

The Departure

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITYSCAPE - DAY

SUPER: Rome. 67 A.D.

Buildings pepper landscape. Many structures are damaged due to rampant fires.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - DAY

Dense fog permeates.

FABIUS (early 30s), curious voyeur, loiters off roadside in battle armor. His fists are clenched more often than not.

SOLDIER beats nail through a MAN'S wrist. Ripped skin reveals a recent flogging.

The man shrieks.

Fabius demands hammer. He pummels nail three times.

Nail pierces wood.

He returns hammer to soldier.

Two additional soldiers arrive. Group lifts cross with Fabius overseeing. Base sinks into a hole.

Fabius saunters off, indifferent.

EXT. PRISON CELLS CORRIDOR - DAY

Fabius treks tunnel with SEPTIMUS (40s), by the book, nasty battle scar on right cheek proving he's a patriot.

FABIUS

What does Nero hope to accomplish?

SEPTIMUS

He was hesitant to give any details.

Fabius sneers, suspicious.

They halt near prison entrance. Two GUARDS act as sentries.

SEPTIMUS

May the gods be with you, Fabius.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

PAUL (65) the apostle, long gray beard, robes caked with dirt, meditates in a trance while chained at ankles. Living legend with most humble demeanor on record. Twinges of sadness pour out when he speaks.

Fabius enters.

FABIUS

I was told you belong to the Christian sect.

Paul shies away.

Fabius reclines beside Paul.

FABIUS

I did not choose this post. In fact, I would have pissed on the opportunity. So let's talk. I may as well enjoy my time.

PAUL

Looking for a new story to share with your friends?

FABIUS

Friends are a dangerous commodity. As long as I am entertained, please, wag your tongue.

PAUL

May I know your name?

FABIUS

Fabius Octavian Meridias.

PAUL

What has happened up until now has been in accordance with God's plan.

Fabius scoffs at remark.

PAUL

My education began in Tarsus of Cilicia.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. CITY OF JERUSALEM - DAY

SUPER: Jerusalem. 25 A.D.

Panoramic view. Olive trees sway in wind.

PAUL (V.O.)

Tarsus was known for a strong educational center. At an early age I left Tarsus for Jerusalem. I had the privilege of being instructed under Gamaliel. A wise rabbi.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

At wooden desks are young Jewish men. Nervous. Determined.

GAMALIEL (50) waves a scroll. A wise man with a humble approach to how he views accomplishments and life itself.

GAMALIEL

(stammering)

A Nazirite vow is not to be taken lightly. When engaged in such a situation one must consider the action from all angles. A usual time allotment for the vow is thirty days, although it may stand for longer.

Gamaliel sweeps to front desk.

GAMALIEL

There are certain requirements a man must abide by.

Gamaliel motions to DAVID (early 20s) in front row.

GAMALIEL

What is to be observed during a vow?

David diverts. Examines scroll.

GAMALIEL

How do you expect to become a teacher?

DAVID

A man cannot cut his hair.

GAMALIEL

What else?

David surrenders to embarrassment.

PAUL (O.S.)

Rabbi.

GAMALIEL

Do not speak unless permitted.

PAUL

Please. Allow me to answer.

Gamaliel approaches an aisle where Paul (early 20s) awaits.

GAMALIEL

Speak.

PAUL

A person under oath is forbidden to walk near tombs. He cannot use a razor on his head and must abstain from anything that would drive him drunk. Grapes, wine, and vinegar should all be avoided.

GAMALIEL

Well done.

Gamaliel unveils scroll.

GAMALIEL

We shall continue our study from Isaiah.

EXT. COLONNADE - DAY

Students exit room. Paul and Gamaliel tread a stone walkway.

GAMALIEL

Young man, your knowledge of the law is much appreciated.

PAUL

My goal is to one day become a rabbi. Like you.

GAMALIEL

A rabbi is an ordinary man. Never forget this truth.

PAUL

Yes, rabbi.

Gamaliel halts near end of colonnade overlooking Jerusalem.

GAMALIEL

(looks to city)

I believe great things are in store  
for you. I also believe your parents  
can say...

(to Paul)

...They've brought you up blameless  
before the law.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul scratches his knee.

PAUL

The School of Hillel was life  
changing. I was enriched in doctrinal  
aspects of the law. Interpreting  
holy scripture became easier. More  
natural.

FABIUS

Interesting, but pointless if the  
words are not divine.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

PAUL (late 20s) builds a tent in the backyard. ABIGAIL (mid-20s), flowing black hair, pious jewel with a soothing aura, emerges from a back door.

ABIGAIL

Mother told me you plan to join a  
group of men.

Paul doesn't cease working.

ABIGAIL

Does father agree?

Paul lays down a hammer.

ABIGAIL  
Fighting them feels wrong.

He wipes his forehead with a cloth.

PAUL  
Are you compassionate toward those  
fools?

ABIGAIL  
I only question your heart.

Paul swings around on his stool. He stands to approach her.

PAUL  
My motives are pure.

ABIGAIL  
How do you know, Saul?

PAUL  
Because I follow the word of God!  
Which clearly describes what happens  
to unbelievers.

ABIGAIL  
But they are not given a chance!

PAUL  
They had ample opportunity! They  
chose otherwise!

ABIGAIL  
You cannot believe that to be true.  
Not for everyone.

PAUL  
I do, Abigail! As should you!

ABIGAIL  
No! God desires us to come to him  
through love! What you speak of is  
punishment.

PAUL  
It is not I who speaks but God! I  
shall do His will! Whatever the  
consequences!

Abigail backs away from Paul.

ABIGAIL  
Of course you will.

Paul sits on the stool. He picks up his hammer and a sharp stake.

PAUL  
On the day of judgment I will have  
nothing to hide.

ABIGAIL  
What is more important? Being  
blameless... or reaching out in love?

Paul looks off to his side.

PAUL  
All who stand against God receive  
their reward.

Paul resumes his work.

ABIGAIL  
Some people may be resisting your  
interpretation of the law.

PAUL  
Let them resist. See what happens.

ABIGAIL  
They should be loved. Not punished.

Paul stops the work.

PAUL  
Perhaps I am blind.

He scoffs with a chuckle.

ABIGAIL  
Or you choose simply not to see.

Abigail bends down and picks up a large section of goat hair.  
She drops the hair near her brother.

ABIGAIL  
May God be with you in your tent  
making.

Abigail stomps away.

Paul looks back at her as she leaves.



EXT. JERUSALEM GATE - DAY

CROWD lingers near an outside city wall.

Bloodthirsty men drop outer garments at Paul's feet (30s).  
They join in on hurling stones at STEPHEN (30s).

PROTESTOR

Brothers, this man has done nothing  
wrong!

STONER 1

He has committed blasphemy! In front  
of everyone!

STONER 2

No one asked for your counsel!

Stephen's bloody knees hit the earth.

STEPHEN

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Stoner 1 picks up a large rock.

STEPHEN

Do not hold this sin against them!

Rock strikes his head.

Stephen lands on his back. Motionless.

EXT. JERUSALEM STREET - NIGHT

Full moon.

Paul (33) holds a torch. He flounces toward a house with an  
ANGRY MOB punching air.

Paul pounds on door.

MOB MAN 1

Knock the door down!

MOB MAN 2

Drag them out, Saul!

Paul bangs twice more.

PAUL

We were told this house announces  
Jesus the Nazarene as messiah!

Paul backs away.

Mob busts through and invades.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Men discover a CHRISTIAN MAN (30s), WOMAN (30s), and YOUNG BOY (6) crouched in a closet room.

They encircle the family.

CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Please! No!

They force her up. She resists. Falls.

Paul approaches from rear, only man not laughing.

CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Don't take us! Please!

YOUNG BOY

Mother!

CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Keep close, son.

CHRISTIAN MAN

Do no harm to my family! Only take me!

MOB MAN 1

We will do as we wish!

PAUL

Are you of the Christ?!

Man glances to his wife. She nods, pursing her lips.

PAUL

What is your answer?!

Man squeezes his wife's hand.

CHRISTIAN MAN

We will not reject him.

Paul turns for door.

Mob seizes the man and woman.

Paul eyes the crying boy. His face is expressionless as a man grabs the child from behind.

MONTAGE

- A group drags a STOUT MAN, STOUT MAN'S WIFE, and TEEN DAUGHTER from their house and onto street.

- Several CHRISTIANS in chains trudge into carriage barred with iron poles.

Paul waves the captives.

PAUL

This is what happens to Christians  
who obey Jesus of Nazareth! A false  
teacher! A heretic!

END OF MONTAGE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul rubs his forehead.

PAUL

I now look to what lies ahead.

FABIUS

Do you feel guilt?

Paul leans against rocky wall.

PAUL

I have talked enough.

FABIUS

I'd like to hear more.

PAUL

Patience, legionary.

Fabius punches Paul in chin. He kicks prisoner in rib cage. Twice.

Paul rolls onto side.

Fabius draws dagger. He slices across Paul's left arm.

Paul yelps. He covers wound with opposite palm. Huddles like a frightened animal.

FABIUS

I have carried armor up many hills!  
Many nights I've hungered for food!  
Patience is not something I lack.

PAUL

There is something missing.

Fabius directs dagger at Paul.

FABIUS

Tell me, Christian. Prophecy. What  
is it?

PAUL

You want to truly know?

FABIUS

But of course! Why would I waste my  
breath?! Spit it out! What do I  
lack!?

PAUL

The blood of Christ.

Fabius twice kicks Paul in upper back.

FABIUS

No more fresh blood is available! A  
man can only give so much before he  
dries up!

Fabius sheathes dagger. He chuckles, heading for exit.

FABIUS

Your story is interesting.

Fabius looks about room, taking it all in.

FABIUS

Prisoner.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Fabius pulls off his breastplate. He places it on a rock  
shelf with other armor pieces.

CASSIUS (40s), craggy face, course jester in the crowd, sneaks  
up behind Fabius.

CASSIUS

How is your prisoner behaving?

Fabius jolts, startled. He places sheathed sword against a wooden bench.

FABIUS

Condemned.

Cassius cackles. He smacks Fabius on the shoulder.

CASSIUS

Did the babbler say anything?

FABIUS

Nothing important.

Fabius takes off his shin pieces.

FABIUS

He mostly talked about his past. He is a leader for the Christians.

CASSIUS

One of those, is he? Don't let him eat your flesh. Drink your blood!  
(snaps fingers)  
Hurry up, Fabius. I'm growing old.

FABIUS

Have I ever been swift at taking it off?

CASSIUS

Never!

INT. FABIUS'S FLAT - NIGHT

Not extremely lavish, but comfortable enough.

At a table, CAMILLA (24) pours salt into a jar. Sultry by nature, she harnesses a conniving wit when a situation deems it appropriate.

Door swings open. She kneels with head bowed in reverence.

FABIUS

Rise.

Camilla complies.

