

“HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET” ON THE VIA EGNATIA

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This article is dedicated to Dr. Richard Rigsby and his wife, Donna; fellow travelers on the Via Egnatia with the Talbot Bible Lands Program

Introduction

The Apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 52:7 in the tenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. He wrote: *“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’”* (10:14-15, NKJV). In Isaiah’s day, as well as Paul’s day, the most common form of transportation was walking and Isaiah said the feet that carried the gospel of peace were beautiful!

A number of years earlier, the apostle had written a letter to the churches in Galatia and stated: *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (4:4-5, NKJV).

The prophet Daniel set forth the timeframe for the “fullness of time” when he prophesied: *“Seventy weeks are determined for your people [Israel] and for your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy [the LORD Jesus]. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself”* (9:24-26a, NKJV). In AD 30, the sinless Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, fulfilled the words of Daniel the Prophet. He was “cut off, but not for Himself” when He voluntarily laid down His life outside the walls of the Holy City of Jerusalem in order to redeem fallen humanity by His precious blood (John 10: 11-18; 1 Pet. 1:18-21).

In preparation for the spread of the gospel after the “fullness of time” had come, God’s plan and program had at least three aspects to it.¹ First, Greek was the common language of the day. In the 4th century BC, the “male goat” whose feet did not touch the ground, predicted by Daniel, conquered the known world (Dan. 8:5). Daniel identifies this male goat as the kingdom of Greece (8:21). History would reveal that the horn between the eyes was Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). The Greek conquest made Koine Greek, or “Common Greek” the *lingua franca* of the world. Much of the New Testament was written in this

¹ I would like to thank Dr. Richard Rigsby, professor emeritus at Talbot School of Theology, for these three suggestions.

common Greek and most people in the Mediterranean world could speak or read the language. This common language allowed for a rapid spread of the gospel.

Second, a Jewish Diaspora existed throughout the Roman and Parthian worlds in the First Century AD (cf. Acts 2:9-11; James 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1). When the early apostles began their missionary endeavors, they always sought out the synagogue and the Jewish community in each city they visited (Rom. 1:16; James 2:2). The common ground that the apostles had with their Jewish brethren was that they both were monotheistic and believed the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus, the early Christians could reason with them about the identity of the Messiah.

Third, another preparation to facilitate the spread of the gospel was an empire wide road system. The Roman army engineers built a vast road network for military purposes, i.e. moving men and equipment quickly to wherever needed. The Apostle Paul, quoting Isaiah, wrote about the beautiful feet that walked these Roman military roads with the gospel of peace. One of these roads was called the Via Egnatia and parts of it exist, even today.²

Ancient Sources

There are literary and cartographical sources for the Via Egnatia. Descriptions of this road are given by Polybius and Strabo and the road is represented on the Peutinger Map of the Roman world. A detailed description is also given in the Antonine Itinerary and the Jerusalem Itinerary.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 – 322 BC) wrote of trade and commerce in the area of Heracleia Lyncei in the 4th century BC. He observed: “There is said to be a mountain between Mentoreia and Istriane called Delphium, having a high peak. ... There is a spot in the gap in the middle in which, when a common market is held, Lesbian, Chian and Thassian goods are bought from the merchants who come up from Pontus, and Corcyrean amphorae from those who come from the Adriatic” (*On Marvelous Things Heard* 104; LCL 14: 285). This would later be part of the Via Egnatia.

The primary source for the Via Egnatia was written by Polybius, a Greek diplomat who helped administer the Roman affairs in Greece and was a contemporary of the building of the road (died 120 BC). In his book, *The Histories*, covering the period of 264-146 BC, he recounted the rise of Rome, their war with Carthage, and their conquest of Greece. In the 34th book he described the Via Egnatia (34.12.2-10; LCL 6:331-333). Unfortunately the full text of this book has been lost.

Fortunately the Greek geographer Strabo (63 BC – AD 25), had partially preserved, with comments, this portion of Polybius’ work in his *Geography of Strabo*, Book 7 (7.7.4; LCL 3:293-297). Strabo also gave further descriptions of the road elsewhere in his book (*Geography* 7.7.8; 7.10; 7.13; LCL 3: 293, 309, 329, 333).

The Peutinger Table was a set of maps made by a monk in the 13th Century AD based on a Roman map from the 4th or 5th Century AD. Some have

² The definitive, well-illustrated, work on the famous Via Egnatia is by Giannes Lolos (2008). Unfortunately it appears only in Greek and awaits an English translation.

suggested that this map was originally made in the First-Century AD. It consisted of 12 maps that covered the area from Spain to India. The Via Egnatia, with its cities, is clearly seen on this map.

There are two itineraries that list the cities and way-stations on the Via Egnatia with the mileage between them. They are the Antonine Itinerary and Jerusalem Itinerary. The former was probably written at the beginning of the 3rd century AD, but may go back to the First-Century BC. The latter is the oldest Christian itinerary and was written by the “Pilgrim of Bordeaux” and described his pilgrimage to and from the Holy Land in AD 333-334.

A Brief History of the Via Egnatia

The Egnatian Way was built by the Macedonian proconsul Cn. Egnatius sometime between 146 and 120 BC as a military road to “allow the Romans to readily dispatch their army against any future [Macedonian] revolt, and to protect the Macedonian borders against barbarian threats” (Lolos 2007: 274-275; brackets added by GWF). A more precise date cannot be given because the pro-consulship of Egnatius is not known. Perhaps someday an inscription will be excavated with a more precise date. Thus, the dating of the road will be secured.

Cicero, writing in the First-Century BC, called the Via Egnatia “our great military road (Latin *via militaris*) through Macedonia” (*De Provinciis Consularibus* 2.4; LCL 13: 543). Indeed it was.

For the next half century the Romans used Macedonia as a base of operation against the tribes, Thracian and others, to the north and north-east of Macedonia (Walbank 1985: 193-197).

The western end of the Via Egnatia played a very important role in the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey. In 48 BC, Julius Caesar crossed the Adriatic with part of his army and took Apollonia, one of the western terminuses of the Via Egnatia. He then moved his army to the other western terminuses in order to establish a base of operation at Dyrrachium and search for Pompey. Vibullius Rufus observed the troop movement of Caesar’s army, and then rode horses night and day to warn Pompey, who was in Candavia (Caesar, *Civil Wars* 3.11; LCL 2:211).

Pompey marched his troops down the Via Egnatia to Dyrrhachium at the Adriatic Sea. A battle between the forces of Julius Caesar and Pompey ensued and Pompey was victorious, but he did not follow up on his victory and eliminate Caesar. Julius commented to his friends: “Today victory would have been with the enemy if they had had a victor in command” (Plutarch, *Lives Pompey* 65; LCL 5:285-287). Pompey was defeated in the next battle at Pharsalus and fled to Mytilene to rejoin his wife and then sailed to Egypt where he was murdered by the advisors of Ptolemy XIII.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Eids of March, 44 BC, the Roman Senate made two of the conspirators, Brutus and Cassius, governors in the East. The conspirators wanted to restore Rome to a Republic and put an end to the dictatorial rule of several autocrats. They raised an army and began to march towards Rome. Mark Antony and Octavian sent an advanced army from Rome to look for Brutus and Cassius on the Via Egnatia (Appian, *Roman History*

4:87; LCL 4:287). Later, Mark Antony and Octavian followed with the rest of the army on the Via Egnatia to Philippi. There, the battle that changed the course of Western Civilization was fought. The Liberators, Brutus and Cassius, and their armies lost the battle. Imperial rule and emperor worship was established in the Roman Empire.

Emperor Trajan (AD 98 – 117) repaired the Via in AD 113 in preparation for his campaign against the Parthians. The Via Egnatia finally fell into disuse in the 5th century AD.

How was the Via Egnatia Built?

Two civil engineers from the University of Thrace in Xanthi, Greece, did a survey of the remains of the Via Egnatia between Philippi and Alexandropolis with the assistance of archaeologists from the Ephoreia of Antiquities of Kavala and Komotini (Xeidakis and Varagouli 1997: 123-132). They observed that the design and construction of the Via Egnatia:

“... was based on well-known specifications. Specifically, the road was always adapted to local topography, geomorphology and ground conditions. Thus the road avoided the difficult and unstable ground, the close curves and the steep grades. The thickness and the layering of the pavement varied according to the foundation conditions. In stable, rocky ground, the pavement consisted of only one layer of well-fitted cobble stones; whereas, in soft and unstable ground the soft soil was excavated and replaced by several layers of cobbles, gravels and rubbles held together with compact sandy soil or lime mortar. Up to four stone layers have been found in an archaeological excavation in the road pavement in the Thrace area. Some layers were made waterproof by well-compacted clay soil. The thickness of the pavement varied from 25 cm to more than 150 cm. The materials used were mainly of local origin. The width of the road ranged from 4 m to 8 m, depending on the ground conditions and the traffic demand. In cities its width reached up to 20 m to accommodate the increase traffic.

