

“to bring to an end”, “to complete”, “to fulfill”. God’s power is fulfilled and completed in our weakness.

It is no wonder that Paul rushes to rejoice in that place of rest when he celebrates God’s provision saying: “I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Cor 12:9). Paul was secure in the strong tower of his soul in God’s rest.

#3 – EVERYTHING LEADS YOU TO GOD’S GOODNESS (Romans 8:28)

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

- Romans 8:28

As has often been pointed out, this verse does not say “all things are good.” Paul is saying instead that “God is working for the good in all things” and he is doing this for those who love him and are in line with his plans and purposes. To benefit from God’s working for good in all things we must love God and be able to process things according to his purpose. We are going to have to remain in the place of faith rest while trusting God’s promise that he is good and will work out all things for good. “All things” would include even things that we consider to be bad or we know to be evil. In all things God is working for the good of those who love him.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

-Romans 8:37

This promise is one of the foundation stones of the fortress of your faith rest tower. Independent of whether things are good or bad -

and independent of whether or not you have perfect understanding of a situation - you can know for certain that God is currently active to use this very moment in your life for your good. This fact needs to be solidly established in your soul before the storm of life hits. Then, when the various storms of life do strike, you will be able to stay in God’s rest while looking out the window of your strong fortress at the winds and the waves - all the while knowing that even in the midst of this turmoil the Lord is working for your good as his plans and purposes move closer and closer to completion.

There is, though, a clear condition in this verse. A person is disqualified from the benefits of God’s good work in all things if that person does not love God, or if that person’s will is not in line with God’s calling and purpose.

#4 – RESCUED FROM EVERY EVIL ATTACK (2 Timothy 4:17-18)

*The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength,
so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all
the Gentiles might hear it.*

And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth.

*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me
safely to his heavenly kingdom.*

To him be glory for ever and ever.

- 2 Timothy 4:17-18

Paul wrote this verse in 67 AD when he was an old man and a prisoner of the Roman Empire, being held in the Mamertine Prison in the city of Rome. The Mamertine Prison was originally dug as a cistern around 625 BC to access a spring of water. By Paul’s time it had been converted into a dungeon where prisoners were held or detained until their court case was finalized.

This was not the same detention that Paul suffered in Rome during 60-62 AD. At that time, Paul was detained under a much more comfortable house arrest and stayed in his own rented house.

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.

- Acts 28:30

Paul records in 2 Timothy that in 67 AD he had already appeared before Nero's imperial court to present his case:

At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

- 2 Timothy 4:16-17

Paul was detained in the filthy Mamertine dungeon, where he would have been lowered in through an opening above. There were surely other prisoners being detained there. All waste, sewage, and the corpses of prisoners who died inside would have been washed from this dungeon through the sewer system of Rome (called the Cloaca Maxima) that connected the Mamertine dungeon to the Tiber River about a quarter mile away.

Paul was confident that he would be sentenced to be executed when he appeared before Nero's court to hear the verdict of his case. He writes to Timothy:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

- 2 Timothy 4:6

Since Paul was a Roman citizen his execution would have been by



decapitation in a place about 5 miles south of the Mamertine prison, outside the city limits on the Via Ostia. Based on early church history, tradition and archaeology, after the execution, Paul's body was taken about 1.5 miles back toward the city and buried in an above ground cemetery on property belonging to Lucina, the woman who buried him.

Since Paul wrote "the time of my departure has come" - and we know that Paul was executed sometime between the fall of 67 AD and the spring of 68 AD - we can be quite certain that Paul was not anticipating physical deliverance from Nero when he wrote:

I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.

- 2 Timothy 4:18

A casual reading of this verse could lead a person to assume that Paul was referring to physical deliverance from persecution, or any other form of evil intended by Nero. But, Paul was not referring to physical deliverance in this text. Obviously, Paul's goal in life was not to escape death. No one escapes death. Paul's goal in life was to fulfill the Lord's plans and purpose for his life, which had long been clearly identified for Paul. The Lord had told Ananias:

This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

- Acts 9:15

And, according to Paul's own account given in 59 AD in Caesarea to Governor Festus and King Herod Agrippa II, it was the Lord who told Paul that he was being sent to the Gentiles to preach the Gospel to them:



I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

- Acts 26:17-18

Paul's mission was to reach the Gentiles with the Word of God. Paul was appointed and empowered to do this by God, but Satan, the lion, would attack all of Paul's efforts. Just as the birds in the parable of the sower came immediately to steal the seed of the Word that was scattered on the road (Matt. 13:4, 19), so Satan would try to destroy, intimidate, censor, discourage, and stifle the seeds of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. Paul had plenty to fear in the natural world - including confinement in the Mamertine Prison, intimidation in the presence of Emperor Nero's court, execution, and much more.

All of these evil attacks were real and designed by the prowling lion, Satan, to make Paul quit proclaiming the message of salvation to the Gentile world. Paul was a strong-willed man before he became a believer and remained so after he placed faith in Christ. But Paul's human strength and determination by themselves would collapse under the pressure of the spiritual forces of evil. Paul needed a place of protection and support. Paul needed to abide in God's rest.

