

# The Context Bible

## Life Group Lesson 43

October 20, 2014 – October 26, 2014

### Acts 28:1-31 Revelation 1

Have you ever wished the Bible was easier to read through like an ordinary book – cover to cover? Because the Bible is a collection of 66 books, reading it like an ordinary book is quite difficult. Compounding this difficulty is the fact that the later writers of the New Testament were often quoting or referencing passages in the Old Testament. In fact, much of the New Testament makes better sense only if one also considers the Old Testament passages that place the text into its scriptural context.

You are reading a running commentary to The Context Bible. This arrangement of Scripture seeks to overcome some of these difficulties. Using a core reading of John’s gospel, the book of Acts, and the Revelation of John, the Context Bible arranges all the rest of Scripture into a contextual framework that supports the core reading. It is broken out into daily readings so that this program allows one to read the entire Bible in a year, but in a contextual format.

Here is the running commentary for week forty-three, along with the readings for week forty-four appended. Join in. It’s never too late to read the Bible in context!

#### *Week Forty-Three Readings*

<p><b>10/20 Paul on Malta</b> Acts 28:1-28:10</p> <p><b>10/21 Paul at Rome</b> Acts 28:11-28:31</p> <p>Phil 1:1-1:2 Ex 21:1-21:6 Phil 1:3-1:20, 1:27-1:30 Prov 14:29-14:30 Phil 4:8-4:23 Prov 14:31 Phm 1:1-1:2</p>	<p><b>10/22 Paul at Rome</b> Acts 28:11-28:31</p> <p>Phm 1:3-1:25 Deut 23:15-23:16 Col 4:1 Prov 29:19-29:22 Eph 6:5-6:9 Prov 17:2</p> <p><b>10/23 Paul at Rome (Cont'd)</b> Acts 28:11-28:31</p> <p>2 Tim 1:1-1:14 2 Tim 2:1-2:13 Matt 10:26-10:33 Prov 8:13-8:14</p>	<p><b>10/24 Paul at Rome (Cont'd)</b> Acts 28:11-28:31</p> <p>2 Tim 2:14-2:21, 2:23-2:26 Prov 26:17-26:21 2 Tim 4:9-4:22 Prov 27:18 Prov 18:24 Col 4:7-4:18 Prov 11:23 2 Tim 4:1-4:5 Prov 17:10 2 Tim 4:6-4:8</p> <p><b>10/25 John's Revelation</b> Rev1</p> <p>Rom 13:11-13:14 Col 1:15-1:23 1 Pet 2:1-2:12 Isa 28</p> <p><i>10/26 Off</i></p>
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## BACKGROUND

This week's readings in the Acts account of Paul conclude with his arrival in Rome. The readings are supplemented with an assortment of passages that include the Old Testament, writings Paul likely made while in Rome (from what many scholars call "the prison epistles"), and from other New Testament passages as well. The weekly readings also include the first chapter of Revelation, but the written lesson for that day's readings will come in the next written lesson rather than this one.

*Paul at Rome (Acts 28:1-28:31; Phil 1:1-1:20, 1:27-1:30; 4:8-4:23; Ex 21:1-21:6; Prov 14:29-14:31; Phm 1:1-1:25; Deut 23:15-23:16; Col 4:1; Prov 29:19-29:22; Eph 6:5-6:9; Prov 17:2; 2 Tim 1:1-1:14; 2:1-2:13; Matt 10:26-10:33; Prov 8:13-8:14; 2 Tim 2:14-2:21, 2:23-2:26; Prov 26:17-26:21; 2 Tim 4:1-4:22; Prov 27:18; 18:24; 11:23; 17:10; Col 4:7-4:18; Rom 13:11-13:14; Col 1:15-1:23; 1 Pet 2:1-2:12; Isa 28)*

Without adequate space last week, we did not set up the shipwreck that put Paul at Malta on his way to Rome. We do that here first, followed by the passages of Paul at Rome and the questions of what happened to Paul after Rome. In the midst of the lesson from the Acts narrative, we weave in the many Scriptures added for the contextual readings.

Luke gives us the account of Paul leaving Judea and heading to Rome in Acts 27. We should note at the outset that this is one of the "we" sections in Acts where it is apparent that Luke is joining Paul for the journey. Not only do we have Luke's inclusive language ("we"), but we also have Luke giving exact directions and accounts, mentioning travel detail with great precision like we saw in the earlier "we" sections of Acts.<sup>1</sup>

Paul and some other prisoners were given to the care of a centurion named Julius who took them on a ship out of the harbor at Caesarea going first to Adramyttium. We should pause here and consider a map's layout of where Paul was and how he was to sail to Rome.

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<sup>1</sup> This again shows us the precision of the history recorded in Acts. Luke writes much of Acts from firsthand knowledge. The rest of Luke's gospel and Acts's history was written from Luke's careful investigation. As Luke said, "Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luk 1:3-1:4). No doubt Luke spent the two years Paul was held in Caesarea researching and speaking to many firsthand sources about the facts that went into Luke and Acts.



Paul was taken “in a ship of Adramyttium” that was set to sail along the coast of Asia. This was the typical means of ship travel. In a day when navigation instruments were relatively crude (at least by today’s standards), when weather forecasting was even more speculative than today, and when even the sturdiest of vessels were still dangerous in the open sea, most water travel was done with land in sight.

Luke and Aristarchus accompanied Paul on the ship. Aristarchus had come with Paul several years back from his home church in Thessalonica to help bring the Greek churches’ contributions to the church in Jerusalem. We can assume that the centurion carried with him the papers that were prepared for Paul’s appeal, including the most recent write up where Agrippa and Festus had found no crime associated with Paul.

On the voyage, “Julius treated Paul kindly.” When the vessel reached Sidon, 69 miles north of Caesarea and the first stop Luke tells us about, Julius allowed Paul “to go to his friends and be cared for.” The word Luke uses for “cared for”<sup>2</sup> is rare in the New Testament. It denotes some type of medical or physical help, telling us Paul may not have been in the best of health for this journey.

From Sidon, the winds were blowing such that the ship went around the western end of Cyprus and followed the coast of modern Turkey until they arrived at Myra. At the harbor in Myra, Julius requisitioned passage for Italy on “a ship of Alexandria.” The

<sup>2</sup> “This is the only New Testament occurrence of the word *epimeleia* (ἐπιμέλεια) although Luke uses another form of it in Luke 10:34.

Alexandrian ships were those that carried grain to Rome.<sup>3</sup> The ships were typically quite large and this one, Luke tells us, had 276 people onboard for the voyage.<sup>4</sup>

## THE STORM

The weather was not favorable for this voyage and the route took a southerly bent under the southern coast of Crete. As the boat zigzagged off the south of Crete<sup>5</sup> it neared a harbor named Fair Havens. As they neared Fair Havens, Paul spoke up to the pilot and owner of the ship as well as the centurion. “Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives” (Acts 27:10).

Paul spoke here, not out of some inspiration from God, but out of his own experience and opinions as an experienced traveler.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately Paul was proven right in his concerns, even though he was wrong on the issue of loss of life. Paul had reason to be concerned. As Luke tells us, “much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over” (Acts 27:9). Luke is referring to the Fast that was *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. If this was the year 59, as Pauline scholar F. F. Bruce supposes, the fast fell around October 5 of that year.

This timing is significant because the oceans were closed to normal sea traffic over the winter. New Testament scholar Brian Rapske joins others in citing a late Roman military writer Flavius Vegetius explaining that May 27 to September 14 was considered the safe time for sea travel. Sea travel was considered risky in the spring between March 10 and May 26 as well as in the fall between September 14 and November 11. The time, however, between November 11 and March 10 was so dangerous that the sea was basically closed, except for emergency travel.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bruce points out that, “Egypt was the chief granary of Rome, and the corn-trade [wheat] between Rome and Egypt was of the greatest importance.” F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Eerdmans 1951) at 453.

<sup>4</sup> One first-century Roman shipwreck discovered recently off the coast of Caesarea was about 147 feet long, roughly half a football field.

<sup>5</sup> While most every map of Paul’s voyage draws a straight line between ports, the actual sailing was typically a zigzag trying to use whatever wind was available to move. Unless the wind was directly behind you, that meant zigzagging.

<sup>6</sup> For years, many Pauline scholars considered Paul an inexperienced traveler; however, as time has produced more archaeological insight into Paul and into these passages, scholars have come to decide Paul was actually a very experienced traveler in his day. It would not be unusual for Paul to give advice on decisions like this. See Rapske, Brian, “Acts, Travel and Shipwreck” *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* (Eerdmans 1994) Vol. 2 at 29 (footnote 129)

<sup>7</sup> See Rapske at 22ff; Bruce at 455.

Rather than heed Paul's advice, the centurion followed the thinking of the ship owner and pilot and they kept sailing past Fair Havens, planning to make the harbor on the western shore of Crete. Once a gentle south wind started, the ship hoisted anchor and began sailing west. As they skirted the southern coast of Crete headed to the western edge, the wind suddenly shifted and started blowing violently from the northeast.<sup>8</sup> The new wind bore down from the coast and began to blow the ship away from the shore. The wind was strong, and the ship could not make any headway (even zigging or zagging!) against such a strong wind. The ship had no choice but to accept the wind and get carried away from Crete.

For a while the ship's crew kept track of their location. They went "under the lee of a small island named Cauda" meaning they went by the island on the side that had some measure of protection from the wind. This was their first opportunity to secure the boat that was pulled along behind the ship.<sup>9</sup> It also was a time when they "used supports to undergird the ship."<sup>10</sup> Luke was part of the team that helped secure the dinghy, "we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat" (Acts 27:16). As Bruce adds, "any landlubber could haul on a rope!"<sup>11</sup> The third action taken at this time was lowering the ship's "gear." Scholars are uncertain if this means dropping anchor to slow the movement of the ship or simply dropping sails or securing the ship against windy storms.

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<sup>8</sup> Luke calls it a "tempestuous wind" using the Greek word *typhonikos* (τυφωνικός) from which we derive the word "typhoon." Bruce explains the adjective "refers to the whirling motion of the clouds and sea caused by the meeting of opposite currents of air" (Bruce at 458). A prefect of the Roman fleet who wrote at the time (named Pliny the Elder) explained a typhoon as "a whirling cloudburst. This brings down with it a portion of heat torn from a cloud, which it turns and whirls round, increasing its own downward velocity by its weight, and shifting from place to place with a rapid whirl; it is especially disastrous to navigators, as it twists round and shatters not only the yards, but the vessels themselves.... The same whirlwind when beaten back by its very impact snatches things up and carries them back with it to the sky, sucking them high aloft." *Natural History* Book 2.49.131-132 (Loeb Classical Library 1938) translated by H. Rackham. Whether Luke is describing an actual water tornado with its accompanying storm or simply the storm that typically produces a water tornado is unclear. We are certain though that he is describing a violent storm! Alaskan fisherman and biblical scholar Weston Fields notes that, "At least in Alaska, the wind must be at least about 40 knots in order to lift up water off the surface and make a mini-typhoon. We call this a "williwaw." At 40 knots one gets about 12 foot waves, breaking on top and pretty difficult for an open boat. The winds in the storm in Acts were probably much higher."

<sup>9</sup> This was the dinghy that would have been used to shuttle passengers back and forth to shore as well as to do basic work around the outside of the ship.

<sup>10</sup> This was a practice of taking rope and wrapping it under the ship's hull and tying it off, then using rope across the deck to tie the opposite sides of the hull tight so the ship had extra strength. This measure was necessary in a grain ship because the grain in the ship's hold, if sufficiently wet, would expand to twice its normal size, breaking apart the ship. See Rapske at 35.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce at 459.

