

[R4507 : page 329]

## ST. PAUL PRISONER AT ROME

– ACTS 28:11-31. – NOVEMBER 14. –

**Golden Text:** – "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

– Rom. 1:16.

EARLY in the spring A.D. 60 Centurion Julius and his soldiers of the Augustan Band started from Malta with St. Paul and the other prisoners for Rome in another ship, Luke and Aristarchus accompanying. The sea journey was effected without special incident, the landing being made in the Bay of Naples at Puteoli, the seaport of Rome, which is one hundred and fifty miles inland. Here they tarried seven days, the Centurion awaiting orders from Rome respecting the disposal of his prisoners. The delay afforded St. Paul an opportunity to meet with a little band of Christians residing at Puteoli. Doubtless he took the opportunity also to send word to the Christians residing at Rome, whom he repeatedly declared that he longed to meet and whom the Lord promised that he should meet. The journey to Rome, one hundred and eighty miles, was made on foot. En route the Apostle was frequently cheered by evidences of the Christian love of the brethren. Some of these met him at Appii Forum, forty-three miles distant from Rome, and another delegation met him at Three Taverns, thirty miles from the great city.

Many great generals had come this same way with their troops to the imperial city, to receive honors and applause, but few preachers ever had so great honors as were accorded to St. Paul. The journey to and from was for one delegation sixty miles and for the other eighty miles, and the record shows us that the Apostle was by these made acquainted with the true spirit of brotherhood amongst the Christians at Rome. The brethren doubtless came on the journey for their own refreshment and joy,

not realizing, perhaps, that the Apostle needed this evidence of their love. Commenting along these lines a gifted writer says, "We often forget that great men are often very lonely and, while we hesitate to say kind words to them, yet words of recognition for what they have done are refreshing to those who receive more criticism than praise. A few days ago an editor showed me a letter he had just received from one who had held nearly the highest position in the gift of the American people, thanking him for his kindly words in a late editorial. My friend said that at first he was astonished that so great a man should care for anything he could say; but on further thought he understood the value of generous appreciation even to the greatest." [R4507 : page 330]

### **"IN HIS OWN HIRED HOUSE"**

The fact that there were no charges of an evil character against St. Paul and the further fact that the Centurion who had him in charge during the voyage became his friend were quite sufficient reasons why he should not be treated as an ordinary prisoner, but allowed to live in his own hired house under the care of a soldier to whom he was lightly chained. However, although not permitted to go at liberty, he was permitted to receive his friends and others who called upon him. It is difficult to estimate how much Divine Providence had to do with all these arrangements. Moreover, the soldier on guard was changed every few hours, so that probably he came in close contact with at least six every day, and thus gradually he probably had contact with the entire imperial guard. Thus many were brought in contact with Christian teachings and example. It is claimed that it was through these soldiers that the Gospel message was carried to France, Germany and Great Britain. Truly, "God works in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform!" St. Paul must have had some financial means. It is assumed that ere this he had come into his patrimony. The Scriptures intimate that Felix held him captive

at Caesarea in hope of receiving a bribe for his release, evidently having some intimation respecting St. Paul's finances.

The Lord's servant was not slow in using his God-granted privileges. He knew not when they might be taken away. First of all, of course, he met the Christian brethren; but, as early as the third day after his arrival, he sent for the Jewish leaders and officers of the synagogues, for at this time there were seven synagogues at Rome. He desired to give them information at first-hand respecting why he was there and a prisoner. Secondly, he wished to preach to them the Gospel. He explained that although a prisoner at the instance of the Jews at Palestine, he was not disloyal to his nation or its customs. He had been pronounced innocent at the Roman Court, but had been compelled to appeal to Caesar for his safety; but that even then he was making no accusation against his countrymen. He proposed that gladly he would explain to them the good news, that the long-expected Messiah, in whom the Jewish expectations of his nation rested, had come. The response was that they had received no letters or other communication injurious to the Apostle, and expressed a desire to hear for themselves what St. Paul had to say, because they had heard of this sect and knew that it was spoken against as evil. If he could say anything favorable to it they would hear it.

As our Lord foretold, the darkness which now predominates in the world hates the light and everywhere speaks against it. Vile slanders are still the weapons of the Adversary which the Christian must not handle, because to do so is contrary to the spirit by which he has been regenerated. Even where a truth discreditable to another must be told for any reason it must be spoken in love and, so far as possible, nothing derogatory or injurious must be said. "Speak evil of no man." It is, however, necessary at times to show up the error, the falsity of doctrines presented in the name of Truth; but in so doing, appeals should

not be made to bigotry or superstition, but to reason and to the Word of God.

