

## FEAST OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

### EPISTLE

Brothers and Sisters: What anyone else dares to claim - I speak with absolute foolishness now - I, too, will dare. Are they Hebrews? So am I! Are they Israelites? So am I! Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I! Are they ministers of Christ? Now I am really talking like a fool – I am more with my many more labors and imprisonments, with far worse beatings and frequent brushes with death. Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes less one; three times I was beaten with rods; I was stoned once, shipwrecked three times; I passed a day and a night on the sea. I traveled continually, endangered by floods, robbers, my own people, [and] the Gentiles; imperiled in the city, in the desert, at sea, by false brothers; enduring labor, hardship, many sleepless nights; in hunger and thirst and frequent fastings, in cold and nakedness. Leaving other sufferings unmentioned, there is that daily tension pressing on me, my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak that I am not affected by it? Who is scandalized that I am not aflame with indignation? If I must boast, I will make a point of my weaknesses. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows—blessed be he forever—that I do not lie. In Damascus, the ethnarch of King Aretas was keeping a close watch on the city in order to arrest me, but I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

I must go on boasting, however useless it may be, and speak of visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, whether he was in or outside his body I cannot say, only God can say—a man who was snatched up to the third heaven. I know that this man—whether in or outside his body I do not know, God knows, was snatched up to Paradise to hear words which cannot be uttered, words which no man may speak. About this man I will boast; but I will do no boasting about myself unless it be about my weaknesses. And even if I were to boast it would not be folly in me because I would only be telling the truth.

But I refrain, lest anyone think more of me than what he sees in me or hears from my lips. As to the extraordinary revelations, in order that I might not become conceited I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to beat me and keep me from getting proud. Three times I begged the Lord that this might leave me. He said to me, "My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection." And so I willingly boast of my weaknesses instead, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

### GOSPEL

At that time, when Jesus came to the neighbourhood of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples this question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptizer, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "And you," Jesus said to them, "who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" Jesus replied, "Blest are you Simon son of Jonah! No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. I for my part declare to you, you are 'Rock,' and on this rock I will build my church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it. I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven."