



Chapter 26

Paul, An Apostle

*"For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,
'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may
bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'"*

Acts 13: 47

Chapter 26

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Read

Acts

22:1 - 29

2 Corinthians

11:1 - 12:13

When the early Christians introduced their faith, they told many stories of miracles. But there were two miracles that seemed most astonishing.

The first was that Jesus, who had been dead, was really raised from the dead and had been seen alive by hundreds of people.

The second was that Saul, the most fanatical persecutor of the Christians, had become their most successful apostle.

Under his Roman name, Paul, he is responsible for almost half the books of the New Testament. Yet he had also been responsible for the sufferings of unknown numbers of Christian martyrs.

“The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” Paul wrote to his good friend Timothy. “And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.”¹

50 A.D.	52-55	55 A.D.	57-59	60-62	62 (or 64)*	65 A.D.
Paul works in Corinth with Silas	Paul works with churches in Ephesus		Paul is imprisoned in Caesarea	Paul is under house arrest in Rome	Paul is beheaded by Nero	
<p>Rome: 54 Claudius is poisoned by his wife, Agrippina.</p> <p>54-68 Nero is Emperor.</p> <p>64 Fire ravages Rome for nine days. Nero blames Christians which institutes first official persecutions</p>		<p>54 Paul writes 1 Corinthians to answer questions from a Corinth church about marriage, pagan sacrifices and other topics.</p>	<p>56 Paul is arrested in Jerusalem; Roman officials transfer him to Caesarea to protect him from death threats.</p>		<p>62 Ananus, the high priest, orders James the Just to be stoned to death.</p>	<p>64 Rome burns for nine days. Christians are blamed by Nero.</p>
						<p>*The exact date of Paul's death, how and where, is a subject of scholarly debate.</p>



Peter And Paul In Acts

In the time of the apostles, it was common for Jews to have a Roman name as well. For example, the author of the second Gospel was called John (Jewish) and Mark (Roman). Saul, too, had a Roman name, and Luke begins to refer to him as Paul when the Good News begins to spread throughout the Roman world (see Acts 13: 9).

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke works hard to show us that Paul has the same authority as the original Twelve. Some scholars think that Luke's main purpose in Acts was to show that Paul was a real apostle. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's ministry parallels Peter's in significant ways.

Peter	Paul
First sermon announces the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. (Acts 2: 14-36)	First sermon announces the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. (Acts 13: 16-41)
Reprimands Simon the Magician. (Acts 8: 9-24)	Reprimands Bar-Jesus the magician. (Acts 13: 6-12)
Heals the lame. (Acts 3: 1-10)	Heals the lame. (Acts 14: 8-10)
Refuses to be worshiped as a god by Cornelius. (Acts 10: 24-26)	Refuses to be worshiped as a god by the people of Lystra. (Acts 14: 8-18)
Rescued from prison by a miracle. (Acts 12: 6-11)	Rescued from prison by a miracle. (Acts 16: 25-34)
Becomes famous for healings, so that the sick hope to be touched by his shadow. (Acts 5: 15-16)	Becomes famous for healings, so that the sick are healed by handkerchiefs or aprons that touched him. (Acts 19: 1-12)
Raises Tabitha from the dead. (Acts 9: 36-42)	Raises Eutychus from the dead. (Acts 20: 7-12)

Over and over again, God shows his power through Paul in the same way as through Peter. None of the early Christians doubted that Peter was a true apostle. Luke shows us that we must believe Paul for the same reasons.

Apostle To The Gentiles

Jesus chose Paul for a specific mission: to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. No one could have been better qualified:

- **Paul's classical education had taught him to speak to the Greeks and Romans in their own terms.**
- **That education also gave him a thorough grounding in logic, which he used to make important distinctions in Christian doctrine.**
- **His intense study of the Hebrew Scriptures gave him the tools to refute any argument Jewish authorities might bring against him.**
- **His Roman citizenship kept him safe from the plots of anti-Christian conspirators (for an example, see Acts 23: 27).**

Paul understood that the New Covenant was in every way the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. It was natural that it should be preached first to the Jews, the people of the Old Covenant. But the Good News was for all people.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you [the Jews in Pisidia]. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For the Lord has commanded us, saying,

'I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'
(Acts 13: 46-47)

Although the Gospel was preached first to the Jews, the New Covenant really erased every distinction between people.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3: 28)

As we saw, it was Paul who insisted that the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. Yet Paul also had his friend Timothy circumcised to avoid scandalizing the Jews.² Although the New Covenant made him free from the Law of Moses, Paul was always willing to sacrifice that freedom if it meant that he could help people see past their prejudice to the Good News of Christ.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9: 19-23)



The Law Was Our Custodian

- **Roman sons were guided by “custodians” until adulthood.**
- **The Law of Moses was our custodian.**
- **When Christ came, we were freed from the authority of the custodian.**

Before the Council of Jerusalem, some Christians thought that the followers of Christ would have to follow the whole Law of Moses. But Paul insisted—and the Church, guided by Peter, agreed—that Gentiles could not be held responsible for the Law. The New Covenant made us free from the Law.

So what was the purpose of the Law in the first place?

Paul explains that the Law of Moses was like a “custodian” or tutor. In Roman times, well-to-do parents would have a private *pedagogue* (Greek for “child-leader”) or custodian for their son. The pedagogue was a slave, but the father gave him absolute authority over the son. But when the son grew up and became an adult, the pedagogue had no more authority over him. As an adult, he was subject only to his father.



The Law of Moses, Paul says, was our pedagogue. With the coming of Christ, we grew up into faith.

Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith....

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father.... So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir. (Gal 3: 23-26; 4: 1-2, 7)

Being Christian means being free from the Law, which bound us only until Christ came. Now we are subject only to God directly.

This divine pedagogy appears especially in the gift of the Law (cf. Ex 19-20; Dt 1-11; 29-30). God gave the Law as a "pedagogue" to lead his people towards Christ (Gal 3: 24). But the Law's powerlessness to save man deprived of the divine "likeness," along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts (cf. Rom 3: 20), enkindles a desire for the Holy Spirit. The lamentations of the Psalms bear witness to this. (CCC 708)

Sin Brings Death Through The Law

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means. Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death in me. For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. (Rom 7: 7-12)

Nothing is wrong with the Law: the fault is in our own sin. Sin manages to change our good intentions to evil actions. It's like an addiction: we want to give it up, but no matter how hard we try we fall back into our old habit.

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.... So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (Rom 7: 15-17, 21)

We all sin, even though we know what is right, and even though most of us actually want to do what is right. When we do sin, the law condemns us. It condemns us in our own conscience, even when no one else knows what we have done. Because no one can keep from sinning against the Law, everyone is condemned by the Law.

For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom 3: 20)

"Justified" means made right with God, clean from sin and worthy to receive God's promises. We can never earn that justification through the Law, because the law is what tells us we are sinners.



*“For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me.
So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.”
(Rom 7: 11-12)*

St. Paul’s Doctrine Of Justification

But if the Law of Moses could not make us righteous—that is, worthy of God’s promises—then what could?

Paul’s answer is that only God himself could do it. We can’t earn righteousness, but God gives it to us as a gift. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ atoned for all our sins.

Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us. It has for its goal the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life. It is the most excellent work of God’s mercy. (CCC 2020)

Through God’s grace, which we did nothing to deserve, we are given the righteousness we could never earn through the Law. Adam’s sin *dis-graced* us all: it removed God’s grace from us. Jesus Christ atoned for us all: by his death and resurrection he restored us to our place as children of God.

Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more; so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 5: 18-21)

Without God's gift of righteousness, we are slaves to the cycle of sin and death. We try to obey the Law, we fail, and the Law condemns us. But with God's grace—the help God gives us, which we could never deserve—we can break free from that cycle, through our faith in Jesus Christ and the sacrifice he made for us.

There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom 8:1-4)

But why did Jesus have to die? The answer is that God is perfect. Perfect justice demands that the penalty for sin be paid. But we are all sinners: as Psalm 14:3 says, "there is none that does good, no, not one."

Under the Old Covenant, someone who had broken the law would make a sin offering. Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ himself is our sin offering.

