

**The Attackers: Paul's Second Imprisonment: Arrested at Nicopolis; Alexander as a Delator Identifies Paul as Instigator for Christians Burning of Rome; Inhuman Punishments Imposed; Paul's Synopsis of the Trial's 1st Phase, 2 Tim 4:16–18; Found Guilty in the 2d Phase, Paul Is Decapitated by the Sword**

**Paul's Second Imprisonment:<sup>1</sup>**

1. Paul decided to spend the winter of A.D. 65 in the city of Nicopolis, located in Northwest Greece on a promontory dividing the Ionian Sea from the Gulf of Arta.
2. This city was the site of Augustus Caesar's field headquarters during the Battle of Actium. The naval conflict took place at the entrance to the Gulf. Augustus's forces defeated those of Mark Antony in 31 B.C.
3. By the year 65, the Christian faith had become widely spread among the northern nations of the Mediterranean Sea largely due to the missionary journeys of Paul.
4. Within Roman society Christians were formerly looked upon as a sect of Judaism but had subsequently lost the toleration extended to the Jews.
5. When accusations against the Christians occurred in Rome, many prominent Christians were rounded up by the authorities, the most famous of which was the apostle Paul.
6. Under Roman law, the guilt of an offender had to be substantiated by an informer, in Latin a *delator*: an informer (plural: *delatores*).
7. This was a lucrative although despised group of informers who functioned under the emperors. They shared in the fines obtained from the accused and also received fees from the emperor.<sup>2</sup>
8. It turns out that Alexander Coppersmith functioned as a *delator* prior to Paul's indictment.
9. The details of this conclusion come from two sources: (1) Conybeare and Howson's *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* and (2) a summary of the Alexandrian passages in Acts and the Epistles to Timothy.
10. There are no sources that document the exact accusations Alexander made to Nero. Nero was certainly into emperor worship and Paul was promoting a new religion he considered illegitimate.
11. Assumptions within the context of the current Zeitgeist of Nero's reign give some insight:

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<sup>1</sup> The following synopsis is condensed from: W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1893; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 764–772; 781–83.

<sup>2</sup> “The role of the informer in matters of criminal law ... was of singular importance to the maintenance of order in Roman society, which was without adequate police force or public prosecutor. Delation under the empire consequently became a lucrative, though disreputable, profession” (“Delator,” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 3:968).

One article of accusation against him must have been the more serious charge, of having instigated the Roman Christians to their supposed act of incendiarism, before his last departure from the capital [A.D. 62]. It appears that Alexander the brassfounder was either one of his accusers, or, at least, a witness against him. We may add, that the employment of Informer (*delator*) was now become quite a profession at Rome, and that there would be no lack of accusations against an unpopular prisoner as soon as his arrest became known. (Conybeare and Howson, p.767)

12. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy was written during his second imprisonment in Rome. Alexander had tried to oppose him in Ephesus in Acts 19 but was silenced by Demetrius and the shouts of the metalworkers union.
13. In 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul excommunicates Alexander along with Hymenaeus by turning them over to Satan for punishment related to blasphemous statements made consistently in the church pastored by Timothy.
14. In 2 Timothy 4:14, Paul accuses Alexander of demonstrating many categories of evil against him. The Greek phrase **πολλά μοι κακά** (*pollá moi kaká*) is best translated, "many categories of evil."
15. The noun **κακός** (*kakós*) is in the plural and refers to the system by which Lucifer runs the world. That system includes the two categories of the cosmic system: (1) the arrogance complex and (2) the hatred complex.
16. The advanced stages of the hatred complex include religion and evil. Although involved in all categories of both complexes, Alexander's hatred of Paul centered around his rejection of the doctrine the apostle taught.
17. Alexander's theology was corrupted by ideas he accepted from Gnosticism and Judaism, both of which emphasized legalism over grace.
18. We have recently studied principles of evil primary of which is the fact it is the system by which Lucifer rules the world.
19. It is through evil that Lucifer strives to create a man-made Millennium which by definition requires perfection.
20. But evil is devoid of integrity. Its tactics include human good, deceit, violence, terror, confusion, and propaganda.
21. As a believer, Alexander is in the advanced stages of reversionism which includes scar tissue on the soul thus making it impossible for him to inculcate, recall, or apply doctrinal principles.
22. It is in this condition of soul that Alexander functions and Paul describes the result as the "demonstration of many categories of evil."
23. The pronoun *moi* is the dative of disadvantage of **ἐγώ** (*egó*): "to me for my disadvantage."
24. What is disadvantageous for Paul is advantageous for Alexander. Because of Alexander's enrollment among the *delatores*, Paul is hauled before Caesar's court as an arsonist.
25. Alexander believes he has achieved victory over Paul by eliminating him from the scene.
26. This begs the question, Why is Alexander still alive?

