

the Author and Finisher of his faith; and because thankfulness has no boundaries, no limits, and looks forward, as well as backwards; looks up, as well as looking down, the message received by the Melitian's from Paul, as a spokesman for all off his ship, was a heart felt message of thankfulness manifested by the outpouring of the love of God through the hands of Paul. In return the Melitan island people, to whom Paul was sent, expressed their gratitude, and thankfulness by honouring Paul, and those traveling with him "*with such things as were necessary.*" They thought Paul was a god, back in ACTS 28:6. Paul pointed them the best he could to the One true living God, and they honoured him for this by providing his provision for his continued journey. As Paul leaves Melita, all who came in contact with him were thankful, and their thankfulness, if properly directed, was to the God of Paul. Certainly Jesus was magnified that winter on the island of Melita.

Melita to Rome

ACTS 18:11 *And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.* No doubt some interesting friendships were made on the island of Melita during this winter. From what we read above it seems that all on the island got to know who Paul was, and a considerable number of them, especially those who were diseased, came to Paul for prayer. Those from off of Paul's ship all got to know him better also, especially the other prisoners, and the soldiers. These would remain as a group. As for the rest that initially arrived on this island from Paul's ship, no doubt, they went different directions. Not everyone on Paul's ship had Rome as a destination. I know from personal experience that when a detour from a planned itinerary is taken, some take a different course of action. Here for example on the island of Melita there would be no reason for the old ship owner, and former shipmaster of Paul's fateful ship to continue on to Rome. Their next destination would probably have been to return to Alexandria, from whence they sailed in the first place. However we are not told any of this in scripture, because it isn't really all that important for us to know. The focus of our text remains upon the Apostle Paul, and those traveling with him.

We mentioned earlier in this study that Alexandria was among the three largest cities in the Roman Empire, with Rome, Italy and Antioch, Syria being the other two. We also previously noted that some of the finest, and largest sailing ships of Paul's day were built in Alexandria, Egypt. No doubt this too was a large grain ship, for in Paul's day Egypt was the granary of Italy. Josephus even wrote of a large ship that he sailed to Italy in that held about six hundred people. It too sank in the Adriatic Sea.

Alexandria means: "man-defender," "defender of mankind," "one who assists men," or "helper or protector of men." As for Alexandria recall that Apollos was born at Alexandria, and after traveling to Ephesus, and meeting Aquila and Priscilla, and being taught the Paul's gospel from them in ACTS 18, Apollos goes on to become one of the church Apostles. Apollos then went on to teach many Paul's gospel, getting them to have a heavenward focus, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. We could say that as Apollos preached Christ, he assisted many to seek the ultimate "man-defender," "defender of mankind," "one who assists men," or "helper or protector of men," who is Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. These four descriptions again are meanings of the word Alexandria, yet these meanings more appropriately apply to Christ. He is the true "defender of mankind." Peter calls Jesus *...the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls...* in 1 PETER 2:25. Paul wrote in HEBREWS 13:5 & 6 *...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

Not knowing God, the mariners of ancient Egypt often marked their ships with an image of a beast, or a man, or a heathen god, or some other object, which was either sculptured or painted on the forward part of the ship. This new ship that Paul was now sailing on was marked at the side with symbols of two heathen gods named Castor and Pollux, which the mariners thought afforded protection for them. Those who were now sailing with Paul from his previous ship knew it was the Lord who provided their

protection. They had learned from first hand experience what the Psalmist had written in PSALMS 121. PSALMS 121:1 *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.* 2 *My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.* 3 *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.* 4 *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* 5 *The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.* 6 *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.* 7 *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.* 8 *The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.*

ACTS 28:12 *And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.* Look on a map and find Sicily, which is an island that looks like the football that the boot of Italy is kicking. In other words, Sicily is the island south west of Italy, and Syracuse is the town on the far south east side of Sicily. Syracuse is about an 80 mile sail from Melita on a course of north and slightly northeast. With a southerly wind it would take about twelve hours to reach Syracuse. Syracuse was the capital city of Sicily. Syracuse was founded about 700 B. C. by ancient Greek Corinthians, and was once described by Cicero as “the greatest Greek city, and the most beautiful of them all.” During Paul’s day it was part of the Roman Empire, and was an important port for trade between the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. Some historians have Paul establishing a church there, which is doubtful since he was only there three days. There is no scriptural record of Paul disembarking at Syracuse, though he may have. During Paul’s day there may have been 18,000 people living there.

Apparently the main reason for staying at Syracuse for three days, was waiting for the proper wind to sail by, which would be a wind from the south. ACTS 28:13 *And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: 14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.* Perhaps an expounded translation of these verses gives us more understanding of what Luke was writing here.

ACTS 28:13 *And from there we made a circuit following the coast, and arrived at Rhegium.* When we had spent a day there the south wind began to blow, and the following day we arrived at Puteoli: 14 where we found some fellow Christians, and were urged to stay a week with them: after which we went on toward Rome.

So here is what they did. From Syracuse, Sicily they sailed along the east coast of Sicily up to the toe of the boot of Italy, a distance of about 85 miles to the port of Rhegium, Italy. Rhegium means: a passage; a breach; to break off. If you look at a map real close you will see that it looks like Sicily broke off from Italy at Rhegium. Rhegium lies at the southern entrance of the straits of Messina, which is about six miles wide, and twenty miles long, a fairly narrow passage through which the ancient ships navigated north on the west coast of Italy. The straits of Messina is known to experience violence of the sea during unfavorable winds. The modern name for Rhegium is Reggio. We are not told if Paul went on shore here either, but we are told that after one day a more favorable south wind blew, which was needed to safely navigate through the straits of Messina.

