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Paul's Arrival at Rome
28: 11-16

Early February 60 AD, the earliest time of the year one would resume sailing.

Paul's arrival at Rome DIG: Given the long delay, his shipwreck at sea, and his continuing status as a prisoner, how might Paul feel upon finally arriving in Rome? What must the believers' reunion with him have been like in verses 14 and 15? How important was this fellowship to Paul?

REFLECT: What limitations are placed beyond your control? How do you react to those limits? How can you serve the Lord even within these limitations? How important is the fellowship of other believers in your life? As you think of the fellowship you have in your life, what would you say gives you your sense of togetherness? If that is lacking, to what would you attribute it to. How much of the fault is yours to bear? What do your brothers and sisters in the faith really need from you?

God fulfilled **His** promise to **Paul**. **The apostle to the Gentiles** arrived in **Rome**. From **his** Damascus conversion on, **Paul** had been on the move. In this passage **his** travels finally came to an end. More specifically, from **19:21** on, **his** focus had been on **Rome**, the capital and hub of the empire. Now at last **his** vision was fulfilled as **he** reached **the great city, the ends of the earth**. It was the fulfilment not just of **his** vision, but of **the Lord's** commission **(1:8)**.[641]

It was impossible to travel during the winter, and so **after three months** (probably November, December, January)**, Luke** said that **we** (**to see link click Bx – Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia: A closer look at the "us" or "we" passages and sea passages**) **set sail in a ship from Alexandria** (the same kind of large grain-**ship** that was shipwrecked) **that had wintered at the island** awaiting the favorable spring breezes**, with the Twin Brothers as its figurehead (28:11).** Ancient ships had its name of each side of the bow and was represented by a sculptured figure. The vessel that **Paul** was sailing on was the **Castor and**

Pollux, named after twin deities, who in Greco-Roman mythology were the sons of Jupiter (Zeus). They were supposedly translated to the heavens as the constellation of Gemini in reward for their brotherly devotion and wish not to be separated (see the commentary on **Genesis Lw – The Witness of the Stars**). **They** were **the gods** of navigation and were regarded as the special patrons and worshiped by sailors.[642]

The first leg of the renewed journey took **Paul** to **Syracuse**, which was ninety miles north of Malta. **Setting down at Syracuse, we stayed there three days** probably unloading some of the wheat and adding other cargo**. From there we got underway and reached Rhegium** (the toe of Italy)**; and a day later a south wind came up,** so it made easy sailing north, **and on the second day we came to Puteoli** (one hundred and eighty miles from **Rhegium,** and one hundred and fifty miles southeast of **Rome**)**,** which had a strong colony of Jews, so it was not surprising that some of them were Messianic believers**. There we found some brothers and sisters, and we were invited to stay with them for seven days,** and **Julius (27:1)**, who had come to greatly respect **Paul**, allowed **them** to stay there **for seven days** before moving on. This should come as no surprise. The edict of Claudius, which **Luke** referred to in **18:2**, dealt with a dispute in the Jewish community of **Rome** that seemed to involve **Christ** and is evidence that the gospel had already reached Italy by 50-51 AD.[643] **And in this way we** began the final leg of the journey **to Rome (28:11-14). Rome** was the capital of **the Roman** Empire. When **Paul** came to **Rome** it had existed from almost 800 years. The population was about two million – one million free, one million slaves. Society was divided into roughly three classes: A small upper class, a large class of the poor, and slaves. The famous Coliseum had not yet been built, but the prominent buildings were the temple of Jupiter, the palaces of Caesar, and a temple to Mars, the god of war.

Now a second group of **brothers heard about us,** probably elders from the church at **Puteoli** who was sent up ahead of **them,** and **came as far as the Forum of Appius** on the Appian Way (forty three miles southeast of **Rome**) **and the Three Taverns** (ten miles further down the road) **to meet us. They** honored **Paul** by greeting **him** as the emperors were received when they arrived at **Rome**. It was the custom of the people to go out and meet him and escort him back into **the city**.[644] Three years before **his** arrival, **Paul** had written **his** letter to **the Roman believers** in which **he** expressed **his** longing to come to **Rome** and **encourage one another (Romans 1:8-13). He** was looking forward to fellowshipping with **them**. It must have been an emotional experience for **Paul** to finally meet **those** to

whom **he** had written. So it was not surprising that **when Paul saw them, he gave thanks to God and took courage (28:15).**



60-61 AD were two years of house arrest.

Having brought **Paul** to **Rome**, **Julius'** task was fulfilled and **he** delivered **his** prisoner into Imperial hands. **When we entered Rome, Paul was permitted to remain in his own quarters, with a** single, ordinary, **soldier guarding him** probably a result of the good report given by **Julius** the centurion **(28:16).** This verse concludes the brief travelogue and the **we** sections of **Acts**; therefore, it is transitional. It brings the long travel narrative to a close, and it opens the account of **Paul's** witness in **Rome**. **He** was under house arrest in **Rome**, but what we see is that **Paul's** custody in **Rome** was the least restrictive of all the forms **he** had endured since being taken captive by **the Romans** in **Yerushalayim** (see **Cq – Paul is Protected by Roman Law**). **He** was allowed to live in **his** own rented house; thus, **he** was free to bear witness to **Messiah**. During the next two years **he** is traditionally thought to have written the Captivity Epistles, with **Philippians** probably being the last of these in 61 AD, shortly before the resolution of **Paul's** trial. In **Philippians 1:13**, written from this **Roman** custody, **Paul** speaks of how **his** message was getting through to the palace guards of **Rome**. Though **he** was the prisoner, **he** truly had a captive audience![645]

The most important theme of the passage is that **God** can be taken at **His** word. **God** told **Paul** that **he**, **the messenger**, would **testify in Rome (23:11)**, and **Paul** did. **God** told **Paul** that no lives would be lost on **the ship (27:22)**, and none

were. And **God** told **Paul** that **the ship** would run aground **(27:26)**, and **it** did. **God** told **Paul** he would **stand before Caesar (27:24)**, and **he** did. **God's** word can be trusted because **God** can be trusted. The only thing we cannot be sure of is *when* **God** will accomplish **His** will.[646]

Many people believe in **Messiah** as their **Savior** yet never have a sense of fellowship with other believers. In **Paul's** life, however, I see three strands that formed the cord of fellowship **he** felt with other believers.

First: Paul believed that part of his calling was to share his gifts and faith with other believers. Over and over in **his** letters, **Paul** assured churches of **his** prayers. **He** didn't just ask **God** to bless them. **Paul** jealously sought **God's** best for them. **He** asked big things of **God** because **he** knew **God** had big things to give. **Paul** had experienced the riches of an intimate relationship with **Christ**. **He** wanted other believers to experience those same riches.

Second: Paul believed that part of his calling was to share his gifts and faith with other believers. He truly believed that **believers** have an obligation to one another as well as to the lost. In **First Corinthians 12:12 he** said: **The body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, through many, are one body.** Without apology, **Paul** instructed believers, as **parts** of **the body** of **Christ**, to recognize **their** obligation to one another – and **their** need for one another. Generally speaking, my spiritual gifts were given for your edification; your spiritual gifts were given for mine.

Third: Paul desired to see all people come to Christ. He preached to anyone who would listen, and **he** considered any convert a brother or sister. All were equally in need of salvation, and all equally loved by **God**. At first consideration we may fully believe we share **his** attitude, but sometimes we struggle with the equality of all believers. We may desire to see all people saved regardless of their position, but we don't necessarily want them to attend worship with us.[647]