
a ***Grace Notes*** course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study
by Warren Doud

Lesson 410: **Acts 28:16-31**

ACTS

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ACTS 28:16-31

ACTS 28:16. *And when we came to Rome,* To the city itself:

the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; or general of the army; or, as some think, the governor of the “praetorian” band of soldiers, who attended the emperor as his guards: his name is thought to have been Burrhus Afranius; to him Julius the centurion delivered all the prisoners he brought from Caesarea, excepting Paul, to be disposed of by him, in the several prisons, or jails, to whom it belonged to take care of such persons: this clause is wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and in the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions:

but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him: this was owing, either to the letter which Festus sent to Rome concerning him, and his case; by which it appeared, that he was no malefactor, and therefore to be used in a different manner from the rest of the prisoners; or rather to the intercession of the centurion, who had all along used him in a very civil and courteous manner; who requesting this favour had it granted, that Paul should not be put into the common prison with the rest, but should dwell in an apartment by himself; or, as the Ethiopic version renders it, “at his own will”; where he himself pleased, for he dwelt in his own hired house, (Acts 28:30).

He was under the care and custody of a soldier, who constantly attended him wherever he went; and which could not be otherwise, seeing he was chained, as in (Acts 28:20) and his chain was put on his right hand, and fastened to the left hand of the soldier, that had him under his keeping; so that wherever he was or went, the soldier must be likewise: hence that passage in Seneca, “as the same chain joins together the prisoner and the soldier, so those things which are unlike go together; fear follows hope.”

ACTS 28:17. *And it came to pass, that after three days,* From his first coming to Rome, when he had hired himself a house, or lodging,

and was settled in it, and was rested from the fatigue of his voyage and journey:

Paul called the chief of the Jews together: he sent to the principal men among them; for though the Jews, were expelled from Rome in the reign of Claudius, they were now returned, and had their liberty of residing there; very likely by means of Poppea, Nero’s concubine, who favored the Jews: but whether they had a synagogue, and these men were the chief and leading men in it, the doctors, rulers, and officers of it, are things not certain; however, these the apostle desired to come to him where he was, for whether he had the liberty of going about where he would, the soldier attending him, is not so clear a point:

and when they were come together; to his house, or lodging:

he said unto them, men and brethren: which was the usual form of address with the Jews; (see Acts 7:2)

Though I have committed nothing against the people and customs of our fathers; meaning he had said nothing disrespectfully of the people of the Jews; nor had done anything to the prejudice of their temporal, spiritual, and eternal good, but just the reverse; nor had he said or done anything contrary to the laws and customs enjoined the Jews by Moses, even those that were of a ceremonial nature; for though he had everywhere declared that the Gentiles were not obliged to an obedience to them, yet he did not dissuade the Jews from the use of them; and oftentimes complied with them himself, things he had been charged with:

yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans; he was first seized by the Jews in the temple of Jerusalem, and then fell into the hands of Lysias, the chief captain; who bound him, and by whom he was sent to Caesarea, where he was retained a prisoner both by Felix and Festus, Roman governors.

ACTS 28:18. *Who when they had examined me,* About the things laid to his charge, had

heard what his accusers had to object to him, and the defense he made for himself:

would have let [me] go; released him from his bonds, and set him at liberty to go where he pleased:

because there was no cause of death in me; no crime proved upon him, which was worthy of death; and this was the sense of Lysias the chief captain, and of Felix and Festus the Roman governors, and of King Agrippa.

ACTS 28:19. *But when the Jews spoke against it*, His being cleared and dismissed, and desired he might be sent back to Jerusalem, to be tried and judged there, to which Festus seemed inclined:

I was constrained to appeal to Caesar; to prevent the design of the Jews upon him, which was to way lay him and kill him, or by what ways they could, right or wrong, take away his life; and to provide for his own safety:

not that I had ought to accuse my nation of; meaning, that he had no ill design in this appeal against his country, to expose them, and bring them under reproach and censure, but to vindicate himself, defend his own innocence, and preserve his character and life; suggesting, that what he did was not of choice, but by constraint, and with reluctance; being no friend to Heathen tribunals, nor any enemy to the Jewish nation.

ACTS 28:20. *For this cause therefore have I called for you*, To let them know the true state of his case; that though he was a prisoner, it was not for any crime he had done, much less any of a capital nature; and that as he was no scandal to his country, so neither did he intend to raise any against it, or say or do anything which might bring it into contempt and danger: as well as

to see [you] and speak with [you]; and keep up and maintain a free and friendly conversation together:

because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain; which was then upon him, and he pointed to; the true reason of which was, because he had preached that the Messiah

the tribes of Israel were hoping and waiting for, and who is the only solid foundation of the hope of eternal life and salvation, was already come; and that he had suffered and died, and rose again from the dead, and that Jesus of Nazareth was he; (see Jeremiah 14:8 17:13)

And this title well agrees with Jesus Christ, who in the New Testament is called "our hope", and "the hope of glory", (1 Timothy 1:1 Colossians 1:27), and he is the hope of every Israelite indeed, of every sensible sinner, of every regenerated person, whether Jew or Gentile; and such are encouraged to hope in him for grace here, and glory hereafter

Whereas they see themselves lost and undone, and that there is no salvation for them by their own works, and that there is salvation in Christ, they are directed and encouraged to hope in him for it; because it is a work finished by him, and is complete in him; it is of free grace and favour bestowed; it is wrought out for the chief of sinners; and such as they themselves are, are invited by himself to look to him for it; and the Gospel declaration is, that whoever believes in him shall be saved.

They see themselves to be sinners, and that there is no hope of the forgiveness of their sins from an absolute God, or the absolute mercy of God out of Christ, but that the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins, and that God, for Christ's sake, does forgive sins.

Wherefore they hope in him for it; to which they are encouraged by the proclamation of the grace of God, as a forgiving God in Christ; by the promises of forgiveness in the covenant of grace; by the Gospel declaration of it; by its being entirely of free grace, through the blood of Christ; and by the many instances of the worst of sinners who have been favored with it.

These Israelites, indeed, also see themselves unrighteous creatures, and that they cannot be justified before God by works of righteousness done by them; but that there is a righteousness wrought out by Christ, which is acceptable and well pleasing to God; is freely bestowed on men, and is imputed to all sorts of men, even to the ungodly; wherefore they hope in him for it,

and lay hold on this object of hope set before them in a word, they have hope of eternal life on his account, that being the gift of God through him; and it being the will of God, that whoever believes in him should have it; and it being in the power and right of Christ to bestow it; and they having also his Spirit as the earnest and pledge of it; as well as have his righteousness as their title to it, his grace as their meetness for it, and have a share both in his intercession and in his preparations of it.

Moreover, the apostle taught that there would be a general resurrection of the dead, upon which would succeed a state of everlasting happiness for the righteous; and which was the hope of the tribes of Israel in common, especially of every Israelite indeed: now these things had irritated the carnal Jews against him, who could not rest till they had been the means of bringing him into the condition he now was; nor were they content with this, without having his life.

ACTS 28:21. *And they said unto him,* That is, the chief men of the Jews at Rome, whom Paul had called together, replied; either in a lying and dissembling way, or as expressing matter of fact; which last may be allowed:

we neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee: which was very much, that the high priest and Sanhedrin had not wrote to the principal men of their religion at Rome; giving an account of the apostle, and his case unto them, in order to prejudice them against him, and to furnish them with charges and accusations; which if they could not prevail by them, so as to get him condemned by the emperor, yet might be a means of preventing any of their nation giving heed unto him, and embracing his sentiments and notions concerning Jesus of Nazareth:

neither any of the brethren that came [from] Jerusalem; or any part of Judea, to Rome; meaning not the Christian Jews, for these they would not call brethren; but those who were of the same religion as well as nation, whom it was usual with the Jews to call brethren:

showed or spoke any harm of thee; so that it looks as if they did make mention of him, but did not charge him with anything that was wicked and criminal: this they said, to show that they were not prejudiced against him by any person or means; and which carried in it a very considerable testimony of the apostle's innocence.

ACTS 28:22. *But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest,* What was his opinion and judgment, concerning the Messiah, whether he was come or not, and whether Jesus of Nazareth was he; and concerning other principles relating to him, embraced by the Christians; and what he had to say for the clearing up, proving, and confirming his sentiments about these things:

for as concerning this sect; or heresy, meaning the Christian religion: in saying so, they reproached it; for the Gospel, or Christian religion, is not an human device, the choice and option of man's free will, and what he pleases himself with, as an opinion and invention of his own, or of other men, as "heresy" signifies; but it is of God, and by revelation of Jesus Christ, and is a doctrine of the highest wisdom.

Nor does it deny or take away any fundamental article of true religion; either natural, as known by the Gentiles, or as revealed, with which the Jews were made acquainted, under the former dispensation; but establishes every such article, as the unity of the divine Being; the worship of the one only and true God of Israel, in a spiritual manner; the doctrine of the Messiah, his person, office, and grace; the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment; and therefore could not be chargeable with heresy.

Nor was it set up for any worldly gain, or popular applause, which are the things that authors and abettors of heresy have in view; nor was it designed to divide and separate persons from the true church of God, but to bring them to it, and unite them together in it; (see Acts 24:14).

We know that everywhere it is spoken against; this they knew, both by letters they received, and by persons who came from

different parts of the world; and which was fact, and was no other than what was foretold concerning Christ, that he should be a sign that should be spoken against, (Luke 2:34); and which the apostle found true of the Gospel preached by him, both among Jews and Greeks; it being to the one a stumbling block, and to the other foolishness, (1 Corinthians 1:23), and especially it was contradicted and blasphemed everywhere by the Jews; these in all places opposed themselves to it, and spoke evil of it, and of its preachers and professors.

Christ, the author, sum, and subject of the Christian religion, was spoken against in his person; his deity and divine sonship were denied, as they still are; and his offices, as prophet, priest, and King; yea, his actions, even his works of mercy to the bodies of men, by healing their diseases, his conversing with sinners for the good of their souls, the several miracles he wrought, and the whole series of his life and conversation, were blasphemed and evil spoken of.

The doctrines of the Gospel in general were contradicted, as they now are by many, as absurd and irrational, and as tending to licentiousness; and in particular those which respect the Father of Christ, as being the Father of Christ, his everlasting love to the elect in him, and his distinguishing grace in the choice of them; and those which relate to Christ, as that he is truly God, and the Son of God, and to his sacrifice, satisfaction, and imputed righteousness; and also which concern the Spirit of God, as his deity and personality, and his operations on the souls of men; and such as relate to a future state, the resurrection of all the dead, and judgment to come.

Likewise the ordinances of the Christian religion, baptism and the Lord's supper, were despised and spoken against, and the professors of it treated as fools and wicked men; the reasons of all this are, because the Christian religion, and the doctrines of it, are not of men, are contrary to the lusts of men, and particularly to the pride of men; they subject

them to reproach and persecution, and gather men out from among them.

ACTS 28:23. *And when they had appointed him a day,* When they should meet together, and when both sides might be better prepared to enter into a conversation on the subject of Christianity; and when there might be an opportunity for a more numerous assembly to hear:

there came many to him into his lodging; the same very likely with his own hired house, (Acts 28:30); hither a large number came at the time appointed, more than those whom Paul first sent for:

to whom he expounded; the Scriptures, the writings of Moses, and the prophets; and particularly such parts of them as concerned the Messiah; so our Lord expounded to his disciples in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself, (Luke 24:27)

And testified the kingdom of God; or the kingdom of the Messiah, which oftentimes signifies the Gospel, and the Gospel dispensation: he produced full and sufficient proofs and testimonies from prophecies, miracles, and facts, that the kingdom of the Messiah was come; which consisted not in outward pompous things, in temporal riches and honors, as they expected; but in the ministration of the Gospel, and in the administration of its ordinances; and in righteousness and holiness, which give the one a right unto, and the other a meetness for, the kingdom of heaven.

Of this he testified, that it is the kingdom of God, of his preparing and of his giving, and is what he calls his people unto, and makes them meet for; and in which they shall reign with him, and enjoy him for ever: and the apostle could testify and make it evident, that there was such a kingdom, and such a future glorious state; from the promise of God, to which the twelve tribes of Israel hoped to come; from the prophecies of the Old Testament, which speak of everlasting life, and of the resurrection of the dead unto it; from the expectations of the saints of the former dispensation, who all died in the faith of

it; and from the coming of the Messiah, his sufferings and death, and ascension to heaven, whereby he had brought life and immortality to the clearest light:

persuading them concerning Jesus;

endeavoring to persuade them, that Jesus was the true Messiah; that he was truly God, and the Son of God, as well as man; that he was born of a virgin, and wrought miracles, and yielded perfect obedience to the law; that he laid down his life as a sacrifice for sin, and to make reconciliation and atonement for it; that he brought in an everlasting righteousness; that he rose again from the dead for justification; that he was ascended up to heaven, and was set down at the right hand of God, where he ever lives to make intercession, and will come again a second time to judge both quick and dead.

These are some of “the things concerning Jesus”, as the words may be rendered, which the apostle endeavored to persuade the Jews into a belief of; as also the blessings of grace which come by him, such as peace and pardon through his blood, reconciliation and atonement by his sacrifice, justification by his righteousness, and complete salvation in him.

Concerning these he persuaded the Jews, setting things in a clear light, using strong arguments to convince them, and giving full proof, as the nature of them would admit of; and which is no other than moral persuasion, and is of itself ineffectual; efficacious persuasion is only of God; it is he that opens the heart to attend to these things, and gives faith to receive and embrace them: however, it is the duty of Gospel ministers to make use of arguments, and by them to endeavor to persuade men of their need of Christ, and of salvation by him, as the apostle did; (see 2 Corinthians 5:11)

Both out off the law of Moses: not the law of the ten commandments, given on Mount Sinai to Moses, who delivered it to the children of Israel, and is opposed to the doctrine of grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ, (John 1:17); that accuses and convinces of sin, and pronounces guilty, and curses for it; but does

not reveal Jesus Christ as a Saviour from it; no proof can be taken from thence of the things concerning Jesus; but the five books of Moses are here meant, in which he wrote of Christ, as our Lord himself says, (John 5:46,47) as he did particularly in (Genesis 3:15 49:10 Deuteronomy 18:15); also the types and sacrifices, recorded in his writings, might be made use of in proof of Jesus, and the things of him:

and out of the prophets: such as (Psalm 22:15,16 16:10 68:18 110:1) (Isaiah 7:14 53:1-12 Daniel 9:24, 26 Micah 5:2 Zechariah 9:9 13:7); with many others: and in this work he continued,

from morning till evening; not that we are to suppose, that he carried on one continued discourse upon these subjects, without any intermission; but that he was all the day employed, either in expounding: the Scriptures, proving that the kingdom of the Messiah was come, and using strong and persuasive arguments, to show that Jesus was he; or in answering the cavils and objections of the Jews, to what he said.

ACTS 28:24. *And some believed the things which were spoken,* By him, concerning the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ; even as many as were ordained unto eternal life, and to whom it was given to believe; for faith is the gift of God, and which comes by hearing of the word, when it is attended with a divine power; and then it is not only notionally understood, and barely assented to as truth, but is cordially believed and embraced, and cheerfully professed, and steadily held fast: this was not a mere historical faith, or a bare assent to the truth of the things spoken, nor a mere profession of faith in them, but a believing in Christ with the heart, the sum and substance of them; as they heard these things, their understandings were enlightened, and they saw their need of Christ, and the things of Christ, which were held forth in the ministry of the word; and so approved of them, savored, relished, and fed upon them; and until this is the case, none can, nor will believe aright:

and some believed not: notwithstanding the full proof, and clear evidence produced by the apostle: these were not of Christ's sheep, their eyes were blinded, and their hearts were hardened, as was prophesied of them, and therefore they could not believe; they were given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart, and were left under the power of obstinate and invincible unbelief: their disbelief of these things arose from the prejudices they had conceived about a worldly kingdom; from the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, they imagining the Messiah would not die, but abide for ever; from the carnal reasoning of their minds, about divine and spiritual things; and from the ignorance that was in them, because of the obduracy of their hearts.

