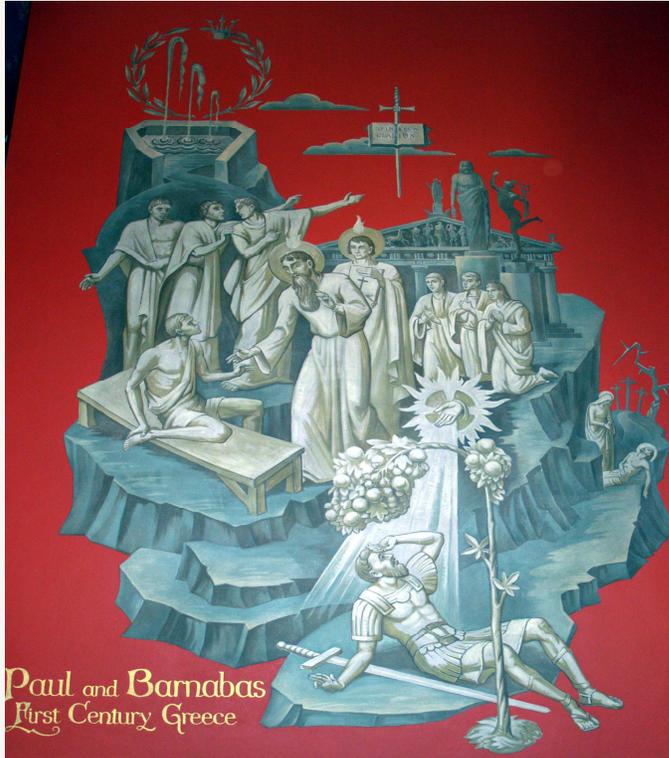


“A Great Cloud of Witnesses”

A Historical Series of the Murals on the Walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church

Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas

First Century Greece



St. Paul, also known by his Hebrew name Saul, was a well-educated Pharisee and a great persecutor of Christians. In fact, he is mentioned specifically as approving of the killing of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:57-59). On his way to Damascus in present-day Syria to persecute Christians there, St. Paul was blinded by a great light and was asked by Jesus “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4). We see this in the mural where St. Paul is lying down with a great light shining on him. Unable to see, St. Paul was taken to Damascus where he regained his sight and was baptized. He immediately began preaching Jesus Christ to the Jews who threatened to kill him (Acts 9:20-25). He fled to Jerusalem, where the Christians were still afraid of him. However, St. Barnabas took care of him and told the Christians and Apostles in Jerusalem of St. Paul’s conversion. Later, both St. Paul and St. Barnabas worked together in Antioch until the Holy Spirit sent them on a mission of evangelization (Acts 13:2-3). This is the first of the three great missionary journeys that St. Paul undertook over the next 12 years. He and St. Barnabas traveled through present-day Turkey in the first journey. They are shown raising up a sick man for signs and wonders accompany their preaching. At the

beginning of his second missionary journey, St. Paul and St. Barnabas split up. St. Paul journeys with Silas again into present-day Turkey before entering Europe and into present-day Greece (including Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth). During his third journey, St. Paul retraced his steps during the first two journeys by visiting the many churches there. During these travels, St. Paul encounters the pagan worship of the Roman Empire everywhere. We can see this in the image of the pagan temple in the mural. St. Paul preaches against these false gods, most famously in his speech in Athens, Greece during his second journey (Acts 17:15-34). After his third journey, St. Paul is imprisoned when he returns to Jerusalem. Held captive for 2 years, St. Paul appeals for his right as a Roman citizen to be tried by the emperor himself in Rome. So St. Paul is sent to Rome, and the last lines of the Acts of the Apostles end with him preaching the Gospel in Rome (Acts 28:30).

It is unknown exactly what happened to St. Paul before his martyrdom. Some say he was acquitted by the emperor and spent time in Spain preaching the Gospel. In any case, many sources agree that St. Paul was martyred in the same persecution that killed St. Peter. As a Roman citizen, St. Paul would have been beheaded instead of crucified or fed to the lions. Tradition says that St. Paul’s head bounced three times after the beheading, and a spring gushed forth at the place of each bounce. This is why there are three fountains depicted at the top of the mural. In fact, a church still exists in Rome that was built over the spot of St. Paul’s beheading that has three fountains inside. St. Paul is usually depicted with a sword. In the mural, there is a sword with the words “Spiritus Gladius” or “Sword of the Spirit.” The Word of God is often compared to a sword – the book of Hebrews says God’s word is sharper than a two-edged sword piercing into the heart (Heb 4:11-12). St. Paul was certainly a fervent and faithful preacher of the Word, and his words and examples pierced the hearts of many to conversion. **The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul is June 29. The Feast of St. Barnabas is June 11.**

Each month, this series will feature the murals painted on the walls of Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Church along with history and commentary. You can also find this series on our website at www.hcscchurch.org.

Historical commentary researched and prepared by Anthony Lickteig (Seminarian).