

Death of Paul

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DEATH OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

"As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Ph11. i. 20, 21.

WE know little respecting the death of the Apostle Paul. We have no record of the manner in which he met the final stroke. Yet I wish to make his death the subject of a few remarks; and to find in it, if possible (and it certainly ought to be possible), something that may suggest important thoughts on a subject which must soon be of great personal interest to us all.

It is a great event when such a man as Paul dies;— when a mind sagacious to plan, wise to impart counsel, vigorous to execute great designs, is withdrawn from the earth; when lips, once eloquent in the cause of truth, become silent; when he who guided the young, warned the wicked, strengthened the feeble, comforted the sorrowful, animated the desponding, is seen no more; when he who brought the richness of his experience, and the maturity of his judgment, to aid the great interests of truth and humanity, has passed away. Influence is of slow growth, and is of inestimable value. The world has no wealth to be compared with this, when employed in the cause of righteousness. Influence is that in a man's known talents, learning, character, experience, and position, on which a presumption is based that what he holds is true; that what he proposes is wise.

And as there is nothing more valuable in society than this, so there is nothing more difficult to replace. A city burned may be built again; the rubbish will be cleared away; the streets will be widened and straightened; long lines of private dwellings and public warehouses will rise from the ruins; and a busy population will soon again drive on the affairs of commerce, of manufacture, of trade. Lands which have been visited with drought are soon fresh and green again; the hills and valleys are clothed with verdure and flocks, the yellow harvest falls before the reaper, and the wains groan heavily-laden with sheaves. From the fields where armies have encamped or fought, where the harvest has been trodden down by the passing and repassing legions, where the torch of war has made everything desolate, all traces of conflict are soon removed; for trees are planted, and the earth is rendered fertile by blood, and the little mounds of earth which marked the place where brave men fell and died are levelled, and the plough passes over Marathon and Waterloo, as it did before the battle. But not so, when a great man dies. His place cannot soon be supplied. The world has never been able to find one who could fill the place of the Apostle Paul.

Manner of Death

Of the actual manner of his death, we know only what may be stated in few words. Tradition says that it was by being beheaded; and all the circumstances of the case render that probable. The fact that he was a Roman citizen would exempt him, under Roman laws, from death by lingering torture, in the forms in which it was inflicted on many of his Christian brethren. It would save him from the ignominy of crucifixion, and would thus distinguish his death from that of Peter, who had no claims to Roman citizenship, and who, wherever he died, was probably put to death, like his Master, on a cross (comp. John xxi. 18). There were two modes of beheading among the Romans:—the one by the licitor's

ax; the other by military execution with the sword. In the former case, the criminal was tied to a stake, scourged with rods, and then beheaded;¹ in the latter case, the executioner was commonly one of the Imperial bodyguards, and the execution was performed in presence of a centurion, whose duty it was to see the sentence carried out. It is every way probable that Paul was executed in this latter mode.

Place of Death

The place where he was put to death is fixed with some degree of certainty. "It was not uncommon to send prisoners, whose death might attract too much notice in Rome, to some distance beyond the city, Under a military escort, for execution." Tradition affirms that, in the case of Paul, this occurred beyond the city walls, on the south-western side of the city, on the road which led to Ostia, the port of Rome. That road was a great thoroughfare when Rome had some commerce; and though outside of the metropolis, and thus free from the dangers of popular tumult and excitement, it would be the most public and conspicuous of all the places in the vicinity of the great city. The traveller now as he goes out of Rome in the south-western quarter, through the gate which opens to the ancient road leading to Ostia, passes at the gate the tomb of Caius Cestus. A pyramid to mark that tomb, the only pyramid in Europe, had been erected in the time of Augustus Caesar, and consequently not long before the time when Paul was beheaded. Around that pyramid is now the Protestant burial-ground,—"unconsecrated ground," in the estimation of the inhabitants of Rome. Outside that gate, and in sight of that pyramid,—the only thing still there which it is certain was in existence at that time,—Paul probably suffered martyrdom. Not far from that spot now rises a magnificent structure,—the unfinished church of St. Paul; and near to it the small and ancient church of the "Three Fountains,"—the church erected on the spot where tradition says he was beheaded.¹ As to the manner in which his body was disposed of, we have no knowledge. One legend says that a noble matron

Three Fountains:

The head of the apostle, say the monks, bounded three times, and the three fountains of water sprang up where it struck the earth. named Lucina buried it on her own land, beside the Ostian road; the more common tradition is that it was conveyed to the Catacombs under the city—"those subterranean labyrinths, where, through many ages of oppression, the persecuted church found refuge for the living, and sepulchres for the dead." Probably no reliance is to be placed on either of these statements.

