

Doctrine of The Praetorian Guard

1. History of the Guard

1.1 Established in 212 B.C. by Scipio Africanus to act as a crack body guard for himself.

1.2 The Guard grew to some 10,000; they were originally located in units of 1000 among ten major cities in central Italy. They served as an internal police force providing protection for Rome and her surrounding city-states.

1.3 The head of the guard became known as the prefect and his power was great as you might imagine.

1.4 During the reign of Tiberius a prefect by the name of Sejanus moved all 10,000 guardsmen to Rome.

1.5 Their power grew and when Tiberius lost interest in being emperor he moved to the Isle of Capri and Sejanus took charge of the affairs of Rome.

1.6 The Senate became a captive of their very protector. Sejanus later became too indiscreet in his lust for power so Tiberius had him assassinated.

1.7 Tiberius remained on the island showing little interest in matters of state; at the death of Tiberius the new prefect Macro proclaimed Caligula Caesar in A.D. 37.

1.8 This established a precedent which would continue for some time.

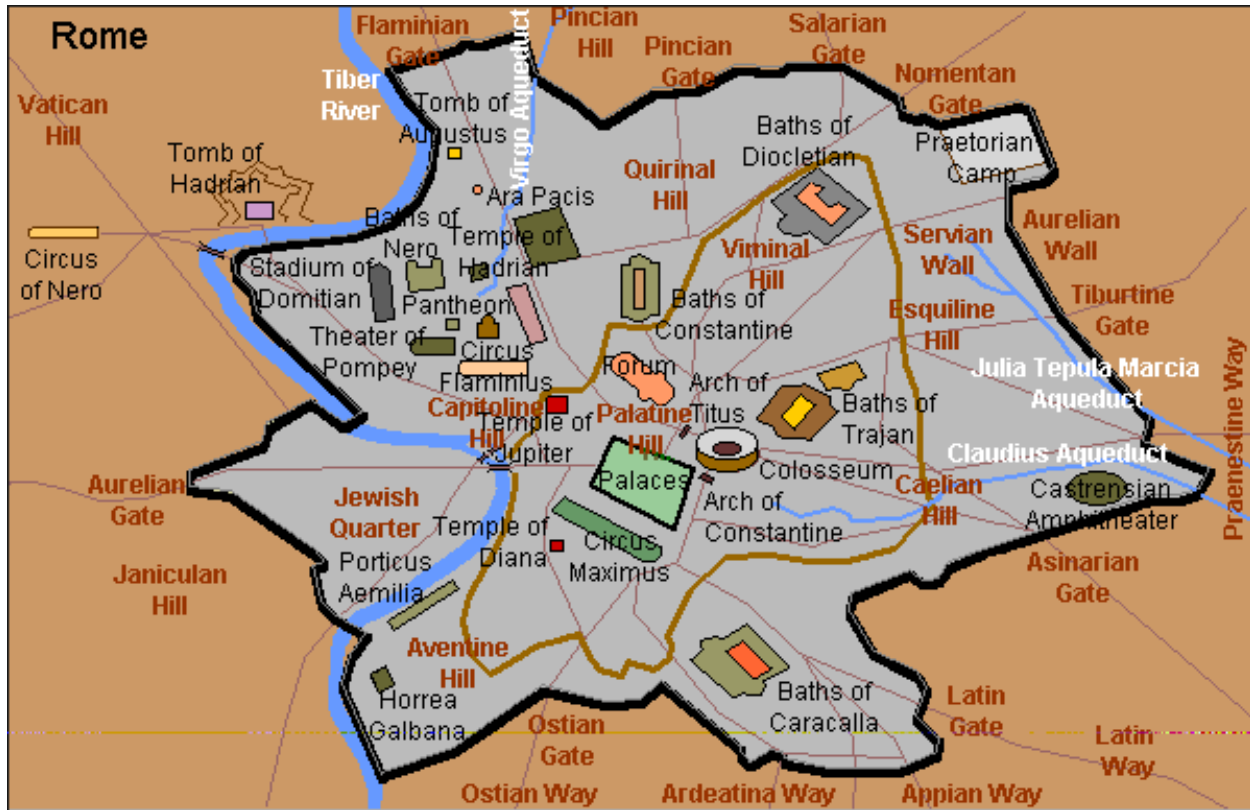
1.9 In A.D. 41 Caligula was assassinated by the guard and the unlikely Claudius was placed on the throne.

