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The Last Years of St. Paul

Valentine Eichenlaub

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_eichenlaubv@csl.edu

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THE LAST YEARS OF ST. PAUL.
A thesis
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Valentine Eichenlaub
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of
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THE LAST YEARS OF ST. PAUL.

Introduction.

The Book of Acts ends with the statement 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". * The inspired writer does not tell us what took place after that. Hence we ask, did the period terminate with the Apostle's condemnation and death or with his acquittal and liberation? Naturally we have no absolute proof for either contention.

Modern critical scholars hold that Paul was not set free but was put to death at the end of these two years. They say that Luke did not mention Paul's death, because he had always spoken in favor of the Roman government and it would be contradictory to mention Paul's condemnation at the hands of that same power. Others say the Book of Acts is incomplete. Goodspeed says that Luke does speak of the death of Paul in Acts 20, where he tells the Ephesian Presbyters that they would see his face no more, only he mentions it indirectly. Scott says that the Roman government would not be inclined to show clemency to a Jew like Paul who was accused of riots, and therefore Paul must have been put to death.

On the other hand, it has been generally believed in all ages that the great Apostle was tried, acquitted, and liberated. In favor of this view we advance the following weighty reasons.

* Acts 28,30.31.

I Evidence in Favor of Paul's Liberation.

1. Paul's certainty to be freed from the Roman prison.

In his Letter to the Philippians, which was written during the latter part of his imprisonment, Paul writes: "But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." * Nor was this a casual hope on his part, for he even asks Philemon to prepare him a lodging, "for", says he, "I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." **

Naturally Paul must have had good reasons for being so certain that he would be released. What these reasons were we do not know. Perhaps powerful and influential friends were working energetically to secure his release. Among others there may have been Festus, Agrippa, Lysias, and Publius who probably used their influence in his behalf. It may even be that his accusers saw fit to drop their case against him. Another conjecture is that the documents and witnesses for the trial were lost at sea in the shipwreck which Josephus mentions and that this loss broke down the trial all the more completely.

2. The fact that the imprisonment described in the Second Epistle to Timothy is much more severe than that described in Acts. According to Acts he was allowed many privileges. Among other things he had his own rented house, was allowed to receive visitors, yes, he was even permitted to preach the Gospel. The only disagreeable thing about it was that he necessarily had to be fettered to a military guard.

But according to the Second Epistle to Timothy he is not only chained but treated "as a malefactor". *** Nothing is

* Phil. 2,24.

** Philemon 22.

*** II Tim. 1,16.

said of his preaching. His friends seem to have found it difficult to visit him. * It was even dangerous to sympathise with him. Hence not a single Christian ventured to stand by him during his last trial. ** And when finally the last stage of his trial approached, he looked forward to death as his certain sentence.

3. The last chapters of Acts do not indicate that Paul was condemned but rather that things took a turn for the better. "It is inconceivable that St. Paul should have died almost immediately afterwards, by a martyr's death, and St. Luke have been aware of it before his book was published, and yet that he should not have made the faintest allusion to the subject." *** Moreover, Agrippa already had said to Festus: "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."**** But above all, the happy ending of Acts forces us to conclude that Paul was released.

4. The testimony of the ancients in favor of a journey to Spain. The most important evidence is supplied by Clement, the disciple of St. Paul, mentioned in Philippians 4,3, who afterwards was bishop of Rome. This author writing from Rome to Corinth says: "Because of envy, Paul also obtained the prize of endurance, having seven times borne chains, having been exiled, and having been stoned. After he had preached the Gospel both in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown of his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and having come to the limits of the West, and borne witness before rulers. Thus he was freed from the world, and went into the holy place,

* II Tim. 1,16.

** II Tim. 4,16.

*** Farrar: "Life and Work of St. Paul", Vol. II, 511.

**** Acts 26,32.

having shown himself a preeminent example of endurance." *
Now to a Roman author "the extremity of the West" could mean nothing but Spain, and the expression is often used by Roman writers to denote Spain.

