

Paul
A Musical About The Life of the Apostle Paul
In Two Acts
By Deborah Capece

The Players

Paul	Aurelius' Mother
Aurelius	Lucia
Luke	Roman Soldier 1
Timothy	Roman Soldier 2
Stephen	Porcia
Cassius	Claudius
Marcos	Priscilla
Mary Magdalene	Lydia

Supporting Cast

Judah	Paul's Follower
Joseph	Girl
Former Blind Man	Boy
Blind Man's Friend	Lydia's Son
Voice of Jesus	Roman Jailor
Pharisee 1	Roman Guards
Pharisee 2	Executioner

Act 1

(Lights up stage right. Paul sits in his prison cell at the end of his life. He is old, gray haired and bearded, looking weary. He is in chains attended by his friends and Aurelius, a Roman soldier, who eagerly listens to him recounting his life. **(Props)** scrolls, small table, goblet, bread, some utensils, a blanket, stools, chains, helmet, sword & shield, oil lamp or lantern. The soldier, Aurelius, removes Paul's chains, carefully, apologetically, as he looks around making sure no other soldier is nearby, watching. One jailer does walk by but ignores the soldier's action, because he, too, has come to love Paul. Aurelius acknowledges him as he passes by, as does Paul.)

Aurelius: Kind sir . . . if I could change things, if I could save you from your fate, I would gladly give myself for you.

Paul: Do not trouble yourself, son. I have run the race, I have fought the good fight So, young man, how much time?

Aurelius: Only a few hours. At dawn they will come for you, my lord.

(Left stage lights up, as executioner is sharpening his axe on a grinding wheel or some other prop available. Lights fade stage left.)

Paul: Your name, soldier?

Aurelius: Aurelius, a centurion guard, son of Claudius Lysias, my lord.

Paul: Please, call me Paul, for we both have only one Lord. (He pauses for a moment, thinking.) And, that name, Claudius Lysias . . . somehow I know that name from my past . . . Hmm. (Paul dismisses the thought for a moment.) So, you have come to hear my story?

Aurelius: Yes, my lord--I mean Paul.

Luke: Son, we are all saddened that soon, very soon, our brother Paul will leave this earth, but we know God's promises can not fail. As our brother has told us, many times, "No eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind

imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” I am Luke, Paul’s physician and scribe. (He holds out his hand for Aurelius.)

Aurelius: I’m pleased to make your acquaintance, sir. And you are? (He looks at Timothy.)

Timothy: Oh, I’m Timothy. I serve in the church at Ephesus and Colosse. So, you’ve joined The Way? I imagine you have had your share of persecution, being a Centurion.

Aurelius: At times it’s difficult. I try to perform my duties, as before, but I can not abide the unfair and harsh treatment of my brothers and sisters in Christ. It’s only because of my rank that I, too, haven’t been taken and imprisoned.

(Paul nods in agreement)

Timothy: Our brother’s endured much for the cause of Christ: floggings, stoning, starvation and imprisonment. (Timothy looks at the prison cell waving his arms). And, yes, betrayal by those he thought friends and brothers in the Lord.

Paul: Yet, I have learned contentment in all things, and count it a privilege to suffer for my Lord’s sake and his church. You shall learn this too, Aurelius. To think, now, that it all began many years ago, in the city of Jerusalem. A young man, not much older than you, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, stood up to the elders and Pharisees of my former religion, preaching to them . . . (he pauses) and to me . . . about our sin and rebellion so demonstrated by our persecution and killing of the prophets up until the time of our Messiah, the one called Jesus Christ. Our ears and hearts were burning within us as we chose, on that day, to kill, once again, yet another prophet of the Lord . . . , who is our King and Savior, the way, the truth and the life.

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(Right stage lights fade as left stage lights go up. There is a crowd of Pharisees, townspeople, and Saul listening to Stephen, preaching, as he stands on a rock or box. **Props:** box or rock to stand on, fake rocks for stoning scene, cloaks for Pharisees.)