The kingdom the apostle testified of was not an Utopian kingdom, nor any of the real kingdoms of this world, but the kingdom of the Messiah they were expecting; but that which he described, being not such an one as they imagined, they believed him not.

The things he said concerning Jesus were not trivial, speculative, and indifferent things; but of the greatest moment and importance, and of which there was full proof in their own writings; and though spoken by Paul, were no other than the word of God; and besides, were good news, and glad tidings, and yet they believed them not.

This difference among them, some believing and some not believing, was not owing to the power and free will of man, as if some of themselves would, and did believe, and others would not, but to the distinguishing grace of God; for faith is not of man, it is the gift of God, it is the fruit of electing grace, and is given in consequence of it: nor is this any unusual thing, under the same ministration of the word, for one to believe, and another not believe: this is a common case, and is the usual success the Gospel meets with; so it always has been, and so it is, and will be; so it was in the times of Noah, he was a preacher of righteousness to the old world, even of the righteousness of faith, many were disobedient, few believed; and so it

fared with the evangelical prophet Isaiah, and with Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and other prophets of the Old Testament; and with John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and with Christ himself, as well as with our apostle; and this has been the case ever since his time, now is, and will be, as long as the Gospel is preached.

ACTS 28:25. And when they agreed not among themselves, One part believing what was said, and the other disbelieving; and such a division is the usual effect of the Gospel ministry; (see Luke 12:51,52)

Or this may be understood of the unbelieving party, who though they agreed in the main that Jesus was not the Messiah, yet might have different sentiments of the apostle; of the manner of his reasoning, and the nature of his proofs and arguments; and of some things which he delivered, which some might assent to, and others deny; as the Pharisees and Sadducees in the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem disagreed about the doctrine of the resurrection: and the rather this may be thought to be the sense, because they not only departed, when very likely those that believed might stay longer, but because at their departure the apostle says something very cutting and stinging, and which he would not say in common of them all, of the believers; and besides, they are afterwards said to reason among themselves, (Acts 28:29)

They departed; from the apostle's lodging to their own houses, or to some other place, where they could call over, and debate among themselves, the things they had heard:

after that Paul had spoken one word; a very remarkable one, and full to the purpose, and which he gave them just at parting with them:

well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers; the passage referred to is in (Isaiah 6:9,10), which the prophet Isaiah delivered under the influence and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, being moved by him, as all the holy men of God were; and which was very appropriate, not only to the Jewish fathers in the times of Isaiah, but to their posterity in succeeding ages, in the times of

Christ and his apostles; (see Matthew 13:10-14 John 12:37-46); and were exceeding applicable to the present unbelieving Jews, who had been disputing with the apostle, and were now departing from him, in unbelief: and from hence it appears, that since it was the Holy Ghost that spake by Isaiah the prophet, and he that spoke to him and by him, was the Adon, Jehovah, and Lord of hosts, as is clear from (Isaiah 6:1,5,8,9); it follows, that the Holy Ghost is a divine person, truly God, and equal with the Father and the Son.

ACTS 28:26. *Saying, go unto this people, and say,* A message sent in wrath and judgment to the people of Israel, rejected from being the people of God, a "lo ammi" being written upon them; and therefore God does not call them "his", but "this" people: and this message was sent by an evangelical prophet, who foretold, in the clearest manner, the Messiah's incarnation, and birth of a virgin, the work he was to do, the sufferings he should undergo, and the glory that should follow; and that after he had seen in a vision the glory of the King Messiah, the perfections of deity filling the temple of his human nature, him exalted on a throne, and attended and worshipped by angels; after he had had such a view of his beauty and excellence, that laid him low in his own sight, and humbled him under a sense of his own impurity and unworthiness; and after he had had a comfortable discovery and application of pardoning grace; and after he had expressed such a readiness and willingness to go on the Lord's errand.

Which one might have thought would have been of a different nature; and that he would have been sent, and have been made useful, to set forth the glories and excellencies of Christ's person, office, and grace, he had had such a view of; and to preach the comfortable doctrine of pardoning grace to men, which he had just now such a gracious experience of; but on the contrary, he is bid to say,

hearing ye shall hear; with bodily ears, the Gospel preached by the Messiah and his apostles:

and shall not understand, spiritually and experimentally, what they heard: to have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel, is a great blessing; seeing it is good news, glad tidings of good things, a joyful sound, and the voice of Christ himself; it is a distinguishing favour, and what all men at all times have not; when it is attended with a divine energy, the Spirit of God is received through it, regeneration, quickening and sanctifying grace are by it; faith comes by hearing it, and Christ is found under the ministration of it; and generally speaking, the understanding and knowledge of divine things, are by means of it.

Men are naturally without the understanding of spiritual things, and where the Gospel is not, they remain so; the ministers of the Gospel, and the word preached by them, are the means of leading men into a spiritual understanding of things, though only as, and when attended with the Spirit of God, who is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ: and a special mercy it is when persons, whilst hearing the word, understand what they hear, and can distinguish truth from error; and approve of the truth, receive the love of it, feel the power, and taste the sweetness of it; find it and eat it, believe, embrace, and profess it, and bring forth fruits worthy of it: but on the contrary, when it is heard and not understood, it is an awful dispensation; for hence either they content themselves with bare hearing, and depend upon it for salvation; or they despise and speak evil of what they do not understand; and so their hearing, instead of being a blessing, is an aggravation of their condemnation:

and seeing ye shall see: miracles wrought: ***and not perceive;*** them to be proofs of the things, for which they are wrought: so Jarchi expounds those words, "ye shall see the wonders, or miracles I have done for you, and shall not set your hearts to know me" from whence it appears that the Gospel preached in the clearest and most powerful manner, and even miracles wrought in confirmation of it, are insufficient for conversion; and nothing will effect it, but efficacious grace.

ACTS 28:27. *For the heart of this people is waxed gross,* Or fat; stupefied with notions of carnal and temporal things, and become hardened against, and unsusceptible of, divine and spiritual things:

and their ears are dull of hearing; the Gospel, and its joyful sound; to which they stop their ears, as the deaf adder to the voice of the charmer:

and their eyes have they closed; and willfully shut, against all evidence from facts, miracles, prophecies, and preaching:

lest they should see with [their] eyes, and hear with [their] ears, and understand with [their] heart, and should be converted; that is, see the evidence of miracles, take in the truth of doctrine, understand the meaning of prophecy, and so be turned from darkness, ignorance, and unbelief, to light, knowledge, and faith:

and I should heal them; or “have mercy on them”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; that is, forgive their sins: hearing the Gospel preached, is the ordinary means of understanding spiritual things; and the understanding being enlightened through the ministry of the word, by the Spirit of God, whereby the sinner sees his lost state by nature, his impurity and impotency, the danger he is in, and the destruction that is imminent on him, and he is liable to, and also his need of Christ, and salvation by him; this issues in conversion, in the turning of a man from the evil of his ways, to believe in Christ, walk on in him, and worthy of him; when he is healed of the diseases of his soul, which are many, are natural, and hereditary, mortal and incurable, but by Christ the great physician; by whose stripes, wounds, and blood, there is healing, that is, pardon; for healing diseases, and pardoning iniquities, are one and the same; (see Psalm 103:3); and at conversion, when a soul is enlightened, and made sensible of the evil of sin, and that there is no cure of this disease, by anything that he or any creature can do, or prescribe for him, but only by the blood of Christ; a discovery of pardoning grace is made unto him; and he is made whole, and cured of every disease that

attended him; from whence spring joy, peace, and comfort to him; but when through hearing the word, the understanding is not enlightened, and conversion does not follow upon it, there is no healing of the disease of sin, no pardon applied; and consequently such must be in a most deplorable and miserable condition, as all ignorant hearers and despisers of the Gospel are; (see Gill on “Matthew 13:14; see Gill on “Matthew 13:15;

ACTS 28:28. *Be it known therefore unto you,* Unbelievers and despisers, take this along with you at parting, and do not say you were never acquainted with it:

that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles; meaning the Gospel, which is a publication and declaration of that salvation, which God contrived from all eternity; made provision for, and secured in the covenant of grace; which he appointed, called, and sent Christ to effect, in the fullness of time; and which he has accomplished, by his obedience, sufferings, and death; even a full, complete, spiritual, and eternal salvation, from sin, Satan, the world, the curse of the law, and eternal death; that that Gospel which proclaims this, and is the power of God unto it, to them that believe, is sent to the Gentile world, by God himself, who has ordered his ministers to turn to them, upon the rejection of it by the Jews:

and [that] they will hear it: and do understand it and obey it, believe it and profess it: this the apostle could assert upon his own knowledge, who had preached it in many nations of the world; and could testify how gladly they heard it, with what pleasure they received it, how readily they obeyed it, and how cheerfully they professed it, and how steadily they held it; though the Jews despised and put it away from them, judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life: this the apostle says, reproaching them with their folly, stupidity, and infidelity; when the Gentiles, which knew not God, received the Gospel and are saved.