In this place of rest, the fortress of Paul's soul would be unconquerable no matter what kind of evil attack he was subjected to. And, from that same place of rest, Paul would be able to launch a counter attack by fully proclaiming to everyone in Nero's court the knowledge of God.

In this way Paul would be tearing down strongholds in the minds of the Gentiles who heard his words. The arguments and high

thoughts of evil that stood opposed to the knowledge of God would begin to crumble. The Lord stood by Paul's side and delivered Paul from every evil attack by giving him confidence, endurance, and fearlessness in the face of evil. Because of this, the Lord's message was fully proclaimed to begin tearing down the strong towers of false philosophies and corrupt realities that evil had built in the souls of the Gentiles.

#5 – ENDURANCE (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Hebrews 12:1-2

Each of us is called by the Lord to “run...the race that is set before us”. Jeremiah's ministry was compared to a race (Jer. 12:5), and Jesus himself had a race to run that included going to the Cross. Before Jesus went to his Cross he had told his disciples, “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*” (Matt. 16:24).

To successfully “run..the race marked out for us”, and to “take up our cross” we will need endurance. Even Jesus is said to have “endured the cross.” We will also have to endure, so that we might take up our own cross and finish our race.

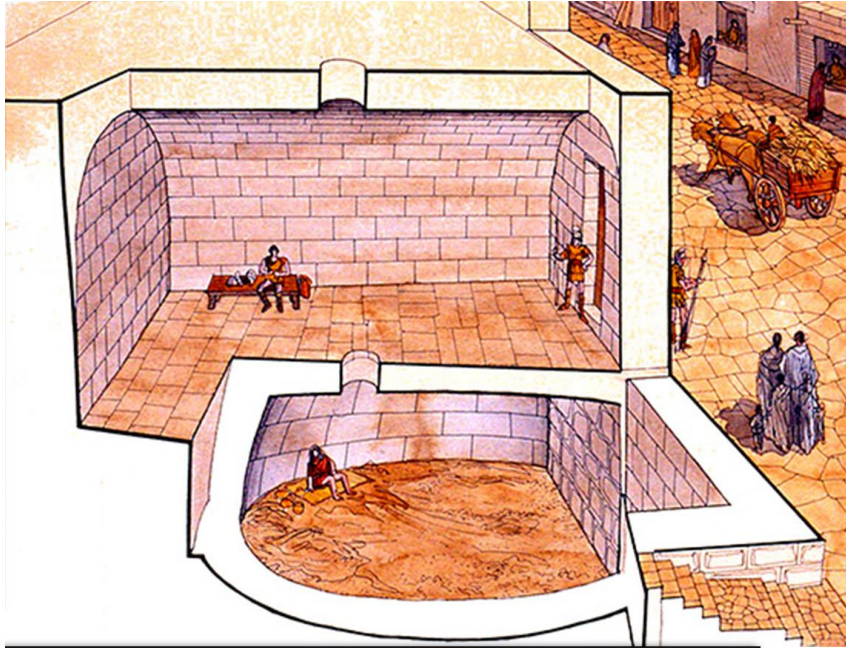
The word used twice in Hebrews 12:1-2 for “endurance” (“run with endurance”) and “endured” (“endured the cross”) is *hupomone* in the Greek. The word *hupomone* means “a remaining behind” and “a patient endurance.” The idea of this word is to hold your ground

Paul's second letter written to Timothy (Second Timothy) in 66-67 AD from prison during Paul's final imprisonment in Rome.

- In the fall of 67 or the spring of 68 Paul was led one morning out of the Mamertine Prison about 5 miles south outside the city of Rome for execution by decapitation on Via Ostia.
- His body was taken about 1.5 miles back towards the city and buried in an above ground cemetery on property belonging to Lucina the woman who buried him.
- This satellite image put these events into perspective.
- It is easier to understand Paul's words in Second Timothy when you realize he knows he is on his way to his execution.
- When Nero has time for Paul to appear for his sentencing Paul's fate will officially be declared.
- Paul has already presented his case to Nero...now, it was just a matter of time for Nero to declare Paul a criminal.
- Nero released Paul in 62 AD, but in 64 AD Nero was blamed for the fire that burnt Rome. To distract the "media" and the "public" Nero blamed Christians (see Tacitus) and started killing Christians in the coliseum, burning them as torches for evening activities, etc. So, in 66/67 AD Nero's view of Paul will be different than it was in 60-62 AD as we see in the book of Acts.
- Paul was a Roman citizen so he could not be crucified like a slave or a non-citizen such as Jesus or Peter.



- St. Paul's stone coffin has been found beneath Rome's second largest basilica, *Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls*.
- The sarcophagus dates back to about A.D. 390 and was uncovered in Rome's Basilica of St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls, named for its location beyond the ancient wall surrounding Rome's center.
- The sarcophagus was buried beneath the main altar, under a marble tombstone bearing the Latin words "Paulo Apostolo Mart.," meaning "Apostle Paul, Martyr."



ROME'S MAMERTINE PRISON