CAMILLA

How was your day, my love?

FABIUS

Worthy of recognition. Mighty Jupiter  
would be proud.

Camilla inserts a piece of ham. Covers with salt. She puts  
in another slice.

From Fabius's forefinger comes a gold ring.

FABIUS

I heard an entertaining tale today.

He lays ring on table.

CAMILLA

May I ask from who?

Camilla tops off jar with salt.

FABIUS

A prisoner I've been assigned to  
guard.

Fabius reclines on a plush sofa.

FABIUS

His name is Paul. A Hebrew. Yet he  
holds Roman citizenship.

CAMILLA

A Hebrew with Roman citizenship?  
What is next? Hebrews occupying  
seats in the senate?

FABIUS

I thought it strange myself.

Camilla treks to a lit candle on a stand. She sparks an  
unlit candle nearby.

Fabius approaches Camilla.

FABIUS

You're a goddess.

She gives Fabius a dazzling smile.

CAMILLA

Of course I am.

Camilla returns candle to stand.

FABIUS  
 Holding pride in your appearance?

Fingertips fondly caress his shoulder blades. Her lips meet his. Tenderly.

EXT. BALCONY - SAME

Fabius leans over rail. Urban landscape looms.

INT. PRISON CELL - SAME

Paul rolls on his side, trying to sleep. His body jerks.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul (33) grips JONASH'S throat (40s). Bound Christians are being led away by a group.

PAUL  
 What has Christ given you!? Other  
 than pain!? Suffering!?

JONASH  
 He has forgiven my sins.

PAUL  
 Blasphemy! He has done nothing but  
 poison your mind!

EXT. SYNAGOGUE COURT - DAY

Against a wooden post Paul (43) is shackled. His naked chest touches wood.

SYNAGOGUE SERVANT (40s) possess a whip embedded with bone pieces and pottery shards. Several ONLOOKERS observe.

Servant cracks whip.

Strands peel apart Paul's flesh.

Paul embraces post. Closes eyes.

BACK TO PRESENT

Paul lays on side. A tear streams down cheek.

PAUL  
 Blessed father in heaven...

INT. NERO'S CHAMBER - DAY

Five SOLDIERS guard throne of NERO (30), a twisted megalomaniac with cropped blonde hair, expensive purple robes, and golden crown. An expert in terror and subtle manipulation.

Septimus bows.

NERO

Rise.

Septimus obeys.

NERO

Has your soldier engaged him?

SEPTIMUS

Yes. The man has been retelling his life story.

NERO

Tell the soldier...his name escapes me.

SEPTIMUS

Fabius Meridias.

NERO

Tell Meridias I desire complete knowledge on where the Christians gather. Our livelihood, our very survival, decrees we destroy any cults seen as dangerous.

SEPTIMUS

Will his citizenship pose a problem?

NERO

Christians and their petty assets, my dear centurion.

INT. PRISON CELLS AREA - DAY

LINUS (35) limps to cell opening. An injured left leg, but naturally clumsy in both speech and movement. He peers inside...

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul, against wall, looks up.



PAUL  
Linus?

LINUS  
My friend!

They hug.

LINUS  
I was lucky to find you!

PAUL  
How are you, brother?

LINUS  
As good as can be expected.

PAUL  
How about the brethren?

LINUS  
Steadfast. Doing what is right.  
Our faith is as strong as an ox! A  
healthy ox, that is.

PAUL  
Good.

LINUS  
Do they treat you well?

PAUL  
Well enough.

LINUS  
God be praised. Brother, I have  
news. Your sister plans to see you.

PAUL  
My sister?

LINUS  
Yes. Word reached us a few days  
ago. She travels with Barnabas.

Paul looks off. He regains focus.

PAUL  
Please tell the others I would like  
to visit with them.

LINUS

I shall.

Linus gives Paul a hug.

PAUL

Linus, do not bribe again.

Linus bobs a confirmation. Guilty as charged.

LINUS

Keep strong.

INT. PRISON CELLS CORRIDOR - DAY

Linus exits. Two PRISON GUARDS (30s) watch him hobble away.

Fabius approaches.

FABIUS

Who was that man?

PRISON GUARD 1

He was a...record keeper.

PRISON GUARD 2

For the prison commander.

Fabius snorts.

Guard 1 opens the door.

Fabius enters.

Guards shrug. Snicker.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius struts inside.

Paul presses against wall.

PAUL

Good morning, Fabius.

Fabius punches Paul. Slaps him. He puts Paul in a head lock. Squeezes tight.

FABIUS

We are not friends. I am to guard you, and you are to remain a prisoner under my control.

FABIUS

Address me as legionary! Nothing  
else.

Fabius releases lock.

With both arms Paul wraps his legs.

PAUL

Very well.

Fabius, bewildered by lack of rebuttal, screws up his face.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

SUPER: 35 A.D. JERUSALEM.

MORDECAI (50s), chief priest, hands over a packet of parchment  
letters to Paul (33).

MORDECAI

Three men will accompany you.

PAUL

Would you like us to bring back all  
the blasphemers? Or do you wish for  
only a certain amount?

MORDECAI

Bring them all.

EXT. BARREN ROAD - DAY

THREE MEN travel with Paul.

ASSISTING MAN 2

Have you ever visited Damascus?

ASSISTING MAN 3

A few times.

ASSISTING MAN 1

How long are we to stay?

PAUL

As long as it takes.

A BRIGHT LIGHT from heaven shines around them.

Paul falls, covering his face. The men follow suit.

ASSISTING MAN 2  
Where does the light come from?!

ASSISTING MAN 3  
What is happening?

JESUS (O.S.)  
Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting  
me?

PAUL  
Who are you, Lord?!

JESUS (O.S.)  
I am Jesus of Nazareth, who you are  
persecuting. Rise. Enter the city.  
You will be told what you must do.

PAUL (V.O.)  
He told me I would become a servant  
and a witness. Teaching men and  
women about forgiveness.

Light vanishes.

Dazed men venture over to Paul.

Paul touches around his eyes in confusion.

ASSISTING MAN 2  
We saw the light, Saul.

ASSISTING MAN 1  
Are you alright?

PAUL  
Did...did any of you hear him?

ASSISTING MAN 1  
Yes, but we could not understand  
anything said. It was very strange.

Paul puts his arms out, stumbling in a circle.

PAUL  
I can't see.

ASSISTING MAN 1  
What?

PAUL  
I...I can't see!

ASSISTING MAN 3  
How can that be?

Man 1 and 2 take hold of Paul. They lead him down road.

ASSISTING MAN 1  
Damascus is on the horizon, Saul.

ASSISTING MAN 2  
We will guide you along.

PAUL (V.O.)  
My heart was torn. I felt confused.  
Scattered. My beliefs, my lifestyle,  
even my existence I came to question.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul lays on a bed inside the house of JUDAS (40s), plump.  
Jagged around the edges, he showcases a friendly spirit.

JUDAS  
A bright light?

ASSISTING MAN 1  
Brighter than the sun.

JUDAS  
Impossible. You speak as if you're  
drunk on wine!

ASSISTING MAN 1  
Wine? No. We are fully sober.

JUDAS  
Fine. You are sober. So why didn't  
you or the others become as he did?

ASSISTING MAN 1  
We honestly do not know.

JUDAS  
You also said a voice was heard.

ASSISTING MAN 1  
It was unclear, but yes, we heard  
one.

ASSISTING MAN 2  
Does he have permission to stay here?

JUDAS  
Will four days be long enough?

ASSISTING MAN 2  
More or less.

ASSISTING MAN 1  
Our duty awaits. We must leave.

They leave the home.

JUDAS  
Would you like something to eat?

Paul rolls on his side away from Judas.

PAUL (V.O.)  
For three days I was blind.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Paul slowly paces. He extends his hands to make certain he won't bump into anything.

PAUL (V.O.)  
I neither ate nor drank. Nourishment  
was the least of my worries. I was  
meditating on things far more  
important.

Paul haphazardly steps over to a chair. He touches it. Carefully plops down.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

At table Judas and Paul reside.

Judas directs Paul's arm to a bowl filled with leavened bread.

JUDAS  
Eat something.

Paul recoils.

Judas sighs.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul leans against bed edge. He bows in contemplation.

PAUL  
Am I to continue in this condition?

PAUL

Up until now...I have lived in good  
conscience of the law. Please.  
Guide me. Show me the righteous  
path. Lead me forward. I am willing.

Teardrops escape his eyes. He chokes up.

PAUL

I am willing.

Paul batters the bed with fists.

PAUL

I am willing! I am willing, lord!

Paul looks to ceiling. Yells. Lowers his face onto bed.  
Sobs.

Judas encroaches.

Paul does not censor.

Judas recedes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (VISION)

ANANIAS (50s), superior balance in street wisdom and the  
philosophical, grey beard, lightly touches Paul's head.

PAUL (V.O.)

A vision came. I was shown a man.  
He comes into my room. Lays his  
hands on me so that I might regain  
my sight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ananias reclines in a chair. Lit candles surround him.

JESUS (V.O.)

Ananias.

Ananias drops a parchment manuscript in his lap.

ANANIAS

I am here, lord.

JESUS (V.O.)

Rise. Go to the street called  
Straight. At the house of Judas  
look for a man of Tarsus named Saul.

JESUS (V.O.) ()  
Behold, he is praying. He has seen  
a vision. A man comes in and lays  
his hands on him. By doing so, he  
regains his sight.

ANANIAS  
Lord, I have heard about this man.  
How much evil he has done to the  
saints in Jerusalem. He has authority  
from the chief priests to imprison  
from here all who call on your name.

JESUS (V.O.)  
Go! For he is a chosen instrument  
of mine.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ananias exits.

JESUS (O.S.)  
I will show him how much he must  
suffer for my name's sake.

INT. HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Ananias taps on door. Judas answers.

JUDAS  
Yes?

ANANIAS  
I'm here for Saul of Tarsus.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Judas lingers in doorway.

Ananias clutches one of Paul's arms with both hands.

ANANIAS  
Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared  
to you on the road, has sent me so  
that you may regain your sight and  
be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Black scales fall from Paul's eyes. Paul scans room in  
amazement.

PAUL  
I...



Paul looks upon Ananias.

PAUL

I can see.

ANANIAS

Do you now see the truth?

Paul affirms with a nod.

ANANIAS

Why tarry any longer? Arise and be baptized.

Paul stretches out a hand.

Ananias seizes it.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT

Paul dons a white robe. Ananias and him are waist deep. He holds Paul around the waist.

Judas loiters at river bank with a fiery torch.

ANANIAS

Saul of Tarsus, do you confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God?

PAUL

With all my mind, heart, and soul.

ANANIAS

I now baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Ananias dunks Paul for a brief moment.

Paul rises. He wipes hair away from his face, shivering.

ANANIAS

Welcome to the fold, brother.