With a favorable south wind, Paul’s ship was able to travel the 182 miles from Rhegium to Puteoli in about 26 hours if they were averaging 7 knots per hour. Puteoli is now called Pozzuoli. Puteoli means: little (mineral) springs, and comes from two words meaning, a “well,” and “to smell strong.” Thus Puteoli was named for the offensively smelling hot mineral springs located there. One author notes that the spring waters were so hot that in time it melted the leaden pipes through which the water was allowed to flow. Puteoli, Italy was the main destination harbor to which the large Egyptian grain ships were usually bound for. Puteoli was some what of a tourist town to which many came for the hot springs seeking cures for their illnesses. Additionally Puteoli was a center of commerce, especially since it had such a large harbor, and received ships from everywhere. The arrival of these large Alexandrian grain ships usually attracted large crowds.

Paul’s arrival at Puteoli would conclude the ship travel portion of his journey. The last part of Paul’s journey to Rome would be by land; Rome being about 125 away. The 350 miles that Paul had just traveled from the island of Melita to Puteoli had taken

So as Julius and his soldiers step off of this Alexandrian ship in Puteoli with their prisoners in tow, what happens next? Luke tells us in ACTS 28:14 *...we found brethren...* . How this came to be we are not told, yet we know, as we noted above, that the Lord was directing their steps. Again PROVERBS 3:6 tells us: *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* And PSALMS 37:23 reads: *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

Here is one possibility of what may have happened upon their arrival at Puteoli. Remember that all of their supplies, and personal goods were lost at sea before arriving at Melita. Then while at Melita the friendly island people provided them with their necessary supplies. Perhaps they could have gone ashore at Syracuse, or Rhegium, however we are not told this in scripture. Thus Puteoli would have been the first place that they could have obtained such personal things as were necessary to replace what they had lost at sea. Obviously the Roman soldier needed supplies, and these particular soldiers probably needed re-supplied. Add to this the fact that they hadn't been paid for a while, thus we could imagine some delay here at Puteoli, Italy while the Roman soldiers checked in with superiors, and collected their pay so that they could pay for their supplies, which expenses they were expected to pay for themselves. Keep in mind that the whole portion of this journey from Caesarea to Rome so far has been by ship, with minimum land travel. Now they would finish their journey traveling overland. It seems that they were going to spend a little time here at Puteoli anyway getting ready for their overland journey to Rome some 125 miles away, and possibly gathering supplies. Part of Julius responsibility was the safe care of his prisoners, who too would need provision for their continued journey on to Rome. During this necessary delay at Puteoli it wasn't long before Paul, and his Roman escorts found Christian brethren. When Paul, and company here at Puteoli found brethren, their immediate travel plans to proceed to Rome were put on hold for a week! We read this again in ACTS 28:14 *Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days:...* .

The Greek word translated here "desired" is parakaleo {par-ak-al-eh'-o} (number 3870 in the Strong's Greek Concordance). Parakaleo comes from two Greek words; para meaning: near; and kaleo meaning: to call, thus simply put parakaleo translates into English as "to call near." Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Word's tells us that parakaleo means to call to one's side, or to one's aid, to admonish, exhort, to urge one to pursue some course of conduct looking to the future. So here in ACTS 28:14 the brethren of Puteoli urged the Apostle Paul *...to tarry with them seven days:...* kind of like a summons to remain by their side for a whole week. And this request was granted by Julius. Why? A couple or three possible answers present themselves here. One is that there was going to be a delay here anyway while preparing for the land journey, as noted above. Secondly this offer of the Puteoli brethren to tarry with them for a week would give Julius, his soldiers, and the prisoners a place to stay for a week as they made further preparations for their land journey. Third, it is quite possible that Julius wanted to take this opportunity to hear for himself more of the gospel of Paul. Julius knew it wouldn't be long before he would deliver his famous prisoner to Rome, and, it seems, he too wanted this fellowship. Praise the Lord! Julius had already witnessed for himself many incredible events because of the Apostle Paul, and now knew the importance of heeding this man's Holy Ghost inspired words. Perhaps Julius wanted to attend a Christian church assembly where he would get to hear Paul preach to believers who had not yet heard Paul's gospel preached by Paul. Perhaps these very brethren were also the very merchants that were putting together the supplies, and provisions that they would need to continue their journey to Rome. Obviously these brethren of Puteoli were very influential in their persuading Paul, and Julius the privilege of staying with them for one week.

Here is another thought to consider. In the last part of JOHN 10:10 we find this statement spoken by Jesus, the Good Shepherd: *...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* There are no limits, or boundaries to the phrase "more abundantly." "More abundantly" addresses life, and has nothing to do with earthly riches, or how to grow an income. Rather "more abundantly" speaks of a life satisfied beyond measure once being born again. "More abundantly" tells of life exceeding above all we could ask or think, according to the power that worketh in the heart of a believer. "More abundantly" adds remarkable, more excellent, superior,

extraordinary, immeasurable spiritual blessings to those that are in Christ. Julius, the Roman centurion in charge of Paul, has witnessed this life “more abundantly” in Paul for about five months now. Julius has witnessed Paul’s calm over flowing life in the time of terrible storm. This is life “more abundantly.” Julius has experienced the good cheer Paul spoke of in this same time of storm. This too is life “more abundantly.” Julius had witnessed, and experienced salvation from a turbulent sea for 276 souls, including himself. This also is life “more abundantly.” Julius now himself appreciated life more, and certainly enjoyed his life “more abundantly.” Julius has witnessed his prized prisoner being bitten by a poisonous viper, and feeling no ill effects. That too is life “more abundantly.” Julius has seen hundreds get healed on the island of Melita after Paul prayed for them, and they too got to experience life “more abundantly.” Julius has seen first hand how God has “more abundantly” provided for Paul and those with him shelter, transportation, and everything they needed to finish this journey when it seemed like they were at dead ends. Julius himself has experienced this life “more abundantly,” and realizes here at Puteoli, Italy God has opened another door of opportunity for Paul. A door where more of this life “more abundantly” would be experienced. Julius too would benefit from this week’s stay at Puteoli, and in the least witness some “more abundantly” bestowed blessings from the Lord.