ACTS 28:29. *And when he had said these words,* Cited the prophecy of Isaiah, and declared the mission of the Gospel to the

Gentiles, and their calling by it; both which must greatly grieve and disturb the unbelieving part of his audience:

the Jews departed; much displeased and uneasy:

and had great reasoning among themselves; not only with them that believed, but with others, that seemed to incline towards the apostle, and who espoused and undertook to defend some principles of his, against the rest, as the doctrine of the resurrection; and particularly they might take into consideration the passage in Isaiah, the apostle had recited to them at parting, and which was so appropriate to them; as well as the account he gave them of the preaching of the Gospel, and the success of it among the Gentiles, things which must be very grating to them: this whole verse is wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and in the Syriac version.

ACTS 28:30. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, In a house which he hired with his own money; in which his friends Luke, Aristarchus, and others, dwelt with him; where he was guarded by a soldier: whether at the expiration of these two years he was set at liberty, and for ten years afterwards travelled into Italy, France, and Spain, preaching the Gospel, as some think; or whether he then suffered martyrdom, is not certain; the latter is most probable:

and received all that came in unto him; there, as the Syriac version reads, that is, into his lodging, as the Ethiopic version expresses it; which is not to be understood of his hospitality, for it cannot be thought that he should provide food and lodging for all that came unto him; but that he admitted

all that would come and hear him, and freely preached the Gospel to them: it should seem by this, as well as by what is said (Acts 28:23); that many of the Jews came into his lodging, and heard him expound, that it was a large house he had hired and dwelt in; and such an one Jerome thinks it was, like that he supposes he would have Philemon provide for him, which he desires in his epistle to him,

(Philemon 22); namely, a house in the most noted place in the city, for the convenience of those that came to him; large enough to hold many; free from noise and disturbance; and not situated in a scandalous neighborhood, nor near to shows and plays; and that the lodging should rather be on the floor than in an upper room: and such a house, with all the conditions that Jerome mentions, the Papists pretend to show at Rome to this day; where, as their tradition is, Luke composed, or however finished this his history; which, as the above writer observes, reaches to the two years of Paul's stay at Rome; that is, until the fourth year of Nero; from whence, adds he, we learn that in the same city this book was composed: and it is certain, that Luke was with him, when the apostle wrote his second epistle to Timothy from Rome, and when the time of his martyrdom seemed to himself to be at hand, (2 Timothy 4:7,11).

ACTS 28:31. Preaching the kingdom of God, That is, the Gospel, as in (Luke 4:43 16:16); he preached up Jesus as the King Messiah, and declared that his kingdom was come, and opened the nature of it; that it consisted not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; which is the kingdom of grace here, and is within a man, in his heart, where grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life: and he gave them same account of the kingdom of glory, and the way unto it; and showed, that without regeneration and sanctification, no one could be meet for it; and without the justifying righteousness of Christ, no man could have a right unto it, or be possessed of it:

and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ: his person, as God and man; his office as Mediator, being prophet, priest, and King; his incarnation and birth; his life and miracles; his doctrine and obedience, sufferings and death; his resurrection, ascension, session at God's right hand; his intercession, and second coming to judgment; with all the truths of the Gospel, in which he has a concern; as redemption, peace, reconciliation and pardon,

by his blood and sacrifice, and justification by his righteousness, and salvation and eternal life through him. These things had been the subject of the apostle's ministry, throughout the whole of it: he began at Damascus with preaching Jesus as the Son of God and the true Messiah; and he ends at Rome, with teaching the things concerning him: at his first setting out in the work of the Lord, he determined to make known none but Christ, and him crucified; and in this resolution he continued through the whole course of his life, and abode by it to the end: and this he did

with all confidence; with all freedom and liberty in his soul, though he was bound in his body with a chain; with all plainness, openness, and faithfulness; and with all courage and boldness, though in the midst of adversaries:

no man forbidding him; not the Roman emperor, nor the Roman senate, nor any other magistrate; nor could the Jews hinder him, nor was his mouth to be stopped by any; nor could the open door of the Gospel be shut, or its course be impeded; for though the apostle was bound, the word of God was not, but ran and was glorified; and was made known, and even owned in Caesar's palace; some say Nero's cupbearer, and Poppea his concubine, were converted by him: and he not only continued preaching the Gospel during the two years of his imprisonment at Rome, but also wrote several epistles to churches, and particular persons; as the epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and the Hebrews, and to Philemon, and the "second") epistle to Timothy: some copies add here, "Amen"; and at the close of the Alexandrian copy, stand these words, "the Acts of the holy Apostles"; and at the Syriac version these, "the End of the Acts of the blessed Apostles, that is, of their Histories".

Rome in Bible Times

Rome was founded on the Tiber river in 753 B.C. It soon spread to cover seven hills, which were : Capitoline, Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal, and Quirinal. The Roman Forum lay between the Palatine and Capitoline

hills and was the center of Roman cultural, civic, and commercial activities.

The finest of Rome's temples, palaces, circuses, baths, monuments, amphitheaters, and imperial buildings were near the Forum. All Roman life centered in this area, and all roads in the empire radiated from the golden milestone located in the Forum. Paul, Peter, and Luke must have been in the forum often; and here Paul may have been tried for his life. The dust and dirt of centuries cover this area now; and earthquake, fire, and time have taken their toll.

There were excavations in Rome as early as the 16th century, with extensive archaeological work being done since then. In the late 19th century, the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology took up the work and have continued to oversee it until the present.

Ancient Rome was a sumptuous and magnificent city. There are many descriptions in history of its magnificence. The Forum measures 240 by 690 feet and was the scene of the trial and death of Julius Caesar and the oration of Mark Antony. The Coliseum, covering six acres, seated 60,000 spectators at gladiatorial contests in which Christians were thrown to wild beasts. The palaces of the emperor and the temple of Jupiter were on the Palatine Hill. More than 250,000 people could watch chariot races at the Circus Maximus.

Near the Forum can be seen the Arch of Titus (Vespasian) which has a sculptured relief of Titus and his legions carrying the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem after the siege of 70 A.D. Of course, this had not been built when the apostle Paul was alive. Also, the Arch of Constantine is in the area and tells of Constantine's proclamation of 316 A.D. in which he announced that Christianity was to be the official religion of the empire. During the excavation, in 1941, of Ostia, Rome's seaport at the mouth of the Tiber, an inscription was found indicating that in 14 A.D., during the reign of Tiberius, Rome had a population of over 4 million.

Of all the discoveries in and around Rome, the most interesting to Christians and Jews are the

Catacombs which lay along the roadways outside the city, but which are never farther than three miles from the old city walls. The origin of these Catacombs is one of the strangest phases of history. They started out as sand pits discovered and exploited by people who needed building materials. The material was actually a combination of volcanic ash and sand, melted enough to cause the particles to adhere to each other. This tufa stone comprised the earth's surface for miles around Rome and was excellent when used in masonry. Many subterranean channels were dug in "mining" this sand.