The cross section of the pavement was convex, with grades perpendicular to its axis from 5 to 10 percent, for rapid drainage. Large rock blocks were placed at the sides of the pavement, raised above the surface, to prevent lateral spreading of the pavement and deterring carts and wagons from sliding off the road. A series of elongated rock blocks were constructed in the middle of the pavement, possibly for separating the opposite traffic” (Xeidakis and Varagouli 1997: 123).

The Roman poet Statius (AD 48-96) wrote a poem about a road built by Emperor Domitian between Rome and Naples in AD 95. The poem described the road-making of the Via Domitiana and it reflected what is known archaeologically about Roman roads (*Silvae* 4.3.40-55; LCL 1:221).

The Roman Milestones on the Via Egnatia

Strabo reported that: “From Apollonia [on the Adriatic Sea] to Macedonia one travels the Egnatian Road, towards the east; it has been measured by Roman miles and marked by pillars [Roman milestones, *miliarium*] as far as Cypsela and the Hebrus Rivers – a distance of five hundred and thirty-five miles” (*Geography* 7.7.4; LCL 3:293; brackets added by GWF). A number of these milestones have been discovered, yet two exist from the original road that was built by the proconsul Cn. Egnatius.

The first milestone was found about seven Roman miles to the west of Thessaloniki at the crossing of the Gallikos River and is now on display in the Thessaloniki Museum (inv. 6932). This milestone had a bi-lingual inscription in Latin and Greek that said: “Cn. Egnatius C. f. proconsul” with the number 260 in Greek and Latin (Romiopoulou 1974: 813-816). The number 260 is the number of Roman miles from Apollonia to Thessaloniki and is a remarkable confirmation of the statement by Strabo: “And the length of this road [Apollonia to Thessaloniki] in miles, according to Polybius, is two hundred and sixty-seven miles” (*Geography* 7.7.4; LCL 3:295; brackets added by GWF).

The second Roman milestone with the name Cn. Egnatius on it was found in the vicinity of Kavala (ancient Neapolis) and had the number 6, showing that it was six miles from Philippi. Walbank observed that this milestone demonstrated that the Via Egnatia “beyond Thessalonica was not a later addition, but was constructed by the original builder of the road, Cn. Egnatius, who may indeed be the Cn. Egnatius C. f. Stellatina mentioned in a letter written by the praetor P. Cornelius Blasio to the Corcyreans” (2002:9).

The Route of the Via Egnatia

The Via Egnatia went from the Adriatic Sea through ancient Illyricum, Macedonia, and Thrace (modern day Albania, Republic of Macedonia, Greece, and Turkey) to Byzantium (present day Istanbul), covering 1,120 kilometers (696 miles / 746 Roman miles).

The route of the ancient road can be reconstructed based on the ancient literary sources (Strabo, Polybius and the ancient *itineraria*), the physical remains of the road and the Roman milestones that still exist, as well as the topography. Yannis Lolias gives a description of the route:

“From Apollonia and Dyrrachium the Egnatia followed the valley of the river Genusus (modern Shkumbin) as far as Lake Ohrid through a pass in the Candavian mountains. It continued around the northern shore of the lake in order to reach Ohrid (Lychnidos), and thence to Herakleia Lyncestis (south of Monastir). From Herakleia the Egnatia took a southeastern course towards Lake Vegorititis, passing between Mounts Vernon (modern Vitsi) and Varnous (Kaimaktsalan), then proceeded east to Edessa, Pella, Thessalonike, and south of lakes Koroneia and Volvi to Amphipolis. From Amphipolis to Philippi the Egnatia passed north of Mount Pangaion, essentially making a loop in order to avoid the marshy areas, then entered the *pomerium* of the colony of Philippi through a monumental arch and went through the city, most likely serving as its

decumanus maximus, in order to continue southeast towards Neapolis (Kavala). From Neapolis to Lake Bistonis the route of the Egnatia is still uncertain, but from that point eastwards there are physical traces reported, the best being the section between Sapes and Alexandropolis over the heights of Zone. More sections are visible between Traianoupolis (east of modern Alexandropolis) and Pheres in the direction of Kypsela (modern Ipsala)” (2007: 277).

