

persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. May we too have such high focus. The Saint's of Caesar's household did.

Paul's Release from Prison at Rome

As we begin this chapter in the life of Paul we get little help from scripture as to the exact events that led to Paul's release. Yet we do find in scripture that Paul was released from prison at Rome. Conybeare and Howson properly note that "the historian who attempts to trace the footsteps of the Apostles beyond the limits of the Scriptural narrative must, at best, be hesitating and uncertain." {The Life and Epistles of St. Paul page 737.} These words were written before 1835. Since then thousands have done further research of historical records, and have come up with more information related to the time during which Paul was held prisoner in Rome. Brother Copley too uncovered writings from Josephus, which piece together helpful evidence that may explain the scenario of Paul's release from prison at Rome. Let's further examine these points.

Luke ended the record in ACTS acknowledging that *...Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him...* ACTS 28:30 & 31. We have in this study extensively examined the events of this two year time period, of which Luke writes no more. Obviously Luke then sent this letter to Theophilus back in Antioch, Syria from whence Paul had began all his missionary journeys. Paul himself from this very prison in Rome had written PHILEMON, COLOSSIANS, EPHESIANS, and probably most recently PHILIPPIANS. Paul's days and hours had been occupied with preaching, and teaching and writing epistles, all the time looking for the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, like David, encouraged himself in the Lord, and gave exceeding high hope to all of those around him. Paul also wrote of expecting to soon be released from his confinement, and of being free once again to travel about. To Philemon Paul wrote in PHILEMON 1:22 *But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.* We see here that Paul was trusting the Lord to set him free from the bonds of Rome shortly after this writing to Philemon. Again in PHILIPPIANS 2:23 and 24 we find Paul expressing the expectation of a soon release from prison stating this of Timothy and himself: *Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.* As a man full of the Holy Ghost, perhaps it was the Lord showing Paul this. Paul says here *...I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.* These are words of faith, and favorable and confident expectation, which we commonly express as "hope." Vine notes that "hope" describes the happy anticipation of good. There are several Greek words translated "hope," and one of these is *elpis* {el-pece'}, number 1680 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, also translated "faith" in HEBREWS 10:23 *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;).* Obviously Paul was a man of hope and faith.

Now jump ahead about five years in time and read a couple of statements Paul later wrote. TITUS 3:12 *When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.* Obviously Nicopolis is not Rome, and there is no way Paul could anticipate wintering in Nicopolis if he was still a prisoner in Rome. In 2 TIMOTHY 4:13 Paul writes of a cloke he had left in Troas with Carpus. This was from a recent visit Paul had made to Troas, one after the time frame of ACTS 28:30 & 31. Also in 2 TIMOTHY 4:20 & 21 Paul writes: *Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. 21 Do thy diligence to come before winter.* Obviously Paul had visited Miletum having personally left sick Trophimus there. Miletum isn't in Rome either. So scripture does tell us that Paul was set free from Caesar's prison, but we are not told in scripture how this came about.

There are at least two differing lines of thought concerning Paul's release from prison here at Rome. We do know that Paul himself had appealed unto Caesar. This takes us back to ACTS 25 when Paul was first brought before the new governor Porcius Festus

right after he succeeded governor Felix. Remember that Governor Felix unjustly held Paul prisoner for two years in Caesarea hoping that Paul would pay him a bribe for his release. This of course didn't happen, even though Felix gave Paul several opportunities during these two years. Paul was a testimony to governor Felix, but Felix didn't want Jesus as his own Saviour. {Review ACTS 24 for these facts.}

Back in ACTS 24 we find listed the false charges brought against Paul at his first meeting with governor Felix. ACTS 24:5 & 6 contains three false charges against Paul, as spoken by Tertullus to governor Felix. ACTS 24:5 *For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.* The three charges against Paul are: (1) accusing Paul of causing dissension and disturbances among all the Jews throughout all the Roman Empire; (2) charged Paul of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; and (3) accused Paul of an attempt to profane the Temple in Jerusalem.