Ananias pats Paul.

PAUL (V.O.)

Immediately afterwards I ate bread.  
Drank water.

FABIUS (V.O.)

Soldiers go without food for days at a time.

FABIUS (V.O.) ()  
Especially during battle, as food  
can be a weakness. Makes a man  
sluggish.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul signals to himself.

PAUL  
Maybe I could pass for a soldier.

FABIUS  
In a dream anything is possible.

PAUL  
Are you certain I cannot?

FABIUS  
Absolutely! You are an old man! An  
old man who cannot wield even the  
smallest of swords!

Paul chuckles in self-depreciation.

PAUL  
I surrender.

Fabius motions to cell with both hands.

FABIUS  
Surrender? I think not. But that  
does strike my curiosity.

PAUL  
How so?

FABIUS  
Well, if you are in here, where are  
other disciples of your faith? If  
everyone was as radical as you they  
would also be imprisoned. Therefore,  
they must be hiding.

PAUL  
I cannot judge another person's heart.

FABIUS  
I wonder where they meet. Perhaps  
somewhere private.

Paul doesn't bite. Fabius sighs.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

At lower elevation lies busy city of Damascus.

Paul (33) reclines with his eyes closed in meditation. Beside Paul is Ananias, gazing at city.

PAUL (V.O.)  
I stayed with the disciples in  
Damascus for several days.

FABIUS (V.O.)  
When did you change your name to  
Paul?

PAUL (V.O.)  
While in the city. Which seemed  
proper, due to my fierce reputation.

Paul opens his eyes.

PAUL  
I don't know if I have enough  
strength.

Ananias showcases a quizzical look.

PAUL  
To do what must be done.

ANANIAS  
Be gentle on yourself.

PAUL  
Easier said than done.

ANANIAS  
These things take time. Something  
is going to happen very soon.  
Something unpleasant.

Paul leans in, wanting more detail.

ANANIAS  
A man's deeds follow him. Whether  
he wants them to or not.

INT. UPPER ROOM - DAY

A group of MEN lounge in a space.

Ananias and Paul are isolated in corner. Men sneer at Paul.

PAUL (V.O.)

My reputation had preceded me. Even  
with Ananias by my side it was  
difficult to gain their trust.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Paul prays over bed.

PAUL (V.O.)

Much of my time was spent seeking  
guidance.

EXT. JUPITER TEMPLE - DAY

People move through large ornate entranceway.

PAUL

Ananias, the life I was  
living...should I purge it from my  
memory?

ANANIAS

God controls our past. Learn what  
lessons you can from there. Remember,  
everything finds its place.

PAUL

I won't ever forget you.

ANANIAS

Nor will I forget you.

Ananias grabs hold of Paul's shoulder.

ANANIAS

You have increased my faith.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Paul rides a camel.

PAUL (V.O.)

Soon afterwards I traveled to Arabia.  
For a few years I meditated on how  
my life had changed.

EXT. DESERT OASIS - DAY

Paul comes upon an oasis. His beard is in full bloom.

PAUL (V.O.)  
The righteousness I thought was my  
own was actually God's.

EXT. OASIS POND - DAY

Paul splashes refreshing liquid onto his face.

PAUL (V.O.)  
I understood what I had become. A  
chief of sinners. Yet he died for  
me.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Paul rides camel toward a glowing sunset.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Would you like to hear a sad truth?

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul leans in near Fabius.

PAUL  
The God I thought I was fighting for  
I was actually fighting against. I  
feel I may never fully understand  
the depth of his love.

FABIUS  
Your hatred for the Christians was  
deep.

PAUL  
It was beyond deep.

FABIUS  
I have three brothers and one sister.  
How about you?

Paul is taken aback.

PAUL  
One sister.

FABIUS

Just one? In my experience the more siblings there are the more exciting life becomes. Me, my sister and brothers shared many fond memories. On one occasion my youngest brother crushed two fingers of mine with a rock.

PAUL

Were you angry?

FABIUS

Furious! I wanted to break two of his fingers. Crush them!

Fabius stares into a corner. Reminiscing.

FABIUS

My brothers and I were working in the fields. A group of men came. Snatched my youngest brother. Sold him into slavery. He was seven years old. We never saw him again.

Fabius grabs a dirt clump. Throws it against a wall.

FABIUS

For a long time I felt responsible. My guilt kept the hatred at bay. Over time, something unexpected crept in. Everything I felt became a distant memory. Lost in time.

PAUL

You began to feel nothing.

Fabius acknowledges with a vulnerable glance. As soon as Fabius shows it, he steals it back.

PAUL

I know. All too well. My heart goes out to you.

Fabius rubs his watery eyes before a tear escapes.

PAUL

After Arabia, I returned to Damascus, hoping my reputation had become less volatile.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Paul (late 30s) preaches near a high platform where scripture is read. SCRIBES, PHARISEES, and CHIEF PRIESTS are present.

PAUL

Believe my words! For I do not speak on my own authority. I am here to proclaim Jesus the Christ is the Son of God. The God who delivered the Israelites out of Egypt.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul points to himself.

PAUL

They tried to refute my message. A few believed. Others took it as words from a fool.

FABIUS

Wisdom often appears wise to those who give it.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. AGORA - DAY

Paul (late 30s) has men and women huddled around him.

PAUL

The kingdom of God is not of this world! It is not built with stones. Overlaid with gold or silver. No. The kingdom is everlasting!

A few men grimace at Paul.

EXT. DAMASCUS SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Three men conspire amongst themselves while Paul speaks to a group near entrance.

PAUL (V.O.)

A plot soon arose. A few men sought to murder me.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Three ASSAILANTS hide near a gate, ready to pounce.

ASSAILANT 1  
We've been waiting a long time.

ASSAILANT 2  
Silence yourself.

ASSAILANT 1  
How about the other gates? Perhaps they caught him.

ASSAILANT 2  
Our task is to watch this one. Now stay silent!

EXT. OUTER WALL TOP PLATFORM - NIGHT

Ananias and AARON (early 40s), crooked teeth, wiry in frame and persona, secure a basket trolley system in an opening connected to outer wall.

Ananias, alongside Paul, surveys area.

Aaron verifies basket is secure. He adjusts rope.

AARON  
We're ready.

ANANIAS  
Paul...

PAUL  
I stayed in Arabia far too long.  
Please forgive me.

ANANIAS  
You need not ask for forgiveness.

The two men hug.

PAUL  
Thank you. For everything.

ANANIAS  
May your days be fruitful in God's vineyard.

AARON  
We cannot wait much longer.



PAUL  
Thank you for doing this.

Aaron gives a joking smile.

AARON  
It's the least we could do.

Aaron pats Paul on shoulder.

AARON  
Go with God.

PAUL  
Say a prayer for me. Jerusalem is  
not a short walk away.

AARON  
We shall.

Paul gets inside basket.

Aaron lowers Paul down with rope. Paul waves. Ananias  
returns gesture.

FABIUS (V.O.)  
Clever plan.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Paul jogs away. Basket lifts up in background.

FABIUS (V.O.)  
Did they discover how you escaped?

PAUL (V.O.)  
I never learned if they did.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul picks dried dirt off his ankles.

PAUL  
After an extended period I arrived  
in Jerusalem. I tried to join the  
disciples.

FABIUS  
Did they accept you?

PAUL  
Not at first.

FABIUS  
I understand their reasoning. If an enemy swears allegiance to Rome, the allegiance doesn't mean he is truthful. It is words. Nothing more. Proof is required.

PAUL  
Precisely what I needed.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Paul (late 30s) and BARNABAS (30s), often carefree, courage beyond measure, maneuver through crowd.

PAUL (V.O.)  
A man named Barnabas took me to the apostles and...

FABIUS (V.O.)  
Apostles? I don't understand the word.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Men chosen as representatives for Christ during his time on Earth. There were originally twelve.

BARNABAS  
They are very eager to meet you.

PAUL  
For the right reasons, I hope.

BARNABAS  
Have faith, brother.

INT. UPPER ROOM - DAY

Paul and Barnabas present before a group of men.

BARNABAS  
You must learn to trust in men, brothers. This man saw Jesus on the road to Damascus. Our savior talked with him! Told him what work he must do for the kingdom.

BARNABAS

He has done much for Christ in  
Damascus! Preaching the word of  
God! So please. Don't count him as  
an enemy. Count him as a brother.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius stretches out his arms.

PAUL

Each day brought a new level of trust.  
I was grateful for Barnabas.

FABIUS

Wait, I am curious. How did you  
initially find out where they met?

PAUL

Ananias was a man of many talents.  
His connections were noteworthy.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

Paul (late 30s) preaches to a group.

PAUL

The sacrifice Jesus made does not  
last for a year. Far be it that he  
is compared to animal sacrifices.  
For his sacrifice endures forever.  
Praise to our savior and his father  
on high!

People reason among themselves.

FABIUS (V.O.)

Once saved, is it possible for someone  
to lose their salvation given by a  
god?

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul affirms with a nod.

PAUL

The lord will judge everyone according to their works.

FABIUS

When?

PAUL

On judgment day. Everyone will be there. Those small and great. The wise. The unwise. Kings.

FABIUS

Even I?

PAUL

Do you fall into a category I said?

FABIUS

I do.

PAUL

Then you will be there.

FABIUS

Does absolute truth even exist? If not, what use is there for judgment?

PAUL

We cannot save ourselves. If we could then there would be no need for Christ. Or God. Or even a day of judgment.

FABIUS

Fate is at my command, prisoner. No one else.

PAUL

We all make a choice.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. WALKWAY - JERUSALEM - DAY

Paul (40s) paces with two men.

PAUL (V.O.)

I spoke with the Greek Hellenists.

FABIUS (V.O.)

Most Greeks will dispute anything.

INT. ROOM - DAY

JAMES (30s), high strung, visits with Barnabas and Paul.

JAMES

News reached our ears earlier today.  
A few Hellenists seek to harm you.  
Our plan is to set you off to  
Caesarea.

PAUL

Are you coming along, James?

JAMES

I must stay here.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius inspects his sword's sharp metal.

FABIUS

Helps to have friends. Especially  
when men would like your head on a  
spear.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ROAD NEAR MEDITERRANEAN SEA - DAY

SUPER: 40 A.D.

Paul (38) hikes.

PAUL (V.O.)

I traveled to Tarsus.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Sunlight flows in through open windows. SIMON (60s), anger-  
ridden on his best day, paces room. Paul's mother, MARTHA  
(60s), submissive to a fault, watches in dismay.

PAUL

Father, please, heed my words.

SIMON

A father must surrender to his son?  
I think not!

PAUL  
Do you not even seek to challenge  
what you believe?

SIMON  
Challenge yours, son! What evidence  
is there?

PAUL  
My evidence is clear.

SIMON  
What is it? Where is it?!

PAUL  
I am evidence.

SIMON  
You should have kept persecuting!

Martha, in tears, vacates room.

PAUL  
I now know an eternal truth.

SIMON  
Eternal truth?!

Paul attempts to place a hand on his father's shoulder.  
Simon shrugs it off.

PAUL  
We find eternal life through Christ.

SIMON  
Now you are boasting about eternal  
life with your newfound faith!? Are  
you mad!?

PAUL  
Please, father...

SIMON  
Leave this house! Now!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Paul swings open door. Abigail (mid-30s) trudges toward  
house holding a fruit basket.

ABIGAIL  
Saul?

PAUL

Abigail?

Abigail sets basket down. They embrace.

ABIGAIL

It has been far too long, brother!

PAUL

It has indeed! How have you been?

ABIGAIL

I've been well. I am working in the marketplace. A tanner was needing some help.

PAUL

Glad to hear you are keeping busy.

ABIGAIL

What brings you back?

PAUL

I needed to speak with father and mother. The beginning of our visit was a joyful reunion, but...

ABIGAIL

Did something happen?

PAUL

You need not concern yourself, Abigail.

ABIGAIL

I want to know.

PAUL

Then come with me. I will show you.

ABIGAIL

Where?

PAUL

Anywhere the gospel of Christ needs to be taught.

ABIGAIL

Are you...a Christian?

PAUL

Yes.

ABIGAIL  
Now I see what troubles them.

PAUL  
Come with me, Abigail. Please.

ABIGAIL  
Let me think on it, brother.

Abigail heads for house.

PAUL  
You were right.

She turns.

PAUL  
You spoke your heart. I didn't  
listen. It was wrong. All of it.

Abigail enters house.

EXT. AGORA - DAY

SUPER: Jerusalem

Paul (38) works as a tentmaker with equipment.

A LOCAL MAN (30s) interacts with Paul. Paul motions to accessories and tools on table.

PAUL (V.O.)  
I proclaimed the gospel to those who  
sought my business. If a soul wanted  
to hear more I had compassion. An  
intense desire to share with them  
the crucified Christ.

EXT. AMPHITHEATER OUTER CORRIDOR - DAY

Gamaliel (70s) converses with two PHARISEES (50s). Trio breezes past a few pillars.

Paul slinks around a pillar to reveal himself.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Greetings.

They turn.

Gamaliel touches his chest.



GAMALIEL  
He desires a word with me.

PHARISEE 1  
Very well.

The two Pharisees leave.

GAMALIEL  
I heard you've become the very thing  
you swore to destroy.

PAUL  
Our lives change.

GAMALIEL  
What evidence exists? A man hangs  
on a cross for a few believers. He  
is taken down. Buried in an ordinary  
tomb. What else is there? Except  
lies!? Deceit!

PAUL  
Jesus was raised the third day.

Gamaliel shakes his head in disappointment.

GAMALIEL  
Such a pitiful waste.

PAUL  
Understand this, Gamaliel. His  
crucifixion is clearly seen in the  
prophecies. Even his ascension to  
heaven was prophesied! Of course  
you know this. Yet you will not  
believe.

GAMALIEL  
If his followers possess an empty  
faith they will fail. They will  
cease to exist!

PAUL  
What if my brothers and I act on the  
true intentions of God? What is  
your response?

GAMALIEL  
No response is required for  
hypocrites.

PAUL  
 Wise teacher, please. Accept it.  
 Our messiah lived among us. Died on  
 the cross! For you and I!

GAMALIEL  
 Blasphemy! He has not entered our  
 midst yet!

Staring contest ensues.

PAUL  
 Farewell, Gamaliel.

Paul retreats.

PAUL (V.O.)  
 I severed ties with a man who could  
 have accomplished much for Christ.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius spins his golden ring.

PAUL  
 I shall tell the rest of my  
 experiences tomorrow.

FABIUS  
 Man of Tarsus?

PAUL  
 Yes, legionary?

FABIUS  
 Where do Roman Christians meet?

PAUL  
 They move. From house to house.

FABIUS  
 No permanent location?

PAUL  
 Only heaven above.

Fabius smirks at witty reply.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Fabius sheds his armor. Still slow.

Cassius sips water from a clay cup.

Fabius throws a dagger into a wooden board. Twists it out.

CASSIUS

Finish dressing before the night  
escapes us. My stomach growls.

FABIUS

One more throw.

Fabius returns to throwing position.

Cassius holds up a finger.

CASSIUS

Only one.

Fabius throws. Lands dead on.

CASSIUS

Learn anything of interest?

FABIUS

From the Christian?

CASSIUS

Assignment you have held for what  
seems a lifetime. Of course, Fabius.

Fabius inserts dagger into sheath. He lays weapon on shelf.

FABIUS

Nothing noteworthy.

Fabius dons outer cloak. Slips into his sandals.

CASSIUS

Not surprising. A man runs out of  
stories to tell sooner or later.  
Unless he keeps company with whores!

Cassius grabs onto Fabius's upper arms.

CASSIUS

Come! Let's eat and act as gods!  
Drink wine! Sing songs!

FABIUS  
Exactly in that order.

Cassius grabs his friend's cheeks.

CASSIUS  
Clever man!

Fabius swats Cassius's hands.

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

SUPER: City of Three Inns

Barnabas (50s) wears a ragged brown cloak. Abigail (late 60s) has graying hair yet still holds a youthful appearance for her age. They arrive at inn entrance.

BARNABAS  
We shall lodge here.

ABIGAIL  
Are we close?

BARNABAS  
Almost half a day's walk. When we arrive in Rome a disciple will meet us at the east entrance gate.

ABIGAIL  
Barnabas?

BARNABAS  
Yes, Abigail?

ABIGAIL  
Do you grieve for him?

BARNABAS  
God has brought Paul to where he is for the sake of the cross. It is honorable.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

SOLDIERS enjoy festivities time with food and drink. Among them are Cassius, Fabius, and Septimus.

SOLDIER 1  
Glory to the gods!

All soldiers raise their drinks. All but Fabius shout...

SOLDIERS

Glory!

Soldiers chug liquid. Fabius eats a meat slice.

Septimus bites into a large chicken drumstick.

SOLDIER 1

How about those women outside!?

SOLDIER 2

They look good enough to eat.

CASSIUS

Not only for eating. Other things too!

Soldiers laugh.

SEPTIMUS

How did everything go today?

FABIUS

He continues to share experiences related to his spiritual crusade.

SEPTIMUS

What about their location?

FABIUS

He says they move from house to house. Meet at a certain place for a specific amount of time. They then move somewhere else. Cycle repeats.

SEPTIMUS

Seems sporadic.

FABIUS

That's the idea.

SEPTIMUS

Caesar will not be pleased.

Cassius overhears.

CASSIUS

Go with courage, centurion!

Cassius salutes Septimus with his drink.

SEPTIMUS

At his core, Caesar is an understanding man.

CASSIUS

He understands the road leading to madness! That is for certain!

Soldiers laugh.

SEPTIMUS

Meridias, walk with me on Cornelia Road tonight.

FABIUS

May I ask why?

SEPTIMUS

You will see.

INT. PRISON CELL - NIGHT

Paul prostrates.

PAUL

Keep special watch over Timothy in his work with the Ephesians. I pray they continue in steadfastness. Give me strength to continue on a faithful path. Bless all the churches in Asia Minor, Judea, and around the Jordan. In your son's name, amen.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - NIGHT

Torches light the path. Fabius and Septimus stroll.

Ten bodies, men and women, are nailed to crosses. Some dead. Others barely alive.

INT. NERO'S GARDENS - NIGHT

Four Christians are nailed to crosses.

Nero marches with personal entourage of SERVANTS and GUARDS. An evil smirk spreads across his theatrically painted face.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - NIGHT

Two ROMAN SOLDIERS linger near crosses.

SEPTIMUS  
Death lingers in the air.

FABIUS  
Indeed.

SEPTIMUS  
Do you know who these bodies belong  
to?

Fabius doesn't answer fast enough.

SEPTIMUS  
Christians. Dying for a cause.  
Enduring pain for someone who  
proclaimed himself as a god among  
men. A divine man who came from  
heaven. Sacrificed himself. It is  
a ludicrous belief. I would have to  
perish for something more real.  
Truth will always be a constant  
debate. Always.

FABIUS  
My prisoner would disagree.

A man screams.

The soldiers cackle. They scoop water from a bucket. Drench  
the man.

LAUGHING SOLDIER  
Does water help!?

LAUGHING SOLDIER 2  
Will your savior fly down and rescue  
you!?

LAUGHING SOLDIER  
Only gods can fly!

SEPTIMUS  
He looks fresh.

Fabius stares into centurion's eyes. A blip of irritation.

SEPTIMUS  
Something amiss?

Fabius gazes at condemned man.

SEPTIMUS

He deserves his fate, Fabius.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Camilla basks in the breeze. Closing her eyes. Taking it in.

Fabius kisses her on forehead. He seems distant. She picks up on his aloofness.

CAMILLA

What troubles you?

FABIUS

Nothing.

Camilla cricks her head, waiting for a revelation.

Fabius exhales. Irritated.

FABIUS

At one end I see this man in chains.  
Nothing more. On the other end I  
see what he stands for.  
Tonight...watching those crucifixions.  
It was much to bear. Those men and  
women were dying for ideas they  
believe in. We are no different.

CAMILLA

Punishment is justice in their case.  
If they didn't set fire to the city--

FABIUS

--Believing in Nero's proclamations  
is unwise.

CAMILLA

Should I view them as a lie?

FABIUS

Anything but truth.

Fabius stomps into...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Camilla follows.

CAMILLA

Fabius! Renounce your treachery!



FABIUS

I will do no such thing.

Camilla clenches one of his arms.

CAMILLA

Swear loyalty to Caesar! Anything else is a betrayal to Rome!

Fabius retreats from Camilla's grasp.

FABIUS

I merely question his motives.

CAMILLA

Nero is Caesar! He can do as he wishes. If he wants to have an orgy so be it. If he wants to kill a hundred men so be it!

FABIUS

You insolent whore! It is not as simple as knowing where his power lies. I have experienced things that would turn your hair grey! Your face white!

Camilla reclines beside him on bed.

CAMILLA

Tell me.

She slides fingertips down his back.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. VILLA ATRIUM - NIGHT

Wealthy GUESTS converse at lively party. SERVANTS hover with food and drink platters.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

VARINIA (20s), long dark hair, a gentle, innocent soul, is blindfolded. Her body shivers. A reluctant participant. She wears only a tunic.

Nero plays somber tune on a fiddle in a corner.

CRUEL SOLDIER (40s) removes his body armor and tunic.

INT. COLONNADE - NIGHT

Laughs resonate as Fabius (20s) marches down corridor.

FABIUS

Varinia?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Soldier removes his sandals, now only wearing a loincloth.

CRUEL SOLDIER

You have been given the honor of  
portraying Caesar's set piece. Only  
the most desirable noblewomen are  
chosen.