Did the Via Egnatia Go through Ancient Thessaloniki?

The visitor to modern day Thessaloniki will notice that the main street running east-west through the city is named the Via Egnatia. This raises the question: Did the ancient Via Egnatia go through Thessaloniki?

Char. Makaronas, in an important study on the Via Egnatia and the city of Thessaloniki, came to some very interesting conclusions based on three Roman milestones found in the western vicinity of the city (1951: 380-388). He surmised that the western branch of the Via Egnatia, coming from Pella, terminated at the Golden Gate, near the present day Vardar Square. The eastern branch of the Roman road started at the Letean Gate, at the western end of Agios Demetrious Street, and followed the modern day Thessaloniki – Kavala Highway (now called the O. N. R.). He concluded that the Via Egnatia did not go through the center of Thessalonike (1951: 388), and that the modern Egnatia Street in the city was given the name when the road was widened after the great fire of 1917 (1951: 384, footnote 12).

The Means of Travel on the Via Egnatia

There were a variety of means of transportation on the Via Egnatia. The most common was by foot. The Roman soldiers marched on foot when they passed through the region. When the army was not on the move, people walked or traveled by horse or mule. Vehicles could be rented for travel. For quick travel, a *cisium*, with two wheels, could be hired. For slower travel, a *rhaeda*, a four-wheel carriage that was drawn by mules could be rented. Cicero writing to his friend Atticus on July 21, 58 BC, complained that he could not leave Thessaloniki because the roads were too crowded (*Letters to Atticus* 3.14; LCL 22: 223)!

The Beautiful Feet of the Christians on the Via Egnatia

In AD 44, Emperor Claudius added the areas of Moesia and Thrace (north of Macedonia) as Roman provinces to the Empire. Roman troops would march north of the Adriatic Sea as they moved into the frontiers of the Danube River (Walbank 2002:16). There was no need to go on the Via Egnatia, thus the road was no longer a *via militaris*. Since Macedonia was now a peaceful province, the road could be used for the official administrative business of the Roman Empire, as well as trade, commerce, and tourism (Lolos 2007: 275).

The Via Egnatia became the road that the “beautiful feet” of the Christians used to spread the Gospel, as well as an important line of communications between churches in different cities of Macedonia. The first Christians to walk this road were probably Peter, Silvanus, and John Mark in AD 42. Later, the

Apostle Paul and his teams travelled on this road on at least three occasions. The believers from Philippi and Thessaloniki used it to spread the gospel in Macedonia and also for church business.

Peter, Silvanus, John Mark

The Apostle Peter, after ministering in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, pressed on to Rome in the second year of Emperor Claudius in AD 42 (Jerome 1994:3:361). Peter, and his co-workers, Silvanus (Silas), and John Mark, could have walked the 746 Roman miles (1,120 km / 696 miles) on the Via Egnatia from Byzantium (later known as Constantinople, now known as Istanbul) to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic Sea and then crossed over to Brundisium in Italy and taken the Via Appia to Rome, or they could have taken a ship via Corinth and then on to Italy. The starting point, Byzantium, was situated in the province of Thrace, but as a frontier town and trade junction it was administered by Bithynia. Pliny the Younger was a direct representative of Emperor Trajan in Bithynia in the early 2nd century AD and wrote to the emperor about a situation in Byzantium (*Epistle* 43, with Trajan's response, *Epistle* 44; LCL 2: 221-223).

Firmin O'Sullivan, in his important book *The Egnatian Way*, points out that a ship from Byzantium to Rome via Corinth would take between eight to twelve weeks. Walking the Via Egnatia and Via Appia would take between four and five weeks (1972: 200), half the sailing time. It would have been advantageous for the missionary team to walk to Rome on the Via Egnatia and plant churches along the way in Macedonia. This would account for the vision that the Apostle Paul had at Alexandrian Troas when he arrived in the city on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:9). His vision indicated that there were already communities of believers in Macedonia that needed help with the propagation of the gospel. On the other hand, the Apostle Peter was in Corinth at one time and had some influence in the church in that city (cf. 1 Cor. 3:22; 9:5). Whether he visited Corinth when he was going to or coming from Rome can not be ascertained.

