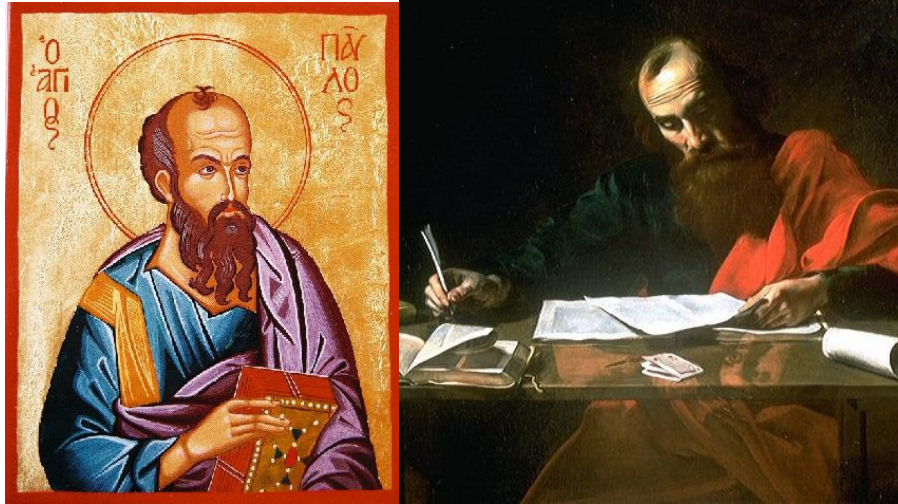


## **THE LIFE & LETTERS OF PAUL**



*Few dispute that, after Jesus Himself, Saul of Tarsus was the most influential Christian leader in the first generation of Christianity. Thirteen NT epistles are attributed to him. He became the apostle and missionary without rivals to the Gentiles. His understanding of Christian doctrine paved the way for the fledgling religion to become an empire-wide phenomenon, still thoroughly rooted in Judaism but increasingly stripped of the ethnocentric and nationalist restrictions that hampered so many first-century Jew-Gentile relationships. Among skeptical scholars, he has even been called the true founder of Christianity. A brief overview of Saul's life and ministry, beyond what we have learned already from Acts, thus forms an essential backdrop to our study of each of his canonical letters.*