1.10 The wise Claudius gave the guard a large stipend to ensure their loyalty. This would prove to be the future means of controlling the guard.

1.11 At the death (probably poisoned by Agrippina) of Claudius, the prefect Burros appointed the infamous Nero as emperor. The "nut" Nero would reign from 54 to 68 A.D.

1.12 Nero in 68 made the fatal error of having Paul executed which many have conjectured was a prime factor motivating Nero's execution.

1.12.1 The power of the Praetorian had become immense. It would take a large army to undermine the military presence massed in Rome; most of Rome's large armies were in the hinterlands fighting the "barbarians."



2. Paul and the Praetorian Guard

2.1 Paul was a missionary to the guard during his Roman imprisonment.

2.2 He was often in their presence. These select troops were assigned to guard the great apostle.

2.3 This familiarity with his guards perhaps accounts for Paul's many military metaphors used in the four prison epistles, i.e., Philemon, Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians.

2.4 Paul from all indication was very popular with his guards.

2.5 Paul's relationship with the guard in the palace had apparently given others confidence to teach the Word.

KJV

Phi 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Phi 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the **palace**, and in all other places;

Phi 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

3. Etymology

3.1 In the New Testament, when Πραιτωριον is properly anglicized, the word is spelled “Praitorion,” however, in most English dictionaries we find “Praetorian.”

3.2 In Philippians 1:13 the word **Praitorion** is translated in the KJV “palace,” in the NIV “palace guard” and in the RV “praetorian guard.”

NIV

Phi 1:13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole **palace guard** and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

3.2.1 Strong's Definition:

“Greek: Praitorion

Derivation: Of foreign origin.

Definition: the Praitorion or governor's courtroom (sometimes included the whole edifice and camp to include the quarters of the guard).”

3.3 Facts about the word Praitorion:

3.3.1 The Praitorion signified originally "a general's (Praetor's) tent." Then it was applied to "the council of army officers;" then to "the official residence of the governor of a province" and finally, to "the imperial body guard."

3.3.2 In the Greek of the New Testament the word “**Praitorion**” appears eight times. Mat 27:27; Mar 15:16; Joh 18:28,33; 19:9, Acts 23:35 and Phi 1:13.

Mat 27:27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall (**Praitorion**) and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

Mar 15:16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium (**Praitorion**); and they call together the whole band.

Joh 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment (**Praitorion**): and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall (**Praitorion**), lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover.

Joh 18:33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall (**Praitorion**) again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Joh 19:9 And went again into the judgment hall (**Praitorion**), and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Acts 23:35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall (**Praitorion**).

Phi 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace (**Praitorion**), and to all the rest;

3.3.3 In Phi 1:13 "the whole **Praetorium**" has been variously explained. For example, it has been spoken of as "the palace." For better understanding, a comparison of Phil 1:13 with Phi 4:22 will prove helpful.

Phi 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the **palace**, and in all other places;

Phi 4:22 All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

3.3.4 It would seem "those who belong to Caesar's household" in Phi 4:22 refer to the many believers among the guard and the various civilians working at the palace.

3.3.5 A map of Rome shows the palace located on Palatine Hill just northeast of Circus Maximus. It could just as easily be labeled the Praetorium.

3.3.6 In the Gospels, the term denotes the official residence in Jerusalem of the Roman governor, the various translations are apparently an attempt to indicate the special purpose for which that residence was used.

3.3.7 Whatever building the governor occupied was the Praetorium. It is most probable that in Jerusalem he resided in the well-known palace of Herod.

3.3.8 Pilate's residence has been identified with the castle of Antonia, which was occupied by a regular garrison. It therefore qualified as a Praetorium as did Herod's palace in Caesarea.

3.3.9 Fort Antonia, after Sejanus' centralizing the guard in Rome, housed no Guard members though certainly there were Roman troops garrisoned there, whose job it was to keep an eye on Temple activities. A map of Jerusalem will illustrate.