The First Epistle of Peter was most likely written soon after Peter's arrival in Rome (AD 42) as a follow-up letter to the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Silvanus most likely carried this letter of encouragement for those believers that were now going through some local persecution (1 Pet. 5:12). His route from Rome would have taken him on the Via Appia and then the Via Egnatia to Byzantium. He would have then boarded a ship and sailed to Amisus in Pontus (Hemer 1977-78: 239-243). If Peter sent his second epistle via a courier service from Rome, the dispatch would arrive in Byzantium in three weeks (O'Sullivan 1972: 200).

Paul's Second Missionary Journey

The Apostle Paul first visited Europe during his second missionary journey in AD 50 (Acts 16:11-17:10). The cities that he visited followed the Via Egnatia: Neapolis (now Kavala), Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessaloniki. The exact route of the Via from Apollonia to Thessaloniki is not known archaeologically and is still debated by scholars (Hatzopoulos 1997:199-212). When the apostle and his team left Thessaloniki for Berea they would have

walked the Via Egnatia toward Pella, but would have taken a secondary road to Berea. The believers in Philippi took advantage of the Via Egnatia to send two financial gifts to Paul while he ministered in Thessaloniki (Phil. 4:15-17).

The Thessalonian Believers

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Thessaloniki: *“For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything”* (1 Thess. 1:8, NKJV). The Thessalonian believers took advantage of the Roman road system to spread the gospel and demonstrate their love to all the believers in Macedonia (1 Thess. 4:10). Not only did they reach Macedonia with the gospel, but also Achaia (Greece proper) and “every place.” Thessaloniki was strategically located in Macedonia with a major port on the Thermaic Gulf. The gospel could go forth via commercial ships to Asia Minor, Phoenicia and Judea, Egypt, and other areas. The Apostle Paul would have made Thessaloniki a major base of operations like he did Ephesus and Corinth, but Satan, in some way, hindered him (1 Thess. 2:18).

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

The Apostle Paul spent a good portion of his third missionary journey ministering in the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor from AD 52-55. After the uproar of the mob instigated by the silversmiths, the Apostle Paul departed Ephesus for Macedonia (Acts 19:23-20:1). During his time in this region he probably also went to Illyricum on the western end of the Via Egnatia. Professor F. F. Bruce suggested that Paul wanted to “spend some time in a Latin-speaking environment (such as he would find in Illyricum) [thinking it to] be a helpful preparation for his planned campaign in Spain” (1985: 274). From Dyrrachium or Apollonia on the Adriatic Sea he could have sailed for Corinth in order to spend the winter (AD 57, Acts 20:2; Rom. 15:19).

Epaphroditus

The church at Philippi appointed one of their own, Epaphroditus, as their “sent one” (apostle) to take a financial gift to the Apostle Paul while he was under house arrest in Rome (Phil. 2:25, 28; 4:18; Acts 28:30; AD 60 or 61). Most likely Epaphroditus would have had others go with him when he carried the money to Rome, since this was the practice in the early church (cf. Acts 20:4). Their journey to Rome, either walking or by taking a cart, would have taken them on the Via Egnatia from Philippi to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic Sea (369 Roman miles), then across the Straits of Otranto to Brundisium. Here they would pick up the Via Appia and follow that all the way to Rome (360 Roman miles). More than likely, the 729 mile trip would have been covered in 57 days – a trip of almost two months - with a rest on each of the Lord’s Day.

Aelius Aristides departed from Smyrna as he traveled to Rome during the winter of AD 143-144 and described the hardships and miseries of his journey on the Via Egnatia (Ramsay 1925:72; Aristides 1986). If Epaphroditus and his

friends made this trip during the winter, this might explain why he got deathly sick and almost died (Phil. 2:27, 30).

Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey

The Book of Acts ends abruptly with the Apostle Paul still under house arrest in Rome, waiting for his appeal to be brought before Emperor Nero. He was apparently acquitted by Nero and released from his first imprisonment in Rome, and went on a fourth missionary journey. The exact itinerary of this journey has been debated by scholars based on the scattered hints in the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). It is known that the Apostle Paul was in Macedonia on this missionary endeavor because he wrote a letter to his son in the faith, Timothy, who was in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). As the Apostle Paul traveled through the province of Macedonia, he would have again used the Via Egnatia.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch on the Orontes

Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in Syria, was condemned by Emperor Trajan and sent to Rome for execution in AD 110. He was marched across Asia Minor by a Roman guard consisting of ten soldiers but was allowed to visit with, and write to, Christians along his journey. They sailed from Alexandria Troas to Neapolis (cf. Acts 16:11) and spent some time in Philippi. In a twist of irony, Ignatius traveled to the Adriatic Sea and then on to Rome by way of the Via Egnatia, which is the Latin form of his name!