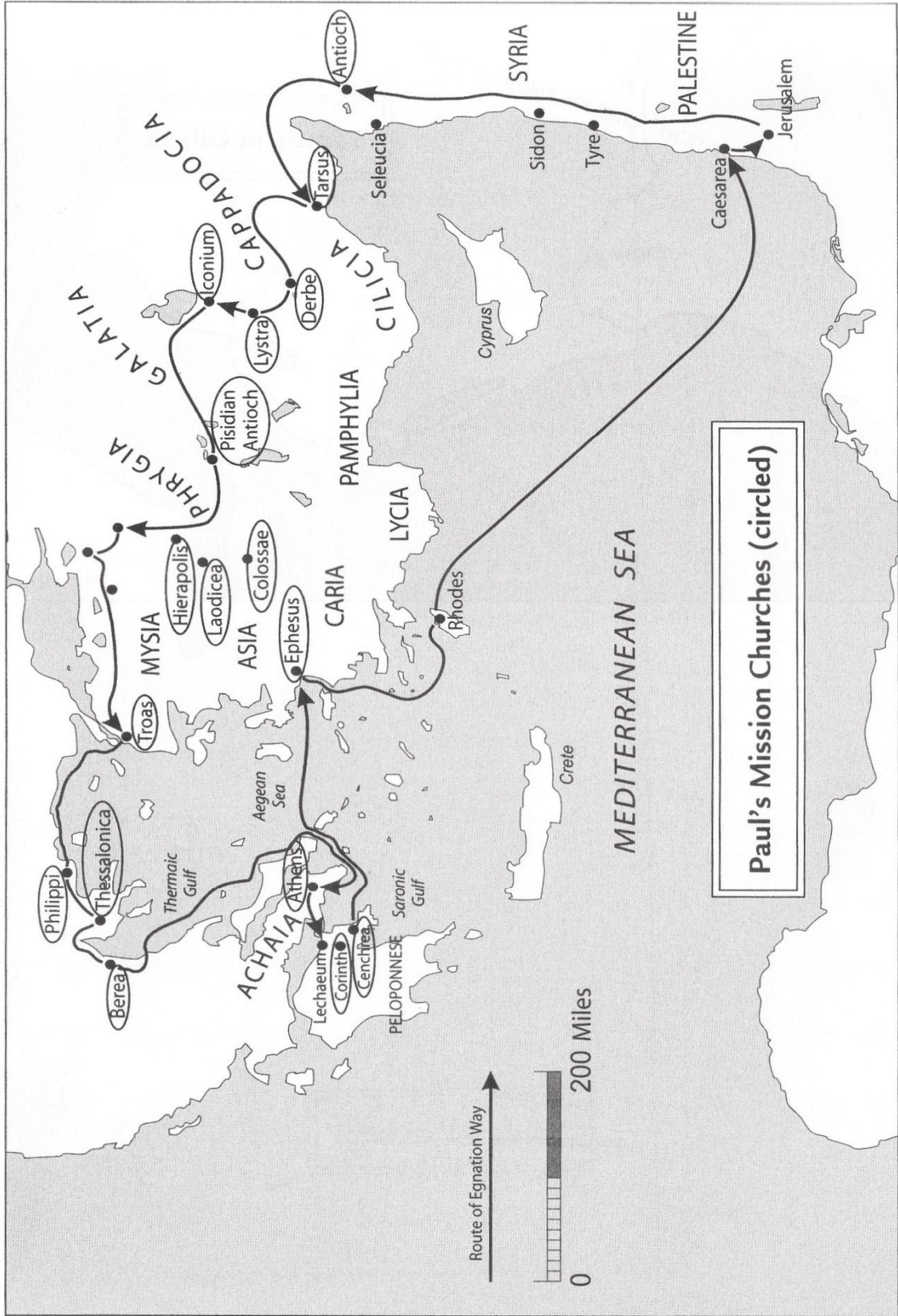
Craig Blomberg

### **Apostle Paul**

- **Most influential Christian leader (after Jesus) in first generation of Christianity**
- **Apostle & missionary to the Gentiles**
  - **Vital role in growth & establishment of church**

*Apart from Paul's herculean efforts, it is difficult to imagine how the gospel of Christ would have taken root so comprehensively in the Greco-Roman world.*

Paul Barnett



### **Apostle Paul**

- **Author of 13 NT epistles (25% of NT)**
  - **First & greatest Christian theologian**
  - **Articulation of Christian belief**
  - **Instruction for Christian faith, worship & daily living**

*There is no question that Paul played a vital role in the growth and establishment of the church and in the interpretation and application of God's grace in Christ. And Paul continues to minister to us today through the thirteen epistles of his that have become part of the canon of the NT. These epistles make up almost one-fourth of the NT, putting Paul just behind Luke in the percentage of the NT written by a single individual. And if one adds the sixteen chapters of Acts (13-28) that are almost entirely devoted to Paul, Paul figures in almost one-third of the NT.*

D A Carson

*Paul was the first and greatest Christian theologian... he belongs to that group of Christians who have seen it as part of their calling to articulate their faith in writing and to instruct others in their common faith, and who have devoted a considerable portion of their lives to so doing... he was effectively the first Christian to commit himself to this calling...*

*...Paul's influence and writings have shaped Christianity as the writings/theology of no other single individual have. The Synoptic Gospels certainly take us back closer to the teaching of Jesus. John's Gospel has had an immeasurable influence on subsequent perception of Jesus Christ in particular and on Christian spirituality in general. Without Acts we would have little clear idea how Christianity first spread. But if theology is measured in terms of articulation of Christian belief, then Paul's letters laid a foundation for Christian theology which has never been rivaled or superseded... they were valued by the churches to which they were addressed, cherished as of continuing value for instruction in Christian faith, worship and daily living.*

James Dunn



Paul preaching in Athens

*To understand Paul's achievements, we need to appreciate his driving passion, which was that Christ loved him and seized him, and he could never be separated from His love (Rom 8:35, 39), sinner though he was and persecutor though he had been. For Paul that "love" of God directed to him through the Son of God (Gal 2:20) became the key to his understanding of God's dealings with [us] but also the basis of all human relationships (1 Cor 8:1).*

Paul Barnett

## PAUL'S LIFE

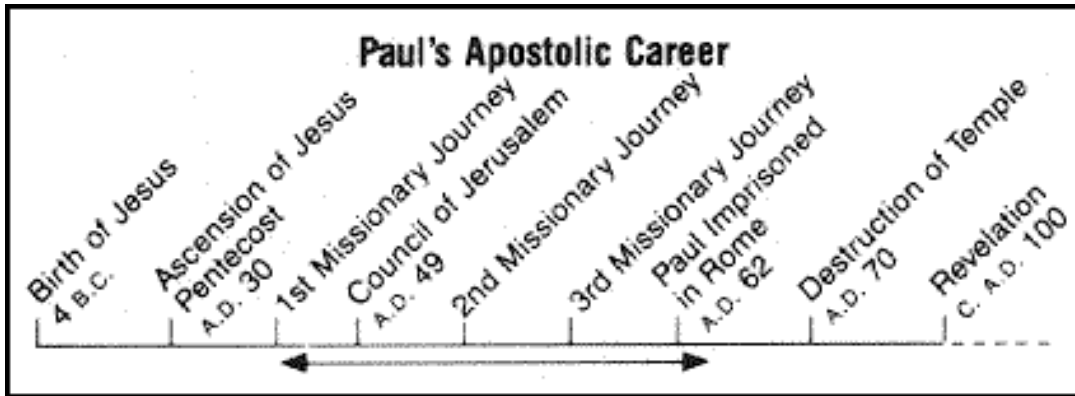
*What missionary is there, what preacher, what man entrusted with the cure of souls, who can be compared with Paul, whether in greatness of the task he accomplished, or in the energy with which he carried it out?*

