope. He waited patiently for the Lord (Psa 37:7), enduring verbal opposition, physical abuse, incarceration, a fourteen day storm, shipwreck, and a venomous snakebite. The trip had taken at least half a year, and possibly more, which covered nearly 2,000 miles by sea. At the last, it probably involved a walk of at least sixty-five miles.

AND WHEN WE CAME TO ROME

“And when we came to Rome . . .”

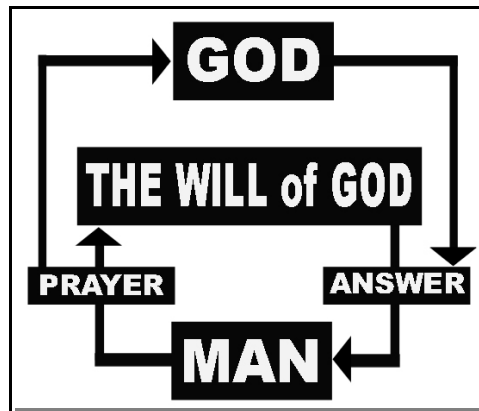


Nearly four years earlier Paul had said as he passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome” (Acts 19:21).

Prior to the trip to Rome, the Lord stood by Paul and said, “Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11). On the way to Rome, during a fierce storm, the “angel of God” stood by him and said, “Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar” (Acts 27:24).

Now the desire of Paul, the promise of Jesus, and the word of the angel has been answered, and Paul is in Rome. Praise the Lord! His desire was in perfect accord with Christ’s determination, and the angel’s elaboration.

This is a noteworthy example of a promise written by John the beloved. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15). I do not believe it is a stretch of the imagination to assume that Paul prayed about the desire he expressed. He found that it was in perfect accord with the will of the Lord.



I do not know how extensive Paul’s prayers were about the matter of going to Rome. However, the text before us suggests that God especially blessed that time in ways beyond expectation. Here again is a confirmation of the statement, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20).

Faith lays hold of the promise, and does not demand to have the specification of details. For example, Abraham believed God about having multitudinous offspring before any of the details were made known (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3,19; Gal 3:6; James 2:23). Again, when God commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac,

he set out to do precisely that, even though he did not know the details involved. Yet, he believed God’s promise concerning Isaac being the child of promise through whom the promised Seed would come (Heb 11:17-19). The outcome in both instances exceeded the understanding of Abraham. That is, there was no way Abraham could have thought upon the promise and concluded what finally came to pass.

It is important to note this, because God works in such a manner as to remove any doubt about why His work was done. It was not merely in answer to a request, for His answers invariably exceed the request raised to Him in faith. **That is why it is wrong to teach people to think of asking as establishing the boundaries within which God will work.** In the very best view, our requests only touch the border of Divine capability. Once this is seen, there is a certain liberty of spirit that allows for a more God-honoring expectation than Him merely fulfilling our godly desires.

THE PRISONERS DELIVERED TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

“. . . the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard . . .” Other versions read, “the centurion delivered up the prisoners to the praetorian prefect,”^{DARBY} “the Centurion delivered the prisoners to the general Captain,”^{GENEVA} “ye under captain delivered the prisoners to the chief captain of the host,”^{PNT/TNT} “the centurion delivered up the prisoners to the captain of the barrack,”^{YLT} “the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard,”^{AMPLIFIED} “the centurion delivered up the prisoners to the commander of the camp,”^{ABP} “the centurion handed over the prisoners to the captain of the guard,”^{EMTV} “the centurion delivered the prisoners to the camp commander,”^{LITV} and “the hundred-chief beside-gives the bound-ones to the war-foot chief.”^{INTERLINEAR}

This clause is omitted by the following versions: ASV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, RSV, BBE, CJB, CSB, DOUAY, ESV, ERV, GWN, MRD, NAB, NAS, NAU, NET, NIB, NJB, NLT, LIVING, IE, WEYMOUTH, ISV, WILLIAMS, MONTGOMERY, CEV, GNB, and MESSAGE.

Touching This Omission

Although this may appear to be an unwarranted diversion, I have a purpose for citing the observations of several notable commentators on this verse.

⇨ **JOHN GILL.** Although he does not concur with these omissions, John Gill

explains their absence by saying, “this clause is wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and in the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions.”