The full overcomer loves Jesus appearing according to 2 TIMOTHY 4:8, and the full overcomer sees His appearing through the manifold trials, and tests in his own every day life, which examinations are part of the “all things” given from God above to help the full overcomer enjoy this life in Christ “more abundantly.” Again Jesus own words of JOHN 10:10 tells us *...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* Are you enjoying this life in Christ Jesus “more abundantly?” Do you *...know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose...?* (ROMANS 8:28) If so you are loving His appearing. Do you *...count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience...?* (JAMES 1:2 & 3.) If so you are loving His appearing. The full overcomer will *...let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing....* (JAMES 1:4). This is life “more abundantly.” All of the Old Testament worthies of faith enjoyed life “more abundantly.” So too even more will the New Testament full overcomers enjoy, and fully appreciate this new life we have in Christ Jesus “more abundantly.”

Consider this also. The phrase “more abundantly” is found seven times in scripture, six of these times in Paul’s gospel, and is an expression of the incomprehensible love of God shown to all believers. {Research this out further on your own by studying: JOHN 10:10; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:10; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:12; 2:4; 12:15; 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17; and HEBREWS 6:17.} Recall that the number seven points to SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. The number seven is found several more times ACTS 28:14, which we are now studying. ACTS 28:14 *Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.* The Greek word translated “tarry” here is epimeno {ep-ee-men'-o} (number 1961 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance), which is found translated as “tarry” or “tarried” seven times in scripture. And then here in verse 14 we find the word “seven” showing that the brethren of Puteoli opened their homes to Paul’s group for seven SPIRITUALLY PERFECTING days. Obviously the love of God was shown by the brethren of Puteoli, and certainly eternal benefits of SPIRITUAL PERFECTION and SPIRITUAL COMPLETION were worked into each life of the believers involved here during this seven day stay.

Let’s consider the “brethren” found here at Puteoli, Italy. Who were they? How did they become “brethren?” The answers to these questions are not directly given in scripture, however we can piece together parts of this puzzle, and come up with some answers. The word “brethren” here in verse 14 encompasses several trains of thought. The word “brethren” can be applied to brothers of the same parents, and “brethren” even applies to step brothers. It is highly unlikely that Paul came across one of his natural born brothers here at Puteoli. The word “brethren” also applies in the broader sense to those of the same nationality. No doubt Paul did find here at Puteoli fellow Jews, with whom he could fellowship. Furthermore the word “brethren” also applies to fellow believers, fellow Christians, brothers in Christ, and, no doubt, this was also the case here in Puteoli. Luke was writing the record here, and he writes: *“we found brethren,”*

meaning we found some fellow Christians. Most likely Paul came across fellow Jews who were Christians here at Puteoli. Maybe there were some Gentile believers here also. Perhaps some of these fellow Christians were converts from Paul's earlier ministry elsewhere, either directly or indirectly. Paul had been preaching by this point in his Christian career around twenty-five years, and had been sponsored by the church at Antioch for about fifteen years. Thousands had heard him preach during this time. And then followers of his had further preached Paul's gospel message, including Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla, and many other unknown to us. ACTS 19:20 records: *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.* Before that we read of Paul's gospel message having "turned the world upside down" in ACTS 17:6. So even though this is the farthest west Paul has ever been, the gospel message of Christ has already been preached here at Puteoli. We are not told the who, what, where, when, and why of all of this, but we do know that this is true, because at Puteoli Luke writes: *...we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days:...*

Keep in mind that Puteoli was a business center, and there were always enterprising Jews located in such places. And these Jewish business men were well traveled. ACTS 2:10 records that on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem there were *...strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes...* ACTS 2:10. Aquila and Priscilla had lived at Rome prior to having been expelled there in ACTS 18:2. And Paul had already written a letter *...To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints:...* ROMANS 1:7. No doubt this epistle to the ROMANS passed through Puteoli, and perhaps some of these brethren had by now read it. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to personally hear from the author of this letter? Of course it would.

Think of this also, the brethren here at Puteoli, Italy didn't have to fellowship with Paul. They didn't have to take strangers in. They certainly didn't have to house prisoners, nor did they have to accommodate them in any way. But they did. Why? Because they truly were grace Saints, and by showing Paul, and the other prisoners, and the soldiers this courtesy, they were living testimonies of what it means to be given to hospitality. Note what Paul wrote in his letter to the ROMANS in chapter 12:9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.* Certainly these brethren of Puteoli fit this description. If they hadn't yet read Paul's ROMANS epistle, they certainly did already follow it's instruction, which we just read.

Let us not under estimate the importance of good Christian fellowship. Here are some thoughts concerning Godly fellowship. The word "fellowship" is found seventeen times in scripture. Seventeen is a very powerful number for it is the number that has to do with VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS. The focal point of this victory is Christ Jesus, and there are many examples of how the number seventeen points to VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS. For instance we read in LEVITICUS 23:5 *In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover.* (Incidentally the phrase "the fourteenth day" is found seventeen times in scripture.) The Jews reckon a day from sunset to sunset. The last passover attended by Jesus then was on the fourteenth day of the month. {Study LUKE 22:13-20.} By studying all the other scriptures that have to do with Jesus crucifixion that He was crucified the next day, still the fourteenth of the month according to the Jewish reckoning of a day, and that he *"...yielded up the ghost..."* (MATTHEW 27:50), *"...about the ninth hour..."* (MATTHEW 27:46). JOHN 19:38-42 tells us that Jesus was buried on that same day, still the fourteenth of the month. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:4 tells us: *...that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:...* . Fourteen plus three equals seventeen. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, victorious over death and the grave, on the seventeenth day of the month. Thus we see a little bit how the number seventeen has to do with VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS. Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:57 *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Remember that the word "fellowship" is found seventeen times in scripture. When we did our meaning of the Bible numbers study we noted that the number seventeen is the seventh prime number, meaning it can not be divided by any whole number other than one. So we should note that the number seventeen also points to

some SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION of some kind. Thus we should note that Godly “fellowship” is a spiritual perfecting quality that will be found in all full overcomers. Let’s see a little more of how this is.