INT. COLONNADE - NIGHT

Fabius rounds a corner. Stumbles upon three SOLDIERS.

FABIUS

Did a woman recently pass through?

BANQUET SOLDIER

Many women come through here.

Guards chuckle.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Soldier body slams Varinia on bed. He jumps on top, grasping  
her wrists.

She screams. Struggles.

Nero switches to a fast-paced tune.

Soldier licks Varinia's neck.

INT. COLONNADE - NIGHT

Varinia's screams reverberate.

FABIUS

Varinia! Varinia!

Fabius tries plowing through, but guards restrain him.

FABIUS

Varinia!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nero plays fiddle like a madman. Quick. Melodic.

Soldier moves to rip apart Varinia's tunic. She slices his face with her nails. Crimson develops.

She rolls off bed. Races to door.

Locked!

Soldier slides off bed. He stumbles. Grabs dagger.

Varinia fails to open door. Just as she turns...

Dagger penetrates her stomach.

Fiddle playing ceases.

INT. COLONNADE - NIGHT

Fabius grapples with soldiers.

FABIUS

Varinia!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Varinia drops to ground with knife in her gut.

VARINIA

(whispers)

Fabius...

FABIUS (O.S.)

Varinia! I'm coming!

Blood forms around her torso.

NERO

I suggest you leave.

Soldier grabs his clothing and sandals. Opens door on far end. Vanishes.

FABIUS (O.S.)

Varinia!

NERO

Open the door!

Door opens.

NERO

Let him in.

Fabius kneels beside Varinia.

Nero paces in a circle.

Fabius looks up to Nero with teary eyes.

NERO

Sight of blood. Taste of death.  
Touch of love. They add passion to  
my performance.

Nero stops behind him. Claps.

NERO

Magnificent theatrical production  
with your wife. Magnificent. For a  
woman to die with such vigor.  
Breathtaking portrayal.

Nero snickers with delight. Exits room.

Fabius watches him depart. Kisses her lips. He pulls a  
golden ring off her finger. Slides ring onto his right middle  
finger. Kisses the piece.

His forehead presses against her chest. Moans. Agony for  
his lost love.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Camilla wraps an arm around his back.

CAMILLA

When your eyes close in death, you  
will meet her in the sacred grove.  
Where cornel trees grow.

He wraps an arm around Camilla's back.

She kisses Fabius on the chin.

INT. NERO'S CHAMBER - DAY

Two GUARDS allow Septimus passage between two large pillars.  
He stops near steps leading to throne. Bows.

Nero retires to his throne.

NERO  
Rise, centurion.

Septimus obeys.

SEPTIMUS  
My soldier reports the prisoner knows  
nothing about where the Christians  
meet.

NERO  
No information at all?!

SEPTIMUS  
According to Meridias, only general  
details were told. Details we already  
knew.

NERO  
By the power of Minerva! Curse that  
wretched man! Tomorrow morning move  
him to the prison near the Via Ostian.  
We will provide him with a temporary  
change of scenery.

SEPTIMUS  
It shall be done.

Septimus bows. As he walks off...

NERO (O.S.)  
Centurion!

Septimus turns.

NERO  
Curiosity infects me to no end. I  
would very much like to meet him.

SEPTIMUS  
I shall see to it personally, Caesar.

Septimus exits.

Nero comes to a bowl on a table. He devours an olive.

NERO  
An olive more valuable than a  
Christian? Surely not.

Nero grabs a few olives. Throws them across room.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Business auction play out in background.

FABIUS  
Three days from now?

SEPTIMUS  
When Nero wants something complete  
he picks up the pace.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius enters.

Paul kneels in prayer on top of a folded cloak.

Fabius studies flagellation scars on Paul's back.

PAUL  
All my life I give to you. Amen.

Paul puts on his cloak.

FABIUS  
Acquainted with scourging, I see.

PAUL  
A testament to what I've experienced.  
Nothing more.

Fabius rests next to Paul.

PAUL  
Not armed with a dagger today?

FABIUS  
I have reached the conclusion you  
are not a dangerous man.

PAUL  
Have I earned a legionary's trust?

Fabius shrugs in a playful manner.

FABIUS  
Possibly.

Paul shifts against wall to get comfortable.

FABIUS

Last time we spoke...I believe you  
were debating with your old teacher.

PAUL

You remember well.

Paul stares at floor, remembering.

PAUL

Barnabas sought me out in Tarsus.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. TARSUS MARKETPLACE - DAY

Barnabas (40s) scouts for Paul (40) in crowd. Paul showcases  
accessories and a tent to an EAGER CUSTOMER (50s).

PAUL

Tent should remain sturdy for at  
least five years.

Barnabas raises his hands in exclamation.

PAUL

Remember to keep the fabric clean.

EAGER CUSTOMER

Thank you, tentmaker.

Paul rolls up merchandise.

Man departs.

Paul stashes a few coins in pouch.

Barnabas sneaks up behind Paul.

BARNABAS

Paul!

PAUL

Barnabas?

BARNABAS

Greetings brother!

Barnabas and Paul hug.

PAUL

Greetings to you!

BARNABAS

How blessed I am to find you! Much good has come to pass for the lord in Antioch. Many men and women have been added to the kingdom!

PAUL

Wonderful!

BARNABAS

It was a magnificent sight. Their faith is very strong.

PAUL

If only I was there.

BARNABAS

That is why I came. Say the word and we're off.

Paul grabs money pouch and work materials.

PAUL

I am at your mercy, my friend. Lead me on.

BARNABAS

Nothing has changed, I see.

PAUL

Not at all.

Paul and Barnabas share a laugh.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius slides his ring on and off in repetition.

PAUL

We traveled to Antioch and stayed with the brothers there. Teaching and encouraging them for a year.

FABIUS

I've never promoted my faith. Not even to slaves I've possessed.

PAUL

Speaking of something you neither see nor hear would be difficult.



FABIUS

You see your god?

PAUL

Faith runs deeper than what we see  
with our own two eyes.

FABIUS

I believe I'll see my youngest brother  
in the next life.

Paul waits to hear more.

FABIUS

One night, I heard my father. He  
learned my brother was sold to a  
man. This...man...forced young boys  
to fight in gladiatorial games.

PAUL

No father should have to outlive  
their child.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE ANTIOCH - DAY

Barnabas and Paul (40s) hike.

PAUL (V.O.)

Barnabas and I traveled to several  
cities preaching the gospel.  
From Antioch we sailed to Cyprus.

EXT. SAILING SHIP - DAY

Paul and Barnabas (40s) enjoy tranquil waves.

PAUL (V.O.)

Someone with me makes the journey  
easier.

FABIUS (V.O.)

For a Roman soldier there is always  
another voice nearby.

PAUL

How is the weather in Cyprus?

BARNABAS

Warm and clear, I hope.

PAUL  
You do not know?

BARNABAS  
Must I know everything?

PAUL  
My mistake in believing you did,  
Barnabas.

BARNABAS  
I know how to roast a goat to  
perfection. That skill must count  
for something.

Paul and Barnabas laugh heartily.

PAUL  
I have tasted the result of your  
cooking skills. No one can match  
you.

BARNABAS  
Not even your mother?

PAUL  
Not even her.

EXT. PAVED ROAD - CYPRUS - DAY

Paul and Barnabas trek through town. People buy and sell  
from vendors. Speak in cliques.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Miletus, Phillipi, Derbe, Lystra.  
We traveled to all these cities.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING AREA - DAY

Paul and Barnabas lounge at table.

PAUL (V.O.)  
God gives the increase. I am merely  
a tool.

Barnabas consumes a piece of bread.

PAUL  
We need to visit those we've already  
proclaimed the word to.

BARNABAS

I agree. We should also have someone accompany us. How about John Mark?

PAUL

No. He left us in Pamphylia. Disregarded the Lord's work.

BARNABAS

Betraying us was not his intention. He longed to see his family.

PAUL

What shall we say then? Our physical family is more important than our spiritual mission?

BARNABAS

John Mark is fully prepared. He is a good choice.

PAUL

I cannot trust him.

BARNABAS

Have you no faith in the man?

PAUL

Apparently not.

BARNABAS

Would you consider letting him come halfway? If he shows any disloyalty I will ask him to leave.

PAUL

God does not ask us to only run half the race! Why should he be treated any different?

BARNABAS

Where is your reasoning, Paul?!

PAUL

Where is yours?!

BARNABAS

With forgiveness! With mercy!

PAUL

Both of which are misplaced!

Barnabas and Paul calm down.

BARNABAS

He will come with me to Cyprus.

Paul huffs in frustration.

PAUL

(terse)

God be with you.

INT. JERUSALEM TEMPLE - DAY

SUPER: 58 A.D.

Paul (55) converses with LOCAL MAN (30s).

PAUL (V.O.)

Almost ten years ago I made a visit  
to Jerusalem to fulfill a vow.

Two TEMPLE MEN (50s) spot Paul. One aggressively points at him.

TEMPLE MAN 1

Men of Israel, help! This is the  
man who teaches everyone everywhere  
against the people, the law and this  
temple! He even brought Greeks here.  
Defiled the holy place!

TEMPLE MAN 2

He brought the unclean Ephesian here!  
How much more blasphemy must we  
endure?!

TEMPLE MAN 1

Seize him! Seize him!

Men drag Paul onto temple's main steps.

Gates to temple shut. Angry mob beats Paul with fists.

ROMAN SOLDIERS, including ROMAN TRIBUNE (30s), muscular, a  
man with war milage on his face, arrives. They cut through  
crowd.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

(gruff voice)

Clear the way! Clear the way!

Two soldiers carry Paul out in chains. Soldiers push back protesters.

Guards lead Paul from courtyard toward Antonia Fortress.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius expresses surprise.

FABIUS  
Roman savages rescued you?

Paul catches his sarcasm. Grins.

PAUL  
Remember legionary, I too am a citizen  
of Rome.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ANTONIA FORTRESS - DAY

Paul trudges up steps between two soldiers with tribune leading.

PAUL  
Could I address--

ROMAN TRIBUNE  
--Do you speak Greek?

PAUL  
(Greek language)  
Yes.

ROMAN TRIBUNE  
(Greek language)  
Are you the Egyptian who recently  
began a revolt?

PAUL  
(Greek language)  
I am a Jew, from Tarsus of Cilicia.  
With your permission, I'd like to  
speak to everyone.

Tribune stops. Paul and soldiers follow suit.

ROMAN TRIBUNE  
Keep it concise.

Tribune motions to crowd.

Paul faces crowd.

PAUL

(Aramaic language)

Brothers and fathers! Hear my  
defense!

Crowd quiets down.