During the first century, there came tremendous conflict between the young Church and the Roman Empire. The marked characteristic of the empire was tolerance; and the most notable characteristics of the Christian church were its love and benevolence. So, you would think the two would have gotten along well together. They did not, however, because the Christians swore allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord of the lives, and everything else was expected to be subservient to Him. Of course the Romans did not like this.

Also, the church had high standards for moral conduct, and they called for conformity to these standards. They said, "If you expect to be saved, you must conform to Christ's way of life." This was resented. The church condemned the world and sought to save it, but from the world there came contempt and aversion, followed by persecution.

The Christians were also thought to be very unsocial people. They were considered strange, and were hated as enemies of society. They were simple and moral in their dress, they would not go to games and feasts, they condemned those who sold fodder for the animals which were to be sacrificed to pagan gods. The public began to dread them because they thought the gods would be angry and cause their crops to fail if too many people refused to make offerings. If crops failed, if the Tiber river overflowed, if plagues came, the cry was "Send the Christians to the lions!" Yet the

Christians were kind to all who were in trouble, stayed and nursed the sick during the plague when others fled, and lived highly moral lives.

In order to test people's loyalty, the Roman government required that every one appear at certain public places and there burn a pinch of incense to the emperor. The Christians considered this emperor worship, and they wished to worship only Christ. So government authorities began to seek them out and punish them with death. As a protective measure the Christians began to meet and work in secret. They sought refuge in the underground sand pits. With their tools they hollowed out rooms, chapels, and burying places. The Catacombs became their place of safe retreat. They came to live there, to worship there, and were buried there, by the tens of thousands.

The Catacombs were discovered, and excavations begun, in the 16th century. Since 1950 they have been excavated very extensively. Enough information has been gathered to fill many books. About six million people are buried in about sixty Catacombs, fifty-four of which are Christian, and six of which are Jewish. Each of these has an obscure entrance from which a stairway leads down to tunnels and galleries which branch off in all directions creating a network of tunnels and streets on as many as four levels connected by stairways. On each level is an immense maze of tunnels - so that in all there are about 587 miles of tunnels.

Along the walls of these passageways, or at dead ends, the Christians are buried in wall tombs. Each tomb is closed with tiles or with a marble slab on which the name, and perhaps a portrait, of the deceased appears. Often the walls and ceilings were decorated with paintings of Bible characters, or scenes such as Moses striking the rock, David, Daniel, Noah, or Jonah — in each case they represented a miraculous deliverance by God. In 1853, the archaeologist DeRossi found a marble slab with the engraving, "Marcus Antonius Rastutus made this sepulchre for himself and his own, who are confident in the Lord."

The Praetorian Guard

Refer to Wikipedia for an extensive article on the Praetorian Guard.

Paul's Journey to Rome

The following is Chapter 24 of *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson

The Appian Way

The last Chapter began with a description of the facilities possessed by the ancients for travelling by sea: this must begin with a reference to their best opportunities of travelling by land. We have before spoken of some of the most important roads through the provinces of the Empire: now we are about to trace the Apostle's footsteps along that road, which was at once the oldest and most frequented in Italy, and which was called, in comparison with all others, the "Queen of Roads." We are no longer following the narrow line of compact pavement across Macedonian plains and mountains, or through the varied scenery in the interior of Asia Minor: but we are on the most crowded approach to the metropolis of the world, in the midst of prætors and proconsuls, embassies, legions, and turms of horse, "to their provinces hasting or on return," which Milton,—in his description of the City enriched with the spoils of nations,—has called us to behold "in various habits on the Appian road."

Leaving then all consideration of Puteoli, as it was related to the sea and to the various places on the coast, we proceed to consider its communications by land with the towns of Campania and Latium. The great line of communication between Rome and the southern part of the peninsula was the Way constructed by Appius Claudius, which passed through Capua, and thence to Brundisium on the shore of the Adriatic. Puteoli and its neighbourhood lay some miles to the westward of this main road: but communicated with it easily by well-travelled cross-roads. One of them followed the coast from Puteoli northwards, till it joined the Appian Way at

Sinuessa, on the borders of Latium and Campania. It appears, however, that this road was not constructed till the reign of Domitian. Our attention, therefore, is called to the other cross-road which led directly to Capua. One branch of it left the coast at Cumæ, another at Puteoli. It was called the "Campanian Way," and also the "Consular Way." It seems to have been constructed during the Republic, and was doubtless the road which is mentioned, in an animated passage of Horace's Epistles, as communicating with the baths and villas of Baiæ.

The first part then of the route which Julius took with his prisoners was probably from Puteoli to Capua. All the region near the coast, however transformed in the course of ages by the volcanic forces, which are still at work, is recognised as the scene of the earliest Italian mythology, and must ever be impressive from the poetic images, partly of this world and partly of the next, with which Virgil has filled it. From Cumæ to Capua, the road traverses a more prosaic district: the "Phlegræan fields" are left behind, and we pass from the scene of Italy's dim mythology to the theatre of the most exciting passages of her history. The whole line of the road can be traced at intervals, not only in the close neighbourhood of Puteoli and Capua, but through the intermediate villages, by fragments of pavement, tombs, and ancient milestones.

Capua, after a time of disgrace had expiated its friendship with Hannibal, was raised by Julius Cæsar to the rank of a colony: in the reign of Augustus it had resumed all its former splendour: and about the very time of which we are writing, it received accessions of dignity from the Emperor Nero. It was the most important city on the whole line of the Appian Way, between Rome and Brundisium. That part of the line with which we are concerned, is the northerly and most ancient portion. The distance is about 125 miles: and it may be naturally divided into two equal parts. The division is appropriate, whether in regard to the physical configuration of the country, or the

modern political boundaries. The point of division is where Terracina is built at the base of those cliffs, on which the city of Anxur was of old proudly situated, and where a narrow pass, between the mountain and the sea, unites the Papal States to the kingdom of Naples.

The distance from Capua to Terracina is about seventy Roman miles. At the third mile, the road crossed the river Vulturnus at Casilinum, a town then falling into decay. Fifteen miles further it crossed the river Savo, by what was then called the Campanian Bridge. Thence, after three miles, it came to Sinuessa on the sea, which in St. Paul's day was reckoned the first town in Latium. But the old rich Campania extended further to the northward, including the vine-clad hills of the famous Falernian district through which we pass, after crossing the Savo. The last of these hills (where the vines may be seen trained on elms, as of old) is the range of Massicus, which stretches from the coast towards the Apennines, and finally shuts out from the traveller, as he descends on the farther side, all the prospect of Vesuvius and the coast near Puteoli. At that season, both vines and elms would have a winterly appearance. But the traces of spring would be visible in the willows; among which the Liris flows in many silent windings—from the birthplace of Marius in the mountains—to the city and the swamps by the sea, which the ferocity of his mature life has rendered illustrious. After leaving Minturnæ, the Appian Way passes on to another place, which has different associations with the later years of the Republic. We speak of Formiæ, with its long street by the shore of its beautiful bay, and with its villas on the sea side and above it; among which was one of Cicero's favourite retreats from the turmoil of the political world, and where at last he fell by the hand of assassins. Many a lectica, or palanquin, such as that in which he was reclining when overtaken by his murderers, may have been met by St. Paul in his progress,—with other carriages, with which the road would become more and more crowded,—the cisium, or light cabriolet, of some gay

reveller, on his way to Baiæ,—or the four-wheeled rheda, full of the family of some wealthy senator quitting the town for the country. At no great distance from Formiæ the road left the sea again, and passed, where the substructions of it still remain, through the defiles of the Cæcuban hills, with their stony but productive vineyards. Thence the traveller looked down upon the plain of Fundi, which retreats like a bay into the mountains, with the low lake of Amyclæ between the town and the sea. Through the capricious care, with which time has preserved in one place what is lost in another, the pavement of the ancient way is still the street of this, the most northerly town of the Neapolitan kingdom in this direction. We have now in front of us the mountain line, which is both the frontier of the Papal states, and the natural division of the Apostle's journey from Capua to Rome. Where it reaches the coast, in bold limestone precipices, there Anxur was situated, with its houses and temples high above the sea.

After leaving Anxur, the traveller observes the high land retreating again from the coast, and presently finds himself in a wide and remarkable plain, enclosed towards the interior by the sweep of the blue Volscian mountains, and separated by a belt of forest from the sea. Here are the Pomptine marshes,—“the only marshes ever dignified by classic celebrity.” The descriptive lines of the Roman satirist have wonderfully concurred with the continued unhealthiness of the half-drained morass, in preserving a living commentary on that fifteenth verse in the last chapter of the Acts, which exhibits to us one of the most touching passages in the Apostle's life. A few miles beyond Terracina, where a fountain, grateful to travellers, welled up near the sanctuary of Feronia, was the termination of a canal, which was formed by Augustus for the purpose of draining the marshes, and which continued for twenty miles by the side of the road. Over this distance, travellers had their choice, whether to proceed by barges dragged by mules, or on the pavement of the way itself. It is impossible to

know which plan was adopted by Julius and his prisoners. If we suppose the former to have been chosen, we have the aid of Horace's Satire to enable us to imagine the incidents and the company, in the midst of which the Apostle came, unknown and unfriended, to the corrupt metropolis of the world. And yet he was not so unfriended as he may possibly have thought himself that day, in his progress from Anxur across the watery, unhealthy plain. On the arrival of the party at Appii Forum, which was a town where the mules were unfastened, at the other end of the canal, and is described by the satirist as full of low tavern-keepers and bargemen,—at that meeting-place where travellers from all parts of the Empire had often crossed one another's path,—on that day, in the motley and vulgar crowd, some of the few Christians who were then in the world, suddenly recognised one another, and emotions of holy joy and thanksgiving sanctified the place of coarse vice and vulgar traffic. The disciples at Rome had heard of the Apostle's arrival at Puteoli, and hastened to meet him on the way; and the prisoner was startled to recognise some of those among whom he had laboured, and whom he had loved, in the distant cities of the East. Whether Aquila and Priscilla were there it is needless to speculate. Whoever might be the persons, they were brethren in Christ, and their presence would be an instantaneous source of comfort and strength. We have already seen, on other occasions of his life, how the Apostle's heart was lightened by the presence of his friends.

Appii Forum and the Three Taverns

About ten miles farther he received a second welcome from a similar group of Christian brethren. Two independent companies had gone to meet him; or the zeal and strength of one party had outstripped the other. At a place called the Three Taverns, where a cross road from the coast at Antium came in from the left, this second party of Christians was waiting to welcome and to honour "the ambassador in bonds." With a lighter heart, and a more cheerful countenance, he travelled the

remaining seventeen miles, which brought him along the base of the Alban Hills, in the midst of places well known and famous in early Roman legends, to the town of Aricia. The Great Apostle had the sympathies of human nature; he was dejected and encouraged by the same causes which act on our spirits; he too saw all outward objects in "hues borrowed from the heart." The diminution of fatigue—the more hopeful prospect of the future—the renewed elasticity of religious trust—the sense of a brighter light on all the scenery round him—on the foliage which overshadowed the road—on the wide expanse of the plain to the left—on the high summit of the Alban Mount,—all this, and more than this, is involved in St. Luke's sentence,—“when Paul saw the brethren, he thanked God, and took courage.”

The mention of the Alban Mount reminds us that we are approaching the end of our journey. The isolated group of hills, which is called by this collective name, stands between the plain which has just been traversed and that other plain which is the Campagna of Rome. All the bases of the mountain were then (as indeed they are partially now) clustered round with the villas and gardens of wealthy citizens. The Appian Way climbs and then descends along its southern slope. After passing Lanuvium it crossed a crater-like valley on immense substructions, which still remain. Here is Aricia, an easy stage from Rome. The town was above the road; and on the hill side swarms of beggars beset travellers as they passed. On the summit of the next rise, Paul of Tarsus would obtain his first view of Rome. There is no doubt that the prospect was, in many respects, very different from the view which is now obtained from the same spot. It is true that the natural features of the scene are unaltered. The long wall of blue Sabine mountains, with Soracte in the distance, closed in the Campagna, which stretched far across to the sea and round the base of the Alban hills. But ancient Rome was not, like modern Rome, impressive from its solitude, standing alone, with its one conspicuous cupola, in the midst of a desolate though

beautiful waste. St. Paul would see a vast city, covering the Campagna, and almost continuously connected by its suburbs with the villas on the hill where he stood, and with the bright towns which clustered on the sides of the mountains opposite. Over all the intermediate space were the houses and gardens, through which aqueducts and roads might be traced in converging lines towards the confused mass of edifices which formed the city of Rome. Here no conspicuous building, elevated above the rest, attracted the eye or the imagination. Ancient Rome had neither cupola nor campanile. Still less had it any of those spires, which give life to all the landscapes of Northern Christendom. It was a wide-spread aggregate of buildings, which, though separated by narrow streets and open squares, appeared, when seen from near Aricia, blended into one indiscriminate mass: for distance concealed the contrasts which divided the crowded habitations of the poor and the dark haunts of filth and misery—from the theatres and colonnades, the baths, the temples and palaces with gilded roofs, flashing back the sun.

The road descended into the plain at Bovillæ, six miles from Aricia, and thence it proceeded in a straight line, with the sepulchres of illustrious families on either hand. One of these was the burial-place of the Julian gens, with which the centurion who had charge of the prisoners was in some way connected. As they proceeded over the old pavement, among gardens and modern houses, and approached nearer the busy metropolis—the “conflux issuing forth or entering in” in various costumes and on various errands,— vehicles, horsemen, and foot-passengers, soldiers and labourers, Romans and foreigners,—became more crowded and confusing. The houses grew closer. They were already in Rome. It was impossible to define the commencement of the city. Its populous portions extended far beyond the limits marked out by Servius. The ancient wall, with its once sacred pomœrium, was rather an object for antiquarian interest, like the walls of York or Chester, than any

protection against the enemies, who were kept far aloof by the legions on the frontier.

Entrance into Rome

Yet the Porta Capena is a spot which we can hardly leave without lingering for a moment. Under this arch—which was perpetually dripping with the water of the aqueduct that went over it—had passed all those who, since a remote period of the republic, had travelled by the Appian Way,—victorious generals with their legions, returning from foreign service,—emperors and courtiers, vagrant representatives of every form of Heathenism, Greeks and Asiatics, Jews and Christians. From this point entering within the city, Julius and his prisoners moved on, with the Aventine on their left, close round the base of the Cœlian, and through the hollow ground which lay between this hill and the Palatine: thence over the low ridge called Velia, where afterwards was built the arch of Titus, to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem; and then descending, by the Sacra Via, into that space which was the centre of imperial power and imperial magnificence, and associated also with the most glorious recollections of the republic. The Forum was to Rome, what the Acropolis was to Athens, the heart of all the characteristic interest of the place. Here was the Milliarium Aureum, to which the roads of all the provinces converged. All around were the stately buildings, which were raised in the closing years of the Republic, and by the earlier Emperors. In front was the Capitoline Hill, illustrious long before the invasion of the Gauls. Close on the left, covering that hill, whose name is associated in every modern European language with the notion of imperial splendour, were the vast ranges of the palace—the “house of Cæsar” (Phil. 4:22). Here were the household troops quartered in a prætorium attached to the palace. And here (unless, indeed, it was in the great Prætorian camp outside the city wall) Julius gave up his prisoner to Burrus, the Prætorian Præfect, whose official duty it was to keep in custody all accused persons who were to be tried before the Emperor.