One of our New Testament overcoming examples of who we are to follow as he followed Christ is the Apostle Paul. Now note this one sentence Paul wrote in EPHESIANS 3. EPHESIANS 3:8 *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.* The “fellowship of the mystery” Paul is talking about here is explained in the verses preceding. EPHESIANS 3:1 *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.* In COLOSSIANS 1:25-27 Paul further expounds about the “fellowship of the mystery” he is talking about here, stating: 25 *Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:...*

So we begin to see that the fellowship Paul enjoyed with the different Saints he came in contact with revolved around his expounding upon “...the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery...” EPHESIANS 3:8 & 9. Brother Copley also wrote about this stating: “...all who believe on Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles, should have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus, and also with one another -- 1 JOHN 1:3 & 7. Fellowship as sons of God is the heritage of all the Saints, all being members of one huge family. Thereby God now makes known to the angelic principalities in the heavenlies His manifold wisdom -- EPHESIANS 3:8-10. It is His good pleasure to employ us, who have embraced this wonderful truth and message of the Apostle Paul, to broadcast it near and far.” {End of quoting Brother Copley from his tract entitled “The Eight Mysteries.”}

We have now noted some thoughts about “fellowship,” a word which is found seventeen times in scripture, ten times in Paul’s gospel record. Yet we haven’t yet fully defined what “fellowship” means. Most commonly in the New Testament the word “fellowship” references sharing something in common, and in this context “fellowship” speaks of being likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind, which thoughts are also found in PHILIPPIANS 2. PHILIPPIANS 2:1 *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.* After the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2 we find in verse 42 that *...they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* Such “fellowship” revolves around discussions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* The Apostle John wrote in 1 JOHN 1:3 *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* Paul expressed this like minded fellowship like this in ROMANS 15:5 & 6 -- *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: 6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We noted above that the number seventeen also points to some SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION of some kind in that seventeen is the seventh prime number, and that Godly “fellowship” is a spiritual perfecting quality that will be found in all full overcomers. Also in defining “fellowship” above we noted how it ties in with the thought of being of one mind. The phrase “one mind” is found seven times in scripture. Perhaps as Paul left Puteoli after seven days of wonderful fellowship, which they all enjoyed, he may have said: *Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you....* 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11.

For Paul, and those with him, these seven days at Puteoli went by in a hurry, and no doubt the hours were filled with like minded fellowship, and instruction in the word of God, as we just noted above. Additionally steps were taken by the brethren here at Puteoli to advance Paul’s journey to Rome, which we will see when we get to verse 15. The last part of ACTS 28:14 reads: *...and so we went toward Rome....* meaning from Puteoli they went by foot on their journey towards Rome.

Let’s now spend some time here refreshing our thoughts concerning the importance of Rome in relationship to Paul’s personal desire to go there. As we go through this review, keep in mind that the Apostle Paul is being highlighted to us in the book of ACTS, and especially in these final chapters, as a man of faith. We should especially note that his life reflects to us the qualities that are to be found in a New Testament full overcomer, and we have often pointed this out during our study of Paul’s life. Each of us have personal desires, and things we hope to accomplish during our own life time. Paul did too. Yet as we grow in the Lord we find our desires need to align with the Lord’s desires towards us. The full overcomer learns to express his desires like Jesus did in LUKE 22:42 as He prayed to God the Father *...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done*. Paul years before had first expressed his interest in going to Rome in his letter written to those Saints at Rome, which epistle we know as ROMANS, which desires we will review shortly. We are not told in scripture when Paul first had this desire to go to Rome. Perhaps it first came when he was yet a youth learning and studying Latin. Yet after getting saved on the road to Damascus, and having the gospel of Jesus Christ revealed unto him by Christ Himself, Paul’s desire to go to Rome would be to impart unto those of Rome some spiritual gift, to the end that they may be established according to Paul’s gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. {Study ROMANS 1:11 & 16:25.}

Perhaps Paul’s interest in going to Rome was further fueled by his meeting Aquila and Priscilla in ACTS 18:2 when Paul first came to Corinth. ACTS 18:2 tells us that when Paul first came to Corinth he *...found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them*. Pontus, where Aquila was born, was a province south east of the Black Sea. Yet lately Aquila and Priscilla had migrated from Rome to Corinth because the Emperor Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome. History records this happening in 52 A.D. Of course we know from ACTS 18:3 that Paul and Aquila were tent makers, and their craft of making tents and drawn them together, yet their fellowship revolved around the Lord Jesus Christ, and through hours of working together, Paul expounded his gospel to Aquila, and his wife Priscilla. As they labored together doubtless Aquila made Paul acquainted with Rome by discussing the sights, and events, and the people of Rome with the Apostle Paul as they worked on their tents. Perhaps this sparked a further interest in going to Rome in the heart of the Apostle Paul. A very strong bond was developed between Paul, and Aquila and his wife Priscilla, so that later when Paul left Corinth to go to Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla followed him, and took up permanent residence there. Aquila and Priscilla became icons in the spreading of Paul’s gospel message there at Ephesus.

Back to Paul’s desire to go to Rome. We find the word “Rome” nine times in scripture text, and eight of these times are in connection with the Apostle Paul. Of course by now we know the number eight had several meanings, and perhaps the most significant of these is the association of the number eight to the BRIDE. All bridal Saints will be well established in Paul’s gospel letter written to those Saints at Rome, which again is his epistle to the ROMANS. The next time we read the word “Rome” in scripture

is in ACTS 19:21. By the time frame of ACTS 19:21 we find that Paul has spent three years establishing the church of Ephesus, and we read: *After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.* "I must also see Rome" is Paul expressing his desire to go there.