Stephen: “Our ancestors had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as God who spoke to Moses ordered him to make it according to the design he had seen. Our ancestors received possession of it and brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our ancestors, until the time of David. He found favor with God and asked that he could find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. But Solomon built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands, as the prophet says, Heaven is my throne, and earth is the footstool for my feet. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is my resting place? Did my hand not make all these things? You stubborn people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit, like your ancestors did! Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold long ago the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become! You received the law by decrees given by angels, but you did not obey it.”

Crowd: Traitor . . . liar . . . Stone him . . . Silence him!

Pharisee (Judah): Let him speak. Is he not a son of Israel, a free man? What has he said that isn't true? The blood of the prophets *is* on our hands, as is the blood of this man called Christ.

Pharisee (Joseph): You! How dare you instruct us, Judah.--you, the youngest here. Have you gone mad, also, like Stephen and become a follower of The Way?

Mary Magdalene: (making her way to the front) Please, listen to him. I was once a woman of ill-repute, making my living in a way that was leading me down a path of ruin. But, by God's love and mercy I was persuaded to leave that life and was transformed by this man, Jesus. The law couldn't do that for me!

Saul: Quiet, wench! You, a woman, and one who is steeped in sin! Why should anyone care what you think! Silence her! (Paul moves around as he speaks, appealing to the crowd.) This man Stephen has been

Stephen: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! (He falls to his knees.) Lord, do not hold this sin against them! (Spotlight fades on Stephen & stage darkens as spotlight is on Saul, with the mens' cloaks at his feet.)

(Paul and Pharisees sing Son of Abraham)** (Paul is alone, farther to the left as lights go down on Stephen and his accusers. They join him for the chorus of the song. A traditional Jewish dance may work here as they are celebrating killing Stephen who they considered an enemy.)

(After song, lights up, stage right, as spotlight on Paul and Pharisees fades, stage left.)

Aurelius: I was told about your former persecution of Christians. I didn't believe it, as you've sacrificed so much for so many years, since I first heard of you.

Paul: It 's true. I was the chief of sinners and swore by my own righteousness. But God revealed to me his plan of salvation. My righteousness could only be found in his Son, who was the sacrificial lamb. It was he I was persecuting, as well as his followers.

Aurelius: Is it true that he revealed himself to you on the road to Damascus and that you were blinded?

Paul: Yes, it is so. However, I was already spiritually blinded before I heard his voice. My physical blindness, ironically, was merely a symbol of the man I was. I remember it as if it were yesterday . . .

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(Lights fade on Paul's cell. Lights up stage left-Damascus Road camp site. Soldiers, Cassius and Marcos, are warming themselves by a fire. Saul is off to the right, more, on his knees praying. **Props:** 2 swords and shields, helmets, fake fire/smoke, blankets, some utensils-cups, pot, etc., blankets (rolled up for journey), scrolls, leather pouch for water, walking stick for later in scene.)

Cassius: Come by the fire Rabbi Saul and warm yourself.

Saul: Can't you see that I'm praying lad?

Cassius: Forgive me sir. I should have realized . . .

(Saul continues in prayer.)

Saul: I, a Son of Abraham, a Pharisee of Pharisees, beseech you to empower me for the task ahead. May your wrath come down upon these traitor Jews who worship a new god--they, who have forsaken Moses and his law. I will find everyone of them--man, woman and child, sparing none, and return them to Jerusalem in shackles. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," the law tells us. They have broken the first and greatest commandment by worshipping a false god who made himself equal to you, my most holy God. Hear my prayer. (Saul rises and moves toward the fire.)

Saul: How much longer is our journey?

Marcos: We're only 25 kilometers from Damascus. If we leave at first light, we can arrive at the city gate by noon. I know you're anxious to get there. Although there is a full moon, there's a chill in the air, my lord. Perhaps we should rest until morning.

Saul: Perhaps, you're right. I am tired.

Marcos: I bid you goodnight, Rabbi.

Saul: Goodnight to you both. And, please, keep the talking and jesting down. I need my rest.

Marcos: Yes, my Lord.

(Paul settles down on a blanket and begins his evening prayers on his knees. Soldiers are still by the fire and begin to pack up their gear.)

(Soldier's Lament Song)**

Cassius: What's with this crazy Jew, anyway? He's been ranting and raving since we left Jerusalem.

Marcos: I hear you, bro. Maybe we shouldn't have signed on for this trip. I know that I could sure use the extra denarii but I think I prefer the peace and quiet of my nagging wife and my bawling infant son, any day!

Cassius: If he isn't renting his clothes and jumping around, he's making noises in his sleep. His snoring is worse than yours, Marcos.

Marcos: I don't snore, Cassius.

Cassius: Yes, you do. I've caught you even talking in your sleep! Last night it was about that pretty wench in the inn, yesterday, who was serving us wine.

Marcos: What wench?

Cassius: You know . . . the one with the . . . (they are interrupted by Saul, as soldier makes hour glass shape with his hands, describing the woman.)

Saul: Once again! Silence! Can't you see that I'm praying? And, I'm weary of your vile speech! I've paid you for your protection and help as well as your SILENCE when I'm praying. Please!

Marcos: (Clearing his throat) Forgive us Rabbi Saul. My friend and I will take our conversation elsewhere. (The two walk off grudgingly.)

(Saul continues with his prayers.)

Saul: And, Jehovah, I beseech you, answer my prayer and give us a safe and swift journey . May we find many who have turned from Judaism to this new religion that makes a mere man into a god. May they be brought to justice by the Sanhedrin and crucified, yes, slain like their delusional leader, Jesus!

(Set darkens as night falls. Night sounds like crickets, owl, etc.)

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(Next Day lights up stage left. The three are walking along with Saul in front of them, on the Damascus Road. The soldiers are making fun of Saul behind his back. Saul turns around a few times to look, but they stop each time and look serious. Suddenly there is the sound of thunder and flash of lightening and the stage darkens and lights. (strobe lights, thunder sounds) (Paul falls to the ground.)

Jesus's voice: Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? (Use reverb on his voice and wind sound.)

Paul: Who are you, Lord?

Jesus: I am Jesus whom you are persecuting! But, stand up and enter the city and you will be told what you must do. (Paul stands and covers his eyes. He appears confused and reaches out trying to find his way, because he is now blind.)

Saul: Did you hear Him speak to me?

Cassius: Hear who? (The soldiers exchange confused glances and then Marcos makes the crazy sign, circling his finger around his ear.)

Marcos: I heard nothing but thunder. It went as quickly as it came. Why are you walking about blindly like that?

Saul: Isn't that apparent young man? (frustrated with him) It's because . . . I **am** blind!!

Cassius: (reaching out to Saul, taking his hand) Here, let me help you, sir. I think he is truly blind. (dropping his hand in fear and backing away) May the gods be with us!

Saul: Christ has told me to go into the city to the house of Judas on Straight Street. Can you take me directly there?

Marcos: I'm familiar with that part of the city. We can take you there straight away! (says with a grin) Get it, Cassius? (Marcos is laughing at his play on words.)

Cassius: (Cassius looks for a walking stick on side of road.) This is no time for jesting. Look at the poor fellow. Have pity, man. (He hands it to Paul.)

Marcos: (taking Cassius aside and speaking just to him) I'm sorry, but something's really weird about this whole thing. Now we not only have a mad man on our hands, but a blind one as well. He's suddenly taking orders from this Jesus, the prophet he hates so much. Now, I'm really confused, bro!

Saul: Well, what is it? Are we going or not? (Paul is still groping about with outstretched arms.)

Cassius: We'll get you there. (With pity) Stay close and hold my hand Rabbi Saul. (walks over to Paul)

(Lights dim, stage left. Lights up stage right)

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Luke: So long ago. Shall I continue, brother Paul?

Paul: Please do.

Luke: Our Lord, in a vision, told a man named Ananias, the man who lived on Straight Street, that Paul was chosen to be a witness and that he would suffer greatly for his name. Ananias was prepared when Paul, who was once called Saul, arrived at his dwelling. He was healed by Ananias, straight away.

Timothy: On Straight Street

Luke: Very funny, young man.

Timothy: I'm sorry. A little levity under such difficult circumstances might help us all.

Paul: Agreed. (Paul laughs) You are so right. Continue, Luke.

will have none of this false messiah.

(Paul's followers drag him away as the crowd heats up and begin to charge at Paul. Lights dim stage left. Stage right, lights up.)

Paul: I was a real *basket case* that evening.

Timothy: Ah, now it is you who makes the jokes! (He laughs—Aurelius isn't sure what the joke is.)

Luke: We're sorry, Aurelius. I guess you haven't heard the story of Paul's escape from Damascus.

Aurelius: No, I haven't. A basket case, Mmm . . .

(Lights dim stage right. Lights up stage left on inside of city wall. **Props:** large basket, large, heavy rope, supplies for Paul's journey (scrolls, blanket, cloak, etc.)

Paul's Follower: Young woman, young man, come here quickly.

Girl: Yes.

Follower: Go, to my house, the one with the blue roof tiles . . . there . . . (he points off stage) yonder, and go to the kitchen and bring me a basket for Paul's escape, and, yes . . . a large rope—my servants will fetch one for you.

Boy: Yes, sir. Race you to the house. (He looks at his companion—they run off stage)

Paul: Kind sir, I can't thank you enough for your help. May the Lord bless you and your family for risking your own lives to assist me.

Follower: The Lord has given you a great gift. I had heard about your new religion, about the Christ, but until last Sabbath's gathering, I didn't understand what it really meant for me. I will pray for your safe arrival wherever the Lord may take you, but it is clear that you are no longer safe in this city. Too many hard hearts—too many stopped ears.

(The children return with a basket, much too small to put a man in, and a large rope.)

Boy: Here you go! (He hands him the basket.)

Follower: What am I supposed to do with *this*?

Boy: Didn't you say you wanted a basket for Paul?

Follower: And how is Brother Paul supposed to escape in THIS! Go back right now. Between the two of you, you should be able to bring me a basket of suitable size, large and strong. Why do you think I sent *two* of you!

Girl: I told you! (looking at the boy)

Boy: So sorry, sir. We'll be right back. (They run off.)

(Paul and the follower gather together his things for his journey-some scrolls, a coat, etc. and a large rope. Let some time elapse.)

(The children return)

Follower: Finally!

Paul: Dear children, come here. (They put the basket down in front of Paul, and he places his hands on both of them, blessing them. They run off. Sounds of shouting in distance.)

Follower: Quickly, they're coming. Into the basket! (Paul gets in the basket with his things and embraces his follower, blessing him, placing his hands on his head.)

(Lights down, stage left. Lights up, stage right, as the men laugh about the story.)

Timothy: And, there you have it, a basket case. (They all laugh.) (Lights dim stage right.)

Intermission

Act 2

(Lights up Stage right. Two soldiers escort Aurelius' mother and wife into the cell who carry small baskets with food for Aurelius. The men rise to greet them. Aurelius embraces his mother and wife. Luke and Timothy offer them their stools, but only Lucia takes a seat.)

Mother: Son, I heard from Lucia that you were here, visiting this condemned man. What are you thinking, putting your family and occupation at risk? Do you want to end up like your father?

Aurelius: Mother, this man, Paul, has done no wrong. He preaches the Good News that the God of creation sent his Son to live and die for each one of us. I can no longer worship idols of stone and bow down to them or the emperor, for that matter.

Lucia: Husband, listen to your mother. The Games are coming up and you will be part of that event. If you can't bow down to the Emperor, make an excuse—and leave this place, now. Some of the guards were talking and guess that you are of The Way. Think of our son and me—how hard you've worked to acquire your rank. We have a good life here, in Rome. Don't throw it away for this Christian god. I beg of you. (She kneels down at his feet—he puts his hands on her shoulders—then helps her up.)