27. Back in A.D. 64, Paul turned the fate of Alexander over to the Lord for the administration of the sin unto death (1 Timothy 1:20).
28. By the year A.D. 67, we find Paul indicted by Nero for arson which is a capital crime. Since he was a Roman citizen it is universally agreed that he was executed by decapitation.
29. The dative of disadvantage for Paul is transformed to a dative of advantage. He dies a martyr's death and is instantly face to face with the Lord.
30. The dative of advantage for Alexander is now transformed into a dative of disadvantage as the Lord brings the process of taking him out under the sin unto death.
31. The accusation against the Christians and the procedure and verdict of Paul's second trial may be summarized as follows:
  - (1) The conflagration of Rome created suspicion among the city's citizens that the culprit was the emperor, Nero Claudius Germanicus.
  - (2) Regardless of whether Nero ignited the flames, the people were convinced he did. To divert blame away from himself, he pointed his regal finger at the Christians whose reputation among the population had become damaged from opposition to their beliefs.
  - (3) The success of this projection of blame is described by Tacitus in *Annals*:

Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontus Pilate. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.<sup>3</sup>

- (4) Those who accused Paul were at the trial's first phase which was held before the presiding magistrates. Paul gives us a synopsis of his first hearing which ended in a verdict of not guilty:

**2 Timothy 4:16** - At my first defense [ first phase of his second trial ] no one [ no witnesses for the defense ] supported me [ believers in Rome are identified as reversionistic cowards ], but all deserted [ ἐγκαταλείπω (*enkataleípō*): constative aorist for action extended over the church age ] me; may [ μή (*mē*): a request, not a command ] it not be counted against them [ those who recover from reversionism ].

<sup>3</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, *Great Books of the Western World* 15 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 168.

**v. 17 - But [ δέ (dé): adversative conjunction ] the Lord stood with me and strengthened [ ἐνδυναμόω (endunamóō): kept pouring the power into ] me, so that through me the proclamation [ κήρυγμα (kérugma): the communication of doctrine ] might be fully accomplished [ the interim between the first and second phases of the trial enabled Paul to write 2 Timothy & Titus and complete his contribution to the canon ], and that all the Gentiles [ the Gentile citizens of SPQR<sup>4</sup> ] might hear; and I was rescued [ ῥύομαι (rhúomai): dramatic aorist is emphatic for divine intervention ] out of the lion's mouth [ as a Roman citizen, Paul could not be fed to the lions ].**

- (5) At the second phase of the second trial, Paul was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to execution by means of decapitation, the form of capital punishment reserved for Roman citizens.

The privileges of Roman citizenship exempted Paul from the ignominious death of lingering torture, which had been lately inflicted on so many of his brethren. He was to die by decapitation. This is the universal tradition. The constitutional mode of inflicting capital punishment on a Roman citizen was by the lector's axe. The criminal was tied to a stake; cruelly scourged with the rods, and then beheaded. But the military mode of execution—decapitation by the sword—was more usual under Nero. Many examples may be found in Tacitus. The executioner was generally one of the *speculatores*, or imperial body-guards, under the command of a centurion, who was responsible for the execution of the sentence. He was led out to execution beyond the city walls, upon the road to Ostia. (p. 781)

The place of execution was not far distant; and there the sword of the headsman ended his long course of sufferings, and released that heroic soul from that feeble body. The death of Paul is recorded by his contemporary Clement; also by the Roman presbyter Caius \kā'-yas\ (who alludes to the Ostian road as the site of Paul's martyrdom), by Tertullian, Eusebius, Jerome, and many subsequent writers. The statement of Caius is quoted by Eusebius. That of Jerome is the most explicit. (pp. 782–83)

The statement that Paul was beheaded on the Ostian road agrees with the usage of the period, and with the tradition that his decapitation was by the sword not the axe. We have this tradition in Orosius \aw-rō'-zhē-as\ and Lactantius \lak-tan'-shē-as\. It was not uncommon to send prisoners whose death might attract too much notice in Rome, to some distance from the city, under a military escort, for execution.<sup>5</sup> (p. 783)

- (6) No believer departs from this life until the Lord until his mission before the Lord is accomplished.
- (7) Note the concepts that were in the divine decree regarding Paul: (1) the sovereignty of God empowered a man who was a Roman citizen, (2) no Roman citizen can be executed in a painful, humiliating manner, (3) the Epistles of 2 Timothy and Titus were completed during the interim between the two phases of the second trial, and (4) even the vicious, degenerate, and unmerciful emperor of Rome could not take Paul out until his duty was done.

<sup>4</sup> See Acts 18:6; 26:20; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11.

<sup>5</sup> W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1893; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 781–83).

- (8) Lucifer had co-opted Alexander to remove his nemesis, but the plan of God prohibited it until His timing in the decree allowed it.
- (9) Decapitation was considered the most merciful form of capital punishment. With the strike of the *speculator's* blade, Paul was instantly transported from the Ostian road to being face to face with the Lord.
- (10) Paul confidence in this very thing is expressed by the next verse:

**2 Timothy 4:18** - The Lord Himself shall deliver [ ῥύομαι (*rhúomai*) ] me from the source of every evil deed, and shall continue to preserve [ σώζω (*sózō*) ] me for His heavenly kingdom; to Whom is the glory forever and ever. Amen.