By accusing Paul of causing disturbances among the Jews throughout all the Roman Empire in the first charge, Tertullus was stating that Paul was in offence against the Roman Government, a charge that amounted to Majestas, or treason against the Emperor, and if found guilty the offender could be sentenced to death. This is termed "sedition" in ACTS 24:5. Sedition is defined as an insurrection, or the stirring up of discontent, resistance, or rebellion against the government in power. This charge was blatantly false, for Paul never did preach anything against the Roman Empire. Here is what Paul preached: ACTS 17:2 *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.* Nothing against the Roman Empire here. Paul wrote in ROMANS 13:1 *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.* This isn't stirring up of discontent, resistance, or rebellion against the government in any way, shape, or form.

The third point above Tertullus so eloquently brought against Paul this charge in the presence of governor Felix was that Paul *...also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law...* {ACTS 24:6}. This was a serious charge, but without merit. This charge stems from the events Luke recorded for us back in ACTS 21:28 & 29, which says: *This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. 29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)* We noted before that Paul never brought any Gentiles into the Jewish temple here at Jerusalem, they had only "supposed" that he did.

We saw back in ACTS 21 how the Apostle Paul nearly got killed by the Jews in Jerusalem when they imagined, they thought, they supposed, he had brought his Greek traveling companion, Trophimus, into the temple. But Paul had not done any such thing, nor could the Jews prove that he did. Yet Paul was wrongfully being accused of doing this, which Tertullus told Felix that Paul *...hath gone about to profane the temple.* If the Apostle Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple, he would have been guilty of an offence against Jewish law, which, in turn, would have been an offence against Roman law, for the Roman law declared that the Jews were to be protected in the exercise of their worship. The Lord arranged it so that governor Felix saw right through these false charges, yet instead of releasing Paul, which would have been the correct, and proper thing to do, governor Felix held Paul prisoner hoping *...also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him:...* (ACTS 24:26). History records that governor Felix was famous for accepting bribes. Felix was also a very cruel ruler, who under the pretense of punishing robbers, he pursued and killed hundreds of Jews. Felix was then recalled to Rome, and most likely would have been condemned to death himself had not his brother Pallas been a close associate of the Emperor. Pallas used his influence with Nero to see to it that Felix escape unpunished. Felix then remained a private citizen, but died a couple of years later. Again remember what we noted above: Paul was a testimony to governor Felix, but Felix didn't want Jesus as his own Saviour.

The next governor was Festus, who inherited prisoner Paul, and Festus tried to make right all the wrongs Felix had done before him. To this end, shortly after becoming governor Festus had another trial concerning Paul, where the Jews of Jerusalem were once again given their opportunity to accuse Paul, seeking his head. ACTS 25:9-12 explains what happened next. ACTS 25:9 *But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.* This appeal by Paul unto Caesar put governor Festus in some what of a dilemma. Why? Because Festus now had to write Nero a letter explaining why Paul had appealed unto him, and giving reasons why Festus himself wasn't able to resolve this issue. Festus then in the following days sought the aid of King Agrippa as to what to write unto Nero. We find in ACTS 25:14 - 26 Paul being called before Festus again, King Agrippa being with him. Another hearing was given Paul. ACTS 25:24 *And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, King Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.* Most all of the 26th chapter of ACTS explains Paul's defence before King Agrippa, and afterwards we read that governor Festus, and King Agrippa had a private meeting. ACTS 26:31 *And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.* Soon after this meeting Paul was sent to Rome, Italy under the command of a Roman centurion named Julius, to whom (we assume) was given a letter from both governor Festus, and King Agrippa explaining their reason for sending Paul to the Emperor. Recall in ACTS 27 the great ship wreck Paul, and all those with him went through. They lost everything in that ship wreck. Did a letter from governor Festus, and King Agrippa survive this ordeal? Only the Lord knows. Julius delivered Paul to the captain of Nero's guard in ACTS 28:16. We are not told if Julius still was in possession of this letter or not. By this time Julius had witnessed untold miracles by the hand of Paul, and had no doubt become a Christian himself. Julius conveyed his thoughts concerning Paul to the captain of Nero's guard, and *...Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him...* according to ACTS 28:16. Obviously Paul wasn't considered a threat by governor Felix, governor Festus, King Agrippa, or Roman centurion Julius, thus he was allowed to dwell in his own hired house these past two years in Rome as he waited for Nero to hear his appeal.

Keep in mind that governor Festus, and King Agrippa agreed among themselves that Paul did nothing worthy of death, or of bonds, as noted in ACTS 26:31 above. If they wrote this in a letter to Nero, wouldn't it seem kind of silly to hold Paul prisoner? I think it would. It is also thought that if Paul did have a trial before Nero at this time, it would have been a rather lengthy one, for the three charges brought against Paul by the Jews before governor Felix back in ACTS 24 still remained, and each charge would have warranted a separate trial according to Roman law. We would like to think that if such a trial was held before Nero, there would be a record of it in history. Such record doesn't seem to exist, perhaps destroyed by the fire that also destroyed most of Rome in July 64 A.D. We will give some more thoughts concerning the fire that burnt 70% of Rome in 64 A.D. a little later in this study, but wouldn't such a fire also affect the Apostle Paul also, especially if he was still a prisoner there? Certainly it would, and we would think it would have been mentioned in scripture also, but it wasn't. So we conclude that Paul was released from prison at Rome before July 64 A.D., when the big fire occurred.

There remains then two broad possibilities on how Paul was set free from Nero's prison. Perhaps Paul did have a trial before Nero, and was found innocent of the three above listed charges, but again we have no record of such a trial in scripture, or in history that we know of. Yet we do have historical accounts of former governor Felix having died before the fire in Rome in 64 A.D. So historical records were kept of important events, such as governor Felix dying, but no record of the Apostle Paul's trial before Nero prior to July 64 A.D. What was more important? Paul's trial or Felix's death? Well to the worldly the worldly things are more important. What do we still read more about, the death of a former governor, or a former president; or the death of a infamous Christian? The worldly famous get the headlines, and here on earth the suffering Saints don't even get an honorable mention! Thus we should realize why we have no such record of Paul appearing before Nero prior to the fire in Rome. Paul's life here on earth mattered little to the world. However to the race course running Christian, Paul's gospel message is our road map to overcoming success. Again if Paul was found innocent by Nero in a trial before the great fire in Rome, we have no historical record of it.

The other possibility on how Paul was set free from Nero's prison was by an early release without a trial. Perhaps no accusers from Jerusalem ever came forth in a timely fashion, and thus Paul was released without fanfare. This very well could have happened, but again we just don't know for certain how it was that Paul was released.

There is mention in history however, through the records of Josephus, of certain Jewish priests being arrested and sent to Rome under the orders of then governor Felix, meaning prior to mid 60 A.D. Josephus writes that when he was twenty-six years old he took a voyage to Rome to seek the release of these prisoners. (History also records that Josephus was born in 37 A.D., so his trip to Rome would have taken place in 63 A.D. By then Paul would have also been in Rome these two years Luke wrote about in ACTS 28:30 & 31. However keep in mind as we go through this thought that Paul and Josephus were in no way connected, nor does Josephus ever make mention of the Apostle Paul in any way, shape, or form. Nor does the Apostle Paul ever mention Josephus. Both men (Paul and Josephus) were Jews, and of the sect of the Pharisees, and had similar backgrounds. Paul became a Christian on the road to Damascus as we well know. It is unclear if Josephus ever accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour, or not. However as Rome would look at it, both Paul and Josephus were Jews, and both were Pharisees, and they would be perceived as "connected" in this fashion.) Josephus writes that when he took this journey to Rome to seek the release of these Jewish priests, his journey was hindered by "a great number of hazards, by sea." Josephus goes on in describing how his ship with some 600 people on it was "drowned in the Adriatic Sea," and "swam for our lives all the night." The next day Josephus and some 80 others were rescued by a ship of Cyrene, and taken to Puteoli, which we previously studied about back in ACTS 28:13 & 14 when Paul and his company were allowed to stay there with Christian brethren seven days. Josephus then writes: "I became acquainted with Aliturius, an actor of plays, and much beloved by Nero, but a Jew by birth; and through his interest became known to Poppea, Caesar's wife." (We have mentioned Poppea, Nero's wife, one time before in this study, and found she was a Jewish proselyte, who was able to persuade Nero to rule in favor of some Jewish causes. {See page 834 of these notes.} There is no record of Poppea ever becoming a Christian, and in fact the historical record shows that she herself was lowly and evil.) When Josephus mentions the Jewish actor Aliturius catching the eye of Nero, it was because Nero himself adored singers, and actors, and even envisioned himself as being both. In disguises Nero sometimes appeared on stage, which actions if found out would have put him being viewed as in the lowest classes of Roman society. Aliturius may have been employed by Nero himself. At any rate Josephus became acquainted with Aliturius, who then introduced Josephus to Poppea, Nero's wife at that time, and Josephus continues that he... "took care, as soon as possible, to entreat her to procure that the priests might be set at liberty." Poppea used her influence with Nero to make this happen. Josephus added: "and when, besides this favour, I had obtained many presents from Poppea, I returned home again." {The above quotes from Josephus come from "Life of Flavius Josephus" page 2 paragraph 3.} Returning home again for Josephus would be going back to Jerusalem.