PAUL

I am a Jew. Born in Tarsus of  
Cilicia. Brought up in this city.  
Educated at the feet of Gamaliel  
according to the strict manner of  
the law. Zealous for God, as you  
all are this very day. I persecuted  
the way to death, binding and  
delivering to prison both men and  
women. The high priest and elders  
can bear me witness on this because  
from them...I received letters. I  
journeyed to Damascus with a group  
of men, hoping to imprison those who  
believed in Christ. At about noon  
time, as we came near the city, a  
bright light shone all around.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

PAUL

I told them I was present during the  
stoning of Stephen, a man of God.  
About my meeting with Ananias. My  
conversion.

FABIUS

I am surprised they listened for as  
long as they did.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ANTONIA FORTRESS - DAY

Crowd listens.

PAUL

Jesus Christ said to me, 'Go, for I  
will send you far away to the  
Gentiles.'

Crowd raises their voices. Thunderous clamor.

TEMPLE PROTESTER

Away with such a man!

TEMPLE PROTESTER 2

You should not be allowed to live!

People pull off their cloaks, flinging dust.

Tribune grabs Paul under arm.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

Your speech has met its end.

Paul and soldiers move with haste en route to fortress  
entrance.

INT. ANTONIA FORTRESS - BARRACKS - DAY

Large open room with pillars set in a semicircle.

Paul is led into a smaller room.

INT. FLOGGING ARENA - DAY

Muscular FLOGGING SOLDIER (30s) chains Paul to a cylindrical  
pillar. A CENTURION, (30s), blonde hair, diplomatic, leans  
on a wall.

Tribune marches to Paul.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

No riots occur on my watch.

Tribune signals to soldier.

Soldier picks up whip with leather straps.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

Gritting your teeth will only make  
it worse.

PAUL

I know.

Tribune leaves.

As soldier winds up to deliver first blow...

PAUL

Centurion! Is it lawful to flog a man who is a Roman citizen? A man not condemned?

CENTURION

Secure the whip, soldier!

Soldier relaxes whip at his side.

Centurion rushes from room.

INT. FORTRESS OPEN ROOM - DAY

Centurion approaches Tribune who speaks with another SOLDIER (30s).

CENTURION

That man is a Roman citizen.

Revelation hits Tribune like a tidal wave.

INT. FLOGGING ARENA - DAY

Tribune stomps over to Paul.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

Are you indeed a Roman citizen?

PAUL

Yes.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

Lying is a capital offense.

PAUL

So is murder.

Tribune considers this.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

My citizenship was bought with a large sum.

PAUL

I am a citizen by birth.

Tribune rubs his temple. Sighs.



ROMAN TRIBUNE

Unbind him. Tomorrow he shall go in front of the council and chief priests.

CENTURION

Yes, tribune.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius draws a circle with dirt.

FABIUS

They made a mistake in not giving you fair treatment.

PAUL

His focus was on avoiding a riot. Not procedure.

FABIUS

Dreadful politics.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE JERUSALEM - NIGHT

Paul rides a horse surrounded by dozens of Roman SPEARMEN and HORSEMEN.

PAUL (V.O.)

A threat against me was made known to the tribune. More than forty men made an oath to neither to eat nor drink until they had killed me. During the night, we set out for the provincial capital, Caesarea.

FABIUS (V.O.)

If you stayed in Jerusalem, a riot may have very well started.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius resigns to a cross-legged position.

FABIUS

What happened to those men who swore to kill you?

PAUL

If a man learns it's an impossible task, special provisions can be made by a rabbi.

FABIUS

A permissible way out. Good. Otherwise it is the murder of one's self or starvation. Not the best of choices.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Paul peers out window. ROMAN GUARD (20s), baby face, stern, acts as a sentry.

PAUL (V.O.)

I found myself under house arrest in Caesarea. Certain privileges came with this predicament.

ROMAN GUARD

Do you have a good relationship with Felix the governor?

PAUL

I have never met the man.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Paul walks along coast of Mediterranean Sea with the guard.

PAUL

How would I go about arranging a meeting with the governor?

EXT. PALACE COURT ROOM - DAY

Paul is given an audience by Governor FELIX (40s), a man with golden rings on every finger, and DRUSILLA (30s), bird beak of a nose and pompous royal flair. Several COUNCILMEN spectate circular room.

FELIX

Gold and fine jewels are what I believe in. How about you?

PAUL

I believe in something greater than myself. A truth sharper than any two-edged sword.

Felix converses with Drusilla.

PAUL

What is your decision noble Felix?

FELIX

Go away for now. When I find an opportune time I will summon you.

PAUL

Very well.

Paul bows. Retreats. His guard follows.

PAUL (V.O.)

Felix wanted a bribe. It was not mine to give. Two years later Festus replaced Felix as governor.

INT. TRIBUNAL - DAY

FESTUS (40s), bald, politician goatee, suave in his demeanor, resides. Councilmen surround him.

Paul (58) testifies in center of room.

FESTUS

Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges?

PAUL

I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourselves know very well. If I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I will not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me no one can give me up to the Jews. I appeal to Caesar.

Festus discusses matter with council.

FESTUS

To Caesar you have appealed.

FESTUS  
So to Caesar you shall go.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Roman citizenship helped once again.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul rubs his temple.

PAUL  
My journey to visit Caesar became a reality. I was put on a cargo ship. On the fourteenth day of our voyage, I told the crew our lives would be spared but the ship would wreck.

FABIUS  
How did you know?

PAUL  
An angel from heaven appeared to me.

FABIUS  
Angel. Sure. Soon afterwards, Jupiter washed your buttocks. Right?

EXT. SHIP DECK - DAY

A centurion, JULIUS (40s), professional, patriotic to a fault, paces over to Paul.

Soldiers draw their swords on prisoners.

JULIUS  
Order those swim worthy to jump overboard! Any remaining prisoners will use torn ship parts for assistance.

Soldiers focus on centurion in shock.

JULIUS  
Is everyone dull of hearing? Do as I have instructed!

SHIP SOLDIER (O.S.)  
Into the water!

SHIP SOLDIER 2 (O.S.)  
Into the water, men!

PAUL

You are a good man.

JULIUS

I've never understood the nature of compliments. But in your case, I'll make an exception.

Prisoners jump into water.

Paul catapults overboard. Splash.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Dozens of prisoners and guards slosh through water.

PAUL (V.O.)

We learned the island was called Malta. Native tribes were living in the area where we went ashore.

JULIUS

This could have been much worse.

PAUL

Shipwrecks are a part of life. At least in my own experience.

JULIUS

This isn't your first adventure?

PAUL

My first shipwreck was terrifying. For an entire night I was adrift at sea. I held onto a plank of wood. Early next morning, fishermen came on the wreckage. Brought me to land.

JULIUS

How many shipwrecks?

PAUL

Including this one? Three.

JULIUS

Fate was on your side.

PAUL

No. By the grace of God.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

NATIVES watch Paul from another campfire.

PAUL (V.O.)  
To our surprise, the natives showed  
us kindness.

Soldiers use hand signals and language to try communicating.

Julius, two guards, and two natives enjoy the heat.

Paul drops a few sticks into fire.

A VIPER hidden in nearby bush sinks its fangs into Paul's  
arm.

Two NATIVES gasp.

NATIVE MAN  
(native language)  
No doubt this man is a murderer.  
Though he has escaped the sea, justice  
has not allowed him to live.

Paul shakes snake into fire.

NATIVE MAN  
He must be a god.

He inspects the skin where viper struck.

PAUL  
Must not have been poisonous.

Julius glances at natives still in shock.

JULIUS  
Then why did they turn afraid?

PAUL  
For our entertainment?

FABIUS (V.O.)  
Closest you've come to being a god?

PAUL (V.O.)  
I was not worried.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Sand dunes. Paul hikes with Julius and two guards.

JULIUS

My scouts found the governor's location. His men have already come out to greet us.

PAUL

Rome is represented here?

JULIUS

Rome is everywhere.

INT. VILLA - NIGHT

Torches light an open courtyard. FEMALE DANCERS dance on platform. Guests lounge.

Paul lounges with Julius, three soldiers, and PUBLIUS (40s), bushy red beard, decked in maroon robe, flamboyant in gestures and vocals alike.

Two FEMALE SERVANTS loaf near Publius.

JULIUS

We are grateful for the hospitality.

PUBLIUS

For fellow countrymen on a long voyage? How could I refuse? A sincere pleasure. Most who visit don't linger. Of course, they are not a captive audience either.

Laughs. Paul, not amused, studies Publius.

PUBLIUS

I am amazed at how well behaved your prisoners are. What are they fed?

JULIUS

They should be grateful.

Julius motions to Paul.

JULIUS

Mostly thanks to this man.

PUBLIUS

Who is our hero?

JULIUS

His name is Paul. He hails from Tarsus of Cilicia.

PUBLIUS  
Welcome, Paul of Tarsus.

PAUL  
Greetings noble governor.

PUBLIUS  
You all will have to excuse me. I  
must attend to my father. He is  
gravely ill.

JULIUS  
My sympathies. May I ask his  
condition?

PUBLIUS  
Dysentery. Death sentence, I'm  
afraid.

PAUL  
Publius, grant me permission to visit  
your father.

PUBLIUS  
Very kind of you, but I must deny  
the request.

JULIUS  
Let him go, governor. I will answer  
for whatever happens.

Publius sighs, slightly annoyed.

PUBLIUS  
So be it.

Publius saunters off with two servant girls. Paul follows.

PAUL (V.O.)  
He said not another word. We ventured  
into his father's chamber.

INT. CHAMBER - NIGHT

Publius and two servants stand loiter near door.

ALBANUS (60s), long white beard, elderly image of Publius,  
lays comatose.

Paul kneels beside bed. Bows head.



PAUL

Lord, you are ever merciful. By your power, I ask you to heal this man. This I ask in your son's precious name. Amen.

Paul lays palms on Albanus's chest.

Eyes of Albanus open. Fully alert. Less pale.

Publius ventures to bedside.

PUBLIUS

Father?

ALBANUS

I feel...better. Much better.

PAUL (V.O.)

Never underestimate a person's tongue.

EXT. OUTER COURTYARD - DAY

Natives and Romans crowd around Paul.

A native LEPER (male, 50s) approaches. Everyone scatters.

Leper kneels.

Paul touches Leper's shoulder.

PAUL

By the power vested in the Son of God I cleanse you.

Man's skin transforms into a healthy state.

Crowd raise voices in amazement. Amongst witnesses is Julius.

EXT. SEA - DAY

Alexandrian ship sails. Twin figureheads of Castor and Pollux are attached to stern.

Paul takes in sea air at the ship's bow.

PAUL (V.O.)

Three months later we set sail on a ship that harbored there for the winter. We put in at Syracuse. Stayed three days. After a few more stops we arrived in Rome.

EXT. PORT OSTIA - DAY

Ship docks. Individuals unload cargo.

Paul exits ship with two guards.

JULIUS (O.S.)  
Prisoner!

Paul stops. Guards push Paul forward.

