

# Paul's Roman Years

*The Voyage, the House Arrest, the Pastoral Period,  
and the Martyrdom*

*c. AD 59 – c. AD 67*

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*Primary Source: Holy Scripture · [noblemind.study/apostle-paul/](https://noblemind.study/apostle-paul/)*


*This is a focused timeline. For the broader chronology of Paul's life, consult the parent timeline  
([Paul\\_Life\\_Timeline.pdf](#)).*

## Phase 1 — The Voyage to Rome (c. AD 59–60)

~AD 59 (Aug-Sep)

Voyage

### Voyage from Caesarea begins; Julius the centurion; Aristarchus and Luke aboard

 Acts 27:1–2

After two years of detention under Felix and then Festus, Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:11) and was placed under Julius, a centurion of the Augustan cohort, for transport to Italy. He boarded an Adramyttian ship at Caesarea, bound up the Asian coast. Luke ("we") and Aristarchus of Thessalonica went with him — the only companions named on the long voyage.

*The shift from Felix to Festus is dated by Eusebius and inscriptional evidence to c. AD 59. F.F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, ch. 30.*

~AD 59 (Sep)

Voyage

### Sidon, Myra, slow sailing; Paul's warning ignored at Fair Havens

 Acts 27:3–12


At Sidon, Julius kindly permitted Paul to visit friends. From Myra in Lycia they transferred to an Alexandrian grain ship bound for Italy. They sailed slowly against the wind for many days and reached a poor harbor on Crete called Fair Havens. The Fast had already passed — sailing season was ending. Paul warned them: the voyage would be with damage and great loss not only of cargo but of lives. The centurion was persuaded by the pilot and the ship's owner rather than by Paul, and the majority voted to push on for the better harbor of Phoenix.

*"The Fast" (Acts 27:9) is the Day of Atonement; in AD 59 it fell on October 5. Ancient maritime practice considered the seas dangerous after September and closed (mare clausum) from mid-November to mid-February.*

~AD 59 (autumn)

Voyage

### Caught in the Euraquilo; fourteen days adrift; the angel's promise


 Acts 27:13–26

A gentle south wind seemed to confirm the decision — until a violent northeaster called the Euraquilo struck and drove the ship out to sea. They could no longer face into the wind. They threw the cargo overboard, then the ship's tackle. After many days without sun or stars, all hope of being saved was abandoned. Then Paul stood among them: an angel of the God to whom he belonged had stood beside him in the night and told him he must stand before Caesar — and that God had granted him every life on board. Not a soul would be lost, though the ship would be lost. They must run aground on a certain island.

~AD 59 (late autumn)

Voyage

### Shipwreck on Malta; 276 souls saved

 Acts 27:27-44

On the fourteenth night the sailors sensed land. Soundings confirmed it. Some tried to escape in the ship's boat under pretext of laying out anchors; Paul warned the centurion that unless they remained, none would be saved — and the soldiers cut the boat away. As day approached, Paul urged everyone to eat, took bread, gave thanks to God before all, broke it and began to eat. They were encouraged and shared the meal. There were 276 souls in all. They lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea, and at dawn ran her aground on a sandbar. The bow stuck fast; the stern was broken by the surf. The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent escape, but Julius — wanting to save Paul — overruled them. All 276 reached land safely, some swimming, some on planks.

~AD 59-60 (winter)

Malta

### Three months on Malta; the viper, the chief official's father, many healings

 Acts 28:1-10

The natives of Malta showed extraordinary kindness, building a fire because of the rain and cold. As Paul gathered sticks, a viper fastened on his hand. The natives expected him to swell up and die — they assumed he must be a murderer whom justice would not let live. When nothing happened, they changed their minds and called him a god. Publius, the chief official of the island, hosted them for three days; his father was sick with fever and dysentery; Paul prayed, laid hands on him, and healed him. Many others on the island came and were cured. When they finally sailed, the islanders honored them and supplied what they needed.