## **TESTIMONY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

On the appointed day the Jews came to hear the Apostle's message and, from morning until evening, he quoted, explained and expounded, showing from the Law and the prophecies that Jesus is the Messiah and that he is now gathering a Spiritual Seed to be his Kingdom, and that when this Kingdom is complete, it will be glorified in the First Resurrection, and will begin the work allotted to the Seed of Abraham, namely, that of blessing all the families of the earth. The blessing will consist of mental enlightenment and mental, moral and physical uplifting out of sin and death conditions to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary. When some of them refused the message, St. Paul sought to further influence them, or at least to influence the believing ones, by quoting from the Prophet Isaiah, showing that God foreknew and foretold that the majority of Jews would reject the message when it should come to them. As our Lord said of them, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." (Matt. 13:14.) The Apostle does not mean that those who are deaf to the Gospel will be eternally tormented, but still they lose a great blessing, the wonderful privilege of becoming heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ the Redeemer in his Millennial Kingdom. They lose a share with the saints in the glorious work of uplift, which will then be in progress. They lose this privilege because not worthy of it. They were blind to the Truth for this cause. To have permitted the unworthy ones to see, hear and understand the message would have distressed them and added to their responsibilities and possibly hindered, to some extent, the outworking of the Divine purposes.

Some believed St. Paul's message and some did not. It is always thus. The Truth is a searcher and discerner of hearts, and a separator. St. Paul remained for two years under these conditions, preaching the Kingdom of God and how it may be attained at the present time by becoming members of the elect "little flock," the Bride of Christ; how the Kingdom when established during the Millennium will bless the whole earth. He explained how all these things were dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrifice; that without the redemption which is in Christ Jesus there could be no remission of sins, no everlasting life, no Kingdom class on the spirit plane, but only everlasting destruction. – Acts 3:23.

[R4508 : page 330]

### **THE SERVANT'S PATH IN A DAY OF REJECTION**

Servant of Christ, stand fast amid the scorn  
Of men who little know or love thy Lord;  
Turn not aside from toil: cease not to warn,  
Comfort and teach, trust Him for thy reward;  
A few more moments' suffering, and then  
Cometh sweet rest from all thy heart's deep pain.

For grace pray much, for much thou needest grace  
If men thy work deride – what can they more?  
Christ's weary foot thy path on earth doth trace;  
If thorns wound thee, they pierced Him before;  
Press on, look up, tho clouds may gather round,  
Thy place of service He makes hallowed ground.

Have friends forsaken thee, and cast thy name  
Out as a worthless thing? Take courage then:  
Go tell thy Master; for they did the same  
To Him, who once in patience toiled for them;  
Yet He was perfect in all service here;

Tho oft thou hast failed: this maketh Him more dear.

Self-vindication shun; if in the right  
What gainest thou by taking from God's hand  
Thy cause? If wrong, what dost thou but invite  
Satan himself thy friend in need to stand?  
Leave all with God; if right, He'll prove thee so;  
If not, He'll pardon; therefore to him go.

Be not men's servant: think what costly price  
Was paid that thou mayest His own bondsman be,  
Whose service perfect freedom is. Let this  
Hold fast thy heart. His claim is great to thee.  
None should thy soul enthrall to whom 'tis given  
To serve on earth, with liberty of heaven.

All His are thine to serve: Christ's brethren here  
Are needing aid, in them thou servest Him.  
The least of all is still His member dear,  
The weakest cost His life-blood to redeem.  
Yield to no "party" what He rightly claims,  
Who on his heart bears all His people's names.

**[R4508 : page 331]**

Be wise, be watchful, wily men surround  
Thy path. Be careful, for they seek with care  
To trip thee up; see that no plea be found  
In thee thy Master to reproach. The snare  
They set for thee will then themselves enclose  
And God his righteous judgment thus disclose.

Cleave to the poor, Christ's image in them is;  
Count it great honor if they love thee well;  
Nought can repay thee after losing this,

Tho with the wise and wealthy thou shouldst dwell.  
Thy Master oftentimes would pass thy door  
To hold communion with his much-loved poor.

The time is short, seek little here below:  
Earth's goods would cumber thee and drag thee down.  
Let daily food suffice; care not to know  
Thought for to-morrow: it may never come.  
Thou canst not perish, for thy Lord is nigh,  
And His own care will all thy need supply.

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

I have had this poem for a long time and always intended to send it to you. I do not know the author and think he probably never knew you; but it seems to apply as if it had been written to you.

Yours in the One Hope,

S. L. G. C.

=====