The storm did not abate overnight and the next day the crew began throwing off the ship's cargo. On the third day the crew threw part of the ship's tackle overboard. For days and nights the storm continued. There were no navigable stars that could be seen, no references to land, and no real control of the ship. Luke wrote, "all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned" (Acts 27:20).

It was in this time of personal desperation for those on board that God sent a message through Paul. Before Paul told the crew of God's message, Paul added his own personal touch, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss!" (Acts 27:21) Paul gently but plainly tells the crew, "I told you so!" Paul then gives his encouraging news that God had plans the weather would not thwart.

Paul gives the crew the word from God as delivered to him from an angel that very night, and he also gives them his own testimony that God is faithful to his word.

But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, "Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you." So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me (Acts 27:22-27:25).

Paul did let them know the boat would need to run aground on a sandbar at some point.

The storm continued to hurl the boat across the water for fourteen days. Sometime deep in that fourteenth night some of the sailors suspected land was getting nearer. Dropping a weight with a rope attached, the sailors determined that the water was only about 120 feet deep. A short time later a second effort showed water getting shallower, only about 76 feet deep. The crew dropped four anchors from the back (stern) of the ship to slow down progress out of fear the ship might falter on rocks as it got closer to shore. A number of sailors then stated a need to drop anchors from the front (bow) of the ship. These sailors were getting into the dinghy to do so, but Luke knew the men were actually looking to use the dinghy to abandon ship and head for shore.

Paul went to the centurion and his soldiers and told them what the sailors were really up to. Paul added, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved!" (Acts 27:31) Unlike Paul's advice that two weeks earlier had gone unheeded, this time the men had no second thoughts! They immediately cut away the ropes holding the dinghy and let it float off before the sailors could abandon ship.

As dawn came, Paul told the people on board to eat! Evidently out of fear or seasickness no one had really eaten for the two weeks of the storm. Paul again committed to the people that "not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." (Acts

27:34) Paul then took the lead by taking bread, thanking God for it out loud before everyone and eating. Others on the boat then followed suit.

## **THE SHIPWRECK**

After eating, the crew began to lighten the ship by throwing off the rest of the wheat so it could run further inland before running aground. As the day broke, the men saw an island with a beach in a bay. Figuring they might be able to run the ship aground fairly close to the beach, they cut loose the anchors, let the rudders free, and hoisted the sail to get wind support. As they went in toward the beach, they struck a reef and ran the boat aground earlier. The bow was stuck on the reef and the waves were destroying the stern of the ship.

The immediate reaction of the soldiers was to kill the prisoners so there would be no escaping. Julius the centurion kept the soldiers from doing so “wishing to save Paul” (Acts 27:43). Under the centurion’s orders, those who could swim were ordered into the water.<sup>12</sup> Those who could not, took planks or parts of the ship that floated and went into the water. “And so it was that all were brought safely to land” (Acts 27:44) on the island of Malta, just off the boot of Italy.

## **PAUL IN MALTA**

Paul spent the winter months there waiting for sea travel to reopen for the spring. Luke wrote of this in the final chapter of his two-volume history of Christ and his church (Acts 28).

Paul and the other 275 people on the ship made it safely to shore after the ship broke up on a reef off the island of Malta. When they first made land, they had no clue where they were, but the inhabitants told them the island’s name. These native people, Luke noted, were unusually kind to the seafarers, building a fire to help with the bitter winter cold and rain.

We should pause here and note that while the ESV translates the passages in Acts 28:2 and 28:4 as “native people,” other versions use different terms. The NIV calls them “islanders.” The King James calls them “barbarous people” or “barbarians” as does the American Standard Version. Luke does in fact use the Greek word *barbaroi* (βάρβαροι) from which we derive the English word “barbarian.” But in the Greek sense, that word simply means that the people were not Greek speakers. To the Greek

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<sup>12</sup> Rapske notes the “readied and controlled manner” in which the ship was ultimately run aground, “passengers would have had some time to prepare themselves and secure any personal belongings against loss or destruction.” Rapske at 34.

ear, those who did not speak Greek made sounds equivalent to murmurings of “*bar bar bar bar*” and in that sense termed non-Greek speakers barbarians.<sup>13</sup>

Bruce and others note that the Maltese were native speakers of a Phoenician dialect. This would be a Semitic tongue that Paul would have likely been able to communicate with fairly well.<sup>14</sup>

Paul, in his typical helping fashion, went about collecting wood for the fire. As Bruce said, “Paul can make himself useful in small matters as well as great.”<sup>15</sup> When Paul picked up a bundle of sticks and placed them on the fire, a “viper” came out of the sticks and bit onto Paul’s hand. The locals saw the viper hanging from Paul’s hand and considered it an omen. They thought it meant that Paul was a murderer who had somehow managed to escape the justice of the sea. Justice would not be thwarted, and they believed the viper was sent to bring Paul to his proper end.

These people had no idea that, as Jesus had promised before his ascension, “These signs will accompany those who believe...they will pick up serpents with their hands...it will not hurt them” (Mrk 16:17-16:18). Paul was not worried. God had told him he would testify in Rome! Paul simply shook the viper off into the fire and kept doing his work. The locals were waiting for Paul to swell up and die, but instead Paul was completely fine. This caused the people to reevaluate and decide that Paul was not a murderer but a god!<sup>16</sup>

The chief of the island was a man named Publius. He went out of his way to receive Paul, Luke, and others and entertain them for three days. There was no real purpose Luke gives us for this beyond the man’s hospitable nature. It turned out a very smart thing, however, as Publius’s father was sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul went to the father, prayed over him, laid hands on him, and healed him!