With lack of specific evidence as to whether Paul was grouped in with the above collection of Jewish priests, or not, is unclear. There remains the possibility that Paul

was set at liberty by Josephus' actions mentioned above, though indirectly. Lest you think the above mentioned scenario is impossible, let me remind you of what is written in ISAIAH 55, words of the Lord Himself. ISAIAH 55:8 *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* Wouldn't it be just like God to send from Jerusalem a high ranking Jew, possibly closely connected with the Jewish Sanhedrin, and have him unknowingly be directly responsible for obtaining the release of the one Jew (Paul) whom they so badly wanted to kill? Having no other Biblical or historic record to fall back upon, I tend to lean toward this explanation as to how Paul was released from prison after these two years in his own hired house in Rome. Brother Copley also noted this possibility in his study book on ACTS, stating: "God may have used that very providence to deliver His servant. Infuriated Jews occasioned his bondage, and a Jew, Josephus, may have released him."

Again let's remember that God specializes in dealing with what we term "impossible." The last part of MATTHEW 19:26 reads: *...with God all things are possible.* MARK 9:23 tells us: *Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* LUKE 18:27 reads: *And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* The full overcomer latches on to such scriptures, and expects it "possible" to be delivered from the "impossible." We have seen this time, and time again all throughout this study on the life of the Apostle Paul. Let's do just a little review here. The Apostle Paul too was a man of faith, a man full of the Holy Ghost, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost had written Philemon: *But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you...* PHILEMON 1:22. Again we see here that Paul was trusting the Lord to set him free from the bonds of Rome shortly after writing this to Philemon. Paul believed his being set free shortly to be "possible." Then in PHILIPPIANS 2:23 and 24 we find Paul expressing the expectation of a soon release from prison stating this of Timothy and himself: *Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.* Again Paul had the faith to believe it "possible" that he would soon be set free from Nero's prison, and be free to travel to Philippi shortly. From his cell in Rome Paul had written the following words in EPHESIANS 3:20 *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Is this "possible," or "impossible?" In other words is it "possible" that God the Father can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power of The Holy Spirit that worketh in us? Yes, or no? The full overcomers say "yes." In fact these New Testament worthies of faith say "possible" in agreeing with Paul's statement of ROMANS 8:37 *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* Thus they can add with Paul EPHESIANS 3:21 *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus (our Lord and Saviour) throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Recall this thought mentioned earlier in this study: men of faith pray to the living God; pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him; pray in faith believing, expecting it "possible" to receive exceeding abundantly above all that they could ask or think, and ask Him to accomplish the "impossible" tasks placed before them! {Review page 1049 of these notes.} With God nothing is "impossible," and all things are "possible." Recall these scriptures: GENESIS 18:14 *Is any thing too hard for the LORD?* JEREMIAH 32:27 *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?* MARK 10:27 *And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.* LUKE 1:37 *For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

Here is some interesting scriptural facts. The word "impossible," is found only nine times in scripture. Nine is an interesting number that points to FINALITY or DIVINE COMPLETENESS, and shows that the final touches on an overcoming Christian life can only be divinely completed by the Holy Spirit. The word "possible" is also rarely used in scripture, found exactly fifteen times. Fifteen is the number pointing to REST. PSALMS 37:7 tells us to: *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him:...* . The full overcomers are prayer warriors of faith, and always REST with their confidence, faith,

and trust in the Lord. Imbedded in every "impossible" situation is the word "possible." The worthies of faith see "impossible" as "possible" with God. Essentially the eleventh chapter of HEBREWS is a partial accounting of some things thought "impossible" by man as being "possible" with God.

The final time we read the word "impossible" in scripture is in HEBREWS 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* "Impossible" to man translates to "possible" with God. Again in LUKE 18:27 Jesus says: *...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* The angel Gabriel told Mary in LUKE 1:37 *For with God nothing shall be impossible.* The scripture is full of accounts of "impossible" things that really, and truly happened unto those who diligently sought God. This verse we just looked at in HEBREWS 11:6 is found in association with the story of Enoch. This Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam JUDE 1:14 tells us. In GENESIS 5:21-23 we find that Enoch lived a total of 365 years. In Enoch's day people lived over 900 years, so he was a relative young man when the Lord took him home. Enoch didn't die, he was translated. Here is what we read of him in HEBREWS 11:5 *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.* Enoch found it simply "possible" to believe God, and the so called "impossible" happened to Enoch; God translated him. If in your heart you say "oh this was impossible," then how can you too expect to be translated when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to catch his Bride away?

Elijah too was translated and did not see death. This story is recorded in 2 KINGS 2, and is rich in typical teaching. And not only did Elijah believe God for this, but Elisha knew it to be true, as did the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el, and at Jericho. As you study this story a little deeper you will see that not all of the ones privileged to know before hand of the translation of Elijah had the faith to truly believe it "possible" for God to do this. We read in 2 KINGS 2:7 *And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off:...* "Afar off" was as close as their faith allowed them to go to and witness Elijah's translation. Remember what HEBREWS 11:1 says? HEBREWS 11:1 defines faith, saying: *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* Follow that with HEBREWS 11:6 again: *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* These fifty sons of the prophets at least had some little faith in that they knew Elijah would be translated on this day, but when given the chance to view this event close up, they were satisfied to stand "afar off;" from a distance in other words. Elisha on the other hand wished to witness this translation of Elijah from as close a viewing point as "possible." So while the fifty sons of the prophets were content to view this from "afar off," Elisha continued to say by Elijah's side. Elijah and Elisha came to the river Jordan, *...And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground...* 2 KINGS 2:8. This parting of the Jordan River was the final miracle by the Lord credited to Elijah. 2 KINGS 2:9 *And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.* Now we know Elijah was a man of faith, an Old Testament full overcomer; one of two translated in the Old Testament. Obviously Elijah pleased God, and had HEBREWS 11:6 kind of faith to believe God to do the "impossible" for him. Elijah by faith parted the river Jordan in the text of 2 KINGS 2:8. What about Elisha? Did he too have full overcoming faith, which believed it "possible" with God to do the "impossible?" Here's our answer: 2 KINGS 2:11 *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.* Remember Elisha had stated by faith that he wanted a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, and Elijah in essence told him to pay attention, and if Elisha truly did witness that briefest of moments, in the twinkling of an eye, when he was translated, then he would receive the double portion of Elijah's

spirit. Wow!!! Elisha did witness this translation up close and personal, not from “afar off,” and the scripture records that Elisha performed exactly twice as many miracles as did Elijah. Truly Elisha, like Elijah before him, had the kind of faith in God that all full overcomers must have to believe it “possible” with God to do the “impossible.” Elisha’s first miracle is recorded in the next verses of 2 KINGS 2:13 & 14 -- *He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; 14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.* On your own time read the rest of this story and see how the fifty sons of the prophets who were content to try and witness this translation of Elijah from “afar off” failed to truly believe that Elijah was translated into heaven, thinking that perhaps the Spirit of the Lord had just given him a quick ride somewhere close. Elisha remained confident that the Lord had indeed translated Elijah, and not transferred him, and eventually allowed the fifty sons of the prophets to go and seek Elijah, which they did for three days to no avail. Unbelief can take you a lot of places you don’t need to go, just ask the fifty doubting sons of the prophets.

We are just reviewing a few examples in scripture of how things that seem “impossible” are indeed “possible” with God. It may seem “impossible” to you that a high ranking Jew from Jerusalem, named Josephus, could have made it “possible” for Paul to be released from Nero’s prison there in Rome. And though we have no real scriptural evidence to prove this one way or the other, we still believe this scenario to have been very “possible.”

Consider this. It was “impossible” for a male Hebrew child to survive Pharaoh’s command of being cast into the crocodile infested river in Moses day. Yet God saw it “possible” that not only did Moses survive being cast into the river, but God raised Moses in Pharaoh’s very own house! Eighty years later the Red Sea was no obstacle to God, and God told Moses in EXODUS 14:16 *But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.* Moses believed this “possible” with God, and Moses knew if God told him to do something as simple as raise up his rod unto God, and stretch his hand over the sea, that it was God’s job to divide it! And He did, and HEBREWS 11:29 records: *By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.* These are just a couple examples of the many “impossible” things God did because Moses, like his parents before him, was a man of faith who believed that God could do the “impossible.” All full overcomers are proven to have this kind of faith! How many Red Sea’s has the Lord placed on your race course? How did He take you through these “impossible” situations? There was only one way this is “possible,” by faith.

There are hundreds more examples in scripture of the “impossible” being made “possible” by faith, and diligently seeking God. A youth named David went up against a well armored giant, and slew him! “Impossible” you say? Not for God, for it was God who guided the smooth stone from David’s antique sling shot to hit Goliath in his forehead, sinking it deep into the giants skull. David proved here that he truly was a man of faith, trusting God to do the “impossible.” Goliath thought this to be “impossible” too, until the stone from David’s sling shot took him out.

In DANIEL 3:15 king Nebuchadnezzar said to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: *...who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?* King Nebuchadnezzar expected, and even demanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego bow down and worship his man made gods, and if they didn’t follow his orders, he would cast them into the burning fiery furnace. You know the story of how they didn’t go along with this heathen idea of the king, and we read in the next verses: DANIEL 3:16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.* These were men of faith, who knew it “possible” that God could do the “impossible” for them. Nebuchadnezzar was furious, and commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than it was supposed to be heated. Too bad Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t familiar with God, or the meaning of Bible numbers, for the number seven is the

number that has to do with SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION, and he was about to witness SPIRITUAL PERFECTION in person! DANIEL 3:21 *Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. 28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.*

Another Old Testament story of how God did the "impossible" is found in DANIEL 6, a story taught the youth in their Sunday School classes about Daniel in the lion's den. At this time Darius was king, and Daniel was promoted as a president over the princes, and other presidents of Darius' kingdom. King Darius was tricked by these whom Daniel was appointed over into signing a decree stating that no one could worship any God or man for thirty days except if his name be King Darius. King Darius seemed to like this idea, so he signed the decree, and Daniel a man of faith in God, continued to worship God as he did before the decree was signed already knowing in his own heart that *...Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever...* HEBREWS 13:8 DANIEL 6:10 further explains: *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Daniel didn't try and hide his faith in God, nor did he quit diligently seeking Him. Remember HEBREWS 11:6 above: But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* The story in DANIEL 6 continues telling how these rulers in the kingdom then went to King Darius and told how Daniel had continued to worship God in spite of the King's decree. DANIEL 6:14 *Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. 15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. (It sounds like Daniel had a profound affect upon King Darius.) 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.*

We all know this story, and the "impossible" ending. If you had never heard this story before, would you believe it "possible" to survive a night in the lions' den without harm? Let's finish reading this incredible story. DANIEL 6:18 *Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the*

morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, C Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21 Then said Daniel unto the king, C king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, C king, have I done no hurt. 23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

This is HEBREWS 11:6 full overcomer faith being recorded here: *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Daniel displayed the same kind of faith as Enoch, for Daniel too ...*believed in his God.* Obviously Daniel's faith in God also caused King Darius to seek God. DANIEL 6:24 continues this story: *And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.* 25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; *Peace be multiplied unto you.* 26 I make a decree, *That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.* 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. 28 *So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

We just briefly reviewed some of the many accounts from Old Testament scripture of "impossible" things that really, and truly happened unto those who diligently prayed, and sought God, and believed Him to do the "impossible." And there wasn't just one "impossible" event that each of these were given during their life time to overcome. God gave each of these hall-of-famers "impossible" situation after "impossible" situation to test their faith in believing it "possible" for God to do the "impossible." Jesus said in MARK 9:23 *...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* Are these words you can believe, and latch onto for the "impossible" situations He brings you to? In GENESIS 18:14 God asks Abraham: *Is any thing too hard for the LORD?* How did Abraham answer God this question? In faith believing! ROMANS 4:20 & 21 gives us Abraham's answer: *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* New Testament worthies of faith accomplish "impossible" tasks by faith in God, believing that there is nothing hard for the Lord to do. Jeremiah prayed in JEREMIAH 32:17 *Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:...* Such faith pleases God, and He is more than happy to then perform the "impossible."

New Testament worthies of faith all will be tested over and over again with "impossible" circumstances. We have seen this time, and time again in this study on the life of the Apostle Paul. Just go back through the book of ACTS and review, and count, if "possible," all the "impossible" situations, and events that are recorded in those 28 chapters. Review the story of Peter in Herod's prison in ACTS 12, and see how by faith, and much prayer, Peter was delivered by seemingly "impossible" methods from prison, and his chains, and how he escaped from soldiers, and locked gates. The following three verses from ACTS 12 give us the highlights. ACTS 12:5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. ...18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.* We can further summarize by saying, by faith Peter was delivered by the angel of the Lord from Herod's prison, and certain death.

In ACTS 16 Paul and Silas were delivered from their prison bands by an earthquake, and set free. But they didn't escape, but rather spent the rest of the night leading the keeper of the prison, and his household to the Lord, thus further establishing the church at Philippi. In ACTS 19 the Lord delivered Paul from the uproar caused by the silversmiths. In ACTS 21 Paul was seized by the Jews, and violently rescued by the Romans, who have safely kept him prisoner in various venues for five years. Now in 63 A.D. it seems "possible" that a high ranking Jew from Jerusalem named Josephus, could have been the very one used of God to obtain Paul's release from prison here at Rome. Perhaps this seems "impossible" to you, but this was "possible" with God. Remember this verse from PROVERBS that Paul also knew: PROVERBS 21:1 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.* It would have been nothing for God to cause Nero to release Paul from prison, and we have given one possibility how this could have occurred.

Paul's Next Five Years

As we begin examining the remaining years in the life of Paul, we have two major sources of information to bring together in order to make some logical sense of what took place in Paul's life during these approximate next five years. One important resource is the following books of scripture: HEBREWS; 1 TIMOTHY; TITUS, and 2 TIMOTHY. All of these epistles were written by the Apostle Paul during these five years, HEBREWS being written first, which points we will go over shortly. The second important area of examination is history itself of what took place during the years of 63 A.D. to 68 A.D. in the Roman Empire. By properly piecing the information contained in history with what is written in these letters of Paul, we can better determine some of what took place in Paul's next five years here on earth. However a lot of this is kind of like trying to view wind: none of us has ever seen wind per se, yet we all know it exists, and have felt, and even witnessed it's effects. So maybe we can not exactly prove when Paul was here, or there, one thing seems most likely, and that is Paul was released from prison at Rome prior to the great fire that destroyed much of Rome in 64 A.D.

Let's take a closer look at this fire. Most all of the historical records agree that this fire started at night (the early morning) of July 19, 64 A.D. On any given day, or night in the summer time it would not have been too unusual to find 80 to 100 small fires starting in a city the size of Rome. Most were contained and put out quickly, with two or three being a little harder to manage every day. Such is still the case in large cities today. Recall it was estimated that Rome had a population of around two million people at that time. However this particular fire started out more intense than most, fueled by merchandise in the shops lining the Circus Maximus, Rome's giant chariot stadium. The fire quickly spread out of control, and burned for six days, and seven nights before being declared contained. It then re-ignited as huge fires often do, and continued to burn for another three days. When finally burnt out the fire had ruined 10 of Rome's 14 districts, meaning two thirds of Rome had been destroyed, including the homes of most of Rome's elite. Much of Nero's palace was also destroyed. These are the facts that all history records agree upon.

So intense was the fire that the heat generated by the fire caused many dwellings to explode with fire from within, similar to the fires we recently experienced in Colorado the last couple of years (2012 & 2013). With no record to the contrary we assume that the quarters where the prisoners were kept were also destroyed. Paul's own hired house of ACTS 28:30 fame must have met the same fate. The amount of lives lost during this fire remains unknown. Certainly many prisoners lost their lives to this fire.

Looting and plunder also followed. Important works of history hundred of years old were destroyed in this fire, as well as thousands of documents. Thus we have little Roman historical records pre 64 A.D. to fall back on concerning the Apostle Paul's stay in Rome, or any evidence that he had a trial before Nero prior to the fire. Again we make the assumption without any historical record to back us up that Paul was released from prison at Rome prior to the fire of 64 A.D. It would also seem quite probable that the letter to the HEBREWS would have been written before this fire also.