The next piece of evidence which we possess on the subject is contained in the Canon Muratorianus, compiled about the year 170 A.D. It reads: "Luke relates to Theophilus events of which he was an eye-witness, as also, in a separate place ** he evidently declares the martyrdom of Peter, but (omits) the journey of Paul from Rome to Spain." ***

In the next place, Eusebius tells us, "after defending himself successfully it is currently reported that the apostle again went forth to proclaim the Gospel, and afterwards came to Rome a second time, and was martyred under Nero." ****

We also have the statement of Chrysostom, who died in 407 A.D. He mentions it as an undoubted historical fact that "St. Paul after his residence in Rome departed to Spain."*****

About the same time Jerome, who lived from 331-420, says, "Paul was dismissed by Nero, that he might preach Christ's Gospel in the West."*****

5. The Pastoral Epistles, which are so similar in contents and which evidently were written in close succession, could not have been written at any other time excepting after the first Roman imprisonment.

For instance, we read in Titus 1,5: "For this cause left I thee in Crete". But not only is there no mention in the Acts of the Apostles of any ministry in Crete, but there is no period

* Farrar: "Life and Work of St. Paul", Vol. II, 604.

** Lk. 22,31-33.

*** Conybeare and Howson: "Life and Epistles of St. Paul", Vol. II, 438.

**** Eusebius: Hist. Eccl. II, 22.

***** Conybeare and Howson; Vol. II, 438.

***** Conybeare and Howson, Vol. II, 438.

in the Apostle's life before his imprisonment at Rome during which he could have preached there. He touched, indeed, at Crete on his way to Rome;* but he appears not to have landed; and if he did, how could he a prisoner, and chained by the wrist to a soldier, have evangelized the island and planted churches? The time also was too short for any such exercise of his vocation.

Again, he tells Titus to come to him at Nicopolis, in Epirus, where he proposes to winter. ** But how could he have passed any winter at Nicopolis before his imprisonment in Rome? In the year 52 A.D. he had visited Greece. The winter of that year and also of the next he spent at Corinth where he sojourned for a year and six months. *** From Corinth he sailed to Jerusalem. He was present there at the Feast of Tabernacles in the year 53. Next he went to Antioch, where he remained for some time. Thereafter, in 54 A.D. he proceeded through Galatia and Phrygia to Ephesus. Here he stayed for the next three years, till the year 57 A.D. **** From there he passed through Macedonia to Corinth where he wintered for three months.***** In the spring of the year 58 he then sailed from Corinth to Philippi. Here he arrived at the time of the passover.***** Next he went to Jerusalem where he was arrested and imprisoned for two years at Caesarea. Hence he was in prison till the year 60 A.D. and was then forwarded a prisoner to Rome.

I Tim. 1,3 we read: "As I besought thee to abide at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia". But on what occasion could Paul, before his imprisonment, have left Timothy at Ephesus when Paul

* Acts 27,7.

** Tit. 3,12.

*** Acts 18,11.

**** Acts 18,23.

***** Acts 20,31.

***** Acts 20,2.

***** Acts 20,6.

himself was on his way to Macedonia? He was at Ephesus only twice, first on his way from Greece to Jerusalem, and therefore not on his road to Macedonia,* and again he sojourned for three years at Ephesus, and then did indeed sail for Macedonia. ** But he did not leave Timothy behind him, for, on the contrary, he had sent him away a little before to Macedonia.*** Nor could Timothy have returned before Paul's departure, and then have been ordered to stay, for when Paul reached Macedonia and wrote the second Epistle to the Corinthians, Timothy was with him, and is joined in the salutation.**** But when the First Epistle to Timothy was written, Timothy was not only at Ephesus, but desired to remain there until Paul returned to him.*****

The Second Epistle to Timothy was clearly written during some imprisonment. ***** This was at Rome.***** But how could this be during his first imprisonment? For he writes to Timothy, "Trophimus I left at Miletus sick".***** But on his voyage to Rome under the charge of Julius the centurion he did not touch at Miletus. Some, of course, try to place "Malta" where the manuscripts read "Miletus". Others claim this Miletus was not the famous city of that name, but one situated in Crete. But this can't be held, for Paul on his way to Rome sailed along the south coast of Crete, but Miletus lay on the north of the island.