News of the healing traveled fast and soon all the island’s sick were coming to Paul for healing. No doubt, the physician Luke must have marveled at the hand of God as these

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<sup>13</sup> For a good set of references to the usage of *barbaroi*, see the note on this text on page 538 of Robertson, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Eerdmans 1956) Vol. 2.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament; The Book of the Acts* (Eerdmans 1988) revised ed. at 496.

<sup>15</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles – The Greek Text With Introduction and Commentary* (Eerdmans 1951) at 470.

<sup>16</sup> One should not miss the chiasmic allusion here toward the end of Luke’s narrative as it compares to the beginning of the Bible. In Eden, the serpent brings death and foils the hopes of man. Armed with the gospel, Paul finds the serpent merely a nuisance to be cast off. Paul shakes the snake into the fire, a place where Scripture teaches the old serpent in the Eden story will eventually go.



people were healed one right after the other. The people were deeply and genuinely grateful, honoring Paul and his companions. When winter was over and the weather was right for the crew to resume travel, these natives made sure Paul was equipped with whatever he might need for the journey.

### THE FINAL LEG TO ROME

Paul and his companions spent three winter months on the island of Malta. Once winter was over, they boarded a ship that had wintered in the harbor to sail on to Italy. The ship was a grain ship from Alexandria much like the one shipwrecked upon the reefs.

Luke gives us a clear account of how the voyage finished. They went to Syracuse on Sicily where they harbored three days. From there, they sailed to Rhegium and then on to Puteoli, both coastal towns of Italy.<sup>17</sup>

In Puteoli, there were other Christians who welcomed Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus. For seven days, the church in Puteoli hosted the travelers.<sup>18</sup> Somehow during this stay, the church at Rome was alerted that Paul was close by and on his way. We should remember here that this is the very church that had received the longest letter Paul had ever written (at least that we know of), Romans. The letter that contained such deep and profound material was written to this church and we can assume that they had poured over the letter repeatedly. This is the church to which Paul had written, “I hope to see you” (Rom 15:24). There is no question the level of excitement in the church was great.

Luke tells us that on hearing of Paul and the others nearby, Christians from the Roman church “came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us” (Acts 28:15).<sup>19</sup> One must suspect that Aquila and Priscilla, Paul’s companions in the mission fields of Corinth and Ephesus were likely among the first to come greet Paul the prisoner! The term Luke uses that is translated “to meet us” (*apantesin humin - ἀπάντησις ἡμῖν*) is a “technical term for the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary by a deputation which went out from the city to greet him and to escort him

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<sup>17</sup> The harbor of Puteoli is the modern bay of Naples. Puteoli was an ancient town in the province of Naples, about 170 miles from Rome. The town is today called Pozzuoli.

<sup>18</sup> While we do not know the origins of the Church in Puteoli, scholars are not surprised that the church would have a presence at this time. Puteoli had a large Jewish presence in Italy. Josephus writes of the Jewish presence there as early as 4 BC (calling the town “Dicearchia” rather than Puteoli). See *Jewish Antiquities*, 17.12.1 and *The Jewish War*, 2.7.1.

<sup>19</sup> These locations were 33 and 43 miles respectively from Rome. From here, Paul would have traveled the famous Appian Way; a road built over 300 years before Paul that led from Rome to the south. A portion of the ancient road can still be traveled today.

there.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, the church treated Paul’s arrival as the city would treat the arrival of a great official. They rolled out the red carpet, in modern parlance!

Once Paul got to Rome, he was allowed to stay by himself in a rented room under the care of the soldier charged with guarding him. As we try to figure out what life was like for Paul in Roman custody, we have several places to read. First, Luke gives us a good deal of information in the closing verses of Acts.

Luke tells us that after being in Rome three days, Paul called the local leaders of the Jews to his house. Paul told these leaders that he had violated neither the Jewish people nor the customs of their fathers, yet was still delivered as a prisoner by the leadership in Jerusalem. Paul explained that the Romans had wanted to release him because after trying his case they found him innocent. But because the Jews objected to releasing Paul, Paul made an appeal to Caesar bringing him as a prisoner to Rome.

Paul then turned the conversation to his true mission efforts. Paul explained that he was in chains because of the hope of Israel, Jesus. The Jews responded that no word of Paul had come to them from Jerusalem, but they did want to hear what Paul had to say about Jesus and the church (they called it a “sect”).

A day was set for this teaching and the Jews came to Paul’s lodgings in great numbers. Paul spent the entire day telling and teaching about Jesus using the Law of Moses as well as the Prophets. Some Jews came to faith; others did not. Paul pointed out the truth of the prophecies from Isaiah 6:9-6:10 about the Jews hearing, but not understanding. Paul had good reason then for taking the message to Gentiles who would listen and understand.

Luke then closed his histories noting that Paul stayed in Rome two years “at his own expense” letting us know that Paul was paying for his own housing and continued for those two years to have a good bit of liberty. Paul was, as God had promised, “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:30-28:31). With that, Luke brings Acts to an end.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Bruce *Greek* at 475.

<sup>21</sup> Many scholars hold that Luke’s abrupt ending of his histories likely stems from the date of composition. Luke ended his history at this point because this was the time he was finished writing! See, e.g., Bruce *Greek* commentary at 481; J. McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Baker Academic 2003) at 251. Other scholars believe that Luke intended a third volume. See, e.g., Robertson, *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament* at 553.

We can go outside Acts to see a bit more about Paul in Rome. In several of the letters he wrote during that two-year period, Paul sets out a few other pertinent facts.<sup>22</sup> First, as we will see reading Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 1:24, Luke stayed on with Paul as a co-worker for at least a while in Rome. Second, we see from Paul's letter to the Philippians that Paul saw his imprisonment in Rome as something that God was using to further his mission. Paul wrote,

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil 1:12-1:14).