JULIUS  
Guards! Stop!

Guards pull Paul around to meet centurion.

JULIUS  
Above all else, I believe in honesty.  
That being said, I must say...I see  
you as an inspiration. When all  
hoped seemed lost, you held steadfast.

PAUL  
We are not much different, you and  
I. We believe in something beyond  
ourselves.

Centurion shakes Paul's hand.

JULIUS  
For whatever awaits, I wish you well.

PAUL  
Grace be with you.

Guards lead Paul along dock.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul dips pen into ink. He writes on parchment in Greek.

PAUL (V.O.)  
House arrest came again for two more  
years. I was able to bring many to  
Christ. Even men and women of  
Caesar's own household.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Paul baptizes TEENAGE GIRL. She emerges from water. He  
embraces her.

Men and women at river's edge clap and shout in joy.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Linus speaks with Paul. STOCKY SOLDIER (20s) lingers.

PAUL (V.O.)

Friends were able to visit. A Roman guard like yourself took watch over me.

EXT. NARROW ROAD - DAY

Paul (early 60s) and Barnabas travels with approaching city in view.

PAUL (V.O.)

No witnesses could be found to testify against me. Same as before. After being released I left Rome and visited several cities.

EXT. AGORA - DAY

Paul and Barnabas converse with a PLUMP MAN (30s).

PAUL

The kingdom of God is free to everyone.

PLUMP MAN

Nothing in this world is free.

BARNABAS

What we speak of does not reside in this world.

PLUMP MAN

Stop talking to me about this nonsense.

PAUL

Friend, I assure you, it is not nonsense.

PLUMP MAN

Tell that to the next person you come across! Which, hopefully, is an old woman. I have heard they are easily swayed!

Man retreats, laughing.

BARNABAS  
Many are called, but few are chosen.

PAUL  
There is always hope.

EXT. MARKET - DAY

SUPER: Troas. 64 A.D.

Paul (62) preaches to spectators with Barnabas at his flank.  
Hostility ensues. Boisterous shouts. Fist pumps.

PAUL  
To live is Christ and to die is gain!  
I speak not on my own authority, but  
of Christ. Forgiveness and eternal  
life through his holy name!

ROMAN SOLDIERS invade area. They apprehend Paul. Usher him  
away.

BARNABAS  
Paul! No!

A soldier restrains Barnabas.

BARNABAS  
Paul!

Soldiers throws Barnabas to ground.

Crowd inches toward Paul, but cannot breach soldiers.  
Soldiers beat off a few persistent men.

EXT. CITY OF ROME - NIGHT

Large city portion burns in flames.

PAUL (V.O.)  
I am not fully convinced my brothers  
are to blame for the fires.  
Nevertheless, Nero wanted them  
captured.

EXT. PRISON - DAY

Two SOLDIERS escort Paul, bound, to entrance.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Shortly thereafter, I ended up here.

PAUL (V.O.) ()  
Another victim of Nero's crusade.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Fabius searches carefully for his next words.

FABIUS  
If you had a chance to survive your  
fate...would you take the opportunity?

PAUL  
Would you give your life for someone  
you love? A wife? A child?

FABIUS  
Death is not my enemy.

PAUL  
Not yet.

Fabius swallows a knot in his throat.

FABIUS  
I would.

PAUL  
You are an honorable man.

Fabius backtracks toward exit.

PAUL  
Do not forget my words concerning  
Christ. For the life I live, I live  
for him.

FABIUS  
Thank you for sharing your story.  
It was fascinating.

PAUL  
You seem interested. Beyond simple  
curiosity.

FABIUS  
Any assumptions of yours are  
pointless. You are an enemy of the  
empire.

PAUL  
Is that Rome talking or yourself?

Fabius grabs Paul's cloak.

FABIUS  
You think you possess all the answers,  
but you do not. You are a powerless  
mortal! Just like everyone else!  
(calming down)  
Blood and flesh. Nothing more.

PAUL  
What burns inside you?

Fabius releases his hold.

FABIUS  
I wish we would have met under  
different circumstances.

PAUL  
You and I are exactly where we need  
to be.

Paul lends out a hand.

PAUL  
A sincere pleasure.

Fabius accepts handshake.

FABIUS  
You are an honorable man, Paul of  
Tarsus.

PAUL  
Die in my stead. Pick up your cross.  
Shed your blood for me.

Fabius opens his mouth to talk, but stops short.

Paul leans in next to Fabius's ear.

PAUL  
Now you understand.

Fabius backs away from Paul as if in a trance. When he  
reaches the opening he departs.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - NIGHT

Fabius examines the corpses hanging on crosses.

INT. LINUS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Linus ushers Barnabas and Abigail inside.

LINUS

You're here!

Linus and Abigail hug. Linus embraces Barnabas.

BARNABAS

Hello, my friend.

ABIGAIL

Where is he?

LINUS

Tomorrow they are moving him to the prison near the Ostian Road.

BARNABAS

That can mean only one thing.

LINUS

We will meet with him tomorrow. I promise.

ABIGAIL

Are you sure?

LINUS

With all my heart.

INT. NERO'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Septimus escorts Paul into Caesar's presence.

SEPTIMUS

As requested, Caesar.

NERO

Wait in the courtyard.

Septimus bows. Departs. Paul, bound with chains, is left with Nero and TWO SOLDIERS.

Nero tramps down the steps.

NERO

At last.

Nero ruffles Paul's hair. He paces around prisoner.

NERO

You Christians have been busy.  
Entertaining men and women in the  
arenas. Being crucified.

Nero halts in front of Paul. He pokes Paul on chest.

NERO

Your kind has been shedding blood  
all over Rome. Must be a good omen  
since your cult deems blood as  
symbolic.

Nero moves behind Paul. His mouth comes close to Paul's  
ear. Lays a hand on Paul's shoulder.

NERO

All of you stink as wretched dogs.  
I despise your kind. Men. Women.  
Children. I show no partiality.  
(whispers)  
I long for an answer. Nothing more.  
(shouts)  
Where does your kind congregate!?  
Where!?  
(softer)  
From one leader to another, please.  
Allow sanity to prevail. Tell me.  
(shouts)  
Where are they!?

PAUL

A man cannot destroy an eternal  
kingdom.

NERO

I am no man! I am a god! And when  
I find where you Christians lurk,  
which I will, I will kill everyone  
who bears the name of Christ!

PAUL

The foolishness of God is wiser than  
men. You will fail.

Nero grunts.



PAUL

Christ awaits you. You only need to seek him.

Nero laughs obnoxiously.

NERO

Seek him? Where shall I find this Jesus? In the garden outside?

Nero almost butts head with Paul, boring his eyes into him.

NERO

Make no mistake. Your cult will become a distant memory. A myth. Not for a little while. Forever.

PAUL

Do what you must.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Two PALACE SOLDIERS lead Paul to Septimus.

PALACE SOLDIER 1

Caesar would like an audience.

INT. NERO'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Septimus arrives at bottom of steps.

NERO

I am at my wits end! These Christians are cunning, Septimus.

Nero rises from throne. He stomps down the steps.

NERO

Perhaps a fresh method of questioning is in order. A more...sadistic approach.

SEPTIMUS

What do you propose?

INT. PRISON - SCOURGING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul, half-naked with a cloth covering his genitals and buttocks, leans against a wooden post. His hands are tied above his head to rope attached to the post.

Septimus hands Fabius a scourge. Bits of pottery shards and bone pieces are embedded.

Fabius inspects scourge like it's a foreign object. He glances at Septimus in a final effort to escape his duty.

Septimus signals to commence.

Cassius watches with his arms crossed. He yawns.

CASSIUS

Scourge the animal, Fabius. I am bored.

Fabius comes up next to Paul. He peers into Paul's eyes.

Paul innocently looks into legionary's eyes.

Fabius focuses on Paul's body. Guilt of looking Paul in eye is unbearable.

SEPTIMUS

Ask him.

FABIUS

Tell us the location of one house.

No response. His body quivers for what is to follow.

FABIUS

I order you in the name of Caesar.  
Give us a location.

Paul closes his eyes.

SEPTIMUS

Ten lashes. Begin.

Fabius focuses on whip, wrestling with his thoughts. His mouth opens halfway. He exhales sharply.

CASSIUS

Bring on the blood.

Fabius backs up a few steps. Raises whip over shoulder.

CRACK. Bloody lash forms on Paul's back.

Paul yells.

SEPTIMUS

Again!

Fabius swings scourge.

SEPTIMUS

Once more!

A third bloody streak arrives.

FABIUS

You do not have to experience this suffering! Give us a location!

Paul remains silent. Tears stream down his face.

Fabius brings scourge above his shoulder. Hesitates.

SEPTIMUS

Whip him, Fabius! Show no mercy!

Fabius shakes. Grits teeth. He whips Paul.

Septimus bends near Paul's body, which hugs the post.

SEPTIMUS

Your pain can cease. We only want a small piece of information. A location. Name and description of one of your friends. That is all.

Paul moans. Glimpses at Septimus before shutting his eyes.

Septimus steps away and commands Fabius with a gesture.

Fabius whips. A streak right below neck.

FABIUS

You will be spared! We give our word!

SEPTIMUS

Strike!

Fabius scourges. He quickly brushes a tear off his cheek.

SEPTIMUS

Final chance to avoid further pain! Confess to us!

Paul doesn't respond.

SEPTIMUS

Five more lashes.

Fabius readies scourge.

FABIUS  
He may not know anything.

SEPTIMUS  
Of course he does! He's their leader!

FABIUS  
He would have said something by now!

SEPTIMUS  
Get on with it!

Fabius gulps. He wipes beads of sweat.

Paul lays forehead against the wood.

Fabius scourges Paul five more times.

INT. NERO'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

Nero plays fiddle in a slow, somber tune.

Septimus enters. Bows.

NERO  
Did he say anything noteworthy? A  
name? Location?

SEPTIMUS  
No, my lord. He said not a word.

NERO  
As expected.

Nero plays his fiddle. Tempo is more rapid than before.

NERO  
You may leave.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Paul bows his head. His body shakes. Bloody imprints of the lashes smear his white cloak.

PAUL  
To your kingdom be glory forever and  
ever. Amen.

A pair of SOLDIERS trek into cell. One of the soldiers taps a wall with chains. Grins.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Fabius stares at dancing flames inside fireplace. His callous hands caress a leather pouch.

Camilla cleans a table in background.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Fabius (early 20s) and an OLD SOLDIER (60), lean and short in stature, hike along path outside Rome's city walls.

OLD SOLDIER

Ever heard about the man from Nazareth? Some people claimed him as a god.

FABIUS

From what I have heard he was but a man.

OLD SOLDIER

Did you know several years ago I was present at his crucifixion?

FABIUS

So he wasn't a god.

OLD SOLDIER

Perhaps not. But the whole land became dark when there should have been daylight. Large earthquakes came to pass. Even rumors of men rising from the dead.