⇒ **JOHN CALVIN.** In his commentary on Acts, John Calvin says of this verses, “Luke doth signify that Paul had more liberty granted him than the rest; for his condition and estate was peculiar. For he was suffered to dwell in an house by himself, having one keeper with him, whereas the rest were shut up in the common prison. For the general captain knew by Festus’ report that Paul was guiltless; and the centurion, as it is likely, did faithfully rehearse such things as might serve to bring him into favor.”

⇒ **DANIEL WHEDON.** Daniel Whedon observes, “**The guard** — Every absolute monarch usually finds it necessary to secure a competent body of troops upon whose fidelity to his own person he can rely in case of rebellion. Such for the emperor of Rome were the praetorian troops. The Praetorian Camp, situated outside of the northwest wall of the city, was a large square lined with military barracks, the lodgings of the soldiery, and strongly fortified on all sides. Its commander, **captain of the guard**, at this time was the celebrated Burrhus, who, in connection with Seneca, endeavoured to support the fortunes of the empire under the reign of the mad and bloody Nero. But in fact the whole clause — **the centurion... but** — is omitted from so many manuscripts that Tischendorf and other high authorities reject it as spurious.”

⇒ **ALBERT BARNES.** Albert Barnes writes, “The commander of the Praetorian cohort, or guard. The custom was, that those who were sent from the provinces to Rome for trial were delivered to the custody of this guard. The name of the prefect or captain of the guard at this time was Burrhus Afranius (Tacitus, History, 12,42,1).”

⇒ **ADAM CLARKE.** Adam Clarke writes, “This word properly means the commander of a camp; but it signifies the prefect, or commander of the praetorian cohorts, or emperor’s guards. Tacitus (Annal. lib. iv. cap. 2) informs us that, in the reign of Tiberius, Sejanus, who was then prefect of these troops, did, in order to accomplish his ambitious designs, cause them to be assembled from their quarters in the city, and stationed in a fortified camp near it; so that their commander is with peculiar propriety styled by St. Luke στρατοπεδάρχης, the commander of the camp. For the arrival of St. Paul at Rome was in the seventh year of Nero; and it is certain, from Suetonius, (in Tiber. cap. 37,) that the custom of keeping the praetorian soldiers in a camp, near the city, was retained by the emperors succeeding Tiberius; for the historian observes that Claudius, at his accession to the empire, was received into the camp, in castra delatus est, namely, of the praetorian cohorts; and so Tacitus says of Nero, An. lib. xii. cap. 69, that on the same occasions illatus

castris, he was brought into the camp. Dr. Doddridge observes that it was customary for prisoners who were brought to Rome to be delivered to this officer, who had the charge of the state prisoners, as appears from the instance of Agrippa, who was taken into custody by Macro, the praetorian prefect, who succeeded Sejanus; (Joseph. Ant. lib. xviii. cap. 7. sec. 6;) and from Trajan’s order to Pliny, when two were in commission, Plin. lib. x. ep. 65. Vincetus mitti ad praefectos praetorii mei debet: he should be sent bound to the prefects of my guards. The person who now had that office was the noted Afranius Burrhus; but both before and after him it was held by two: Tacit. An. lib. xii. sec. 42; lib. xiv. sec. 51.”

⇒ **MATTHEW HENRY.** Matthew Henry writes, “He is still a prisoner. He had longed to see Rome, but, when he comes there, he is delivered, with other prisoners, to the captain of the guard, and can see no more of Rome than he will permit him. How many great men had made their entry into Rome, crowned and in triumph, who really were the plagues of their generation! But here a good man makes his

by the untimely death of Marius, the commander-in-chief of the praetorian army, which guarded the royal palace and the emperor’s person. Of course, the emperor was too great a man to give personal attention to a prisoner. Hence Marius received Paul, and gave him perfect liberty as long as he lived. This was owing to the excellent and even wonderful report given him by Julius, the centurion, who told about the storm and thrice miraculous deliverance through this paradoxical man, and the letter of Festus, simply stating that there was nothing against him criminal in Roman law, but simply complicated matters connected with the Jews’ religion.”

⇒ **JOSEPH BENSON.** Joseph Benson observes, “And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard — Or prefect of the praetorian band, according to his commission. It was customary for prisoners who were brought to Rome, to be delivered to this officer, who had the charge of the state prisoners. The person who now held this office was the noted Afranius Burrhus.”

Let it be clear that these quotations add no weight to the text, and that is not my reason for giving them. They do confirm, however, that there is by no means unanimity among insightful handlers of Scripture concerning the omission of this phrase.

entry into Rome, chained and triumphed over as a poor captive, who was really the greatest blessing to his generation. This thought is enough to put one for ever out of conceit with this world.”

⇒ **JAMIESON, FAUSSET, AND BROWN.** Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown says of this verse, “the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard — the Praetorian Prefect, to whose custody, as commander of the Praetorian guard, the highest military authority in the city, were committed all who were to come before the emperor for trial. Ordinarily there were two such prefects; but from A.D. 51 to 62, one distinguished general — Burrus Aframus, who had been Nero’s tutor — held that office; and as our historian speaks of “the captain,” as if there were but one, it is thought that this fixes the apostle’s arrival at Rome to be not later than the year 62 [WIES]. But even though there had been two when Paul arrived, he would be committed only to one of them, who would be “the captain’ who got charge of him. (At most, therefore, this can furnish no more than confirmation to the chronological evidence otherwise obtained).

⇒ **W.B. GODBEY.** W.B. Godbey writes, “This continues two years daily, and was then discontinued

⇒ **JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE.** Joseph Sutcliffe writes, “When we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; the captain of the praetorian cohort. The guard was a fortified camp in the suburbs of Rome. A wise and regular government will not leave the lives and property of a metropolis to the mercy of an infuriated and drunken mob, which a spark may kindle to vengeance in a moment. Robbers and murderers must be afraid of the sword, which supports the magistrate in the severer exercises of duty.”

The Reason for These Citations

Let it be clear that these quotations add no weight to the text, and that is not my reason for giving them. They do confirm, however, that there is by no means unanimity among insightful handlers of Scripture concerning the omission of this phrase. Yet, the Bibles that omit this passage leave their readers completely oblivious of the message it contains — or that anything more was written by Luke than is represented by this text.

Additionally, there is a certain flow

of logic that is reflected in these words. Paul receives special treatment, which you would never conclude reading the versions that omit the explanation provided in this verse. The fact that it is omitted in several manuscripts that were written a considerable time after the original writing of the text, is, in my own judgment, not sufficient reason to exclude it from our English Bible. Its inclusion adds sense to the text, and takes nothing from the facts. It also highlights the discretionary judgment of the "captain of the guard," who gave a special privilege to Paul. All of this, of course, was the working of the Lord, who was protecting His servant in order that he might bear witness to Him in Rome, just as He had promised.

It seems to me that there is a certain obligation laid upon translators to provide a text that best gives honor to God, and more precisely states the case. I do not know what form of reasoning would insist that a variant manuscript, written at a later date, necessarily implies a scribal interpolation. Why could not the later variation be owing to a scribal omission, thinking the text was redundant, or lacked

any value?

At any rate, I choose to accept the text as it stands in the Authorized Version, and ascribe wisdom and insight to those who so translated it. There really can be no successful refutation of that stance.

PAUL PERMITTED TO DWELL BY HIMSELF

"... but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him." Other versions read, "BUT Paul was permitted to dwell by himself,"^{NKJV} "Paul was allowed to stay by himself,"^{NASB} "allowed to live by himself,"^{NRSV} and "but Paul was allowed to remain by himself."^{DARBY}

This is a most remarkable circumstance. It indicates that Julius delivered a good report of Paul. He could attest to his wisdom in warning of the dangers of sailing from Crete. There was also his wise council about staying on the ship, and bringing encouragement to all who were on board the ship. He may very well have shared the incident of Paul being bitten by an extremely venomous snake, and the

healing the father of Publius, as well as the healing of many of the diseased of the island of Melita. Then, there was the fact that none of the charges against Paul could be substantiated, and had he not appealed to Caesar, he would have been released by the king Agrippa. There was also the letter of Lysias to Felix the governor. If this also was made known to the captain of the guard, it is not difficult to understand why he allowed Paul to dwell in his own quarters with a special soldier being assigned to him.

The Hand of the Lord Was With Him

Thus, it is obvious that the hand of the Lord was with Paul. **Now he could bear witness to Christ without hostile Jews being present.** Accommodations were also provided so he would not have to speak within the framework of a jail cell. Remember, he had been confined to a prison for two years in Caesarea, and there is no record of him being able to bear special witness concerning the savior at that time – unless it be when he was called by Felix in hopes of receiving a bribe from him to be loosed (Acts 24:26). Now, although a prisoner, he had liberty.

PAUL CALLED THE CHIEF OF THE JEWS TOGETHER

"¹⁷ And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸ Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. ¹⁹ But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of."

The wisdom of the priorities of Paul are evident in this passage. He moved about with godly intentions, not intending to give a cause for reproach to Christ, and not seeking to make it more difficult for the Jews. He did not seek to merely vindicate himself, but to reduce the amount of friction that could occur when he began witnessing of the Christ. He did all of this without compromising the truth.

HE CALLED THE CHIEF OF THE JEWS TOGETHER

"And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together..." Other versions read, "called the leaders of the Jews,"^{NKJV} "those who were

the leading men,"^{NASB} "the local leaders of the Jews,"^{NRSV} "the most influential Jews,"^{GWN} "the principle Jews,"^{MRD} "the most important Jewish leaders,"^{IE} "the ones being of the Jews foremost,"^{ABP} and "those who were prominent among the Jews."^{EMTV}

In the Jewish economy, the "chief" men were the ones most learned in "the Jew's religion" (Gal 1:13,4). These were not political figures, or mere men of wealth. **Rather, they were the ones who had the leadership because of their Scriptural understanding, and leading roles in religious places and affairs.** In this way, as well as in other facets of life, the Jews were distinguished from the rest of the peoples. Their lives revolved around the Temple in Jerusalem, and the synagogues where they were located. They were not noted for having coliseums, or other places of non-religious gatherings. Their feasts were religious in nature. In this way they established that God intended for the people identified with Himself to be distinguished for that identity. They were not noted for their involvement in the civil and social affairs of the world.

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Before going any further, I want to draw attention to the fact that the Jews maintained their unique identity while in Rome, Italy – a long way from Jerusalem. **As in every nation in which they were found, they were never absorbed, so to speak, by the culture, thereby losing their identity.** This continues to this very day. Although apparently taking advantage of the benefits of any heathen society, there was a sense in which they remained separate from it.

God has not departed from this standard in the church. While unlearned men are often eager to get Christians to be a part of the society in which they find themselves, this has not yet been established as a Divine strategy.

These days it is not unusual to hear professed Christ leaders challenge Christians to become light and salt in the world by being involved in political and social causes. **This entire approach is questionable, to say the least.** The influence God intends for His people to have in the world is the result of making clear by their manner of life that they have a **primary** association with God. It is *“unto Him”* that they live (2 Cor 5:15), presenting their bodies a living sacrifice to Him (Rom 12:1-2).

A second consideration here is the fact that Paul knew the Gospel, was God’s power unto salvation *“to the Jew first”* (Rom 1:16). Therefore, most generally, wherever he found himself, his first contacts were made with the Jews.

A third factor in this matter is the fact that Jesus had called him to testify to the Jews, and not only to the Gentiles. Jesus had revealed to Ananias, *“he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”* (Acts 9:15).

The social climate had apparently changed in Rome. Earlier in this book, our attention was drawn to the presence of Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. Formerly having made their home in Italy, they were among those Jews whom Claudius had commanded *“to depart from Rome”* (Acts 18:2). That expulsion took place in 52-53 A.D., about nine years prior to this event. They had now returned to Rome. The particulars of that allowance are not provided to us.

**PAUL’S EXPLANATION #1
I HAVE COMMITTED NOTHING**

AGAINST THE PEOPLE

“ . . . and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers . . . ”

At this point, Paul does not know if the Jews in Rome had heard of his arrest and the charges brought against him. However, he did want to make sure they knew the truth of the matter, lest he be put at an unnecessary disadvantage.

Even though the Jews had vigorously opposed and harmed Paul, yet he did not seek vengeance against them. He lived out what the doctrine taught: *“Recompense to no man evil for evil”* (Rom 12:17). And again, *“See that none render evil for evil unto any man”* (1 Thess 5:15). Peter also taught, *“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing”* (1 Pet 3:9).

Notwithstanding, he would not let their lies against him go unchallenged, though he did not do evil to them. He saw this as a necessary means of neutralizing damaging influences. Paul boldly said to Felix, *“Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me . . . Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against*

Again, Paul makes clear that the charges brought against him could not be proved. Even the governmental authorities of the meticulous manner of Roman law, after both hearing and weighing the charges brought against him had acknowledged they were without any genuine basis. He had done nothing worthy of death.

**PAUL’S EXPLANATION #3
CONSTRAINED TO APPEAL UNTO
CAESAR**

“But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar. . . .” Other versions read, *“when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar,”* ^{NASB} *“when the Jews made protest against it, I had to put my cause into Caesar’s hands,”* ^{BBE} *“the Jews contradicting it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar,”* ^{DOUAY} and *“when the Jewish leaders protested the decision, I felt it necessary to appeal to Caesar.”* ^{NLT}

Even though Felix, Festus, and Agrippa had rendered the verdict of “not guilty,” the Jew continued to press the issue, even asking Agrippa to bring Paul to Jerusalem to be tried. They plotted to kill him along the way. From a practical point of view, this left Paul no recourse except to Caesar. Of course, there was more to it than that. Jesus had promised he would bear witness to Him in Rome, and an angel confirmed that he would stand before Caesar. However, those were pearls he would not

Paul makes clear that he was not engaged in some kind of retaliation or revenge. He was not delivering formal charges against Israel, although they had sought his life without a just cause. He would leave the matter of vengeance with the Lord, for it belonged to Him. He only sought to confirm that he had been charged falsely, and that any unbiased person was able to see that clearly.

me. Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council” (Acts 24:13,18-20).

**PAUL’S EXPLANATION #2
I WAS DELIVERED A PRISONER**

“ . . . yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me . . . ”

cast before everyone.

**PAUL’S EXPLANATION #4
CONSTRAINED TO APPEAL UNTO
CAESAR**

“ . . . not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.” Other versions read, *“not that I had any accusation against my nation,”* ^{NASB} *“not that I had any charge to bring against my own people,”* ^{NIV} *“even though I had no desire to press charges against my own*

After the passing of considerable time, and enduring all manner of adversity, Paul finally arrives in Rome – by Given O. Blakely

people,”^{NLT} and “*though it was not because I had any charge to make against my nation.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul makes clear that he was not engaged in some kind of retaliation or revenge. He was not delivering formal charges against Israel, although they had sought his life without a just cause. He would leave the matter of vengeance with the Lord, for it belonged to Him (Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30; Rev 2:23). He only sought to confirm that he had been charged falsely, and that any unbiased person was able to see that clearly.

The Protection of His Witness and Character

Some people are overly naive at this point. They feel as though no person

should ever defend themselves against erroneous charges. However, this view is too simplistic. When Paul’s doctrine was attacked, or the reality of his apostleship questioned, he addressed the matter.

- ⇨ When he was charged with teaching that by doing evil good would come (Rom 3:8).
- ⇨ When some in Corinth questioned the validity of his claim to apostleship (1 Cor 9:1-27; 2 Cor 12:12).
- ⇨ When the Gospel that he preached was questioned by some in Galatia (Gal 1:11-12; 2:7).

Paul would not allow anything false being said against him that would

possibly impede the progress of the Gospel. He even went so far as to silence a woman with a spirit of divination who publically said he was a servant of God, and was showing her the way of salvation. Such a confession could not be allowed from such a person, lest the Gospel be associated with Satan’s empire of darkness (Acts 16:16-18). Had Paul let that matter go, it would have appeared as though he was working for that woman’s masters.

Along these same lines, Jesus did not permit the demons to confess Him publically (Mk 1:24-25; Lk 4:34,41). God’s people need to learn to conduct themselves wisely in this area. There are people who seek to tarnish our reputation, and we must not ignore it.

FOR THE HOPE OF ISRAEL I AM BOUND

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

The Jewish leaders came to meet Paul – which is quite a testimony of itself. I seriously doubt that anyone calling for a meeting of Christian leaders in our relatively small city would meet with much success. Several of us have been involved in an effort to bring only preachers of a particular sect together, and have not done well in their sincere efforts. That is because the religious culture of our day does not promote that kind of closeness. However, it did exist in Israel, who was cultured by God to be interdependent.