From Ephesus Paul returned to Macedonia, and then back to Corinth where he spent the winter of 57 & 58 A.D. This is noted in ACTS 20:2 & 3. During this winter at Corinth Paul wrote GALATIANS, and then ROMANS. While in Corinth Paul makes a greater connection with a man named Tertius, whom we know very little about. Coneybeare and Howson note that Tertius apparently (to judge from his name) was a Roman Christian from the Latin section of the church. At what point in time he became a Christian we are not told in scripture. He may have known Paul for some time, perhaps from the first visit Paul made to Corinth back in ACTS 18. It seems that Tertius spent hours with the Apostle Paul telling him about Rome, and the Saints of Rome. Furthermore it seems that the Lord put Tertius in the life of the Apostle Paul at this time to aid in the writing of Paul's ROMANS epistle. ROMANS 16:22 plainly tells us: *I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.* We discussed this previously in this study that there is a word that describes one who takes dictation like Tertius, who wrote this epistle unto the ROMANS, and this word in Latin is amanuensis, which literally means a "servant from the hand." An amanuensis is someone skilled in the transcription of speech, (especially dictation), much like a stenographer. Tertius took upon himself the equivalent of a secretary to the Apostle Paul, and penned the epistle to the ROMANS as dictated by the Apostle Paul. Imagine doing that! There must have been hours upon hours of wonderful conversation between Paul and Tertius in order to accomplish this task. What a student of Paul's Tertius must have been. Why didn't Paul personally write the ROMANS epistle with his own hand? Poor eyesight, as noted in GALATIANS 4:15 and 6:11, which you can study again on your own. There has been an on going debate whether the epistle to the ROMANS was written in Latin or Greek. Yet this point is muted by the assumption that Tertius, being a Roman, could write to them in Latin, if need be, or in Greek, which apparently was the more common language of the Romans at that time. (Study ACTS 21:37 to see this point a little more clearly.) In whatever language this ROMANS epistle was written in, those of Rome could read it.

It is in his ROMANS epistle that Paul further expresses his future desire to go to Rome. We find snippets of this in ROMANS chapters 1, and 15.

ROMANS 1:7 *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; 10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. ...15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

ROMANS 15:15 *Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, ...22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; 24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. 25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. 29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of*

the blessing of the gospel of Christ. 30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; ...32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

After Paul wrote this ROMANS letter, and sent it to Rome from Corinth, Paul traveled back through Macedonia as he finished this third missionary journey of his heading for Jerusalem, to bring alms to his Jewish nation, as noted in ACTS 24:17, and ROMANS 15:26 above. While at Jerusalem Paul was violently assaulted by the Jews of the temple, further forcefully rescued by the Roman soldiers at Jerusalem, and promptly arrested until such time as the charges against him could be sorted out. (As of the time frame we are in ACTS 28, Paul is still in custody of the Roman Empire as a prisoner who has appealed unto Caesar. And it will still be a while until Paul's case gets resolved.) Back in ACTS 22 we find Paul giving his testimony before the multitudes of Jerusalem while in Roman bonds. In ACTS 23:11 we find Paul spending his second night in the Roman castle at Jerusalem, a prisoner being closely guarded by the Roman soldiers. This was one of the darkest times in Paul's life. It seems that this heart felt desire of his to go to Rome would never happen. How could it? He was a prisoner with an unknown fate ahead of him. Certainly Paul had made his requests known unto the Lord. And we know that the Lord knew Paul's heart. 1 SAMUEL 16:7 in part tells us that *...the LORD looketh on the heart.* JEREMIAH 17:10 also tells us, in part: *I the LORD search the heart...* so we know that the Lord Jesus Christ knew exactly how Paul was feeling at this dark hour of the night. Jesus also knew that Paul felt like he had now reached the darkest hour of his life. At his darkest of hours in Paul's life, in the middle of the night we find in ACTS 23:11 this remarkable event: *...the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.* We see here that the Lord knew Paul's hearts desires, and even Paul himself knew PSALMS 37:4 *Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* Paul believed Jesus, and now he knew without a doubt that that he was going to Rome to bear witness of Jesus Christ! What a shot of spiritual adrenaline these words were to Paul's life. *"Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."*

Notice that Jesus didn't tell Paul when he was going to Rome, nor how long it would take him to get to Rome, nor how He was going to get Paul to Rome, all questions I would want to know the answers to. I am sure Paul wanted to know these kinds of answers too, but as our Apostle, and our example to follow as he followed Christ, and our further example of a New Testament full overcomer, and our example of a New Testament man of faith, the Lord was wise in not telling Paul how, or when, or by what means he was going to Rome, or even who he was going to Rome with. No, the Lord wanted Paul to trust Him, and believe Him, and rest in Him, and know that His words are true, so that all Paul had to do was believe Jesus, and know by faith that *"...so must thou bear witness also at Rome."* Do you think Paul could handle knowing the details of this incredible journey at this point in time? No, and neither could you nor I. That is why Jesus didn't appear unto Paul at midnight and say: "Cheer up old buddy, you are going to Rome, in fact you must go to Rome! But first you are going to be held unjustly for two years as a prisoner in Felix's prison, while being pursued all the time by the Jews of Jerusalem who are intent on killing you. Then another governor will hear your case, and make it known to King Agrippa, who will send you by Roman escort to Rome. On the way to Rome you will be lost a sea for two weeks, loose all hope of ever be saved from death at sea, and then suffer another ship wreck, and be tossed on an island where you will be bitten by a poisonous viper, and have trouble communicating with the natives. Then after a bitter winter, you will proceed by another ship, and then by land to Rome, where you will be held prisoner for two more years. How do you like them apples?" Of course Jesus didn't say any of this, because He wanted Paul to be tested as a man of faith, who believed even the words of truth he was already inspired to write unto the Corinthians: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.* Did Paul believe this? Yes. And as we move on towards Rome we too will see this in verse 15 of ACTS 28 where we will find Paul taking courage as Saints from Rome come out to meet him, and travel with him the last few miles to Rome.