FABIUS

Nonsense. Only the mighty Mars can perform such wonders.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Fabius studies fireplace.

Camilla reclines on couch. She pulls her dress up, revealing three quarters of her thighs. She strokes a thigh.

Fabius peers over.

Her eyes spell seduction. She sticks out her tongue in a lustful manner.

Fabius leaves area.

Defeated, Camilla grunts. She tugs her dress over exposed flesh.

EXT. VIA OSTIAN PRISON - NIGHT

Abigail, Barnabas, and Linus hide in shrubs. Two GUARDS holding spears tarry.

LINUS

(whispers)

We will not have much time.

ABIGAIL

(whispers)

What if they catch us?

BARNABAS

(whispers)

They won't.

ABIGAIL

How can you be sure?

BARNABAS

I'm not.

Guards leave posts.

LINUS

Go! Go!

Abigail, Barnabas, and Linus sprint to entrance.

Barnabas tries door. Locked.

BARNABAS

Quick. Find a rock.

They search ground.

Abigail is winner. She hands rock to Barnabas.

BARNABAS

Step back.

Barnabas jabs rock against lock. After five attempts, lock breaks.

INT. VIA OSTIAN PRISON - NIGHT

They search cells.

LINUS

Paul?

Barnabas spots cell. Paul scans outside via a barred window.

Barnabas dislodges lock. Tosses rock.

Paul turns to bars.

Cell door opens.

Abigail and Linus team up with Barnabas.

ABIGAIL

Brother!

PAUL

Abigail.

Paul hugs her.

PAUL

Hello, my friends.

BARNABAS

Surprised to see me?

PAUL

Not at all.

INT. FABIOUS'S FLAT - NIGHT

Fabius writes a letter on parchment.

Camilla breezes by.

CAMILLA

What are you doing?

FABIUS

Nothing.

Camilla doesn't buy it.

FABIUS

It's a report. To my commander.

CAMILLA

Good luck.

Fabius nods affirmation.

INT. PRISON CELL - LATER - NIGHT

Paul lays his hands on Linus's shoulders.

PAUL

You cannot stay long. If they catch  
you --

LINUS

There is time.

Paul relaxes. Takes a deep breath. Removes his hands.

PAUL

You've served Christ with an eager  
spirit.

Linus chokes up. He gives Paul a hug, beating on his back.

LINUS

I will miss you, brother.

Linus steps back.

LINUS

Farewell.

PAUL

Until we meet again.

INT. PRISON CELL - LATER - NIGHT

Barnabas paces cell.

Paul strokes his beard.

BARNABAS

Trials we go through are full of  
peril.

Paul crosses his arms.

PAUL

Our savior was on trial. Never once  
did he call on God or the angels to  
save him.



Barnabas stops pacing.

BARNABAS

Have you thought of what we will  
feel? How our hearts will break?

PAUL

Guilt arrives on its own. At the  
end, when our time has come, we owe  
it all to him.

BARNABAS

I will miss you. Your encouraging  
words. Your example. I will miss  
it all.

PAUL

Remain sad for only a season. I am  
going to a place where I want to  
dwell. My love will linger on.

Barnabas embraces Paul.

BARNABAS

I am sorry. For the disagreements.  
The lost time we could have shared.  
Please. Forgive me.

PAUL

Already done. I hope, in time, you  
can forgive me.

Barnabas releases from hug. He steps toward door.

BARNABAS

It has been a blessing to have you  
as a friend. A brother.

PAUL

Grace and peace be with you, Barnabas.  
We will see one another again.

CELL CORRIDOR

Abigail waits her turn. Barnabas stumbles over. Tears stream  
down his face.

She pats Barnabas on shoulder.

PRISON CELL

Paul and Abigail embrace. Paul winces due to pain from recent flogging. She recedes from hug, keeping close to his face.

ABIGAIL

Remember the time you broke your leg? While climbing the tree? We were so young. Feels like a lifetime ago.

PAUL

I remember.

ABIGAIL

Well, something in me is now broken. My pain...cuts deeper than any sword.

PAUL

Sister...

ABIGAIL

Why now? In these cruel days why must you leave me?

Abigail beats on his chest with fists.

ABIGAIL

Plead for mercy! Just this once!  
Plead for them to give you mercy!  
Do it for those you love! For me!

PAUL

I cannot.

Paul grips her arms.

PAUL

I cannot!

ABIGAIL

Escape with us! We can run away.  
Far from here. Where Rome cannot find us.

PAUL

But God will.

ABIGAIL

God wants you to live! God...

Abigail cries in agony. She places her forehead against Paul's chest.

ABIGAIL  
(softly)  
God wants you to live.

PAUL  
Abigail...

Abigail lifts her head to gaze into Paul's eyes.

Paul chokes up. Tears come.

PAUL  
Life does not ask forgiveness for  
the trials we experience.

EXT. OSTIAN ROAD - DAY

Three SOLDIERS lead Paul in shackles. Fabius is among a SQUAD OF SOLDIERS in L-shaped line formation.

An EXECUTER (40s), enjoys occupation, Goliath-sized, awaits with a long sword.

PAUL (V.O.)  
The time for my departure has come.  
I have fought the good fight. I  
have finished the race. I have kept  
the faith.

Paul ambles up to Executioner.

Across road among crowd of onlookers are Linus, Barnabas, and Abigail. Sad faces envelope them. Barnabas, behind Abigail, holds onto the top of her shoulders.

A soldier kicks the back of Paul's right knee.

Paul falls.

Another soldier yanks off Paul's cloak to reveal his scar-ridden skin.

Executioner stomps toward Paul. Examines his body.

Paul glances at Executioner.

Executioner chuckles with dark pleasure. He retreats a few steps.

Soldiers hurl small stones. A few spit on Paul.

RIDICULING SOLDIER 1  
Ignorant Christian!

RIDICULING SOLDIER 1 2  
Tell your god to save you!

RIDICULING SOLDIER 1 3  
What god would save this man?!

All soldiers, except Fabius, laugh.

Paul glimpses to the three across road.

Catching Paul's glance, Fabius sneaks a look at group.

EXECUTOR  
Are you ready to die?

PAUL  
I am not ready to die, but to live.

Soldiers laugh even harder.

A soldier kicks Paul in rib cage.

EXECUTOR  
Back in formation!

Soldier scrambles back to position.

EXECUTOR  
Renounce your god. Bow down to  
Caesar. Worship him. If you obey,  
your life may be spared.

PAUL  
Tell Nero...I forgive him.

Executor unsheathes his sword.

EXECUTOR  
Does the prisoner wish to say anything  
before I cut him from the world?

PAUL  
I do.

EXECUTOR  
Proceed.

PAUL  
We fail to grasp a simple truth.

PAUL

That Christ would die for us. Yet he did! For you! For me! For the poor man. Rich man. Woman. Child. Slave. Everyone. Each person has the ability to choose! It is a gift no man can take away. More powerful than fear.

(To Executer)

I ask mercy from no one. Only God shows mercy.

Paul lowers head.

PAUL

To live is Christ. To die is gain.

MONTAGE - SLOW MOTION

- Executer raises sword into air with both hands.
- Fabius watches Paul with a dreadful, sympathetic stare.
- Three observe from opposite street side.
- Paul rotates his head and stares into eyes of Fabius.
- Sword descends upon neck of Paul.
- Paul's body falls on the dusty earth. Head rolls. Stops.
- Fabius ogles sky. He closes his eyes in dismay.
- Executer inserts sword into sheathe.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. OSTIAN ROAD - DAY

Fabius marches with squad. He steals a glance at those...

ACROSS ROAD

Abigail's knees hit the earth. Barnabas consoles her.

INT. FABIUS'S FLAT - EVENING

When passing by table Camilla notices a letter written on parchment. Fabius's golden ring acts as a paperweight. She picks up parchment and ring. Reads.

INT. LINUS'S HOUSE - EVENING

Abigail studies parchment letter by candlelight. Her index finger touches inscribed words. Remnants of a courageous man.

INT. FABIVS'S FLAT - EVENING

Parchment and ring plunges to floor.

Camilla wobbles to chair. Her body trembles. She stretches her arms. Her nails scrape wood. She bangs two fists. Grabs hair. Sobs with all her being.

EXT. OSTIAN ROAD - GARBAGE DUMP - EVENING

Sun drops on horizon.

Barnabas and Linus spy two SOLDIERS carrying a corpse. A third SOLDIER holds a severed HEAD.

They arrive at a pile. Bodies decompose at different rates. No respect for the dead.

Men toss body and head onto mound. Depart.

Barnabas and Linus spring over.

Linus places long white cloth on ground.

Barnabas conceals severed head with smaller white cloth.

The two enshroud corpse in cloth.

Barnabas stashes head between corpse's legs. They hoist it into air, transporting with head between the legs.

INT. FABIVS'S FLAT - BALCONY - EVENING

Camilla inserts ring into pouch. Overlooks city. A faint smile develops. She now understands Fabius more than she ever did.

INT. NERO'S CHAMBER - EVENING

Septimus speaks with Nero MOS. Nero nods sternly.

Bowing, Septimus leaves.

Nero stomps over to a table. He grabs a bowl full of olives. Throws bowl onto floor, which shatters into pieces. Olives scatter.

Nero pushes additional bowls, plates, and goblets off table.  
Rage consumes him.

INT. LINUS'S HOUSE - EVENING

Linus, Abigail, and Barnabas wash corpse with sponges. Head is positioned near neck.

Abigail drips ointment over corpse.

Trio wraps body with strips of cloth.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LINUS'S HOUSE - EVENING

Cloth strips enclose corpse.

Barnabas leads a prayer.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - EVENING

Fabius sits on a rock slab situated off roadside. He observes various crosses and hanging bodies.

EXT. GARDEN - EVENING

Barnabas and Linus carry corpse on pallet. Abigail leads with a fiery torch.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - EVENING

Fabius removes his breastplate, leg guards, and helmet with absolute ease. He stows items against the rock.

INT. TOMB - EVENING

A rock slab cut out of wall.

Linus and Barnabas gently insert corpse. Linus situates head against the neck.

They join Abigail. Her torch illuminates sadness in their eyes.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - EVENING

Fabius lays his spear and sword beside him. He sheds his red cloak and spreads it over the weapons.

INT. TOMB - EVENING

Abigail places a rolled parchment on corpse. She squeezes her brother's right hand.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - EVENING

Fabius only wears a seamless tunic. Carrying a sack over his shoulder, he journeys on road with setting sun before him.

INT. TOMB - EVENING

Abigail sings an ancient choral hymn. Midway into verse, Linus and Barnabas join in by singing bass.

EXT. VIA CORNELIA - EVENING

He doesn't dare look back at his previous possessions. A newfound destiny awaits Fabius, ready to usher him toward an unknown time and place.

FADE OUT