Dying Words

We have none of the dying words of the apostle Paul; we have no account of the melancholy procession to the place of death; we know not whether he was attended by any of his friends, or whether there were any Christians present to witness the closing scene, and to sustain him by their presence and their prayers. It would, indeed, be interesting if we could know that when the time came, and he saw the ax about to descend, he repeated his own triumphant language, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But the importance of such utterances in the dying hour has been vastly overrated. Paul, in his own writings, never refers to such dying expressions as proofs of personal piety. Those proofs he found in the lives of believers, not in their feelings or their expressions on a bed of death. To the apostle Paul, we know that "to die" would be "gain" (Phil. i. 21). He esteemed it as such, not indeed for all men, as if the mere fact of dying necessarily introduces them into a better state; but for himself he regarded it as a gain or advantage (1cfpSoe). He uses the same word in another place in the same epistle (Phil. iii. 7), in reference to what he had "gained," or sought as gain, in

Paul

The Mind of the Apostle

By A.N. Wilson

Chapter One: The Emperor Nero's Legacy to the Christian Church

On 19 July in the year AD 64, a fire broke out among the squalid, timber-built little shops which clustered around the Circus Maximus, the great sports stadium in Rome. It raged for six days, spreading across the base of the Palatine and the Caelian Hills, and by the end of a week it had destroyed many of the best-loved buildings and landmarks of the Imperial capital -- Luna's temple on the Aventine, Numa's palace, the shrine of Vesta near the Forum (though the great Forum itself remained unscathed). After six days, the fire-fighters seemed to have brought the conflagration under control but it was reignited, either by accident or design, on the Capitoline Hill and by the end of the month three of the fourteen quarters into which the Emperor Nero had divided the city were in ruins. Nero's own magnificent apartments on the Palatine and Oppian Hills were gutted, though the flames did not touch his stupendous Golden House (Domus Aurea), which was still being embellished and redesigned at the time of his death four years later.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/paul.htm?noredirect=on>

The Death Of Paul In Rome

by A.T. Robertson

"The details are all wanting. Tradition supplies only a few, which may be true or not. The story is that Paul was beheaded on the Ostian Road. It was customary for criminals of prominence to be executed several miles out of the city so as to avoid the crowds. We may picture the event in a possible manner. One day in late spring or early June the executioners came to Paul's dungeon and led him out of the city. One is reminded of Jesus as he bore his cross along his Via Dolorosa. Paul, as a condemned criminal, would be the victim of the rabble's sport. He would have no defender. We do not know if Luke was with Paul to the very last. We may at least hope so. If he could, he would surely walk along as near Paul as would be allowed. But no band of Christians followed with him now. He was going out of Rome on his way to the true Eternal City. He knew Rome well, but his eyes were fixed on other things. Outside the city the busy, merry life of the time went on. The crowds flowed into town. Some were going out. Paul was only a criminal going to be beheaded. Few, if any, of the crowds about would know or care anything about him. At a good place on the road some miles out the executioners stopped. The block was laid down. Paul laid his head upon it. The sword (or axe) was raised. The head of the greatest preacher of the ages rolled upon the ground.

Tradition says that a Roman 'matron named Lucina buried the body of St. Paul on her own land, beside the Ostian Road.' Be that as it may, no Christian can come to Rome, especially by the Ostian Road, without tender thoughts of Paul, the matchless servant of Jesus." (A.T. Robertson, *Epochs In The Life Of Paul*, pp. 316-317)

APOSTOLIC BEHEADING; THE DEATH OF PAUL

Apostolic Beheading; the Death of Paul

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, summed up his own contribution to Christianity better than anyone else could. "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." Wherever he carried the gospel, the church put down deep and enduring roots. He saw himself as primarily an apostle to the Gentile races.

Paul was ideally equipped for the role. In him three great cultures merged. A Roman citizen, he had entree to the entire Roman world. Steeped in Greek culture, he could convey his ideas across the Hellenized world. A Pharisee, strictest of the Jews, he carried in himself the Mosaic law and had points of contact in the synagogues of the empire.

Paul began his career as a persecutor of the faith. After meeting Christ in a daylight vision on the road to Damascus, where he was traveling to arrest Christians, his life was transformed. Christ ever after was all to him and he gave us insights into the Lord as deep as any found in the writings of the apostles who walked with the Lord. "I resolved to know nothing among you except Christ, and him crucified." "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; Yet not I, but Christ lives in me." "He was the firstborn over all creation." "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, both in heaven and the earth and under the earth."