For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus. (Rom 3:22-26)

Paul tells us that we are "justified by faith apart from works of the law."³ The essence of "justification" is divine sonship, which is freely given by the Spirit in baptism.

Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is *favor*, the *free and undeserved help* that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life (cf. Jn 1:12-18; 17:3; Rom 8:14-17; 2 Pt 1:3-4). (CCC 1996)

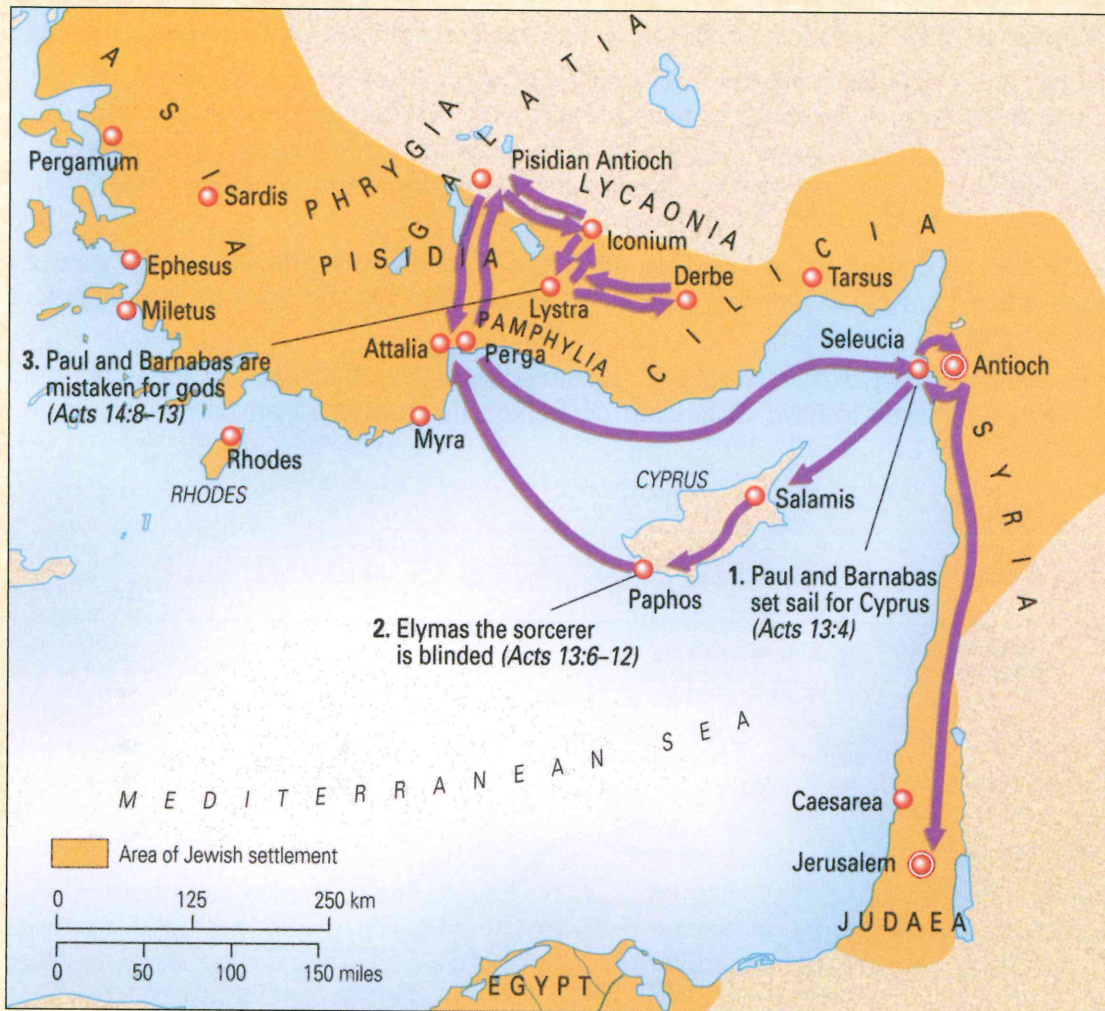
Grace is a *participation in the life of God*. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church. (CCC 1997)

We can never earn the right to be part of God's family, not even by perfect obedience. It must be a free gift from God. Paul says that following the Law of Moses—the rituals and observances that set Israel apart as a nation—can never justify us. Indeed, history shows that the Law could never bring holiness to Israel. Israelites and Gentiles alike can be justified by their faith in Jesus Christ without following the Law of Moses.

According to Christian tradition, the Law is holy, spiritual, and good (cf. Rom 7:12, 14, 16), yet still imperfect. Like a tutor (cf. Gal 3:24) it shows what must be done, but does not of itself give the strength, the grace of the Spirit, to fulfill it. Because of sin, which it cannot remove, it remains a law of bondage. According to St. Paul, its special function is to denounce and *disclose sin*, which constitutes a "law of concupiscence" in the human heart (cf. Rom 7). However, the Law remains the first stage on the way to the kingdom. It prepares and disposes the chosen people and each Christian for conversion and faith in the Savior God. It provides a teaching which endures for ever, like the Word of God. (CCC 1963)

Paul does *not* mean that good works count for nothing. Some early Christians might have misinterpreted him, thinking that good works were unnecessary because they had faith. A letter from St. James set them straight.

Paul's First Journey (Acts 13:4 - 14:26)



What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

But some one will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. (Jas 2: 14-18)

Membership in God's family comes to us as a free gift. Once we are members of the family, however, we are expected to abide by the terms of the family covenant—including all the good works Jesus commanded. That does not mean that our good works can buy our way into the family; instead, because God freely gave us membership in his family, we are held to a higher standard.

St. Paul's Travels

Paul's travels took him through much of the Roman Empire. In Asia Minor, in Greece, and in Rome itself, he preached the Gospel, founded new churches, and encouraged churches that had been founded by other apostles. According to one ancient tradition, he even went as far as Spain.

Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2 Cor 11: 25-27)

Eventually, though, he ended up in Rome. He was sent there as a prisoner. It was one of those occasions when his Roman citizenship helped him out: he had the legal right to appeal to the Emperor in Rome.

Of course, an appeal like that could take a long time. Meanwhile, Paul was a prisoner, but not badly treated. He was allowed to have visits from his friends, like the physician Luke, who wrote down

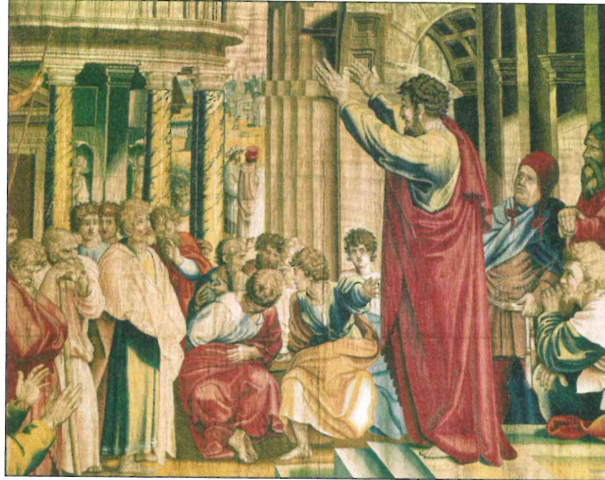
Paul's Second Journey (Acts 15:40-18:22)



Paul's story in the Acts of the Apostles. He was also allowed to send letters to friends and to churches he had founded.

Luke's story in Acts ends with Paul in Rome. He had reached the heart of the Roman Empire, carrying out Jesus' orders to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. He might have been released and arrested again later, or he might have spent the rest of his life a prisoner in Rome.

The tradition of the Church is sure, however, that he eventually died in Rome during Nero's persecution. An ancient tradition says that he died on the same day as St. Peter. Peter was crucified; Paul, as a Roman citizen, was spared that torture. His head was cut off with a sword, which is why you see St. Paul holding a sword in many pictures of him: it reminds us of how he died for the faith.



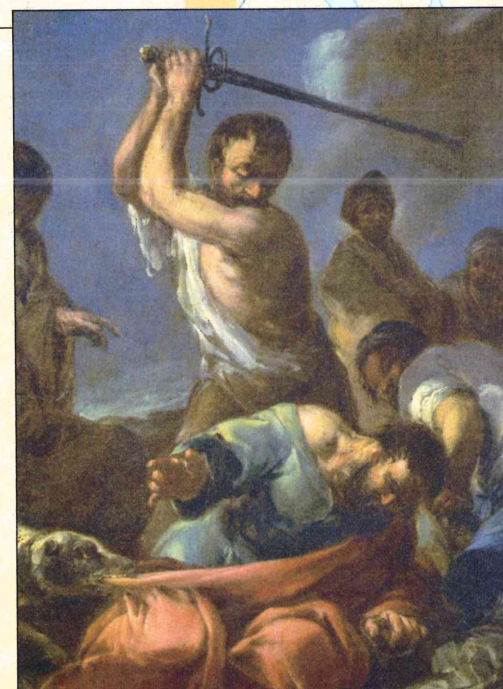
Paul's Third Journey (Acts 18:23-21:17)



Paul's Journey To Rome (Acts 21:26-28:31)



"After we had escaped [from the shipwreck], we then learned that the island was called Malta. . . . Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper came out . . . and fastened on his hand. . . . He . . . shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. . . [the natives] said that he was a god." (Acts 28: 1-6)



The sword that Paul carries in many paintings and sculptures of him reminds us of how he died for his faith.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

The heretic Marcion had argued that the God of the New Testament was a different God from the God of the Old Testament. Tertullian refutes that argument: no one had ever doubted that Paul was preaching the same God that the Jews had always worshiped.

Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, ch. 21.

Now if it was with the view of preaching a new god that he [Paul] was eager to abrogate the law of the old God, how is it that he prescribes no rule about the new god, but solely about the old law, if it be not because faith in the Creator was still to continue, and His law alone was to come to an end?—just as the Psalmist had declared: “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed.”

And, indeed, if another god were preached by Paul, there could be no doubt about the law, whether it were to be kept or not, because of course it would not belong to the new lord, the enemy of the law. The very newness and difference of the god would take away not only all question about the old and alien law,

but even all mention of it. But the whole question, as it then stood, was this, that although the God of the law was the same as was preached in Christ, yet there was a disparagement of His law. Permanent still, therefore, stood faith in the Creator and in His Christ; manner of life and discipline alone fluctuated. Some disputed about eating idol sacrifices, others about the veiled dress of women, others again about marriage and divorce, and some even about the hope of the resurrection; but about God no one disputed.

Now, if this question also had entered into dispute, surely it would be found in the apostle, and that too as a great and vital point. No doubt, after the time of the apostles, the truth respecting the belief of God suffered corruption, but it is equally certain that during the life of the apostles their teaching on this great article did not suffer at all; so that no other teaching will have the right of being received as apostolic than that which is at the present day proclaimed in the churches of apostolic foundation. You will, however, find no church of apostolic origin but such as reposes its Christian faith in the Creator.



A first century Artemis idol from the Ephesus Museum.

The Great Theatre of Ephesus and the Appian Way. On the westward part of Paul's third journey, Paul spent three years in Ephesus. In this time, Paul brought many to Christ. In Acts 19: 23-41, Demetrius, an Ephesian silversmith whose trade in silver Artemis idols had been jeopardized by Paul's preaching, organized a protest of silversmiths and craftsmen at this great theater which seats twenty-five thousand people. Paul was rescued from a potential riot by Alexander, a town clerk, who assured the Ephesians that Paul and his companions were "neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers." Alexander told the silversmiths to take up any complaint against Paul with the courts and avoid a dangerous riot.

VOCABULARY

ASIA

A part of the Roman Empire corresponding roughly to Turkey. Today known as Asia Minor. Paul founded many churches there.

BARNABAS

A Christian missionary who was Paul's companion in some of his travels. He introduced Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem.

CUSTODIAN

A tutor or pedagogue: someone placed in charge of a child until the child reaches maturity.

JUSTIFICATION

Being made right with God. It is a free and undeserved gift God gives us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

NERO

The wicked (and probably insane) emperor who began the first Roman persecution of the Christians.

ROME

The capital of the Roman Empire, and the greatest city of the ancient world. Peter—the first pope—and Paul died there on the same day after having organized the Church.