This doubt, which of two places, somewhat distant from each other, was the scene of St. Paul's meeting with the commander-in-chief of the Prætorian guards, gives us the occasion for entering on a general description of the different parts of the city of Rome. It would be nugatory to lay great stress, as is too often done, on its "seven hills:" for a great city at length obliterates the original features of the ground, especially where those features were naturally not very strongly marked. The description, which is easy in reference to Athens or Edinburgh, is hard in the instance of modern London or ancient Rome. Nor is it easy, in the case of one of the larger cities of the world, to draw any marked lines of distinction among the different classes of buildings. It is true, the contrasts are really great; but details are lost in a distant view of so vast an aggregate. The two scourges to which ancient Rome was most exposed, revealed very palpably the contrast, both of the natural ground and the human structures, which by the general observer might be unnoticed or forgotten. When the Tiber was flooded, and the muddy waters converted all the streets and open places of the lower part of the city into lakes and canals, it would be seen very clearly how much lower were the Forum and the Campus Martius, than those three detached hills (the Capitoline, the Palatine, and the Aventine) which rose near the river; and those four ridges (the Cœlian, the Esquiline, the Viminal, and the Quirinal) which ascended and united together in the higher ground on which the Prætorian camp was situated. And when fires swept rapidly from roof to roof, and vast ranges of buildings were buried in the ruins of one night, that contrast between the dwellings of the poor and the palaces of the rich, which has supplied the Apostle with one of his most forcible images, would be clearly revealed,—the difference between structures of "sumptuous marbles, with silver and gold," which abide after the fire, and the hovels of "wood, hay, stubble," which are burnt (1 Cor. 3:10–15).

Description of Rome

If we look at a map of modern Rome, with a desire of realising to ourselves the appearance of the city of Augustus and Nero, we must in the first place obliterate from our view that circuit of walls, which is due in various proportions, to Aurelian, Belisarius, and Pope Leo IV. The wall, through which the Porta Capena gave admission, was the old Servian enclosure, which embraced a much smaller area: though we must bear in mind, as we have remarked above, that the city had extended itself beyond this limit, and spread through various suburbs, far into the country. In the next place we must observe that the hilly part of Rome, which is now half occupied by gardens, was then the most populous, while the Campus Martius, now covered with crowded streets, was comparatively open. It was only about the close of the Republic that many buildings were raised on the Campus Martius, and these were chiefly of a public or decorative character. One of these, the Pantheon, still remains, as a monument of the reign of Augustus. This, indeed, is the period from which we must trace the beginning of all the grandeur of Roman buildings. Till the Civil War between Pompey and Cæsar, the private houses of the citizens had been mean, and the only public structures of note were the cloacæ and the aqueducts. But in proportion as the ancient fabric of the constitution broke down, and while successful generals brought home wealth from provinces conquered and plundered on every shore of the Mediterranean, the City began to assume the appearance of a new and imperial magnificence. To leave out of view the luxurious and splendid residences which wealthy citizens raised for their own uses, Pompey erected the first theatre of stone, and Julius Cæsar surrounded the great Circus with a portico. From this time the change went on rapidly and incessantly. The increase of public business led to the erection of enormous Basilicas. The Forum was embellished on all sides. The Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, and those other temples the remains of which are

still conspicuous at the base of the Capitoline, were only a small part of similar buildings raised by Augustus. The triumphal arch erected by Tiberius near the same place was only one of many structures, which rose in rapid succession to decorate that busy neighbourhood. And if we wish to take a wider view, we have only to think of the aqueducts, which were built, one by one, between the private enterprises of Agrippa in the reign of Augustus, and the recent structures of the Emperor Claudius, just before the arrival of the Apostle Paul. We may not go further in the order of chronology. We must remember that the Colosseum, the Basilica of Constantine, and the baths of other emperors, and many other buildings which are now regarded as the conspicuous features of ancient Rome, did not then exist. We are describing a period which is anterior to the time of Nero's fire. Even after the opportunity which that calamity afforded for reconstructing the city, Juvenal complains of the narrowness of the streets. Were we to attempt to extend our description to any of these streets,—whether the old Vicus Tuscus, with its cheating shopkeepers, which led round the base of the Palatine, from the Forum to the Circus,—or the aristocratic Carinæ along the slope of the Esquiline,—or the noisy Suburra, in the hollow between the Viminal and Quirinal, which had sunk into disrepute, though once the residence of Julius Cæsar,—we should only wander into endless perplexity. And we should be equally lost, if we were to attempt to discriminate the mixed multitude, which were crowded on the various landings of those insulæ, or piles of lodging houses, which are perhaps best described by comparing them to the houses in the old town of Edinburgh.

If it is difficult to describe the outward appearances of the city, it is still more difficult to trace the distinctive features of all the parts of that colossal population which filled it. Within a circuit of little more than twelve miles more than two millions of inhabitants were crowded. It is evident that this fact is only explicable by the narrowness of the streets,

with that peculiarity of the houses which has been alluded to above. In this prodigious collection of human beings, there were of course all the contrasts which are seen in a modern city,—all the painful lines of separation between luxury and squalor, wealth and want. But in Rome all these differences were on an exaggerated scale, and the institution of slavery modified further all social relations. The free citizens were more than a million: of these, the senators were so few in number, as to be hardly appreciable: the knights, who filled a great proportion of the public offices, were not more than 10,000: the troops quartered in the city may be reckoned at 15,000: the rest were the Plebs urbana. That a vast number of these would be poor, is an obvious result of the most ordinary causes. But, in ancient Rome, the luxury of the wealthier classes did not produce a general diffusion of trade, as it does in a modern city. The handicraft employments, and many of what we should call professions, were in the hands of slaves; and the consequence was, that a vast proportion of the Plebs urbana lived on public or private charity. Yet were these pauper citizens proud of their citizenship, though many of them had no better sleeping-place for the night than the public porticos or the vestibules of temples. They cared for nothing beyond bread for the day, the games of the Circus, and the savage delight of gladiatorial shows. Manufactures and trade they regarded as the business of the slave and the foreigner. The number of the slaves was perhaps about a million. The number of the strangers or peregrini was much smaller; but it is impossible to describe their varieties. Every kind of nationality and religion found its representative in Rome. But it is needless to pursue these details. The most obvious comparison is better than an elaborate description. Rome was like London with all its miseries, vices, and follies exaggerated, and without Christianity.

Population of Rome

One part of Rome still remains to be described, the "Trastevere," or district beyond the river.

This portion of the city has been known in modern times for the energetic and intractable character of its population. In earlier times it was equally notorious, though not quite for the same reason. It was the residence of a low rabble, and the place of the meanest merchandise. There is, however, one reason why our attention is particularly called to it. It was the ordinary residence of the Jews—the “Ghetto” of ancient Rome: and great part of it was doubtless squalid and miserable, like the Ghetto of modern Rome, though the Jews were often less oppressed under the Cæsars than under the Popes. Here then—on the level ground, between the windings of the muddy river and the base of that hill from the brow of which Porsena looked down on early Rome, and where the French within these few years have planted their cannon—we must place the home of those Israelitish families among whom the Gospel bore its first-fruits in the metropolis of the world: and it was on these bridges,—which formed an immediate communication from the district beyond the Tiber to the Emperor’s household and the guards on the Palatine,—that those despised Jewish beggars took their stand, to whom in the place of their exile had come the hopes of a better citizenship than that which they had lost.

The Jewish community thus established in Rome, had its first beginnings in the captives brought by Pompey after his eastern campaign. Many of them were manumitted; and thus a great proportion of the Jews in Rome were freedmen. Frequent accessions to their numbers were made as years went on—chiefly from the mercantile relations which subsisted between Rome and the East. Many of them were wealthy, and large sums were sent annually for religious purposes from Italy to the mother country. Even the proselytes contributed to these sacred funds. It is difficult to estimate the amount of the religious influence exerted by the Roman Jews upon the various Heathens around them; but all our sources of information lead us to conclude that it was very considerable. So long as this

influence was purely religious, we have no reason to suppose that any persecution from the civil power resulted. It was when commotions took place in consequence of expectations of a temporal Messiah, or when vague suspicions of this mysterious people were more than usually excited, that the Jews of Rome were cruelly treated, or peremptorily banished. Yet from all these cruelties they recovered with elastic force, and from all these exiles they returned; and in the early years of Nero, which were distinguished for a mild and lenient government of the Empire, the Jews in Rome seem to have enjoyed complete toleration, and to have been a numerous, wealthy, and influential community.

The Roman Church

The Christians doubtless shared the protection which was extended to the Jews. They were hardly yet sufficiently distinguished as a self-existent community, to provoke any independent hostility. It is even possible that the Christians, so far as they were known as separate, were more tolerated than the Jews; for, not having the same expectation of an earthly hero to deliver them, they had no political ends in view, and would not be in the same danger of exciting the suspicion of the government. Yet we should fall into a serious error, if we were to suppose that all the Christians in Rome, or the majority of them, had formerly been Jews or Proselytes; though this was doubtless true of its earliest members, who may have been of the number that were dispersed after the first Pentecost, or, possibly, disciples of our Lord Himself. It is impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion concerning the first origin and early growth of the Church in Rome; though, from the manifold links between the city and the provinces, it is easy to account for the formation of a large and flourishing community. Its history before the year 61 might be divided into three periods, separated from each other by the banishment of the Jews from Rome in the reign of Claudius, and the writing of St. Paul’s letter from Corinth. Even in the first of these periods there might be points of

connection between the Roman Church and St. Paul; for some of those whom he salutes (Rom. 16:7, 11) as “kinsmen,” are also said to have been “Christians before him.” In the second period it cannot well be doubted that a very close connection began between St. Paul and some of the conspicuous members and principal teachers of the Roman Church. The expulsion of the Jews in consequence of the edict of Claudius, brought them in large numbers to the chief towns of the Levant; and there St. Paul met them in the synagogues. We have seen what results followed from his meeting with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. They returned to Rome with all the stores of spiritual instruction which he had given them; and in the Epistle to the Romans we find him, as is natural, saluting them thus:—“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my sake laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the Church that is in their house.” All this reveals to us a great amount of devoted exertion on behalf of one large congregation in Rome; and all of it distinctly connected with St. Paul. And this is perhaps only a specimen of other cases of the like kind. Thus he sends a greeting to Epænetus, whom he names “the first-fruits of Asia” (ver. 5), and who may have had the same close relation to him during his long ministration at Ephesus (Acts, 19), which Aquila and Priscilla had at Corinth. Nor must we forget those women, whom he singles out for special mention,—“Mary, who bestowed much labour on him” (ver. 6); “the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord” (ver. 12); with Tryphæna and Tryphosa, and the unknown mother of Rufus (ver. 13). We cannot doubt, that, though the Church of Rome may have received its growth and instruction through various channels, many of them were connected, directly or indirectly, with St. Paul; and accordingly he writes, in the whole of the letter, as one already in intimate relation with a Church which he has never seen. And whatever bonds subsisted between this Apostle and the Roman Christians, must have been drawn still

closer when the letter had been received; for from that time they were looking forward to a personal visit from him, in his projected journey to the West. Thenceforward they must have taken the deepest interest in all his movements, and received with eager anxiety the news of his imprisonment at Cæsarea, and waited (as we have already seen) for his arrival in Italy. It is indeed but too true that there were parties among the Christians in Rome, and that some had a hostile feeling against St. Paul himself; yet it is probable that the animosity of the Judaizers was less developed, than it was in those regions which he had personally visited, and to which they had actually followed him. As to the unconverted Jews, the name of St. Paul was doubtless known to them; yet were they comparatively little interested in his movements. Their proud contempt of the Christian heresy would make them indifferent. The leaven of the Gospel was working around them to an extent of which they were hardly aware. The very magnitude of the population of Rome had a tendency to neutralise the currents of party feeling. For these reasons the hostility of the Jews was probably less violent than in any other part of the Empire.

Interview with the Jews

Yet St. Paul could not possibly be aware of the exact extent of their enmity against himself. Independently, therefore, of his general principle of preaching, first to the Jew and then to the Gentile, he had an additional reason for losing no time in addressing himself to his countrymen. Thus, after the mention of St. Paul’s being delivered up to Burrus, and allowed by him to be separate from the other prisoners, the next scene to which the sacred historian introduces us is among the Jews. After three days he sent for the principal men among them to his lodging, and endeavoured to conciliate their feelings towards himself and the Gospel.

It was highly probable that the prejudices of these Roman Jews were already roused against the Apostle of the Gentiles; or if they had not yet conceived an unfavourable opinion of him,

there was a danger that they would now look upon him as a traitor to his country, from the mere fact that he had appealed to the Roman power. He might even have been represented to them in the odious light of one who had come to Rome as an accuser of the Sanhedrin before the Emperor. St. Paul, therefore, addressed his auditors on this point at once, and shewed that his enemies were guilty of this very appeal to the foreign power, of which he had himself been suspected. He had committed no offence against the holy nation, or the customs of their fathers; yet his enemies at Jerusalem had delivered him,—one of their brethren—of the seed of Abraham—of the tribe of Benjamin—a Hebrew of the Hebrews—into the hands of the Romans. So unfounded was the accusation, that even the Roman governor had been ready to liberate the prisoner; but his Jewish enemies opposed his liberation. They strove to keep a child of Israel in Roman chains. So that he was compelled, as his only hope of safety, to appeal unto Cæsar. He brought no accusation against his countrymen before the tribunal of the stranger: that was the deed of his antagonists. In fact, his only crime had been his firm faith in God's deliverance of his people through the Messiah promised by the Prophets. "For the hope of Israel," he concluded, "I am bound with this chain."

Their answer to this address was reassuring. They said that they had received no written communication from Judæa concerning St. Paul, and that none of "the brethren" who had arrived from the East had spoken any evil of him. They further expressed a wish to hear from himself a statement of his religious sentiments, adding that the Christian sect was everywhere spoken against. There was perhaps something hardly honest in this answer; for it seems to imply a greater ignorance with regard to Christianity than we can suppose to have prevailed among the Roman Jews. But with regard to Paul himself, it might well be true that they had little information concerning him. Though he had been imprisoned long at Cæsarea, his appeal had been made only a short

time before winter. After that time (to use the popular expression), the sea was shut; and the winter had been a stormy one; so that it was natural enough that his case should be first made known to the Jews by himself. All these circumstances gave a favourable opening for the preaching of the Gospel, and Paul hastened to take advantage of it. A day was fixed for a meeting at his own private lodging.

They came in great numbers at the appointed time. Then followed an impressive scene, like that at Troas (Acts, 21)—the Apostle pleading long and earnestly,—bearing testimony concerning the kingdom of God,—and endeavouring to persuade them by arguments drawn from their own Scriptures,—"from morning till evening." The result was a division among the auditors—"not peace but a sword,"—the division which has resulted ever since, when the Truth of God has encountered, side by side, earnest conviction with worldly indifference, honest investigation with bigoted prejudice, trustful faith with the pride of scepticism. After a long and stormy discussion, the unbelieving portion departed; but not until St. Paul had warned them, in one last address, that they were bringing upon themselves that awful doom of judicial blindness, which was denounced in their own Scriptures against obstinate unbelievers; that the salvation which they rejected would be withdrawn from them, and the inheritance they renounced would be given to the Gentiles. The sentence with which he gave emphasis to this warning was that passage in Isaiah, which is more often quoted in the New Testament than any other words from the Old, —which recurring thus with solemn force at the very close of the Apostolic history, seems to bring very strikingly together the Old Dispensation and the New, and to connect the ministry of Our Lord with that of His Apostles:— "Go unto this people and say: Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their

eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”

A formal separation was now made between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the Jews of Rome. They withdrew, to dispute concerning the “sect” which was making such inroads on their prejudices (ver. 29). He remained in his own hired house, where the indulgence of Burrus permitted him to reside, instead of confining him within the walls of the Prætorian barrack. We must not forget, however, that he was still a prisoner under military custody,—chained by the arm, both day and night, to one of the imperial bodyguard,—and thus subjected to the rudeness and caprice of an insolent soldiery. This severity, however, was indispensable, according to the Roman law; and he received every indulgence which it was in the power of the Præfect to grant. He was allowed to receive all who came to him (ver. 30), and was permitted, without hindrance, to preach boldly the kingdom of God, and teach the things of the Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 31).

Thus was fulfilled his long cherished desire “to proclaim the Gospel to them that were in Rome also” (Rom. 1:15). Thus ends the Apostolic History, so far as it has been directly revealed. Here the thread of sacred narrative, which we have followed so long, is suddenly broken. Our knowledge of the incidents of his residence in Rome, and of his subsequent history, must be gathered almost exclusively from the letters of the Apostle himself.