Adolf von Harnack

### 1. Overview

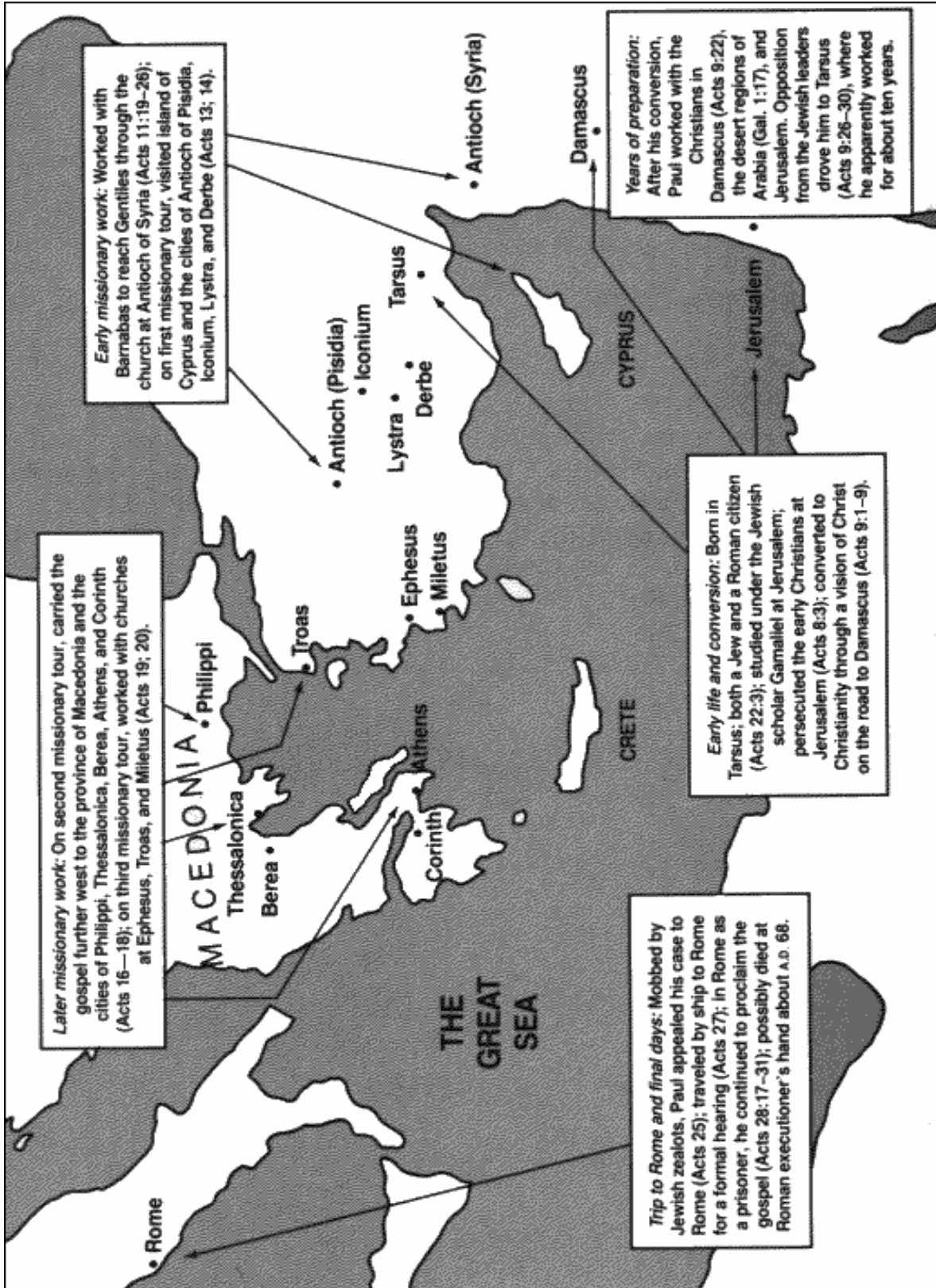
<p><b>Heritage &amp; Upbringing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Born in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3) around AD 10</li> <li>• Belonged to tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5)</li> <li>• Studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3)</li> <li>• Hellenistic by culture (cf. Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12)</li> <li>• Roman by citizenship (Acts 22:28)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early Religion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hebrew and Pharisee (Phil 3:5)</li> <li>• Persecuted the Christians (Acts 8:1-3; Phil 3:6)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conversion, Calling &amp; Commission</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-8; 22:3-21)</li> <li>• Church in Antioch instructed by the Holy Spirit to send Paul (and Barnabas) out for the work (Acts 13:1-3)</li> <li>• Carried the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; Gal 2:7-10)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Achievements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missionary: embarked upon 3 extended missionary journeys (Acts 13-20); founded numerous churches in Asia Minor, Greece and possibly Spain (Rom 15:24, 28)</li> <li>• Theologian: wrote letters to numerous churches and various individuals which now make up one-fourth of our NT</li> </ul>
<p><b>End of Life</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent to Rome following his arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27; 28:16-31)</li> <li>• According to Christian tradition, released from prison allowing further missionary work in Macedonia; re-arrested, imprisoned again in Rome, and beheaded outside of the city</li> </ul>

**2. Chronology**



c. 33	Call to apostleship; mission in Arabia (Gal 1:15–17)
35	Short first visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18–20)
35–45	Ministry in Cilicia, Syria, Antioch
46	Conference with “pillars” in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1–10); famine relief delivered from Antioch (Acts 11:27–30)
47–48	<b><u>1st Missionary Journey</u></b> Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Anatolia (Acts 13:4–14:28)
48/49	Council of Jerusalem; apostolic decree (Acts 15:6–29)
49–51/52	<b><u>2nd Missionary Journey</u></b> Paul and Silas/Silvanus in Macedonia and Achaia; churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth planted (Acts 16:9–18:18)
51/52	Paul’s hasty visit to Jerusalem, Antioch and Anatolia
52–57	<b><u>3rd Missionary Journey</u></b> Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–20:1), Macedonia, Illyricum and Corinth (Rom 15:19; 16:23)
57	Last visit to Jerusalem; arrest and loss of liberty (Acts 21:17–23:35)
57–59	Imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 23:35–26:32)
59–60	Journey to Italy (Acts 27:1–28:15)
60–62	House arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16–31)
? 62	Paul’s hearing before Caesar
64	Great fire of Rome
? 65	Death of Paul

(Source: F F Bruce, from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*)



## **Article: PAUL'S CAREER - HIS LIFE & MINISTRY**

By F F Bruce

From *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*

### **1. Family and Citizenship**

Paul was born into a religiously observant Jewish family of Tarsus in Cilicia, apparently in the first decade of the first century AD. According to Jerome (*Vir.* 5), his family came from Gischala in Galilee. It traced its descent from the tribe of Benjamin, and Paul was given the name Saul, borne by the most illustrious member of that tribe in history—Saul, the first king of Israel. The name Paul, by which he is commonly called, was part of his triple name as a Roman citizen: it is the Roman cognomen Paullus.

