

28 Acts 28:17-31 | God's Purpose for Paul as Prisoner

Summer 2009. Rome visit. My family visits Rome. Internet hotel booking. Arrived 8 pm. Booking cancelled 10 am? No room?!... Paul had no such problem.

Paul lived in his own rented house. It turned out that his dream 'holiday' in Rome was to last for two years. There was only one snag: he was under house-arrest (v.20).

Jesus had told Paul that he must preach the Good News in Rome; but hadn't mentioned the house-arrest.

Looking back, we can see that Paul's captivity was part of God's good purpose for him. Not only did he witness to many visitors, but he was later to stand trial before the Roman emperor himself.

God gave Paul what he wanted (safe passage to Rome) together with what he would rather not have had (status as a prisoner). And Paul accepted both with faith.

We too may need to grasp the nettle of something we'd rather not have – an illness, a weakness, a difficult job, a lack of freedom to go where we want – trusting in God's constant care for us.

Awaiting a possible death sentence, Paul was not thinking mainly about himself. His social networking in Rome, his Roman Facebook, centred around two main themes: the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (vs 23, 31). His paper mail (Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians) pored over the same themes. May we share his courage and freedom (v.31) in passing on Good News; even if our circumstances do not seem ideal and even if some people refuse to believe (vs 24, 26, 27).

Our Father in heaven, may your Kingdom come. In me.

In my church. In my country.

To the ends of the earth. Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus.