

A PRISONER OF CHRIST

Paul wrote the Book of while a Roman prisoner of Christ – “Paul, a prisoner of Christ.”

The Greek word for prisoner is desmios. Desmios was used by Paul to describe a prisoner of war rather than a criminal.

A criminal prisoner is a person who is deprived of his liberty because of a charge of violating a law of the state.

A War prisoner is a person deprived of his liberty because he was captured as a military combatant. Paul is thinking in terms of the Angelic Conflict (AC) and being captured on the battlefield (Eph.6:10-17).

This lesson will study five aspects of Paul being captured on the battlefield of the angelic conflict as a prisoner of Christ and not Rome or the Devil.

1. This idea is used five times to describe Paul’s life as a missionary of the gospel of grace salvation (Philm.1, 9, 10, 13, 23; Eph.3:1; 4:1; Col.4:18; Phil.1:7, 13-14) [Prison Epistles].

In 2 Cor.11:23-28, Paul describes his life as a “Servant of Christ” in terms of undeserved suffering in the angelic conflict (spiritual warfare).

Paul list 24 adversities associated with missionary service in the AC. Notice that many of them are given in multiplication.

- Vs.23 in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.
Vs.24 5 times received 39 lashes.
Vs.25 3 times beaten with rods, 3 times shipwrecked – night and day in deep.
Vs.26 frequent journeys, dangers of rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren.
Vs.27 in labor and hardships, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.
Vs.28 **apart from such external things**, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.”

2. In 2 Cor.11:23, Paul refers to “far more imprisonments.”

There were at least five imprisonments recorded of Paul while a missionary of the gospel of grace salvation.

- He was put in prison for Christ in Philippe (Acts 16:22-40) [city jail]
- He was put in prison for Christ in Jerusalem (Acts 23:10-24, 32) [Fort Antonia]
- He was put in prison for Christ in Caesarea (Acts 23:33-35) [Herod’s Praetorium]
- He was put in prison for Christ in Rome (Acts 27:1; 42; 28:16-31) [house arrest]
- He was put in prison for Christ in Rome (2 Tim.1:16; 2:9; 4:6-8) [Mamertine Dungeon]

3. Paul wrote four Prison Epistles while a POW of the AC. These four Epistles contain much of the doctrines of the spiritual warfare strategy of the AC (Eph.6:10-20; Col.4:3-6, 18; Philm. 10-13; Phil.1:12-16).

Paul talked about advancing the gospel with conversions while a **prisoner of Christ** (Phil.1:12-14).

- Philippe imprisonment (Acts 16:27-34) [jailer and household).
- Jerusalem imprisonment (Acts 23:11-23) [Jerusalem hostility).
- Caesarea imprisonment (Acts 26:28-32) [ranking politicians and military] (Acts 23-28).
- Rome first imprisonment (Philm.10-13; Col.4:9) [Onesimus] (Acts 28:23-24, 30-31) [crowds].

[Paul's second imprisonment in Rome was marked by desertion and betrayal (2 Tim.1:15; 2:17-18; 3:8-12; 4:10, 14-18)].

4. Paul wrote how the spiritual advancing believer wins in the warfare of the AC by comparison with the elite Praetorian Roman Guard in Rome (Eph.6:10-17) [the Armor of God].

Augustus developed the Praetorian Guard to protect the emperor from the fate of Julius Caesar. He commanded complete loyalty from them. They were the power behind the throne of Rome until Constantine I dissolved them.

Paul probably had them in mind when he wrote – “Suffer hardships with me, as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.” (2 Tim.2:3-4)

The term Praetorian was derived from the tent (praetorium) of the battlefield commander (praetor). Special qualified soldiers were chosen from both the infantry and cavalry to be trained and serve as members of the elite Praetorian Guard. They were responsible for guarding the emperor and the capital city.

Many scholars believe that Claudias Lysias was a Praetorian commander of 1 of 5 cohorts [1000 and 10 centurions] in Jerusalem and (Acts 22:25-30; 23:17-26).

They also believe that Julius was a Praetorian centurion of 100 in Caesarea (Acts 27:1-16). Julius was assigned to escort Paul to Rome because of Paul's appeal to Caesar.

Praetorian centurion was in charge of the crucifixion of Jesus in Jerusalem (Matt.27:27, 54).

5. Paul enacted Lex Valeria as a Roman citizen – the right of provocatio – the right to appeal a capital offence or penalty pronounced by a magistrate to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12; 26:32).

Lex Valeria, Porcia, or Julia didn't allow Roman citizens to be scourged with rods or whips or to be crucified.

Therefore, Paul was sent from Caesarea to Rome under Praetorian Guard and placed under house arrest in Rome until trial (Acts 28:30).