- * Acts 18, 19.
- ** Acts 20, 1.
- *** Acts 19, 22.
- **** II Cor. 1, 1.
- ***** I Tim. 3, 14.
- ***** II Tim. 1, 8. 16; 4, 6. 16.
- ***** II Tim. 1, 17.
- ***** II Tim. 4, 20.

Again Paul says, "Erastus remained behind at Corinth".* But Paul on his voyage to Rome did not pass through Corinth. This passage to Rome must have been on some subsequent occasion when Paul took the usual winter route from the East to Rome across the Isthmus of Corinth.

Once more we read, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."** If this Epistle was penned during Paul's first imprisonment, the date of it must be placed some time between the spring of the year 61 A.D., when the imprisonment at Rome began, and the spring of 63 A.D., when it ended; and the cloak, etc. must have been at Troas previously to 61, since 58 in fact, when Paul touched there on his way from Macedonia to Jerusalem. But on arriving in Judea he was taken prisoner and kept in bonds at Caesarea for two years, and then sailed for Rome, which he reached in the year 61. If, therefore, the letter was sent towards the close of his imprisonment in 63, an interval of five years, and if sent at the commencement of his imprisonment, an interval of three years had elapsed since he had left his cloak and books and parchments at Troas. But how improbable is it that Paul should have waited for five, or even for three years, for an article of dress such as a cloak, and for books and parchments which he must have required for constant use, more particularly the parchments, to which Paul attached so much attention. ***

* II Tim. 4,20.

** II Tim. 4,13.

*** The arguments under part 5 have been taken from Lewin: "Life and Epistles of St. Paul", Vol. II, page 292f.

II Paul's Journeys after His Acquittal.

"A captive to the fowler's artful snare
Barred from his wonted flights in mountain air,
The eagle folds his wing -- Lo! once again
Dawns the bright freedom from the chain --
Upward he springs to heaven with new delight,
And soars and soars, till lost to mortal sight." *

After Paul's acquittal it seems that he immediately left Rome. In other words, shortly after those two years of which St. Luke speaks ** had ended the great Apostle left the great metropolis. This must have taken place in the year 63. For already in the next year there broke out that bloody persecution, from which, had he still been at Rome, it is certain that he could not have escaped. But the Pastoral Epistles are proof enough that he did get his freedom. Hence where did he go?

Five years before this time the great missionary, in writing to his Roman congregation had expressed a desire to go to Spain after visiting Rome. *** He had, however, also sent a message to Philemon. This was written while he was yet in prison. From it we must infer that he intended to visit Asia Minor as speedily as possible after his liberation.**** It seems, however, that he deferred this visit till he had carried out his once-cherished plan to visit Spain. The reason for this supposition becomes clear from the following. Paul had informed the Philippians that he intended to come to them shortly. ***** But before he himself set out for Philippi he sent Timothy to that congregation and evidently did not plan to visit this city

* Anonymous.

** Acts 28,30.

*** Rom. 15,28.

**** Philemon 23.

***** Phil. 2,19-23.

until Timothy would return, for he writes: "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me."* So Timothy set out immediately after he saw the outcome of Paul's trial. However, he could hardly travel the distance from Rome to Philippi in less than a month. Taking this into consideration and bearing in mind that Timothy also had to spend some time in Philippi and perhaps in some of the other congregations in that vicinity and accounting for the time he had to use for his return journey, we can well conclude that from three to six months had to pass. Did Paul remain idle during this time? Certainly not! Nor did he remain in Italy, for he had worked there two years already. The most logical thing for him to do, therefore, was to preach the Gospel also to other climes.

Therefore, immediately after his Roman imprisonment had reached a happy ending he set out for Spain in that same year, the year 63. It need not be imagined that he went all alone, for on practically all his other journeys he was accompanied by faithful followers. So also on this trip we may take for granted that some of those who had stood by him during his imprisonment in Rome went with him. Among them were Aristarchus, Demas, Luke and Justus. Some of these men and perhaps some new converts went with him to work in Spain.