*Three months wintering matches Roman maritime practice (mare clausum); they would have sailed when the sea reopened around mid-February.*

## Phase 2 — Arrival & the Two-Year House Arrest (c. AD 60–62)

~AD 60 (spring)

### Roman Arrival

#### Final leg: Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli; brethren meet at the Forum of Appius

 Acts 28:11–15

When the sea reopened they sailed on another Alexandrian ship — the Twin Brothers — that had wintered at the island. They put in three days at Syracuse, then to Rhegium (the toe of Italy), then a south wind sprang up and on the second day they made Puteoli on the Bay of Naples. There they found brethren and were invited to stay seven days — Julius again allowing it. From Puteoli the news reached Rome, and Christians came down to meet Paul on the Appian Way: some at the Forum of Appius (about 43 miles south of Rome), others at the Three Inns (about 33 miles south). When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

*The Appian Way is the Via Appia, Rome's oldest paved road. The Forum of Appius and the Three Inns (Tres Tabernae) are both attested in Cicero (Letters to Atticus 2.10). The Christian community in Rome already exists before Paul arrives — he had written them his great theological letter several years earlier from Corinth.*

~AD 60

### Roman Arrival

#### Arrival at Rome; allowed to live by himself with a soldier


 Acts 28:16

When they came into Rome, Paul was permitted to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him. This is the Roman *custodia militaris*: the prisoner is chained to a guard but lives in private rented quarters, may receive visitors freely, and is fed at his own expense (or his friends' expense). It is the least restrictive form of Roman imprisonment and was reserved for prisoners of social standing or in non-violent cases.

~AD 60

### Roman Arrival

#### Meeting with the Roman Jewish leaders; some persuaded, others disbelieving

 Acts 28:17–29

Three days after arriving, Paul called together the leaders of the Roman Jews. He explained that he had done nothing against the people or the customs of the fathers but was a prisoner only because of the hope of Israel. They had received no letters from Judea about him and had heard nothing personal against him, but they knew the sect (the Way) was everywhere spoken against. They appointed a day; many came; Paul testified from morning till evening, persuading them concerning Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were persuaded; others disbelieved. Paul applied Isaiah 6:9–10 to them — “their ears are dull of hearing” — and announced that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear.

~AD 60-62

### House Arrest

## Two years of house arrest; preaching the kingdom of God, unhindered

 Acts 28:30-31


Paul lived two full years in his own rented quarters and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ — with all openness, unhindered. This is the last sentence of Acts. Luke leaves the story before the legal case is resolved. The unhindered teaching is the resolution Luke offers: not Paul's release or his execution, but the gospel's free course in the imperial capital, reaching even Caesar's household (Phil 4:22) and the praetorian guard (Phil 1:13).

*The final word of Acts in Greek is akolytos — “unhindered.” Luke ends mid-action. Whether this is artistic restraint or whether Acts was written before the case was resolved is debated.*

~AD 60-62

### Prison Letters

## Paul writes Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians

 Eph 3:1; 6:20; Phil 1:13, 25; 4:22; Col 4:3, 18; Phlm 1, 9, 22


From this two-year imprisonment come four letters in which Paul refers to himself as a prisoner. Onesimus the runaway slave returns to Philemon at Colossae, carrying not only the personal letter for his master (Philemon) but also Colossians and the circular letter we call Ephesians; Tychicus accompanies him (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7-9). Philippians is written separately, probably later, after Epaphroditus has nearly died and recovered (Phil 2:25-30). Across the four letters Paul speaks of his chains as a means by which the gospel has reached even the praetorian guard (Phil 1:13), names brothers in Caesar's household (Phil 4:22), and expresses confidence that he will be released (Phil 1:25; 2:24; Phlm 22).

*Some scholars place the Prison Epistles at Ephesus or Caesarea rather than Rome; the Roman provenance is supported by the references to the praetorium and Caesar's household and by the developed Christology of Colossians and Ephesians. F.F. Bruce, ch. 32; Carson & Moo, ch. 18.*

~AD 62

Released

### Probable release; Acts ends without recording the verdict

 *Inference from Phil 1:25; 2:24; Phlm 22; with the Pastoral Epistles*


Acts gives no verdict. The two-year endpoint is unexplained. The most natural inference — Paul’s repeated expectation of release (Phil 1:25; 2:24; Phlm 22), and the assumption of the Pastoral Epistles, which describe travels that fit nowhere within the Acts narrative — is that Paul was acquitted, perhaps because the Jewish accusers from Jerusalem never arrived to press the case within the statutory time-limit. This is a strong inference, not a recorded event. The narrative jump from “unhindered” at the end of Acts to the Pastoral travels has to be bridged by reconstruction.