FOR THIS CAUSE I HAVE CALLED FOR YOU

“For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you . . .” Other versions read, “*this reason,*”^{NKJV} and “*this is why*”^{CJB}

Note, it was a “*cause*” that drove this meeting, not mere friendship. There was a purpose behind this gathering, and it did not center in Paul himself. It rather related to the commission that Jesus had given him in the beginning. “*I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from*



the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:16-18). **Were it not for the carrying out of that commission, Paul would never have been arrested, or even opposed by the Jews.**

First, he explains why he was there under these particular circumstances, for it did not look as though he had come to minister. In fact, it did not appear he came of his own will, but was rather forced to come to Rome, bound by chains.

FOR THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

“ . . . because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” Other versions read, “*I am wearing this chain for*

the sake of the hope of Israel,”^{NASB} “*for on account of the hope of Israel I have this chain about me,*”^{DARBY} “*I’m wearing these chains because of what Israel hopes for,*”^{GWN} and “*I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of Israel – the Messiah -- has already come.*”^{NLT}

This is the third time in this episode that Paul has referred to hope, always relating it to the Abraham and the Jews.

- ⇨ **BEFORE THE JEWISH COUNCIL IN JERUSALEM.** “*Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question*” (Acts 23:6).
- ⇨ **BEFORE AGRIPPA IN CAESAREA.** “*And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews*” (Acts 26:6-7).
- ⇨ **BEFORE THE JEWISH LEADERS IN ROME.** “*. . . because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain*” (Acts 28:20).

This is a view of Judaism from the perspective of Divine intent. It is not meant to suggest that every Jew lived

with the hope of reference – but every Jew of honest and good heart did so.

For Abraham and those with the “*faith of Abraham*” (Rom 4:16), everything hinged on the coming of the Messiah. So far as the culmination of human experience was concerned, it was encapsulated in the resurrection of the dead, as it was confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The difference between Paul and the unbelieving Jews was not in the hope itself, but in the One who fulfilled the hope – Jesus Christ. The fact that Paul embraced Jesus, “*who is our hope*” (1 Tim 1:1), shaped everything he did, and directed the manner in which he thought. The Jews were looking for the Messiah, but Paul had found Him. The Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, but

Paul received Him in that capacity.

Under the Old Covenant, the Law confirmed the absolute need for a Savior and Liberator. Those who took it seriously soon found that they were morally and spiritually impotent to perfectly fulfill the law, as was demanded of them. That circumstance made the coming Messiah relevant – as compared with looking for someone to give man an earthly advantage and answer all of their carnal desires. Therefore, the Law did its work by convincing of sin, and that is what opened the door for hope, **for men who do not think they are sinners have no mind for a Savior.**

The language Paul uses is very wise, for he appeals to something honest Jews longed for. Now they face a man who

was willing to suffer, be incarcerated, and bound with a chain because of the hope that he possessed.

This is a sterling example of what is meant by the phrase, “*We are saved by hope*” (Rom 8:24). The individuals who possess that hope, abounding in it by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13), will shape their lives around it. There is no inhibition they will not abandon (Rom 13:12), no weight they will not throw off (Heb 12:2) no defilement from which they will not cleanse themselves (2 Cor 7:1). There is no sacrifice too great, and no effort that is considered too difficult. **Hope is a driving force in the believer, and is an anchor for the soul, both steadfast and sure** (Heb 6:19). It keeps the one possessing it do avoid drifting into forbidden waters.

THEY WANTED TO HEAR

“²¹ And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. ²² But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.”

By Divine providence, the Jewish hostility that was found in Jerusalem was apparently not found in Rome, Italy. The stage is being set for a proclamation of the truth. The response of these men to the truth will reveal where they stand.

THEY HAD NOT HEARD ANYTHING BAD ABOUT PAUL

“*And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee . . .*” Other versions read, “*reported or spoken any evil of you,*” ^{NKJV} “*reported or spoken anything bad about you,*” ^{NASB} “*to give an account or say any evil about you,*” ^{BBE} “*any report or story of anything to your discredit,*” ^{NJB} “*We have heard nothing against you!*” ^{LIVING} “*reported or stated anything to your disadvantage,*” ^{WEYMOUTH} and “*Nobody wrote warning us about you. And no one has shown up saying anything bad about you.*” ^{MESSAGE}

Considering the aggressive opposition that Paul experienced from the Jews, this is a most remarkable statement.

No Jew from Judea sent them letters warning them of Paul. Furthermore, no Jew came to Rome reporting something evil against Paul, or trying in any way to discredit him. How could this be? **It was because God did not allow it to happen.** Those who were Paul’s enemies did not think about writing to their fellow Jews in Rome, warning them about Paul. No traveling Jew came to Rome spouting off about Paul, and

trouble against Paul in Rome.

In this way, Paul would be able to witness in Rome without facing the kind of opposition he did elsewhere.

Paul admonished Titus to so conduct his life so that no one would have anything evil to say about him. “*In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in*

No Jew from Judea sent them letters warning them of Paul. Furthermore, no Jew came to Rome reporting something evil against Paul, or trying in any way to discredit him. How could this be? It was because God did not allow it to happen. Those who were Paul’s enemies did not think about writing to their fellow Jews in Rome, warning them about Paul.

the purported damage he had done among the Jews. God had, so to speak, broken their teeth, so they could not speak against His servant (Psa 58:6). He had clouded their minds so they could not think up ways to discredit Paul. Just as God kept the Israelite women and children safe when all of the men went to certain appointed feasts (Ex 34:24), so God kept Paul’s enemies from fomenting

*doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, **having no evil thing to say of you**” (Titus 2:7-8). Paul wrote to the Philippians about being “**blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom***

After the passing of considerable time, and enduring all manner of adversity, Paul finally arrives in Rome – by Given O. Blakely

ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15).

The work of God is important enough that everyone involved in it must be clean, lest the name of Christ be blasphemed (Rom 2:24; 1 Tim 6:1).

THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHAT PAUL THOUGHT

" . . . But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest . . ." Other versions read, *"we desire to hear from you what your views are,"*^{NASB} *"we would like to hear from you what you think,"*^{NRSV} *"we consider it suitable to hear from you what you think,"*^{CSB} *"we beg to hear of thee what thou thinkest,"*^{DARBY} and

control of Rome, and the citizens having to pay taxes to Caesar.

As they will clarify, they particularly wanted to hear about the disciples of Jesus – people of the way. What kind of reasoning supported their views, and Paul's in particular? What comprised his theological thinking?

A Local Application

We have had our share of evil reports and false charges. But most, if not all, of us have yet to have a local person ask us to explain what we think about life in Christ Jesus, and why we do so.

"The only thing we know about this Christian sect is that nobody seems to have anything good to say about it."^{MESSAGE}

Everyone was not speaking against those who were disciples of Jesus. It was the Jews that were doing so. The natives on the island of Melita certainly were not speaking against this group of people. There were thousands, perhaps millions, who were speaking favorably of the faith and love of certain brethren in Rome itself (Rom 1:8). The same was reported of the believers in Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:8-9).

The Jews, however, had been fairly consistent in their opposition to believers, and their hostility toward the Gospel. Now, these Jews were more noble than those critics, and wanted to know more about this body of people – people of *"the way"* (Acts 24:14). What did they believe, and why did they believe it? What made them what they were, and what kind of power had they experienced? They wanted to know.

It is refreshing when someone – anyone – asks why we believe the things we have embraced? Why do we speak the way we do? What is the reason for our hope? Peter writes, *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ"* (1 Pet 3:16).

Paul was ready to give an answer for the hope that was in him, and to do it confidently and with power. He had sanctified the Lord God in his heart.

These men were not asking for Paul's views on the Roman government, Nero's rule, taxation, or other social issues. They were not asking for his views on marriage or immorality, as the Roman citizens were in a state of moral decline. They had no mind to ask Paul what he thought about Jerusalem being under the control of Rome, and the citizens having to pay taxes to Caesar.

"we think it fitting and are eager to hear from you what it is that you have in mind and believe and what your opinion is."^{AMPLIFIED}

These men were not asking for Paul's views on the Roman government, Nero's rule, taxation, or other social issues. They were not asking for his views on marriage or immorality, as the Roman citizens were in a state of moral decline. They had no mind to ask Paul what he thought about Jerusalem being under the

THEY WANTED TO KNOW OF THIS SECT

" . . . for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against." Other versions read, *"for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere,"*^{NASB} *"for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect,"*^{NIV} *"for as to this form of religion, we have knowledge that in all places it is attacked,"*^{BBE} *"the only thing we know about this movement is that it is denounced everywhere,"*^{NLT} and

CONCLUSION

We learn of the ways of God from this entire account. When He directs people along a certain path, the destination is the primary thing, but it is not the only thing. **There are blessings and opportunities all along the way – things that bring glory to the Lord and encouragement to the traveler.** Ponder some of the opportunities that were granted to Paul from his arrest to his arrival in Rome – a period that stretched over three years.

- ⇒ In Jerusalem he was given license to speak to the Jews about his life (Acts 21:1-5).
- ⇒ In Jerusalem he testified to the Jews concerning his conversion (Acts 21:6-13).
- ⇒ In Jerusalem he testified to the Jews of the commission given to him by Jesus (Acts 21:24-16).

- ⇒ In Jerusalem he testified to the Jews of his baptism into Christ (Acts 21:16).
- ⇒ In Jerusalem he testified to the Jews of Jesus' appearance to him in the Temple (Acts 21:17-21).
- ⇒ In Jerusalem he testified to the Jewish council (Acts 23:1-10).
- ⇒ In Caesarea he testified before Felix (Acts 24:10-21).

- ⇒ In Caesarea he reasoned with Felix and Druscilla concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:24-25).
- ⇒ In Caesarea he testified of his innocence to Festus (Acts 25:10-11).
- ⇒ In Caesarea he gave an extensive testimony to Agrippa of his life and conversion (Acts 26:1-15).
- ⇒ In Caesarea he gave an extensive testimony to Agrippa of Jesus' commission to him (Acts 26:16-18).
- ⇒ In Caesarea he gave testimony to Agrippa of the message he preached (Acts 26:21-23).
- ⇒ In Caesarea he reminded Agrippa of the testimony of the prophets (Acts 26:27).
- ⇒ While sailing to Italy, Paul warned them of the danger of sailing at that time, and that much harm would be caused by doing so (Acts 27:10).

- ⇒ In the midst of a fierce storm, Paul testified of the appearance of the angel of God to him, assuring that only the ship would be lost, and that they would be shipwrecked on a certain island (Acts 27:21-26).
- ⇒ Before a frightened group of people, Paul assured them they would all be saved from the storm. He then took bread, prayed before them all, and encouraged them to eat (Acts 27:33-35).
- ⇒ On the island of Melita, before several hundred people, Paul showed great faith when he was bitten of a venomous snake (Acts 28:3-6).
- ⇒ On Melita, Paul healed the father of Publius, showing the superior power of Christ (Acts 28:8).
- ⇒ On Melita, Paul healed many of the islanders who were sick (Acts 28:9).
- ⇒ En route to Rome, Paul and company found brethren in Puteoli, and

remained with them for seven days (Acts 28:14).

- ⇒ En route to Rome Paul was refreshed by the coming of several brethren from Rome, who met them in The Three Taverns, and Appii Forum (Acts 28:15).

- ⇒ In Rome he was given private quarters where he was able to call for the chief of the local Jews and give witness to them (Acts 28:17-20).

Thus we have a brief summation of a three-year trek to Rome, laden with various kinds of opportunities to bring glory to God and help to the people.

A path that has no opportunities to witness for the Lord is probably not a Divinely ordered one. **The people of God should be careful not to be caught up with goals and ambitions that are not attended by open doors!** In the Kingdom of God, waiting and inactivity are an admixture. Those who are waiting for a special blessing may very well miss a special opportunity to be a blessing.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/5/10. We will conclude our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The one hundredth and seventh, and final, lesson will cover verses 23 through 31 of the twenty-eighth chapter: "PAUL PREACHING IN ROME." A day is appointed to Paul during which he could speak to the Jews, confirming what he had been preaching all along. From morning until evening he expounded the kingdom of God, persuading the people of Jesus out of Moses and the Prophets. When some did not believe, Paul testified that he had been sent to blind them, and that he would now turn to the Gentiles. The Jews left reasoning on these things. Paul continued for two years preaching the Kingdom of God and testifying of Jesus. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

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