SPAIN

The western most province of the Roman Empire. James and perhaps Paul traveled there in their journeys.

TIMOTHY

A friend of Paul to whom he addressed two letters.



An altar dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul in a prison cell in Mamertine (Mamertinum) Prison in Rome, the prison which held Peter and Paul during his second imprisonment.

STUDY QUESTIONS

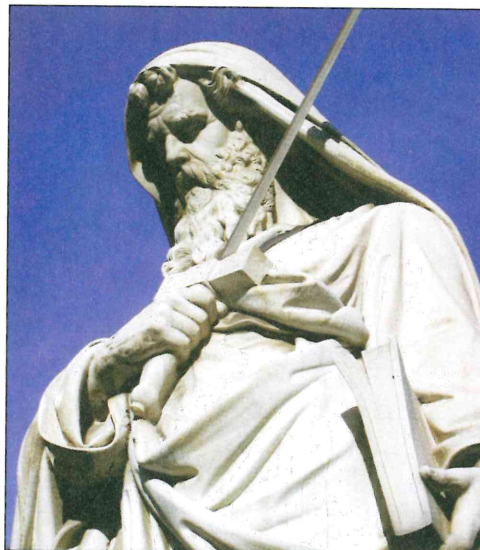
1. What two miracles did early Christians deem most astonishing?
2. Why did Paul consider himself an example of Jesus Christ's perfect patience?
3. How does Luke use the Acts to show us that we must believe Paul had the same authority as the original twelve apostles?
4. For what specific mission did Christ chose Paul?
5. What qualified him for this role?
6. What did the New Covenant erase?
7. What was the purpose of the Law if it was only to be discarded when Christ came?
8. How can we achieve righteousness?
9. Why did Jesus have to die?
10. What happens if we do not achieve righteousness?
11. What does Christian tradition say regarding the Law?
12. Does faith make good works unnecessary?
13. Where did St. Paul travel?
14. Where was St. Paul at the end of Luke's story?
15. What does Church Tradition tell us about the end of Paul's life?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Paul was a well educated man. His studies in Greek and Roman thought, logic, and Hebrew scripture allowed him to be prepared to defend the faith in any situation. Paul also had great faith and was able to perform many of the miracles which Peter also performed as head of the Church. Paul disagreed with Peter on different occasions in matters concerning the Church, but he always ended up submitting to Peter's judgment, though Peter was an uneducated Galilean. Why was Paul so subservient to Peter? What is so important about Peter's position as head of the Church on earth?

2. Why does Paul call himself "the foremost of sinners"? Do you think this label is appropriate? Explain.

3. Church tradition holds that Paul was beheaded in Rome because of his faith. It was only his Roman citizenship that saved him from death on a cross. Why do you think Roman citizens were not allowed to be crucified? What was so terrible about the death our Lord endured for us?



St. Paul holds his sword of martyrdom outside St. Paul's Church in Rome.

FROM THE CATECHISM

32 The *world*: starting from movement, becoming, contingency, and the world's order and beauty, one can come to a knowledge of God as the origin and the end of the universe.

As St. Paul says of the Gentiles: For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made (Rom 1: 19-20; cf. Acts 14: 15, 17; 17: 27-28; Wis 13: 1-9).

And St. Augustine issues this challenge: Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air distending and diffusing itself, question the beauty of the sky...question all these realities. All respond: "See, we are beautiful." Their beauty is a profession [*confessio*]. These beauties are subject to change. Who made them if not the Beautiful One [*Pulcher*] who is not subject to change? (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 241, 2: PL 38, 1134)

442 Similarly Paul will write, regarding his conversion on the road to Damascus, "When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles..." (Gal 1:15-16). "And in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts 9: 20).

639 The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56 St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve..." (1 Cor 15: 3-4). The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus (cf. Acts 9: 3-18).

1385 To respond to this invitation we must *prepare ourselves* for so great and so holy a moment. St. Paul urges us to examine our conscience: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Cor 11: 27-29). Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.

Endnotes

1. 1 Tm 1: 15-16.
2. Acts 16: 3.
3. Rom 3: 28.

The ruins of the bema or platform in Corinth where Gallio judged Paul. (Acts 18: 5-17)