*1 Clement 5 (c. AD 95) refers to Paul reaching “the limits of the West,” suggesting travel beyond Italy that Acts does not record. Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 2.22) preserves the same tradition. The case for release is widely accepted but it is reconstruction, not narrative.*

~AD 62–66

Late Ministry

### Late ministry: Crete, Macedonia, possibly Spain; writes 1 Timothy and Titus

 *1 Tim 1:3; Titus 1:5; 3:12; Rom 15:24, 28; 1 Clement 5*

After release Paul resumed mission work. He left Titus on Crete to set in order what was lacking and ordain elders in every city (Tit 1:5). He went to Macedonia, leaving Timothy at Ephesus to charge the teachers and protect the church from false teaching (1 Tim 1:3). From somewhere in this period he wrote both 1 Timothy and Titus — manuals of pastoral practice for the work of overseeing congregations. He planned to winter at Nicopolis on the western coast of Greece (Tit 3:12). Paul had long expressed the intent to preach in Spain (Rom 15:24, 28); whether he reached it is uncertain, but 1 Clement 5, written within a generation of his death, speaks of “the limits of the West.”


*The entire late-ministry chronology is reconstructed from the Pastoral Epistles and patristic tradition; Acts ends before this period. The Pastoral references cannot be placed inside the Acts framework, which is the strongest internal argument for a release-and-return period. Carson & Moo, ch. 21.*

## Phase 4 — Final Captivity & Martyrdom under Nero (c. AD 66–67)

~AD 66–67

### Final Imprisonment

#### Second arrest; the final imprisonment under Nero — abandoned by most

 *2 Tim 1:8, 15–17; 2:9; 4:6–13*

At some point — perhaps in connection with Nero’s persecution of Christians following the great fire of Rome in AD 64 — Paul was arrested again. The conditions of this second imprisonment were severe: a chained prisoner in real custody, not the rented quarters of the first imprisonment (2 Tim 1:16; 2:9). Most companions had abandoned him. “All who are in Asia turned away from me,” he writes (2 Tim 1:15). Demas had loved this present world and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia. “Only Luke is with me” (2 Tim 4:10–11). He sent Tychicus to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12) and called for Timothy to come quickly and to bring Mark, the cloak left at Troas, and the books — especially the parchments (2 Tim 4:9–13).

*Tacitus (Annals 15.44) describes the Neronian persecution after the fire of AD 64: Christians were made scapegoats, tortured, and executed in horrific ways. Whether Paul was arrested as part of this specific wave or for an unrelated charge is unknown.*

~AD 66–67

### Final Imprisonment

#### 2 Timothy — Paul’s last surviving letter


 *2 Timothy throughout; especially 4:6–22*

From this second imprisonment Paul wrote 2 Timothy — the most personal of his letters, and his last. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim 4:7–8). He passes the work to Timothy with detailed pastoral charge: preach the word, in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction; do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. He calls for Timothy to come before winter (2 Tim 4:21). Whether Timothy arrived in time is not recorded.

~AD 67

**Martyrdom**

## Martyrdom at Rome under Nero

 *2 Tim 4:6-8 (Paul's own anticipation)*

Paul's death is not recorded in Scripture. His own anticipation in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 — “I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come” — is the New Testament's last word on his fate. Early tradition is unanimous that he was executed at Rome under Nero. The earliest external witness, 1 Clement 5 (c. AD 95), refers to Paul's martyrdom but does not specify the manner. Later writers (Eusebius, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth, the Acts of Paul) specify beheading — the manner of execution appropriate for a Roman citizen — at a traditional site three miles outside Rome on the Ostian Way. The Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls now marks the location.

*External witnesses to Paul's martyrdom: 1 Clement 5 (c. AD 95); Ignatius, Ephesians 12 (c. AD 110); Dionysius of Corinth in Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 2.25.8; Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. 2.25; Tertullian, On Prescription Against Heretics 36; Acts of Paul 11 (apocryphal but ancient). Scripture itself names neither the place, the manner, nor the date.*

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