As to his ministry in Spain we are absolutely in the dark. At what port he landed, in what cities he preached, how long

* Phil. 2, 19.23.

he stayed in Spain -- all these and similar questions must remain unanswered. We may be sure though that the great missionary after arriving in Spain followed his old method of preaching first to the Jews. Also in Spain there were many Jews in the various cities. Having thus gathered a nucleus among his own kinsmen, he extended his message also to the heathen. What success he had is impossible to say, but we may be sure that the Word of God did not return void.

After a comparatively short stay in Spain, Paul, in the year 64, seems to have returned to the East to set things in order in the Orient.* No doubt he went directly to Crete. We need not suppose that the Christian church of Crete was founded during this visit of St. Paul. On the contrary, there are numerous indications in the Epistle of Titus which show that the churches of this island had been established before this time. When and by whom they were founded is quite uncertain. But already on the great day of Pentecost Cretans were amongst those who heard the great sermon of St. Peter.** Some of them may have been converted and then carried the Gospel back to their native country. There, however, no apostle regulated their faith, probably they had not even been properly organized, and as a result Judaism and Gnosticism had corrupted the Word. For that reason Paul hurriedly did that which was needful, either silencing the error or selecting fit persons as presbyters of the numerous scattered churches. Then he left Titus in charge to carry on the work. ***

* We are following Dr. Fuerbringer's "Einleitung" in trying to trace the Apostle's last journey. This seems to be the most logical and agrees with the Pastoral Letters. Of course, the information regarding his last missionary journey is so scant that a number of the proposed trips can be held as correct.

** Acts 2, 11

*** Titus 1, 5.

He himself went to Ephesus. Here he found that the predictions which he had long ago uttered to the Ephesian Presbyters * were already being fulfilled. Heretical teachers had arisen in the very bosom of the church and were gaining a following among the believers. The Gnostic heresy had gathered strength and had fastened itself upon Christianity. Paul ended the troubles by putting out of the church Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander,** the heretical leaders. And to prevent any further trouble he left Timothy in charge of the work.***

While in this region Paul no doubt also visited the other congregations in this vicinity. This brought him to Colossae, where he had asked Philemon to prepare him a lodging,**** to Laodicea, to Hierapolis, and to other congregations in that region which he had never visited before.

From Ephesus the Apostle, with Tychicus and Artemas,***** proceeded by way of Troas and Nicopolis to Philippi. ***** Here they were received with greatest joy. "The Philippian beheld their spiritual father after a separation of seven years, and now grown venerable by age; and he, on the other hand, had to acknowledge another liberal contribution which had been forwarded to him at Rome by the hands of Epaphroditus." ***** While this was a well-regulated congregation, yet also here existed grounds for uneasiness. Also this flock had to be guarded against heretical teachers.# Not only that, but there were also private feuds ## which had to be adjusted. This the Apostle did.

* Acts 20,29.30.

** I Tim. 1,20.

*** I Tim. 1,3.

**** Philemon 22.

***** II Tim. 4, 12; Tit. 3, 12.

***** Phil. 2, 19-23.

***** Lewin: "Life and Epistles of St. Paul", II, 338.

Phil. 3,2.

Phil. 4,2.

Thereafter he visited Thessalonica, Beroea, and other Macedonian communities and then went south to Corinth.

Also in Corinth Gnosticism had gained a foothold, and it was the Apostle's duty to instruct also this congregation. Possibly from this city Paul sent Artemas or Tychicus to take the place of Titus. *

Titus, on the other hand, was to meet Paul at Nicopolis where he intended to winter.** This was the winter of the year 65 to 66.