We have just revisited Paul's long time desire to go to Rome, and we have seen in our studies on the life of Paul how much trials and tribulation he faced before getting there. And in our time frame of ACTS 28:14 he is not there yet, but he now is getting ever so close. We should note here some interesting facts concerning Paul's epistle to the ROMANS. Recall at this point in Paul's life he has written six of his fourteen epistles, 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS, 1 & 2 CORINTHIANS, GALATIANS, and most recently ROMANS. The first five of these letters were written unto the Saints Paul had already visited. The ROMANS epistle was different in that Paul's gospel message preceded him going there. In other words Paul's gospel arrived in Rome way before Paul did. Paul had not yet met the people to whom his letter was addressed. He could not visualize certain individuals as he dictated this letter to Tertius. So important was this ROMANS epistle that it's instructions went ahead of Paul. And now even before Paul gets to Rome we find those who had heard of him, and, no doubt, had read his letter written unto the ROMANS. Perhaps those brethren of Puteoli were also among them. But like all of Paul's epistles, his written instructions go way beyond his time frame, for they even reach down unto us this day. It is through the magnifying glass of Paul's gospel that we are able to rightly divide, and correctly examine all Holy scripture. Perhaps you too have noticed that all good Holy Ghost anointed preaching of scripture is greatly enhanced by the light of Paul's gospel. If you haven't noticed that yet, pray that the eyes of your understanding be enlightened. The ROMANS epistle preceded Paul to Rome in part because of it's importance to understanding Paul's gospel. The Holy Ghost has even placed the book of ROMANS first in our Bible of all of Paul's epistles, exactly where it should be found. Sister Bodie notes that of Paul's epistles, ROMANS "...is the first in order, as well as the greatest in scope of all his epistles. It stands related to the others as the hub to the spokes of a wheel. All the essentialities of the other letters are embodied in this letter to the Church at Rome; therefore, we may say, it is the Genesis of Paul's writings." {End of quoting Sister Bodie.} Sister Bodie noted five divisions in ROMANS: The declaration of the gospel (chapter 1:1-17); the need of the gospel (chapters 1:18 - 3:20); the unfolding of the gospel (chapters 3:21 - 5:21); the results of the gospel (chapters 6:1 - 11:36); and the practical side of the gospel (chapters 12:1 -16:27). Brother Hill too noted five divisions of ROMANS when he laid out the frame work of ROMANS, though his divisions were some what different than Sister Bodie's. Brother Hill divided ROMANS like this: chapters 1:1 - 3:20 he called CONDEMNATION with the emphasis being on sin. Division two was chapters 3:21 - 5:21, which he entitled JUSTIFICATION, with the emphasis being salvation. Division three dealt with SANCTIFICATION, and included all of chapters 6, 7, and 8. The highlighted topic in these chapters was separation. Division four spoke of sovereignty, which Brother Hill entitled DISPENSATION, the main topic of chapter 9, 10 and 11. Division five was GLORIFICATION, spoken of in chapters 12 - 16. The one word Brother Hill used to describe this was service. The whole point of us noting this here is to emphasize the importance of Paul's ROMANS epistle, and that it was sent ahead of Paul to Rome, expressing his desire to go there, and to expound unto them his gospel. No wonder then that he was fought so hard in actually getting to Rome. And what an introduction to the book of ROMANS the Holy Ghost left us in the final chapters of ACTS as Paul journeys towards Rome.

The trials and tribulations that Paul faced before he even got to Rome are also expressed as a prayer request of his in his letter to them. For example in ROMANS 1:10, which we quoted above, Paul writes: *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.* Did you catch it? Paul was making a request unto the Lord, and by the will of God, if by any means, meaning whatever obstacles there were to overcome, *...I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.* It was the will of God upon where Paul was placing his emphasis. And if it were the will of God, there was no way his journey unto Rome would be anything other than prosperous, meaning a journey resulting in immeasurable success. The 1912 Weymouth New Testament translates ROMANS 1:10 like this: "always in my prayers entreating that now, at length, if such be His will, the way may by some means be made clear for me to come to you." That indeed defines a "prosperous journey." And may we also note that there wasn't a time limit placed on this "prosperous journey" either. How can we place a time limit on the exceeding riches of

His grace, which it will take the ages to come to show us? "If by any means" is really a statement of GRACE also, for this phrase "if by any means" is found exactly five times in scripture! Think about the "if by any means" that it took to get Paul this close to Rome: an unjust arrest in Jerusalem; an undeserved two year prison term at the hands of governor Felix, who all the time had his hand out expecting to receive a bribe from Paul (ACTS 24:26). Paul then faced a lost at sea storm tossed experience for two weeks; a ship wreck; and a poisonous snake bite, just to mention a few of the "if by any means" things Paul had faced on his journey to Rome, so far. The final "if by any means" statements found in scripture is this one of Paul's found in PHILIPPIANS 3:11 *If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* This request is the ultimate hope of all full overcomers. Are you there yet?

In ROMANS 1:11 Paul makes three important points as to why he wanted to go to Rome: *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*... . First he wanted to see them, secondly he wanted to impart unto them some spiritual gift, meaning praying for them, and laying his hands on them in prayer; and thirdly he wanted to spend time with them, and see them grown in the Lord, for he expressed that in *...the end ye may be established;*... . Paul reaffirmed this request in ROMANS 16:26 *Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel,*... . In ROMANS 1:12 Paul mentioned being comforted together with mutual faith, meaning he wanted to be there with them to experience this strengthening bond in the Lord. This is the very same reason Paul would later write in HEBREWS 10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.* Exhorting also means being *...comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me...* spoken of in ROMANS 1:12. Note in verse 12 also that Paul emphasizes the mutual faith, the reduplicated reciprocating faith, that they each had in Christ Jesus, who in turn has a special comforting care for all those who trust in Him. Paul wanted to be in Rome together with these Roman Saints to experience with them this divine comfort of Christ manifest by close Christian fellowship. Don't ever undervalue the importance of likeminded fellowship in the Lord, which leads to that bond of perfectness spoken about in COLOSSIANS 3:14. In ROMANS 1:13 Paul emphasizes that he longs to see them because he knows as the Apostle sent unto the Gentiles that they would enjoy the benefits of a Holy Spirit filled life; that they needed to learn more of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that he wrote about in GALATIANS 5:22 & 23 -- *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.* The end result would be that the Apostle Paul too *...might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles...* ROMANS 1:13. *So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also....* ROMANS 1:15. Thus we see some of the long time reasons behind why the Apostle Paul had desired for such a long time to go to Rome.

Realize also that in about seven years from this time frame the Apostle Paul would be executed in Rome. That will happen during his second visit to Rome, so obviously there is a lot more travel left in Paul's life, and we will find that Luke will be with him to the end, (see 2 TIMOTHY 4:11). Furthermore Paul has yet to write eight more epistles, and several of them will be written from Rome, (EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON, 2 TIMOTHY, and perhaps HEBREWS). So we note the importance of Rome in the life of the Apostle Paul, but here in our time frame of ACTS 28:14 he is not yet there.

Let's spend a few minutes here before studying ACTS 28:15, and discuss some hidden facts that are right here before us. One thing we should recognize is that Paul was probably as excited as anyone in his group to be this close to Rome, and he could hardly wait to get there. In reality the Lord had sent Paul to Rome as a kind of fourth missionary journey. This journey had really started when Paul got arrested in Jerusalem, then as a prisoner Paul had got to testify, and witness as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ to three governors, a king, and to hundreds of others along the way. Paul had preached Jesus to the Sanhedrin, to the so called important people of his day on the day he appeared before king Agrippa, to those who would seek him out in prison, and to those he came in contact with, whether on ship, or on land, bond or free, Jew, Gentile, Greek, Roman, or Barbarian. This fourth missionary journey of Paul's to Rome is all done while a prisoner, and when he arrives in Rome, he will still be a prisoner for

two whole years according to ACTS 28:30. Again Jesus had told Paul back in ACTS 23:11 *...Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.* Paul is now about five to seven days away from Rome. The last recorded stops before he arrives at Rome are recorded in ACTS 28:15.

Here is another point to consider. We briefly mentioned earlier that when a large Egyptian grain ship arrived in Puteoli, it attracted large crowds, and created some considerable excitement because everyone wanted to see what goods the ships were bringing from afar. Some of the Jews at Puteoli were merchant men, whose products came by ship. These Jewish merchant men stayed in close communication with their business outlets in Rome, and they did so by sending a dispatch to Rome by foot, or whatever other means of transportation they had. Recall that this particular grain ship that Paul had arrived in Puteoli on had also spent the winter at Melita, so it had taken this ship several months to bring the inventory it was carrying to Italy. When the Jewish merchant men of Puteoli found out the contents of the Castor and Pollux ship they would send to Rome a dispatch stating that these goods off the ship would be arriving in a few days. The dispatchers also made those in Rome aware of the important people cargo that would soon be coming their way. So while Paul and company tarried seven days at Puteoli, news of their soon arrival at Rome would reach those at Rome. And we see this in verse 15, where we read: *And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.* Brother Copley notes here that Paul was not the founder of the assembly at Rome, yet he desired to visit them, as we also noted above in the verses we looked at in ROMANS 1 and 15. The assembly at Rome was well established before the Apostle Paul ever got there, and the Bible records in ACTS 2:10 & 11 that there were "strangers of Rome" in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost who heard "the wonderful works of God" spoken by those disciples who were filled with the Holy Ghost. Perhaps it was these brethren from Rome who initially established the church at Rome. One thing is clear here, and that is that there was a Christian assembly in Rome years before Paul ever got there, for Paul wrote his ROMANS epistle to the Saints in Rome several years before this frame of ACTS 28:15.

The distance from Puteoli to Rome was about 125 miles, and the road between these two cities was one of the most well traveled roads in the world of Paul's day. In fact this well traveled road was called the "Queen of Roads." On your own you can think spend some time thinking about who had already traveled this road. Hundred's of thousand's of people from all walks of life, and from all over the world. No doubt Paul had read and heard of those who had traveled this road, and certainly he reflected about all who had gone this way before him. Yet Paul's thoughts were always occupied with the Lord, and as he walked this well traveled famous road, Paul knew that it was the Lord who was bringing him this way; that this road was now a part of Paul's race course, just as much as being lost at sea for two weeks was a part of his race course. Recall that Rome means "strength," yet Paul knew his strength came from the Lord, or as Brother Copley noted, from "the throne room of Him whose name is "Strength," Jehovah Almighty." That is why Paul later wrote in EPHESIANS 6:10 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* The Philadelphian full overcomer "*hast a little strength*" REVELATION 3:8 tells us, but here again their only strength was in the Lord. That is how the Old Testament worthies of faith *...Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens...* as noted in HEBREWS 11:34; by putting their faith and confidence in the Lord's strength, and in the power of His might. The Lord had told Paul in ACTS 23:11 that he was going to Rome, and Paul was counting on the Lord to get him there. {Review page 962 of these notes.} In fact the Lord wanted Paul to have a safe journey to Rome, so He provided him with a Roman soldier escort. No thief or robber was going to get to Paul on this journey without first taking on the Roman army. Very few ever traveled this busy highway to Rome so well protected, and so well provided for.

Now think of the journey, the race course set before you. Who put you on that race course? Who knew before you ever got there the obstacles on your race course? Who protects you on your race course? Who provides everything you need for your journey? As a Captain of an airplane it was part of my duty to welcome everyone on board with a speech that included a statement such as, "...now just sit back, relax, and

enjoy your flight.” My responsibility was to get everyone to their destination safe, as quick, and comfortable as possible. Long ago the Lord designed for each of us that trust in Him a race course according to HEBREWS 12:1. Jesus is the Captain of our salvation according to HEBREWS 2:10. HEBREWS 2:10 defines what this means: *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, put us on the journey that He set before us; He designed the obstacles we would face on our race course; He provided everything we would need, and will need to finish our race course; and He protects us while on the race course. Our responsibility is simple: only trust Him. Now again think of the journey, the race course set before you and realize that we are encouraged to *...lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...* HEBREWS 12:1 & 2. This is His way of saying “sit back, relax, and enjoy the journey.”