In addition to his Christology, Paul pioneered the missionary tactics of the early church, brought the gospel to the Gentiles and came as close as any apostolic writer to creating a systematic theology. His Letter to the Romans has had a profound impact upon our understanding of guilt and grace, predestination and faith. Wherever reformation has come to the church the ideas of this epistle have played a leading part. His letters were prized by the early church. His fellow apostle Peter recognized their worth and included them with the other scriptures.

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This date is open to dispute. Paul's death has been variously placed between 62 and 67. We shall probably never know for sure.

What we do know is that he gave his life for the faith he had persecuted. At his conversion, a prophet named Ananias was sent to him to show him what things he must suffer. In an early letter he catalogued some of those sufferings. It is a long list. His beheading was but the culmination of a life of sacrifice "poured out as a drink offering" to his Lord Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:6).

The date of Paul's death is believed to have occurred after the Great Fire of Rome in July 64, but before the last year of Nero's reign, in 68.[3]

It is described in a number of sources:

I Clement (95–96 AD) suggests that both Paul and Peter were martyred.[88]

There is an early tradition found in the writing of Ignatius, probably around 110 AD, that Paul was martyred.[89]

Dionysius of Corinth, in a letter to the Romans (166–174 AD), stated that Paul and Peter were martyred in Italy.[90] Eusebius also cites the Dionysius passage.[91]

The Acts of Paul, an apocryphal work written around 160, describes the martyrdom of Paul. According to the Acts of Paul, Nero condemned Paul to death by decapitation.[92]

Tertullian in his Prescription Against Heretics (200 AD) writes that Paul had a similar death to that of John the Baptist, who was beheaded.[93]

Eusebius of Caesarea in his Church History (320 AD) testifies that Paul was beheaded in Rome and Peter crucified. He wrote that the tombs of these two apostles, with their inscriptions, were extant in his time; and quotes as his authority a holy man of the name of Caius.[94]

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John Chrysostom (c. 349–407) wrote that Nero knew Paul personally and had him killed.[97]

Sulpicius Severus says Nero killed Peter and Paul. (403 AD)[98]

A legend later[when?] developed that his martyrdom occurred at the Aquae Salviae, on the Via Laurentina. According to this legend, after Paul was decapitated, his severed head rebounded three times, giving rise to a source of water each time that it touched the ground, which is how the place earned the name "San Paolo alle Tre Fontane" ("St Paul at the Three Fountains").[99][100]

Also according to legend, Paul's body was buried outside the walls of Rome, at the second mile on the Via Ostiensis, on the estate owned by a Christian woman named Lucina. It was here, in the fourth century, that the Emperor Constantine the Great built a first church.

Then, between the fourth and fifth centuries it was considerably enlarged by the Emperors Valentinian I, Valentinian II, Theodosius I, and Arcadius. The present-day Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls was built there in 1800.[99]

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Paul's Execution Site and Burial Location

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://generationword.com/notes/romans/51-Paul_location_death_burial_hisotry.pdf

'If thou wilt go to the Vatican or to the Ostian road thou wilt find the trophies of the Apostles Peter and Paul who founded this Church.' These words of the Roman presbyter Gaius (or, Hippolytus bishop of Portus) in his treatise against the heretic Proclus are a positive testimony to the existence at the end of the Second Century of trophies or memoriae—i.e. small oratories—over the graves of the Apostles Peter and Paul. It further indicates in what localities these visible monuments were to be found.

320 AD - Emperor Constantine built a small basilica to receive the pilgrims visiting Paul's tomb.

325 AD – Eusebius makes the further statement that the names of the Apostles were to be seen in the cemeteries of Rome in his day.

390 AD – Emperor Theodosius enlarged the building of Constantine and encased Paul's remains in a sarcophagus located on view in the middle of the basilica which is the same sarcophagus we see today because it is embedded in the layer of the Theodosian basilica from 390.

433 AD – part of the building collapsed during an earthquake. During renovations the floor was elevated and the sarcophagus was buried and covered by a marble tombstone.

The tomb of St. Paul on the Ostian Way. The Apocryphal Acts all declare that St. Paul as became his status as a Roman citizen suffered martyrdom by decapitation and that he was led out to a place known as Aquae Salviae, near the third mile-stone on the Ostian Way.

604 AD - An extant inscription of Gregory the Great, 604 A.D., records the gift by him of a piece of land at the Aquae Salviae to the basilica of St. Paul

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