From Nicopolis Paul continued along the western coast to bring the Gospel of Christ also to other people. He now proclaimed the Glad Tidings in Epirus, in Illyria and in Dalmatia. Had Paul himself not reached these provinces, it is doubtful whether he would have sent Titus thither later on.***

After this the Apostle bent his steps to the right to return by way of Thessalonica, Philippi and Troas to Ephesus. This must have been his course, for we find him in Troas next, where he left his cloak, books, and parchment.**** It seems likely that he was arrested here and hurriedly sent to Ephesus to be tried. We are not told what led to his second imprisonment. Zahn conjectures that it was due to the machinations of the Jews. That may be correct. Whether it was brought about by the provincial government or by the headquarters in Rome, we do not know. At any rate, we know that Paul was guiltless. But how could he prove his innocence to a biased jury? Hence, as a last resort, he may again have appealed to Caesar. That would have ended his trial in Ephesus. To Rome he again had to go. This

* Tit. 3, 12.

** Tit. 3, 12

*** II Tim. 4, 10.

**** II Tim. 4, 13.

Journey took place in the year 66. We know nothing of the route that Paul took with the soldiers who led him away. "It may very possibly have been from Ephesus to Cenchreae, over the Diolkos to Lechaeum, and then along the Gulf of Corinth and across the Adriatic to Brundisium, whence the prisoner, his guards and companions would make their dreary way along the great Appian road to Rome."* But while Paul was yet a free man he had written some of the so-called

III Pastoral Letters.

1. The First Epistle to Timothy.

Paul and Timothy, as we have seen, had been together at Ephesus. Paul then went to Macedonia and left Timothy in charge of the Ephesian congregation. Having arrived at his destination, the Apostle may have found that he could not meet Timothy as soon as he had expected and that Timothy needed further advise and encouragement to carry on his work efficiently, so he wrote this letter to him from some Macedonian city in the year 64. The Epistle contains the following information:

a. How Timothy is to shepherd the congregation in general.

He is reminded of the commission given him to oppose the Judaizing teachers. These instead of teaching the pure doctrine were busying themselves with fables and endless geneologies which had no practical value. Moreover, they took a wrong stand toward the law, insisting that the law of Moses was a part also of the New Testament dispensation. Of course, Paul does not want to say that the law is needless. Quite the contrary! He says, it is good, if a man use it lawfully. It opens the eyes of the sinner so that he might be lead to the Gospel. 1,3-11.

* Farrar: "Life and Work of St. Paul", II, 545.

Speaking of the law, Paul is reminded of the fact that he himself, before his conversion, had false notions concerning the Mosaic ordinance. And now being set aright he is forced to praise Christ who had made a believer out of the former persecutor. For this fact the Apostle once more glorifies God and charges Timothy likewise "to fight the good fight of faith", 1, 12-20.

Next follow directions for public worship, stressing especially public prayer. This is to be made for all men in general, because salvation is there for all, as well as for those in authority, because thereupon depends the Christian's welfare. Such public prayers are to be offered by men, not by women, for thereby they would publicly teach men. Such a thing is contrary to Scripture and is not in accord with woman's position. "Holy woman's holy sphere is the holy home" * 2, 1-15.

Public worship in turn is to be supervised and directed by able bishops. Not everybody is fit for this glorious work. For that reason the Apostle goes on to state the necessary qualifications of a pastor. 3, 1-7.

But even the pastors are not able to do the work alone. They need helpers. Also these must be the proper men, else they are no helpers. Therefore Paul gives directions regarding the qualifications of these co-workers and regarding their appointment for office. 3, 8-13.

This information was imparted to Timothy, because he was the pillar and foundation of the truth. He it was who had the office of a bishop; he it was whose word carried much weight in the appointing of deacons.

* Dallmann: "Paul" 307.

Next Paul utters these prophetic words, namely that not all will remain faithful to the truth. Instead they will preach doctrines of devils. To overcome these heresies Timothy is to preach the Word and live the Word. 4,1-6.

b. How he is to shepherd the individual.
Wisely Timothy is to consider age and sex and treat each accordingly. 5,1-16.

Of the presbyters he says that those who perform their office well are to receive special honor and selfevidently proper support. Nor is Timothy to receive accusations against them without the testimony of witnesses. 5,17-21.