Luke: Perhaps we should leave for a while and return later. There are too many of us in the cell and the guards will become suspicious.

Timothy: We'll take our leave, brother Paul, and return late this evening.

Paul: As you wish. Thank you for everything. I look forward to seeing you to say . . . goodbye before the dawn. (They depart.) Please, madam, you must be weary. Take this seat and rest for a while.

Mother: (Said with disdain) If you insist. Your father is gone, two years, now, and I miss him everyday. Where did his devotion to this Christ ever get him? He lost his rank, was abandoned by his old friends, torn limb to limb in The Games. Treated worse than a dog—he and all his followers. And to think that he defended this man to Felix. (She looks angrily at Paul.)

Paul: *That's* how I know the name Lysias! It's coming back to me now. (He rises and paces a little in excitement.) Yes, it was your father, Aurelius, who wrote to the governor Felix telling him I'd done no wrong. He, it was, who arranged for an escort of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, I think, and two hundred spearmen to accompany me to Caesarea, away from the Jews who wanted to kill me. Dear Madam, I am indebted to your late husband for that. (She looks away from Paul in anger.)

Aurelius: So, my father knew you? And, it was you who influenced him to follow Christ? He never spoke of it to me.

Mother: He did to me, son. Why do you think I have such animosity towards this man?

Aurelius: But, mother, you can not blame Paul for father's decision to follow Christ. It is God, himself, who opens our eyes to hear his Word and change our hearts. As the Master said, 'Whoever tries to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life shall gain it.' His kingdom was not of this world. Everything we can see, hear and touch is fleeting. Like the grass, our lives are short and will wither away. But imagine, someday, having life that never ends, free of sorrow, pain and sin. Wasn't that worth dying for?

Mother: But, what of all of us--the family that loves you? I can not bear to see you imprisoned or, worse, killed for this religion. Many have gone before you. Do you want to suffer the same fate?

Aurelius: Mother, let's not speak of this now.

Paul: Son, she is in a lot of pain. Anyone can see that and hear that from her lips. Madam, I'm sorry for your loss. I, too, have lost many

friends because of the persecution of the church. I know you don't want to hear this now, but I am overjoyed that Claudius turned to the Savior. And to think that he *saved me* from my kinsmen that day. I assure you, madam, God's promises are sure. Your husband is at peace, now, awaiting his reward when Christ judges the living and the dead on the last day. Tell me, how was your husband taken?

Mother: (She pauses to remember) There was a man, named Benjamin, a recent convert to your religion, or so my husband thought, whom the believers came to trust. He was even a guest in our home on several occasions. Well, one night during evening prayers, the home, they were meeting in, was surrounded by Roman soldiers. It was after they broke in that this man left by a back door and was no longer seen. It became clear, later, that he had betrayed them. They, the Christians, were all arrested. The soldiers made no exceptions-men, women and even children. I think there were a dozen or more. Because they knew my husband, they offered to keep silent concerning him, but he refused to abandon his friends and went off to prison with them. They were questioned about their faith. None would recant. I tried to visit my husband on several occasions and was only allowed to see him once, the day he was taken to the Circus Maximus. (She pauses and begins to cry.) I shall never forget the stench of that place, the darkness, the cries of the dying . . . and those about to die. I begged my husband to renounce this Christ and to offer allegiance to the Emperor and come home with me. But, of course, he would not. I am still angry about his decision that day. I nearly fainted when I saw him for the first time in months, as someone lit a lantern. Sores on his body, burn marks from the torturing iron, disheveled and filthy, half starved. The memory has never left me and often wakes me in my sleep. All that pain and death . . . (She cries.)

(Lights down stage right and lights up stage left in prison corridor. There are several prisoners, different ages-director's choice. **Props:** swords, lanterns, fake chains for prisoners, water bucket and ladle.)

(Roman Soldier 1 is walking around prisoners, staggering (drunk) and hailing insults at them.)

