

UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH

Then and *Now*
in 30 Minutes



Episode 40 - Defeated

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THE SETTING



We've come to the **Mamertine Jail in Rome** where Paul spent his final days. This dungeon is beneath **The Church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami** (St Joseph of the Carpenters), on the northern edge of Rome's Forum and on a site used as a place of worship since the 7th century. It is a deeply moving location. For this Roman Catholic church, dedicated to Jesus' earthly father, is the site of the "Carcer" (Prison) - in Medieval times called The Mamertine Jail - the traditional site of the final imprisonments of Paul and Peter. Rome rarely imprisoned common criminals, and this prison was reserved for political prisoners sentenced to execution, usually by being thrown off a nearby rock or by strangulation. But, as a Roman citizen, Paul would have been beheaded with a sword.

When someone was sentenced to death, they were brought into the Upper Chamber of the Carcer to await their execution. Below is a circular room (the Tullianum) into which they were then lowered through a hole in the floor, and there they were left. Still today it is a dark, airless, foul-smelling place. The name Tullianum is derived from the Latin word for 'a spring' for, according to church tradition, Peter caused well-water to spring up so he could baptize his jailors - though it is doubtful whether Peter was actually incarcerated here.



The Church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami
built on the site of Paul's prison



Inside the lower chamber of the Carcer
showing the hole in the roof through which
prisoners were lowered to their execution



BIBLE READING

[2 Timothy 4:1-22](#)



KEY IDEAS

- Acts' open-ended nature suggests that Luke wrote his account while Paul was still under house-arrest in Rome. But we can work out from Paul's later writings that this wasn't the end of his story. Scholars believe he was released by Nero in AD 62 at what Paul calls "my first trial" ([2 Tim 4:16](#)), quite possibly because his accusers simply didn't turn up, just happy to have got rid of him. And remember: Festus and Herod Agrippa had agreed that there were no substantive charges against him ([Acts 26:31](#)).
- Why do we think Paul was released? Because it's clear from his later letters that he made a fourth mission trip, in which he visited -
 - o Crete, commissioning Titus to lead the church there ([Tit 1:5](#))
 - o Corinth (where he left Erastus) and Miletus (where he left Trophimus sick ([2 Tim 4:20](#)))
 - o Ephesus, where he left Timothy in charge of the church ([1 Tim 1:3](#))
 - o Probably Colossae, which he said he intended to visit ([Phm 1:22](#))
 - o Troas, where he left his cloak with Carpus ([2 Tim 4:13](#))

- o Philippi ([1 Tim 1:3](#)), where he wrote 1 Timothy & Titus
 - o Nicopolis, where he wanted Titus to meet him ([Tit 3:12](#))
 - o Possibly Spain, which he had long hoped to visit (e.g., [Rom 15:24](#))
 - But by the time he is writing 2 Timothy, he is “chained like a criminal” ([2 Tim 2:9](#)). He is now in the Carcer in Rome and knows that “the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing” ([2 Tim 4:6-8](#)). He longs for his friends, his cloak and his scrolls ([4:9-13](#)), and has already undergone a first trial when “no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me ...but the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength” ([4:16-17](#)). Yet despite all this, he can still write, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom” ([4:18](#)). And he can still write this second letter to Timothy to encourage him. What a man!
- Tradition says that Paul was executed in the Carcer in AD67 by the sword (his right as a Roman citizen) during emperor Nero’s persecution of the Church.



1. How did Paul’s personal sense of being undefeated link in to his conviction of Christ being undefeated?
2. Paul didn’t fear death - what about you?
3. How could a renewed sense of the Church being undefeated, no matter what happens, help us become unstoppable again?



For a behind-the-scenes glimpse into what was involved to create this podcast series listen to Mike and David recounting their experiences!

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