After more pastoral advise to Timothy, he devotes a few lines to the duties of Christian slaves, 6,1-5, the dangers of riches which so many false teachers desire, 6,6-10, the contentment which godliness brings, 6,11-16 and the correct use of riches, 6,17-19.

In closing, Paul once more reminds his young friend of his commission and wishes him God's grace.

2. The Epistle to Titus.

Titus had been left in charge of the congregations in Crete. He held the same position as Timothy did in Ephesus. To him also Paul addressed a letter. This also was written from Macedonia. As to its date, we may safely assume that it was written about the same time in which Paul wrote to Timothy, namely in the year 64. In this letter, after a somewhat longer salutation, Paul discusses the duties of Titus:

a. As to organization.

First of all he is to continue to correct whatever was deficient in the various congregations of Crete and also to appoint presbyters in every city. These were to be uncommonly able men, for they were to have an unusually difficult field. Of the Cretans their own poet Epimenides in 600 B.C. had said: "The Cretans are always liars, evil wild beasts, lazy gluttons". And this witness as St. Paul says was true. Surely, then, able men were needed for the position of presbyters. For that reason Paul goes on to enumerate some of their necessary qualifications, 1,5-9. But there was another reason why well-qualified men were highly necessary, namely because heretical teachers of the circumcision were raising havoc in the churches of Crete. These had to be set aright or cast out. 1,10-16.

b. As to teaching.

Titus receives directions how to exhort the aged men, aged women, young women, young men and slaves. All of them are to be soberminded and obedient in their particular position in life. 2,1-10.

But what means are to be employed to bring about such a wholesome condition? Only and alone the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 2,11-15.

However, the Christians also have certain duties over against the unbelievers generally. Hence Titus is to instruct them how to behave toward all non-Christians, 3,1-3. Were not they also heathen at one time, and was it not solely the grace of God in Christ which brought about their changed condition? Therefore, let Christians love their fellow-men even as God loved all. Heretics likewise are to be loved, but avoided. 3,4-11.

In conclusion Paul gives personal instructions, asking Titus to hurry from Crete to meet Paul at Nicopolis as soon as he was relieved by Artemas or Tychicus. 3,12-25.

3. The Second Epistle to Timothy.

This letter was written during the last days of Paul's life. It is his last will and testament and was written "not so much with ink as with Paul's own blood. It is the solemn subscription of the Pauline doctrine and faith". * No wonder then that its contents are full of pathetic tenderness and deep solemnity.

After the usual greeting and thanksgiving, 1,1-2, Paul exhorts his beloved young friends to suffer hardship for the Gospel's sake, to be ashamed neither "of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner."** This exhortation gains in force by the very fact that St. Paul points to himself as an example of suffering for Christ's sake. 1,3-18. So likewise Timothy should be willing to suffer hardships as a good soldier of the Cross. Doing that, he will be amply rewarded. 2,1-13.

Then follow certain rules as to how pastors are to conduct themselves. 2,14-26. Such qualified shepherds are especially necessary because of the grievous times of heresy and persecution and because of the terrible depravity of the last days. 3,1-9. Hence the exhortation to abide in the truth and to teach with increased diligence and earnestness. 3,10-4,5.

Now comes that triumphant shout of victory of that greatest of all apostles: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have

* Calvin. Quoted in Dallmann's "Paul", 325.

** II Tim. 1,8.

finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. . . . The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

Because the Apostle is about to suffer martyrdom and will no longer be able to gainsay error, it becomes the more necessary for Paul's disciple to continue in the footsteps of his great teacher. 4,1-8.

Here follow Paul's last counsels, his greetings, and the benediction. 4,9-22.

IV The Closing Days of the Great Apostle.

Once again Paul was within the mighty capital. But what a change he beheld everywhere! Round about him was a scene of devastation, the effects of the recent conflagration. This must have been a very depressing view. It reminded him of the thousands of innocent Christians who died a martyr's death to account for Nero's cruel act.