Philippians is often called Paul's "epistle of joy" because it emphasizes over and over the joy that believers have in Christ. Paul has this joy even while life's events have unfairly put Paul into a place of misfortune. After all, Paul is writing the letter from an unjust Roman imprisonment.<sup>23</sup> Paul ended his letter to the Philippians calling them his "joy," emphatically urging them to "rejoice" in the Lord "always," and explaining that Paul's own "secret" to living was contentment in each moment assured of God's real presence at each moment (Phil 4). Paul was living Proverbs 14:29-31. He was not easily angered by life, he was at peace in his circumstances, and he was appreciative of those who loved and supported him.

We also know from Colossians 1 and 4 that many other Christians in ministry with Paul made the trip to Rome to join him in his labors there. John Mark, Timothy, Aristarchus, and others were with Paul at various times there.

While in prison in Rome, Paul made an interesting acquaintance. Paul met a runaway slave named "Onesimus." Paul knew Onesimus's owner, a believer by the name of Philemon. Through Paul, Onesimus became a believer, and Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon, a decision that could have cost Onesimus his life, had Philemon chosen to make such an example of the runaway. This is especially interesting because of the Old

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<sup>22</sup> Some scholars believe the prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) were written during a different imprisonment, for example, that in Caesarea.

<sup>23</sup> While imprisoned, it is of interest that Paul opens the letter calling himself a "servant of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:1). The Greek (*doulos* – δούλος) is better translated "slave." We added to the reading Exodus 21:1-21:6 to show the two aspects of slavery under Jewish law. Normal "slaves" were released in years of jubilee, but a slave could choose to be a slave for life. In that event, the slave would have the ear marked, and would not have freedom from the slavery. Importantly this was a *personal choice* and could not be forced on anyone. This was what landed Paul in his imprisonment. Paul saw himself as God's possession (slave) *by choice* and *for life*. This is why the New American Standard translates this as Paul and Timothy being "bond servants of Christ Jesus."

Testament teaching of Deuteronomy 23:15-23:16 that “You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.” This indicates that Onesimus was clearly going back by his own choice as well.

Paul wrote Philemon a letter that Onesimus carried back, and that letter from Paul’s imprisonment is also included in the readings.

Philemon is a personal letter from the heart of Paul to the heart of Philemon (and Apphia and Archippus) concerning one man: Onesimus. Of all Paul’s writings, this is the only strictly private letter preserved for us today.<sup>24</sup> The letter sets forth Paul’s request that Philemon and his family welcome Onesimus back into their household. It is written in the spirit of Proverbs 29:19-29:22, carefully, and in peace, seeking to restore something broken rather than stir up strife.

Paul begins by naming Timothy with him, which is similar to what we see in many of his letters. But, here is the difference. Normally, Paul speaks in his letters as “we...” In Philemon, though, Paul uses the first person and writes the personal “I” over and over again. What Paul has to say is personal, extremely personal.

While in most of Paul’s letters he terms himself an apostle, in this letter it does not happen. Here, Paul is not “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus” as he identified himself in the companion letter of Colossians. Instead, he is “Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus.” Paul is writing on behalf of a runaway slave. Paul does not set out his apostolic office and authority. Instead, Paul writes of himself as a prisoner, not of an earthly captor or owner, but of Jesus Christ.

Paul addresses the letter to “Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church that meets in your house” (Phm 1-2). As set out earlier, Philemon was the owner of the slave Onesimus, Apphia, most likely, Philemon’s wife, and Archippus probably Philemon’s son. We know from Colossians that Archippus was likely serving the Laodicean church.<sup>25</sup>

Paul writes warmly. Calling Philemon a fellow worker is high praise from the Apostle to the Gentiles. No doubt to the extent that Philemon’s home served as the center for a house church, Philemon earned the moniker.

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<sup>24</sup> Later, we will study the Timothy letters and Titus. They are all addressed to individuals, but unlike Philemon, they cover issues of church governance and discipline where Philemon covers strictly a personal matter.

<sup>25</sup> Colossians 4:17 follows on the heels of verse 16 where Paul instructs the Colossians to exchange letters with the Laodiceans, a church 10 miles away. In verse 17, Paul urges Archippus to “complete the work” he has received from the Lord. Many scholars consider the comment in 17 following 16 as indicative that Archippus was serving the Laodicean church.

Paul wishes “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The “you” here is plural, reflecting Paul’s greetings to all three family members. But the letter pivots the attention after this verse. The remaining “you”s in the letter are mostly singular. Paul writes the remaining letter very personally to Philemon.

Paul begins his attention to Philemon with thanksgiving and prayer. “I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints” (Phm 4-5). We already see Paul’s delicate way of dealing with the slavery issue that forms the core of this letter. Paul is writing to reunite a slave (Onesimus) who is now a Christian with Philemon, his owner. Oh so delicately, Paul begins with thanksgiving for Philemon’s love for ALL the saints (which will now include Onesimus!).

Paul continues, “I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.” Paul emphasizes the importance not only of our relationship with Christ, but also how we demonstrate that faith to those around us. Can you imagine Philemon reading this letter in his home, to the house church meeting there, handed to him by the very slave that had run away? As people watch Philemon read the letter, perhaps with the runaway still in their presence, Philemon reads the holy Paul’s prayer that those who watch Philemon would see Philemon’s faith actively shining “with the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.” Not every slave and good thing we have materially, but every good thing we have in Christ.

Paul’s delicate touch continues, “For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.” (Phm 7) Again, powerful words being read with the return of a runaway slave, now turned saint and perhaps present -- Philemon’s love refreshing the heart, even of Onesimus?!

With this background, Paul now turns to the key for his writing, a personal plea for Onesimus. In verse 8, Paul writes, “Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required...” Paul is not ordering Philemon to do anything. Paul is not invoking his apostolic authority. Paul does not say, “thus saith the Lord.” Paul merely asks, allowing Philemon to make the godly decision, for his “favor.” Paul says, “yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you -- I, Paul, an old man<sup>26</sup> and now a

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<sup>26</sup> Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich give the meaning of Paul’s word “old man” (*presbutes* πρεσβύτες) citing several sources for the proposition that it dates Paul between 50 and 56 years old. Their main source is the Jewish writer Philo, born around B.C. 20 and writing a few decades before Paul. Philo quotes Hippocrates as saying there are “seven ages, those of the little boy, the boy, the lad, the young man, the man, the elderly man, the old man and that these are measured by multiples of seven” hence the little boy is birth to 7, the boy is 7 – 14, the lad 14-21, the young man 21-28, the man is 28-49 (“seven times seven”), the elderly man, then, 50-56 (“up to seven times eight”) and after that, an old man. Philo (and arguably Hippocrates) uses *presbutes* for the “elderly man.” See Philo, *On the Creation*, section 105

prisoner also for Christ Jesus.” (Phm 9) Paul reemphasizes his position as a prisoner belonging to Christ as he seeks his favor.

“I appeal to you for my child Onesimus.” Onesimus was not Paul’s literal son; he was Philemon’s literal slave, and Paul’s son in the faith. For Paul adds, “whose father I became in my imprisonment.” (Phm 10) Paul was involved in the rebirth of Onesimus while Paul was in chains in Rome. (Remember Paul was under arrest and under 24-hour guard, but was in a rented house and able to receive visitors as well as go out into the marketplace.)

We should not be surprised that a runaway slave would go to Rome, even from Colossae. Indeed, Rome as the capital with a huge populace would be the easiest place for a runaway slave to get lost in the masses. But even in Rome, God has his eye out on those for his kingdom. Onesimus, in ways we are not told, came under the influence of Paul and found a real Lord, as he was running to escape from just such a relationship on earth.

In verse 11, Paul writes a pun, again in the same delicate way he has written the whole letter. Speaking of the slave Onesimus, Paul writes, “formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.” (Phm 11) The pun is off of the name “Onesimus” (Ὀνήσιμος), which comes from the Greek verb (ὀνίνημι) meaning “profit, benefit or help.” Onesimus’s name literally means “useful.” So referencing Mr. Useful, Paul writes that “formerly he was *useless*, but now he has become *useful*” both to Paul and Philemon.

What made Onesimus finally true to his name and useful? The transforming work of Jesus Christ! In full confidence of how faith controlled Philemon’s actions, Paul sends Onesimus back to the one who could rightfully punish the runaway with death. Paul writes, “I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but by your own accord” (Phm 12-14).

Paul’s words are again very delicate. Paul all but asks for Philemon to grant this runaway freedom, when the world would dictate the harshest of punishments. But, Paul does not ask. Paul gives Philemon the chance to do the right thing on his own initiative. Paul sees reason behind the escape that exceeds the mindset, certainly of Onesimus when running, but also Philemon who discovered the slave missing. Paul writes, “For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever.” (Phm 15) While Onesimus was “dear” to Paul, he should be even dearer to

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(XXXVI) translated by Colson and Whitaker, (Loeb Classical Library 1929) at 87. Dunn also gives additional cites for the proposition the term could also mean a man in his 60’s. Dunn at 327.

Philemon. “You might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother – especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh [as a man] and in the Lord” (Phm 16). Paul calls Onesimus a “*beloved* brother.” It surely did not go unnoticed by Philemon that Paul uses the very same description for Onesimus as he did for Philemon at the letter’s start! “Paul...To Philemon our *beloved* fellow worker” (v. 1).

With that build up, Paul goes a bit further in his request of Philemon. Paul writes, “So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.” (Phm 17) You have to figure at this point, Onesimus will not only not be put to death, but probably not beaten either! What about restitution? No doubt Onesimus took food at least, if not much more when he hit the road. Paul covers that as well. Paul writes, “If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account” (Phm 18). There should be little doubt that Philemon was not going to be issuing a bill to saint Paul!

Paul writes his salutation in his own hand (Phm 19) adding a last significant “suggestion.” Paul writes a pun once more asking for a “benefit” from Philemon in the Lord (Phm 20). The Greek Paul uses for benefit is the same basic word as Onesimus (ὀναίμην). Paul doesn’t come right out and ask for the granting of freedom for Onesimus, but leaves no doubt as to what should be done! Wanting Philemon to welcome Onesimus as Paul himself, and asking for a forgiveness of all debts, Paul adds, “Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that *you will do even more than I say.*” (Phm 21). Then, as if putting a cherry on top of a sundae, Paul explains, “Prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you...” (Phm 22).

After this, Paul concludes the letter with additional greetings from others with him. While we don’t know for certain what happened with Onesimus and Philemon, there really cannot be much doubt about it, both from what Paul wrote and from the church’s inclusion of the letter in the canon.<sup>27</sup> It is most reasonable to believe that Onesimus lived the experience of Proverbs 17:2, living wisely as a servant and inheriting as a son.

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<sup>27</sup> A good question to ask regarding Philemon is why was this personal letter preserved? No one can say for certain, but there are some interesting historical facts that might shed some illumination. One can fairly assume that Onesimus was in his late teens or early twenties when he ran away. (It does seem fair to assume that, absent absurdly poor treatment from a master - highly unlikely from what we know of Philemon- a slave who had long been in service would not run away.) It is similarly reasonable to assume that if Onesimus continued to be of benefit to Philemon as Paul expected, then one might find him working in the church either directly in Colossae and even at some point in the mother church of the region in Ephesus. With these assumptions, some interesting historical writings take on added meaning.

The Apostolic Father Ignatius, who was the Bishop of Syrian Antioch, wrote 45 to 50 years after Onesimus was freed (a date which would likely make Onesimus 65 or 70 if still alive). Ignatius wrote to the Ephesian church while on his way to Rome to be thrown to wild beasts. The Ephesian church is

Paul's letter to Philemon would have gone into the same area as not only Colossae, but the "mother church" of that geographic region, Ephesus. As many scholars place Paul's letter we call "Ephesians" into this same time frame, it makes sense to see Paul's comments there on slavery. This is especially notable as Ephesians is generally regarded as a circular letter to be read in the many regional churches, extending out into those where one would find Onesimus and Philemon. Paul wrote,

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him (Eph 6:5-6:9).

### PAUL AFTER ROME

What happened to Paul and his appeal? Did this become the death of Paul?

We know that none of the Roman authorities that had already heard the case against Paul could find any reason to convict him. As Paul told the Jews in Rome, "When they

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presided over by a bishop named Onesimus! Now, certainly Onesimus was a common slave name in the time period, but how odd a slave (or former slave) would rise to the bishop position in the major church of the region!

In the first six chapters of Ignatius's letter, the Bishop Onesimus is mentioned by name 14 times. In this same part of the Ephesian letter, Ignatius echoes language from Philemon that certainly shows his familiarity with the letter. In 2:2, Ignatius even reiterates Paul's pun from verse 20 of Philemon. Paul wrote, "I want some benefit (or "use") from you" with "benefit" being the word *onaimen* from the same root as Onesimus. Ignatius calls out the Bishop Onesimus by name in 2:1 of his letter to the Ephesians and then immediately follows by saying, "may I always have *onaimen* in you" using the same word/pun.

One particularly curious aspect to this possible identification of Onesimus involves the collecting of Paul's letters. Goodspeed and a number of scholars believe that the body of Paul's letters was first put together at Ephesus toward the end of the first century. (C. Leslie Mitton, *The Formation of the Pauline Corpus of Letters*, (London: the Epworth Press 1955) at 44ff.) That is when Onesimus would have been bishop, and most likely, the overseer of the collection. Might that not shed additional light on why Paul's letter that generated Onesimus's freedom was saved and added to the collection?

Whether such reasonable inferences are true, the Holy Spirit certainly saw fit to include in scripture this delightful letter demonstrating Christian love and life in a fallen world.



examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case” (Acts 28:18). King Agrippa and the governor Festus, the last to hear Paul’s case, had even discussed that Paul “could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar” (Acts 26:32). Most scholars suspect, then, that Paul was ultimately released from his Roman time in chains, as Paul himself had anticipated.<sup>28</sup> We can remember that in writing from prison, Paul told multiple audiences that he expected to be released and come to visit them.<sup>29</sup>

Acts closes, however, without telling us what happened. The final verses record that, “He lived there [Rome] two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:30-28:31). Why does Luke not give us any more information? Scholars differ in answering this. I agree with the early church historian Eusebius (c. 260 – 341) who wrote some two hundred fifty years later that,

“Luke probably wrote the Acts of the Apostles at that time, carrying down his narrative until the time he was with Paul. We have said this to show that Paul’s martyrdom was not accomplished during the sojourn in Rome which Luke describes.”<sup>30</sup>

One can also cobble together a bit of Paul’s life by reading the three “Pastoral Epistles” (1, 2 Timothy, and Titus).<sup>31</sup> This suggests that around 62, consistent with church history, Paul was in fact released. By carefully reading the letters Paul wrote after his release (1 Timothy and Titus), we are able to construct a tentative itinerary Paul followed as he went through Crete, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece.

We have a good basis in history for believing that Paul’s missionary zeal took him as far as Spain during this time. Clement, a leader of the church in Rome, wrote a letter to the Corinthian church about 30 years later (95 A.D.). In this letter, Clement references Paul’s death and speaks of Paul “teaching righteousness throughout the whole world”

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<sup>28</sup> It is also worth noting, and not without mentioning God’s providence, that the Caesar at this time was Nero. Nero’s court advisor, who would likely oversee Paul’s appeal, was Seneca, brother of Gallio, proconsul of Achaia. This is the same Gallio that had already examined Paul after Jews had brought basically the same charges against him in Corinth, proclaiming, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things” (Acts 18:14-18:15). No doubt Paul would have informed Seneca of his brother’s prior ruling!

<sup>29</sup> See Phm 1:19, 25; Phm 1:22.

<sup>30</sup> Eusebius, *Church History* 2.22.6

<sup>31</sup> We should note that scholars are not in agreement that the pastoral epistles were written by Paul.

and specifically reaching “the limits of the west” (1 Clement 5:1-7). Many scholars see this as a reference to Spain. (Paul had certainly indicated in Romans 15:24 and 28 a desire and intent to go to Spain.)

At some point we suspect to be around 65 – 67 A.D., Paul was again arrested and imprisoned in Rome. Caesar Nero and the government’s position on Christianity changed somewhat during the interim between these imprisonments. On the night of July 18/19 in the year 64 A.D., a five-day fire broke out in Rome that destroyed 20 percent of Rome and severely damaged half of the city. We read in the historian Tacitus of not only the fire, but also of Nero’s reaction.<sup>32</sup>

Tacitus explains that the rumors around Rome were that Nero had henchmen set the fire in order to have the excuse for rebuilding Rome to suit his personal taste. In an effort to squelch these rumors, Nero “substituted as culprits” the Christians. Tacitus said,

But all human efforts...did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Another historian of Rome named Suetonius doesn’t provide information linking persecution to the fire, but he does specify that, “punishment was inflicted by Nero on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition” (*Life of Nero* 16:2).