Somewhere along his journey he wrote to the church at Rome these famous words: "I am writing to all the Churches, and I give injunctions to all men, that I am dying willingly for God's sake, if you do not hinder it. I beseech you, be not 'an unseasonable kindness' to me. Suffer me to be eaten by the beasts, through whom I can attain to God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ" (*Ignatius to the Romans* 4:1; LCL 1:231).

A Beloved Pig Involved in a Traffic Accident

A funerary monument was discovered at the site of Longos in the ancient city of Edessa, one of the major cities along the Via Egnatia, to the west of Pella, between Thessaloniki and the Adriatic Sea. This second-third century AD monument was dedicated to a pig!

The monument depicts four donkeys pulling a four wheeled wagon that is driven by a hooded man. The wagon, carrying an unidentified cargo – some think a phallus, appears to be heading down a slight hill. In front of the raised hooves donkeys is the pig that is being memorialized by this monument. Apparently the driver lost control of the donkeys and wagon as he headed down the hill because under the wheels of the wagon is the same pig, apparently run over and now "road kill." Above and below this scene is an inscription honoring the pig and describing the traffic accident.

The inscription reads: "I, the Pig, beloved of all, a four-footed youngster, am buried here. I left the land of Dalmatia, when I was given as a gift. I stormed

Dyrrachion and yearned for Apollonia, and I crossed every land on foot, alone and invincible. But now I have departed the light on account of the violence of the wheel, longing to see Emathia and the wagon of the phallic procession. Now here I am buried in this spot, without having reached the time to pay my tribute to death” (Chaniotis, et. al. 2017: 37).

The inscription states the pig originated from Dalmatia and walked the Via Egnatia from Dyrrachion, on the western end of the Via Egnatia at the Adriatic Sea, to Edessa before he was killed in a tragic road accident.

Conclusions

The Lord in His sovereignty used the Roman army to build a road intended for military purposes, but in a striking contrast, this road was later used to spread the gospel of peace. The Apostle Paul had written to the believers in Rome: “Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God” (Rom. 5:1).

Paul’s important theological work on the spiritual condition of humanity began by stating that all humanity - Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free - are all sinners and have come short of God’s glory, or perfection (Rom. 1-3).

God, in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died on Calvary’s Cross to pay for all the sins of all humanity. He would justify - the act of God whereby He declares a sinner righteous - any and all who would put their trust in Him, and Him alone for their salvation. Doing good deeds, keeping the commandments, or any works righteousness, including water baptism, could never justify a sinner (Rom. 4-5), only faith alone, in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, could justify anyone. Have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and know that you have peace with God? The eternal destiny of an individual, Heaven or Hell, is the most important decision one could ever make.

He goes on to discuss the sanctification of the believer in the Lord Jesus (Rom. 6-8). The believer is set apart for the Lord’s work and is engaged in spiritual warfare as they live their lives for the Lord Jesus.

Ambrose, the bishop of Milan (AD 374-397), drew interesting parallels, using military language, between the Roman army marching on the Roman roads and the spiritual warfare that Christians find themselves engaged. He stated:

“When a soldier sets out on the Way he does not decide the order of march for himself, nor does he choose the route according to his own will, take pleasant shortcuts or fall behind the standards. He receives an itinerary from the emperor and keeps to it. He advances in the prescribed order; he marches with his weapons and covers the route by the right road – so that he may find supplies waiting in places where they have been got ready. If he took some other route, he would not get his rations or find the proper billet (*mansio* [cf. John 14:6]), for the commander gives orders for these to be prepared for those who follow him, and do not go off either to the right or the left from the correct route.”

“A soldier does well not to leave the Way but to follow his commander, because the officer does not consider what will suit himself

but what is possible for all. That is why he arranges for halts. The army marches three days, and rests on the fourth. Cities are chosen which lie at three or four days from each other, or even more, if there is plenty of water and supplies are abundant; so the journey is done without fatigue, until they reach a chosen, as it were royal city, in which tired armies find refreshment" (*On Psalm 118* (119), verse 33; cited in O'Sullivan 1972: 196).

May the Lord strengthen and protect His children as we make our way on the road of life, as He protected those that carried the gospel – good news - of the Lord Jesus along the Via Egnatia.

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