Once again Paul was imprisoned in Rome. This time he was not treated with the clemency which he enjoyed during his former Roman imprisonment. He was in solitary confinement. Only Luke was with him. ** He had parted with all his ordinary companions as we see from the last chapter of his last letter. All the more heart-rending must have been the fact that Demas had without good reason forsaken him. *** But even through this thick darkness there gleamed a ray of light. Onesiphorus arrived.

* II Tim. 4,6-8; 4,18.

** II Tim. 4,11.

*** II Tim. 4,10.

This warmhearted disciple had followed Paul from Ephesus to Rome, had taken great pains to discover his prison, and, having overcome the difficulty to meet Paul, was rendering him assistance. This Paul gratefully acknowledges in the words: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."* From this passage we at the same time see that the sojourn of Onesiphorus at Rome was short. Soon Paul again had not a friend with him. But the spirit of Paul was not broken during this trying time. He was still the strong Christian that he was before. He even desired his books and his parchment which had been left at Troas. Timothy was to bring these things to him. Whether Timothy was able to fulfil this wish of the aged Apostle is uncertain. Chances are that by the time Timothy could reach Rome Paul was no longer among the living.

In fact when Paul made this request his first trial at court had taken place already.** His accusers with their witnesses had hurriedly prepared their case against him and had rushed to Rome. Paul was brought before court. Nero took his seat on the tribunal. At his side were the jurors. Each juror was provided with three tablets, one of which was marked with the letter "A", Absolveo, Not guilty, another with the letter "C", Condemno, Guilty, and the third with the letters "N L", Non liquet, or Adjournment for further investigation.

* II Tim. 1, 16-18

** II Tim. 4, 16.

Before this court Paul stood deserted. His accusers were better situated. Alexander the coppersmith together with his witnesses were bringing their accusations. Paul had to depend on the Lord. He had no advocate to argue his cause and no witnesses. At that time witnesses were not compelled to give evidence, and hence, since the followers of this new religion, were punished so cruelly, not a single Christian ventured to defend the accused. Those of Asia who knew that Paul was innocent might have offered testimony, but they were panic-stricken by the prevailing persecution. Hence the Apostle writes: "Thus thou knowest that all they which are in Asia have turned their backs upon me," * among whom must have been Phygellus and Hermogenes.** However, the Lord stood by him. Paul was able to defend himself and to confess Christ.

At the close of the trial the judge would confer with the jurors and would receive from them one of the tablets. The verdict would then be given in accordance with the majority of votes. Nero naturally did as he pleased. Paul had defended himself so successfully that even Nero was obliged to acquit him. Hence Paul writes: "I was delivered from the mouth of the lion."***

During the interval between the first and the second trial Paul wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy. During this interval also, Nero evidently left for Baiae.

At the second hearing, which took place before governors, as Clement of Rome writes, Paul again openly confessed his faith and insisted that he had violated no law. Again the accusers presented their case. This time, however, Paul heard the word

* II Tim. 1, 15.

** II Tim. 4, 16.

*** II Tim. 4, 17.

"Guilty". Sentence of death was pronounced, and Paul was conducted to his cell.

It was custom to grant a delay of ten days before carrying out the sentence. This delay was granted so that the Emperor might have the opportunity to grant a pardon. Nero, of course, paid no attention to this custom. He often hustled his victims off to death in an hour. And Helius, Nero's representative, we may be sure, left no long interval elapse between the Apostle's condemnation and his execution.

Tradition says that on the 29th of June, A.D. 66, Paul was led to execution. The place of martyrdom is supposed to have been at Aquae Salviae, or Tre Fontane, about two miles from Rome, on the Via Ostiensis. Thus ended the life of the greatest of all missionaries.

"No more to tread the desert's burning sand
Or climb the pass where mountain snows congeal!
No more to brave the robber's ruffian band,
Or plow the stormy seas with treacherous keel!
No more the ignominious lash to feel,
Or drag the galling chain! -- Now dawns the day
That sets to long-tried faith the welcome seal;
And lightened of its weary load of clay,
The spirit rests with Him who "wipes all tears away." *

* Dallmann: "Paul", 329.

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