

PAUL IN PRISON

Ted Swartz and Lee Eshleman

Characters: Paul, Leon

Scripture text: Colossians 3:1-17

Props: table, chair, letter, writing scraps, cup and ball toy, pens

Setting: In a prison cell/ sparse

Length: 10 minutes

(PAUL stands looking out toward the audience, page in hand, lost in thought. LEON enters his cell, loudly, perhaps chewing a wad of gum.)

LEON: *(Calls back to unseen guards.)* Whoa, Nelly!!! Easy. I'm going, I'm going. You prison guards are all so brusque. ... Brusque: blunt in manner or speech often to the point of ungracious harshness. Brusque.

PAUL: *(To the guards.)* Hey, hey, wait a minute; this is a mistake—this isn't his cell...*(Hears a pointed response.)*... I'm sorry?

LEON: *(Reference to the guard.)* Brusque.

(He turns. PAUL and LEON regard one another. LEON sets his pack on the table.)

LEON : Howdy, chief. I guess we're gonna be roomies.

PAUL: That's my desk.

(LEON drops pack on floor. Sits on desk.)

PAUL : That's still my desk.

LEON: *(Extends his hand.)* Name's Leon. *(No response from PAUL.)* That's my hand.

PAUL: Right.

(LEON takes his hand back. PAUL returns to his table, still without shaking hands and picks up the pen. LEON gets out a ball and scoop game and begins playing with it. PAUL looks at him. LEON becomes aware of the angry look—stops.)

LEON: Didn't get your name.

PAUL: That's right.

LEON: Okay, chief.

PAUL: The name is Paul.

LEON: From?

PAUL: Originally Tarsus, now I'm not so sure.

LEON: Paul of Tarsus. There ya go. That wasn't so hard, chief.

PAUL: They told me this was always going to be a private cell.

LEON: Oh, I won't be here long, all a big mistake, I mean being in jail, not just this cell.

PAUL: Uh huh.

LEON: Sure, I consider myself an agent for society, you know, a leveling agent. These fella have too much, this fella, he doesn't have enough, needs to be leveled out.

PAUL: This fella who doesn't have enough, that fella ever you?

LEON: Might be.

PAUL: Okay.

LEON: I'm an embezzler.

PAUL: Really?

LEON: Embezzler: one who fraudulently appropriates funds entrusted to him, for his own fiduciary gain. Embezzler.

PAUL: Lots of money?

LEON: No, no, no. Just one guy. I embezzled from my father.

PAUL: Really?

LEON: Father: one who's parentage is established while his humanity is not. Father.

PAUL: Close were you?

LEON: You have no idea. *(Pause.)* Like I say, I'm a leveller. He never wanted to give me anything, so I intervened. Intervene: to step in and do what someone definitely has coming to them. Intervene. To tell you the truth, chief, I robbed him blind. Blind: a condition ... well, you probably know what that is.

PAUL: You have no idea ... Your side of the cell is over there.

LEON: Whatcha working on there, chief? *(PAUL ignores him.)* Workin' on a book? Your memoirs? Letter to the little woman? You married? Women are great. I mean, long as they know their place, know what I'm saying chief? Course ya do. *(Gets out the game again.)* Workin' on a personal best.

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(Notices again that PAUL is looking at him.) Right. *(Puts it away again.)* So, what is it? *(Begins moving closer to look over PAUL'S shoulder.)* I consider myself a man of letters, I could give you a few pointers I'm sure. The right romantic phrase, know what I mean? Course ya do, chief.

PAUL: Would you stop calling me chief!!!! It's a letter! Not a book, not my memoirs! It's a letter—and not to the little woman!

(LEON backs off, raising his hands. There is a pause.)

LEON: Okay, chief. *(Pause.)* That's one long letter, I mean I was thinking about sending a postcard—picture of the jail, havin' a great time wish you were here-ha. But that, that's one long letter, practically an epistle. *(Picks up a sheet.)* I could give you a few pointers on editing...

PAUL: Look!!!! Congratulations! I believe you are the most annoying person I have ever had the pleasure of sharing a cell with. I want you to take your stuff, your little toy, your witty comments, your expansive ego, and yourself and move over to that side of the cell. —okay—chief?

LEON: *(Reads.)* “Therefore be gentle kind, humble, meek and patient.” *(Pause to look at PAUL.)* So it's fiction? *(Reads.)* “God loves you and has chosen you as his special people” ... then you have a bunch of stuff crossed off. So who's it to? *(No answer.)* Who's it to, chief?

PAUL: I don't want to talk about it.

LEON: Come on. Hey, it's me, Leon.

PAUL: It's to a church.

LEON: A church.

PAUL: A church: a group of ... children, squabbling about unclean foods, untouchable animals or whether or not you should celebrate the new moon festival!!!! ... a church. In Colossae. I'm trying to encourage them.

LEON: I can see where you're exercising your gifts there, chief.

PAUL: *(Pause.)* Right.

LEON: Encourage them to what?

PAUL: It's a long story.

LEON: Come on, what do what got but time? What's their problem? Problem: a situation either externally or internally provoked to which there appears no apparent solution. Problem.

PAUL: You don't know these people.

LEON: Consider me a student of the human condition.

PAUL: Me, too.

LEON: There you go.

PAUL: *(A long look at him—LEON gestures an encouragement.)* Okay. You know ... when you belong to a group that holds certain beliefs—when you are longer a part of that group, the rules from the old group...

LEON: They don't matter any more.

PAUL: Exactly. These people are now followers of Jesus.

LEON: Who?

PAUL: He was ... is a Jew who ... changed all the rules. Now, since they are now his followers ... the old rules...

LEON: ...don't matter.

PAUL: Exactly. The things they are concerning themselves with ... they're unimportant things ... whether you are Greek or Jew, a slave or a free person, circumcised or not, whether you're ... *(Gestures to LEON.)*

LEON: ...an embezzler, currently not free.

PAUL: ... or not...

LEON: ... doesn't matter.

PAUL: ... doesn't matter. ... Don't touch that, don't taste this—doesn't matter—these people ... are new persons, because of Jesus. He has changed everything! All that stuff should go away!!

LEON: Hey, I'm standing right here, chief.

PAUL: It's typical; we spend so much time getting our tees crossed, we forget God doesn't even like tees.

LEON: He doesn't?

PAUL: It's a figure of speech.

LEON: How do you know what God likes?

(PAUL just looks at him.)

LEON: I'll withdraw the question. So what are you going to tell them?

(PAUL throws up his hands, grabs the toy.)

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LEON: *(Picks up the letter again, and reads.)* God loves you and has chosen you as his special people...

(PAUL still says nothing.)

LEON: I'm this ... church. Talk to me. *(Motions.)* God loves you and has chosen you as his special people...

PAUL: What do you care?

LEON: God loves you...

PAUL: You're not gonna give up, are you?

LEON: God loves you and...

PAUL: ... Each one of you is part of a new body.

LEON: A new body, what does that mean?

PAUL: It's the new group—you were chosen to live together in peace.

LEON: But what does that mean, specifically?

PAUL: It means to put up with one another!!! *(Realizes what he has said; the next is a different tone.)* And forgive anyone who does you wrong. Love. Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

LEON: When you said about embezzlers and that not mattering? Did you mean that? Paul?

PAUL: I sure did, chief.

THE END

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***** SCRIPT PREVIEW *****

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PREVIEW

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