So, it was a different Rome with a different attitude when Paul was arrested again and writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy. The first Roman imprisonment which we have studied from Acts was one where Paul was under house arrest. Paul was free to preach,

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<sup>32</sup> Tacitus was born around 56 A.D. and wrote his *Annals* of Roman history around 100 A.D. Chapter 15 contains his account of the fire.

receive visitors, and converse freely about his faith, even converting some of Caesar's guards. Furthermore, the basis for Paul's first imprisonment was trumped up on charges that would have seemed silly to Emperor Nero. By the second imprisonment, however, Christians were singled out for the most atrocious persecution and deaths merely because of their faith. They were the emperor's scapegoats and the imprisonment would be a far cry different. We will read in 2 Timothy that, unlike his earlier imprisonment writings, Paul held no pretense or belief that he would get released. Paul knew his end was near.

Many passages show Paul's thoughts in this regard. Paul wrote of "the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus" in 2 Tim 1:1. In 2 Tim 1:10 he contrasted the "life and immortality" Christ brought to the "death" Christ abolished. In 2:11 he references that "if we have died with him, we will also live with him." Paul makes multiple references to those who had already passed on, both his relatives (1:3) and Timothy's (1:5). Paul wrote of the coming day of Christ' return and judgment ("I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me" 1:12; "Christ Jesus. Who is to judge the living and the dead" 4:1; "the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day" 4:6-4:8; and "The Lord will ... bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom" 4:18).

Paul was not afraid to die. He knew the promises of Jesus in Matthew 10:26-10:33. The Father who called him, had the hairs on his head numbered, and kept track of every falling bird. By the Lord, Paul was well cared for in this life and eternally. Paul had always walked with an eye toward eternity, urging all believers to cast off works of darkness and walk properly as in the daytime (Rom 13:11-13:14). This language is similar to Peter's toward the end of his life as he wrote of the church as built on Jesus,<sup>33</sup> but not for this world. We are mere sojourners here (1 Peter 2:1-2:12).

How did Paul die? Scripture does not tell us, but we have a good bit of reliable church history that tells of his death. Writing in 96 A.D., Clement of Rome referenced Paul as one of the men of "holy life" who was persecuted and died during the reign of Nero.<sup>34</sup> This is borne out by several other post-New Testament writers, including Origen (mid 240's) and Eusebius (300's).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Peter quotes Isaiah 28 with Jesus as the cornerstone or foundation for God's people and God's work. Jesus is the "plumb line of justice" in a divine and eternal sense (Isa 28:16-28:17). His death was not simply an act of love; it was a statement and affirmation of justice!

<sup>34</sup> 1 Clement 6:1 is interpreted by most scholars to refer to the persecution under Nero.

<sup>35</sup> Eusebius was the first after Luke to diligently research and write a history of the church. His Ecclesiastical History (3:1) referenced Paul's death. ("Paul, spreading the gospel of Christ from

While history is solid on Paul's martyrdom in Rome, there is a bit less certainty on exactly where he was executed. The Roman pastor Gaius wrote a little over a hundred years later that Paul and Peter were both executed on the *Ostian Way* at a location that was marked by monuments. Some believe that this location was merely Paul's burial location, not his actual execution site.

Also written a hundred years after his death was an early church work called *The Acts of Paul*.<sup>36</sup> Some of the history in this work is clearly embellished. Most scholars, however, accept the accuracy of the account of Paul's death by beheading as contained in the book.

### QUESTIONS

1. Can you call yourself a bondservant of Christ? Have you truly surrendered to him with a willingness to endure hardship and difficulty if it helps to achieve his kingdom purposes? In the process can you find joy and cause for rejoicing, whatever circumstances come your way?
2. How do you view this life from a day-to-day perspective? Is it a journey or a destination? Do you have your feet on earth but your eyes on eternity?
3. How will you face death? More importantly, how will you live in the meantime, knowing one day you will face death?

#### *Week Forty-Four Readings*

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Jerusalem to Illyricum and finally suffering martyrdom at Rome under Nero.”) Eusebius was an exhaustive researcher who wrote a fairly reliable history.

<sup>36</sup> According to the early church writer Tertullian, an elder in a church in Turkey wrote the “history” in honor of Paul but lost his office once his work was determined unauthentic. This work, dated around AD 160 recorded that Paul was brought before Nero when the Christians were being killed in masse. Nero noted that the other Christian prisoners treated Paul deferentially; so Nero determined that Paul was a leader among them. Nero orders Paul beheaded. The Acts of Paul reports, “Then Paul stood with his face to the east and lifted up his hands unto heaven and prayed a long time, and in his prayer he conversed in the Hebrew tongue with the fathers, and then stretched forth his neck without speaking.” The Acts then records that the executioner “struck off his head.” *Acts of Paul* X.V (Oxford 1924) trans. M. R. James.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10/27 John's Revelation Rev 1</b></p> <p>Mrk 12:1-12:12 Dan 7:9-7:14 Zech 4 Isa 41:1-41:4 Pslm 89 Isa 46</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>10/28 John's Revelation Rev 1</b></p> <p>Ezek 2 Ezek 3:4-3:27 Isa 49</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10/29 John's Revelation Rev 1</b></p> <p>Heb 13:7-13:16 Eph 6:10-6:20 Heb 4:11-4:13 Num 6:22-6:27 Isa 48:12-48:22</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>10/30 The Letter to Ephesus Rev 2:1-2:7</b></p> <p>Lev 26:1-26:13 Heb 12:3-12:17 Prov 17:3 Prov 12:1 Prov 20:30 Gen 25:19-25:34 Num 20:14-20:21 Heb 10:32-10:39</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10/31 The Letter to Ephesus Rev 2:1-2:7</b></p> <p>Jer 2:1-2:3 Gen 3:22-3:24 Prov 3 Prov 29:24-29:26 Isa 17</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>11/1 The Letter to Smyrna Rev 2:8-2:11</b></p> <p>Jas 2:1-2:7 Prov 19:1, 4, 19:6-19:7 Matt 24:1-24:14 Jas 1:1-1:4; 1:16-1:27 Prov 17:28 Prov 18:2, 6, 13, 15 Prov 19:11 Prov 10:20, 10:30-10:32</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>11/2 Off</i></p>
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