



Church of Christ

Rapid City, South Dakota

April 21, 2024

Elders

Elbert Johnson

Terry Harmon

Deacons

Casey Allen

Mike Atchley

Aaron Christensen

Charles Taylor

Evangelist

Terry Harmon

Schedule of Services:

Sunday:

Bible study -

9am

Worship - 10 am

Evening - 6 pm

Wednesday:

Bible study -

7pm

Please join us!

The Praetorian Guard

by David Padfield
Part 2/2

Paul In Chains

"Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him." (Acts 28:16). It is interesting that Luke uses the phrase, "the captain of the guard," since there were usually two Prefects (captains) in the Praetorian Guard. However, between the years 51 and 62 A.D. there was just one Prefect; his name was Afrianius Burrus. It is believed by most scholars that Paul arrived in Rome around 60 A.D. It is also interesting to note that by the end of the second century the work of the Praetorian Prefect was highly elevated. "The command of these favored and formidable troops soon became the first office of the empire. As the government degenerated into military despotism, the Praetorian Prefect, who in his origin had been a simple captain of the guards, was placed not only at the head of the army, but of the finances, and even of the law." (Edward Gibbon, *The History Of The*

Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire, Vol. I, p. 159).

Paul had been delivered to the Praetorian Guard to await trial before the Emperor. Paul is twice referred to as having been "bound in chains," where the Greek word *halusis* is used (Acts 28:20; Eph. 6:20). The *halusis* was a short length of chain by which the wrist of a prisoner was bound to the wrist of a soldier who was guarding him, so that escape was impossible. Though allowed some freedom, Paul was still under constant guard. In the course of two years, one by one, Praetorian Guards would be on duty with Paul. But these guards were also under the constant influence of Paul and the gospel! They could not help overhearing what Paul taught others. They could hear Paul as he spoke to others. They would hear him pray and sing praises to God. They would note his courage, gentleness, loyalty to Christ and deep inner conviction. They would have noticed that Paul was no ordinary prisoner, brought to Rome to entertain the crowds in the Circus Maximus. He was an uncondemned Roman, one who had appealed to Caesar. It is almost certain Paul would have tried to teach his "captive audience" i.e., those soldiers chained to him.

Those To Serve (04/21)

AM service -

Announcements -

Mike A.

Song Leader -

Aaron

Scripture/Prayer -

Eric

2 Kings 7:3-16

[Sun. evening] -

3rd Sunday singing

Lord's Table:

Bread - Casey

Vine - Nate

Contribution -

Mike M.

4th Person -

Chuck D.

Closing Prayer -

Seth

Usher -

Chris N.

Bible Study Topics

Sunday Morning

John

Wed. Evening

The Faithful

Church

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Welcome Visitors!!

Thank you for being with us today. Please fill out a visitor's card and place it in the collection basket when it is passed. We invite you to comment on Google reviews so that others might find a sound congregation while traveling. Thank you!

Prayer Requests / News

- ◇ Please continue to pray for **Mike McDowell**, who lost his wife this past Thursday. A visitation is planned for May 2nd @ 5pm and funeral @ 10am on May 3rd at Kirk Funeral Home.
- ◇ Continual prayers for; **Dean Bullock; Therin Wendt; Tim Wood's mom and grandmother; Loretta Lewis; Jim Smith; Tera Ottenbacher; Carolyn McDowell, Neil Sperle; Timmy Walker; Jon & Deb Vick; Allen Rustad; Tim Tutor; Alyssa & Danielle Prochaska; Justin Barnhart; Enola Atchley; Chuck & Mary Taylor; Marcus Taylor and family; Linda McBrayer; Barbara Olson; Twyla Neimi; and Jessica Bannister.**
- ◇ Happy Birthday to **Jens Christensen (04/29)!**
- ◇ **Potluck Fellowship** today. Please stay and join us!

[continued from page 1]

Paul's imprisonment had opened the way for preaching the gospel to the finest regiment in the Roman army! All the Praetorian Guard knew why Paul was in prison—and many of them were touched by the gospel. No wonder Paul declared that his imprisonment had actually been for the furtherance of the gospel! The news spread from guard to guard, to the families of the guards, and then to Caesar's household! This very sight had to give great comfort and fresh courage to the brethren at Philippi. Paul ended the Philippian letter by saying, "*All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household*" (Phil. 4:22). Paul sends special greetings from the Christian brothers who are of Caesar's household. It is important to understand this phrase rightly. It does not mean those who are of Caesar's kith and kin. Caesar's household was the regular phrase for what we would call the Imperial Civil Service; it had members all over the world. The palace officials, the secretaries, the people who had charge of the imperial revenues, those who were responsible for the day-to-day administration of the empire, all these were Caesar's household." (William Barclay, *The Letters To The Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 87).

Conclusion - Being in protective custody gave him free rein to preach the gospel to guards and his visitors! While in Rome he was saved from many of the hardships, persecutions, and afflictions that had often attended his preaching in the cities of Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor. From his rented quarters he wrote five New Testament epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, and probably Hebrews). Luke, the beloved physician, ends the book of Acts with these words: "*Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*" (Acts 28:30-31). We wonder why Luke never told us what happened to Paul, whether he was executed or released. The reason is that this was not purpose. At the beginning Luke gave us his

scheme of Acts when he told how Jesus commanded His followers to bear witness for Him in Jerusalem and all over Judaea and Samaria and away to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Now the tale is finished; the story that began in Jerusalem rather more than thirty years ago has finished in Rome. It is nothing less than a miracle of God. The Church which at the beginning of Acts could be numbered in scores, cannot now be numbered in tens of thousands. The story of the crucified man of Nazareth has swept across the world in its conquering course, until now without interference, is being preached in Rome, the capital of the world. The gospel has reached the center of the world and is being freely proclaimed—and Luke's task is at an end." (William Barclay, *The Acts Of The Apostles*, p. 193). What can we learn from the treatment of Paul? There is nothing in the gospel that we should ever be ashamed. The gospel has not lost its power to save and change the hearts of men and women.