It is not known for how many generations the family had lived in Tarsus, but the family business of tent-making (or perhaps, more generally, leatherworking) evidently prospered. Paul was born a citizen of Tarsus—"a citizen of no mean city," in his own words (Acts 21:39)—and this implied a certain level of wealth. The property qualification for Tarsian citizenship was 500 drachmae (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 34.23). In addition to the wealth requirement, the practice of Judaism must have been a further obstacle in the successful quest for citizenship. If the citizens of Tarsus were organized into tribes, like the citizens of many Hellenistic cities, membership of such a tribe involved practices which Jews would have found offensive; possibly the Jewish citizens of Tarsus were enrolled in a tribe of their own, though there is no positive evidence for this.

But much more important than the family's possession of Tarsian citizenship was its acquisition of Roman citizenship—an honor rarely granted to provincials. Paul inherited Roman citizenship at birth: his father or grandfather may have been so honored for conspicuous services rendered to a military proconsul such as Pompey or Antony. Paul would have been registered as a Roman citizen by his father at the public record office in Tarsus. Roman citizenship carried with it several privileges of which Paul was able to avail himself during his career—the right to a fair trial, for example, exemption from degrading penalties like scourging, and most notably the right to appeal from the jurisdiction of a lower court to that of the emperor of Rome ( Acts 16:37; 22:25; 25:11).

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*Vir. De Viris Illustribus*  
*Or. Orationes*

## **2. Education at Jerusalem**

Although he was born in a Greek center of culture, it was not in any of the schools of Tarsus that Paul was educated. It was probably at a later stage that he acquired the measure of literary knowledge and Stoic thought that is attested in his writings and speeches. By his own account he was educated according to his ancestral traditions, surpassing many of his contemporaries in the study and practice of Judaism (Gal 1:14). In his Jerusalem speech of Acts 22:3 he says more precisely that, while born in Tarsus, he was brought up in Jerusalem and “trained in the school of Gamaliel according to the strict interpretation of our ancestral law.”

Gamaliel, a leading Jewish teacher of his day, is said by later tradition to have been head of the rabbinical school founded by Hillel, c. 10 BC, if not indeed a member of Hillel's family. But the earliest traditions which reflect some direct memory of Gamaliel and his teaching do not associate him with the school of Hillel; they speak rather of others as belonging to the school of Gamaliel, as though he founded a school of his own. Even if Gamaliel was a follower of Hillel, however, it would not follow that Paul was a Hillelite. Paul's writings do not yield sufficient evidence to show certainty whether, before he became a Christian, he was a Hillelite or an adherent of the rival school of Shammai. His statement that anyone who submits to circumcision “is bound to keep the whole Law” (Gal 5:3) might be thought to reflect the stricter Shammaite doctrine, but such a conclusion cannot safely be drawn from a statement made in a polemical context. His zeal as a persecutor of the church presents a sharp contrast to the temporizing policy advocated by Gamaliel in Acts 5:34–39, but the explanation may simply be that Paul saw more clearly than Gamaliel the serious implications of the Christian movement for the life and health of Judaism.

## **3. Persecutor of the Church.**

According to his letters and to Acts, Paul was an active persecutor of the church before he became a Christian. He assaulted the infant church with the utmost violence in his attempt to destroy it (Gal 1:13). This was the negative aspect of his zeal for the Law and traditions of Israel, which perhaps found a positive outlet in the proselytization of Gentiles. His words, “If I ... still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?” (Gal 5:11), have been thought to point in that direction.

When he says that he “persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor 15:9), it is natural to think primarily of the Jerusalem church. The “church of God” would hardly have been found as a recognizable body anywhere else than

in Jerusalem in the first two or three years after the resurrection of Christ. This is plainly attested by the record of Acts, which describes him as “entering into houses, dragging out men and women and committing them to prison” (Acts 8:3), and, when the persecution led to dispersal, harrying the refugees even beyond the frontiers of the province of Judea. Reading between the lines, one can infer that “Hellenists” rather than “Hebrews” (cf. Acts 6:1) were the principal targets for this attack. The apostles remained unscathed in Jerusalem (Acts 8:2).