Roman Soldier 1: We who are about to die, salute you! Now, Christians, repeat after me: We who are about to die, salute you! (The believers just stare at him, some turning away avoiding eye contact.) Hey, haven't I seen you before? (He pulls the hair of the former prostitute, Porcia, who is down on her knees praying silently, avoiding eye contact with him.) What's the matter, wench? Cat got your tongue? Answer me! (He shines a lantern in her face, so he can have a better look at her. She avoids looking him in the eye.) That's right, look this way girly! Hey, I know you . . . you're the woman from the brothel. Porcia's your name. Yeah, you got me in a lot of trouble with my wife a few years ago. How did you end up here? Tired of swinging your hips and offering yourself to the soldiers of Rome?

Porcia: I'm ashamed of the life I once lead and I am truly sorry that I hurt your wife and your marriage. I have only one true love, now, and that is the god-man Jesus Christ, the savior of us all, especially of those who believe. Trust him and save your soul. He will give you the strength to live, to even be faithful to your wife, to love others like you love yourself. None of us can imagine all that he has prepared for those who love him. ****(She sings her song, *Confession*)**

Roman Soldier 1: You're pathetic. Look at you, all grimy and smelly. Not so pretty now, are you? Where is your Christ when you need him most? Did you know that you're about to be a wild cat's dinner, little lady? (He laughs and makes growling noises like a lion and pretends to be scratching her.)

Roman Soldier 2: Leave her alone! Haven't these people suffered enough? Give them some space to pray to their God. They have done us no harm.

Roman Soldier 1: What do you mean? They're enemies of the state, against our beloved emperor, Nero. May the gods be with him. What . . . are you falling for their stories, too, about this man Jesus? You had better watch yourself, or you'll end up like them.

Roman Soldier 2: You're drunk—maybe you should worry about yourself and pray that I don't report YOU for coming to work plastered!

are a very brave woman, Priscilla. You are like the prophetess, Deborah, of old, full of wisdom and strength. I know the Lord has many things for you, yet, to do in his service.

Priscilla: Brother, you know Aquila and I would have gladly given our lives for you. Your ministry is so important and the church needs you so in these troubled times.

Paul: Thank you, sister, but your ministry is just as important. We're all his servants, planting seeds wherever he opens doors. We don't always see the fruit, but God will bring forth the harvest in due time.

(Lights dim stage left—lights up stage right on cell)

Paul: Or my fellow worker, Phoebe who delivered one of my longest letters to the church at Rome? Would I have entrusted her with such a lengthy and, some say, complex letter without her understanding its contents? The church would have relied on her if they had questions. I was not there to answer them. And, my sister in the Lord who hosted an assembly in her home, Lydia of Thyratira. I found her and others following the Lord in that city. And it was there that I further explained the Good News of the Gospel, which she and her household received and, then, were baptized by me.

(Lights down, stage right. Lights up stage left.)

(Scene opens with Paul watching a group of women (and a few men) worshipping near a river. They are singing a hymn. Lydia is leading the singing. Props: set made to look like river's edge with some plants, real or artificial.)

**** (Alleluia song-sung by women. Descant by Lydia or other soprano.)**

(After song, Lydia and women turn when they see Paul to the side.)

Lydia: Go in peace. We will see each other again at the next Sabbath, here by the river. All are welcome into my home after worship for a meal.

(The group disperses, except for Lydia, her son, and Paul.)

Lydia: I saw you, earlier, standing here as we sang. I hope you received a blessing.

Paul: I did, dear sister. The singing was beautiful.

Lydia: And what brings you to our city?

Paul: I'm a traveler, called by the Lord God to tell the Good News of the Gospel. I would like to share it with you and your fellow worshipers.

Lydia: I've heard about the Gospel, about a man who performed many miracles who said he was the savior of the world. Some say that he rose from the dead. I don't know how that is possible. There are many things I do not understand, so I continue to meet in the traditions of the God of the Jews.

Paul: And, who am I speaking with, dear lady?

**** (Lydia sings Lydia song/duet with Paul.)** (After song, lights fade stage left. Lights up stage right)

Paul: Yes, these women and many others were pillars of the faith in their respective towns and villages. At times when I had been abandoned by brothers, and those claiming to be my brother, it was the women who stood by me. I believe in the ages to come they will share with the men, in all the churches, the responsibilities once given only to the men. Men resist change and we should not rely on our traditions as much as the example of our Lord, who never treated women with disdain or any differently than he did men. He was interested in what they had to say, and he did not silence them. Do you know that it was a woman who first greeted him at the tomb and shared the good news of the resurrection or that it was his women followers who stayed while he was being crucified when all of his disciples had fled in fear, except for John. So, my son, listen carefully to the words of our Lord and to my words. In the last days your sons . . . and daughters . . . shall prophesy, as the prophet Joel says.

Aurelius: You've said many things, and I need time to take it all in.

Mother: As do I, son. Don't be impatient with me (she smiles looking at his wife) . . . or your wife. We need time to ponder all the things that have been said. I'm still grieving the loss of your father, so, perhaps, it clouds my judgment. All in good time, son. All in good time.

Paul: I will pray for you, dear lady, for your comfort in your loss and your encouragement that your husband is at peace now awaiting the resurrection of the body when he can enjoy the full presence of his Lord. I pray that you, too, will be among those at the resurrection of the just. As I have mentioned in my letter to the Romans, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ, all shall be made alive.' All of our trials are for our good to bring us closer to him and to cause us to love him. As the prophet Isaiah proclaimed: 'I solemnly make this oath what I say is true and reliable: Surely every knee will bow to me, every tongue will solemnly affirm, they will say about me, Yes, the Lord is a powerful deliverer.' No design of the Lord can be thwarted by mortal men. All his plans will be carried through until he accomplishes his purposes. He works all things after the counsel of his will and desires all people to be saved, as I have written to Timothy concerning. I hope you won't only enjoy his presence in the next life but in this short life, as well.

Mother: I'll think carefully about what has been said here. Thank you Paul for your kind words and sympathies.

Lucia: May I speak now?

Aurelius: Yes, please. Forgive me madam.

Lucia: The hour is late and perhaps mother and I should be going if, of course, that is all right with you, husband.

Aurelius: Yes, of course. I'll have a few of my men escort you back home. I don't want you wandering around in the dark, unaccompanied, in this city, understand?

Lucia: Yes, husband. (With a grin) Your obedient servant. (She bows to him or shows another sign of deference.)

Aurelius: (He laughs) Enough woman! Very funny. (He rises and kisses his mother, saying goodbye. He takes Lucia's face into his hands and speaks more quietly.) I will try to be more loving and a better listener, Lucia. I will also be more interested in your opinions in the future. (More sternly, with resignation) Still, you're my responsibility, and I will keep you safe, so you'll not be wandering about in the dark by yourself. Hear? (He kisses her again.) Guards!

(Paul, smiling, clears his throat, waving goodbye to them, as a few soldiers escort the women out.)

Aurelius: So, Paul, how did you come to be a prisoner of the Emperor? I thought I heard it said that you could have avoided this sentence by not appealing to Rome. Is it true?

Paul: Yes, perhaps I would have been saved from this fate if I hadn't appealed to Rome, but, then, perhaps my ministry here would have never happened. Brother it is really impossible to say. All I know is that through everything, God has been with me and has worked out all things for his glory and his honor.

Aurelius: It's almost dawn, brother. I'll stay with you until the end. If there's anything I can do for you I shall order my men to get whatever you wish. (Paul shakes his head and smiles) There, it seems your friends have returned.

(They rise as Timothy and Luke enter the cell. The sound of guards coming through the corridor gets louder, as they near the cell door. Paul kneels to pray. The others kneel down next to him. The guards look puzzled when they see their superior, Aurelius, kneeling also.)

Paul: Father, God, give me strength in the hour of my need. Take away the trembling I am feeling in my heart. I ask for these brothers and for all those in the church who have loved me--stood by me--that you would comfort their hearts at my passing. I have fought the good fight. I have won the race. And, now I will be returning to your care, awaiting the