Paul was now 125 miles away from Rome. How long would it take to get to Rome considering that Paul and his group were probably traveling by foot? On a well traveled road traveling at the pace of the slowest person in the group we can assume that they could cover 25 miles a day, which means that they were five days from Rome. This seems to line up with what we read in ACTS 28:15. ACTS 28:15 *And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.* Think of this, while in Puteoli for seven days in verse 14, a dispatch was no doubt sent to Rome containing the information on what goods were enroute from the Castor and Pollux Egyptian ship. Also this dispatch would contain information concerning the personnel enroute to Rome. Probably it would take five days for this information to reach Rome, where this news was then published. By the time this information was circulated through Rome, Paul's group would be well on their way from Puteoli to Rome. Three or four days journey from Puteoli was a town called Appii Forum, which was about 43 miles from Rome. Here, to the great surprise of Paul, disciples from Rome had traveled just to meet Paul along the way! Perhaps Paul, Luke or Aristarchus recognized some of these brethren, or maybe none of them had ever met before, but because of the news of Paul's arrival at Puteoli these men traveled to Appii Forum to welcome him, having no doubt read his ROMANS letter.

About ten miles further on the road to Rome was a town called The Three Taverns where a second group of Christians had come to greet the Apostle Paul. Paul was now 33 miles from Rome. No doubt Paul was overwhelmed at the reception he was receiving here in Italy, and amazed at how many had heard of his gospel message, and were touched enough by it to drop everything they were doing, and come a great distance by foot to greet him. Luke now notes three things when he writes in ACTS 28:15 *...whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.*

First Luke here writes *...when Paul saw...* . Remember again that the Apostle had very poor natural eyesight, a point we went over previously. {Review page 593 of these notes.} Paul's poor eyesight is why Paul dictated his ROMANS epistle to Tertius, who wrote it down for Paul... ROMANS 16:22. Paul himself noted in his GALATIANS epistle of the large characters he wrote in his own hand... GALATIANS 6:11. And we noted when Paul was before the Jewish Sanhedrin council in ACTS 23:1-5, how that Paul couldn't distinguish individuals, only the color of clothes they wore. So *...when Paul saw...* these individuals who had come out to meet him for the first time on the road to Rome here in ACTS 28:15, realize that he was the last one in his group to get a good look at these brethren. Everyone else in his party had seen these men before Paul did. Paul would have to had to be real up close and personal with these Roman brethren to see them.

Secondly here Luke casually points out a characteristic that all full overcomers achieve, and that is a genuine heart felt thankfulness to God for everything in their life: ACTS 28:15 *...whom when Paul saw, he thanked God...* . Here Paul thanked God for getting to see these brethren; for bringing him safe to them; for bringing them so far a distance from Rome to greet him; and for their enthusiasm in wanting to visit with the man who wrote the epistle they had studied. In Paul's very first epistle, which is 1 THESSALONIANS he wrote in 5:18 *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* We have noted this verse many times previous in this study. Sure it is easy to give thanks when things are going good. But how about when

circumstances seem to be against you? *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* Every thing? Yes every thing. During the height of the storm in ACTS 27 Paul was giving thanks unto God! He was believing God, and thanking God for a safe conclusion to that portion of his trip. Paul gave thanks unto God for the stale water soaked food they all got to eat in ACTS 27:35. All along this incredible journey of Paul's Christian life he had given thanks unto God for every thing. By this point in his life thanks unto God just constantly flowed out of his mouth, coming from an abundance in his heart! I bet if you go back to the three days Paul was left blind back in ACTS 9:9, and could hear his prayers noted in ACTS 9:11, that Paul was spending the majority of his words thanking God; thanking God for His Son Jesus; thanking God for sending Jesus unto him personally; thanking God for showing a Pharisee trained from his youth in the perfect way of the law, grace and mercy, a concept he didn't learn from the best law teachers; thanking God for eternal salvation; thanking God for an opportunity to serve him with whatever time was allotted him from that point forward; and the list is endless of the thankfulness Paul could have prayed in his prayers. The same goes for you and me too, for the list is endless of the thankfulness we should have instantly flowing from our lips of the exceeding riches of His grace that He has shown us in sending Jesus to be our Saviour! REVELATION 4:9 verifies that the full overcomers from this church age *...In every thing give thanks:...* for it reads: *And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever.*

The third point Luke notes in ACTS 28:15 is that...*when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage...* meaning he was of good cheer; he took great confidence; his faith was bolstered in the Lord. Actually this just begins to explain what Paul must have felt here as he saw for the first time these brethren he had long ago written. They were his answer to many prayers. These brethren lifted Paul's spirit as they began to fellowship the one with the other. These Roman Saints were welcoming Paul to their city with an exceeding display of the love of God. What an appreciation for the Apostle Paul they showed him in traveling this considerable distance from Rome just to greet him! No wonder that Paul took heart and courage. No doubt he proceeded on to Rome with them in very high spirits, anticipating seeing the rest of the Saints in Rome. No wonder Paul cried out to the Lord giving thanks unto God for this answer to his prayer of ROMANS 1:8 *...I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.* What an inward welcoming affection Paul felt as he was being escorted on to Rome by these Christian brethren who had brought Paul such exhilaration. No doubt these last few miles of Paul's journey to Rome went by quickly. Paul must have felt like he was walking on air.

There is kind of an emotional contrast to observe here too. We have often noted that the events prior to ACTS 23:11 were probably one of the lowest emotional points in Paul's Christian life. Then in ACTS 23:11 Jesus Christ Himself lifts Paul's spirit by telling him *...Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.* Now almost in Rome some three years after Jesus spoke these words, Paul was experiencing one of the emotionally uplifting high points in his Christian life. Think about it. When was the last time you heard about a group of Christians walking 43 miles to see a preacher? If you were to even witness such an event, wouldn't you too take courage? Wouldn't that lift your spirits? Wouldn't you too be of good cheer? Perhaps Paul now told the greeters from Rome what the Lord had told him back in Jerusalem *...Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.* Remember what we noted earlier in this study concerning the phrase "be of good cheer." Seven times in scripture we find the phrase "be of good cheer." Seven is the number that speaks to us of SPIRITUAL PERFECTION or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. Thus the phrase "be of good cheer" speaks to us some things about SPIRITUAL PERFECTION or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. Certainly Paul was of good cheer as he arrived in Rome.