#### **4. Call to Apostleship**

It was while Paul was on his way to Damascus, armed with the high priest’s commission, to round up some who had sought refuge from the persecution there, that he was confronted by the risen and exalted Christ, turned right around in his tracks and called to be Christ’s ambassador to the Gentile world. This personal encounter with Christ determined the whole course of Paul’s subsequent thought and action.

Until that moment Paul had taken it as axiomatic that one who had died the death on which the divine curse was pronounced by the Law (Deut 21:23) could not be the Messiah, the elect one of God, as his followers claimed. Their claim was blasphemous. But now their claim was manifestly true. He had seen and heard Jesus, the crucified one, alive and glorified. But it was his devotion to the Law that had made him such a zealous persecutor—that is, as he now realized, his devotion to the Law had led him into the most sinful course of all: he had been fighting against God, his Son and his people. The Law had done nothing to show him the sinfulness of his course. The Law had proved itself bankrupt. But Christ, whose grace wiped out his guilt and empowered him to be his special envoy, displaced the Law’s former centrality in Paul’s life. For him, henceforth, “to live was Christ” (Phil 1:21). It was then that Paul first knew himself to be set right with God through the redemptive act of Christ and not through his own works of righteousness. The very death which incurred the curse of God turned out to be the deliverance of the people of Christ from the curse of a broken Law (Gal 3:10–14).

#### **5. Apostle to the Gentiles**

Paul quickly responded to his call to evangelize the Gentiles by traveling to the nearby territory of the Nabatean Arabs, where his activity seems to have aroused the hostility of the authorities (Gal 1:17; 2 Cor 11:32–33). From there he returned to Damascus and then went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter. He also met James, the Lord’s brother, all the other apostles being

evidently absent from Jerusalem. It was doubtless during this visit that Paul learned how Jesus had appeared in resurrection to Peter and James, as he records in 1 Corinthians 15:5, 7. They in turn would hear how he himself had met the risen one.

After two weeks he returned to his native Tarsus and spent several years in the united province of Syria and Cilicia, actively propagating the faith he had once endeavored to root out (Gal 1:21–24). While he was thus engaged, he was invited by Barnabas to join him in directing the new forward movement which had recently been launched in Antioch on the Orontes, where Gentiles in large numbers were making a positive response to the gospel (Acts 11:19–26).

Paul claimed to be an “apostle of Jesus Christ”; where necessary, he insisted on this designation. But in what sense was he an apostle? The term is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament: Luke, for his part, generally confines it to the Twelve (with Matthias replacing Judas Iscariot). If a qualification for apostleship was to have remained in Jesus’ company throughout his public ministry (Acts 1:21–22), then Paul did not satisfy that qualification. In one section of his narrative (Acts 14:4, 14) Luke uses the plural “apostles” of Barnabas and Paul together; this usage may have been taken over from his source at this point. Otherwise, he does not call Paul an apostle. Paul may very well have recognized Barnabas as an apostle. By “those who were apostles before me” (Gal 1:17) he probably means the Twelve; but he almost certainly looks on James, the Lord’s brother, as an apostle (Gal 1:19), together with “all the apostles” who saw the risen Lord in sequence from James (1 Cor 15:7) and who seem to be distinct from the Twelve, mentioned along with Peter in 1 Corinthians 15:5. When he speaks of Andronicus and Junia, whose faith in Christ antedated his own, as “of note among the apostles” (Rom 16:7), he probably means that they were apostles themselves. (The “apostles,” or envoys of the churches, mentioned in 2 Cor 8:23, are in quite another category.)

If to be an apostle is to have seen the risen Lord and to have been called and commissioned by him to be his witness and messenger, then Paul was preeminently an apostle of Jesus Christ, accredited as such by the apostolic “signs” which attended his ministry (1 Cor 9:1–2; 2 Cor 12:12). Paul was called and commissioned to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; Gal 1:16), and his Gentile apostolate appears to have been acknowledged by the leader of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:7–8). But there was no other witness at hand when the Lord commissioned him. Anyone who refused to recognize this apostleship could appeal to the absence of independent testimony.

Paul could produce nothing like the credentials of the Twelve. His credentials were the converts he had won and the churches he had planted—more than adequate credentials, in all conscience. He had worked harder and preached more extensively than any of those who had seen the risen Christ before he did; he had planted churches more widely and observed the harvest of the Spirit growing in the lives of those who had turned to Christ through his ministry. It is almost incredible that intruders should invade his own mission field and try to persuade his converts that his apostolic standing was questionable, and that they should even find some to lend them an ear. In such situations Paul's argument was practical: his converts were the last people who could question his apostleship, for they owed their new existence in Christ to his apostolic ministry—they were its seal and guarantee (1 Cor 9:2). But what is important is not the title he held but the work he did. In the light of his achievement Paul can safely rest his case before the bar of history—not to speak of a more august bar which he kept constantly in view, as he set himself to discharge his commission in such a way that the day of Christ would reveal that he had “neither run in vain nor labored in vain” (Phil 2:16).

#### **6. Conference at Jerusalem.**

The church of Antioch, a mainly Gentile church, was not long in being established. Its members showed their quality by sending a sum of money to the mother church in Jerusalem to help it at a time of food scarcity in Judea, appointing Barnabas and Paul to convey the gift (Acts 11:27–30). This may have provided an occasion for the conference described by Paul in Galatians 2:1–10. Barnabas and Paul were received by the leaders of the Jerusalem church, James (the Lord's brother), Peter and John, the three so-called pillars. It was agreed that Barnabas and Paul should continue to concentrate on the Gentile mission, while the Jerusalem leaders would devote themselves to gospel witness among Jews. It is not implied that two different versions of the gospel were involved: Paul laid his Law-free gospel before the Jerusalem leaders, and they evidently found it acceptable. The difference lay rather in the two mission fields and in the presentation of the message. The agreement concealed several ambiguities, and these might lead to tension if full confidence were not maintained between the two sides. At the request of the Jerusalem leaders, Barnabas and Paul undertook to remember the poor in the mother church—an undertaking which Paul took very seriously.

## **7. With Barnabas in Cyprus and Anatolia**

On returning to Antioch, Barnabas and Paul were released by the church there to embark on a missionary campaign which took them to Cyprus and then to central Anatolia—to the Pisidian, Phrygian and Lycaonian regions of the Roman province of Galatia. The churches planted in the course of this mission in the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe are probably among the “churches of Galatia” addressed in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

The historicity of this campaign has been questioned: it has been interpreted as a “model journey,” setting forth the way in which Luke conceived that a missionary campaign should be conducted, including the way in which the gospel should be presented both to a synagogue congregation, as in Paul’s address at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41), and to a pagan audience, as in Barnabas and Paul’s confronting the idolatrous Lystrans with the revelation of the true God in his works of creation and providence (Acts 14:15–17). But the details of the journey, when examined in the light of historical geography, make a strong impression of factual truth. There is, moreover, a marked similarity between the missionaries’ remonstrance against idolatry at Lystra and Paul’s reminder to the Thessalonian Christians of how they had “turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9).

## **8. Terms of Gentile Admission to the Church**

When Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch on the Orontes, they found themselves before long involved in controversy. The agreement recently concluded at Jerusalem was perhaps understood differently by the two parties. Paul apparently soon began to feel that its spirit was not being observed by the Jerusalem leaders. There was a clash between him and Peter at Antioch, when Peter was spending some time with the church there. To begin with, Peter ate quite freely with the Gentile Christians, but some messengers from James in Jerusalem persuaded him to change his ways and withdraw from table fellowship with Gentiles. In Paul’s eyes the implications of Peter’s conduct threatened the foundations of the gospel of grace. But other Jewish Christians in Antioch, including even Barnabas, sided with Peter, and Antioch could no longer provide Paul with a base for his missionary activity.

A disagreement on this scale, affecting the unity of the church and indeed the very nature of the gospel, could not be left unresolved: Peter himself, we may be sure, was not happy with the embarrassing situation in which he

was placed. A meeting of the Jerusalem apostles and elders, commonly called the Council of Jerusalem, was convened to consider the issue, and observers from the church of Antioch were invited to attend. Those members of the Jerusalem church who maintained that Gentile converts should be circumcised and submit to Mosaic Law were given an opportunity to express their views, but the apostles and elders resolved that no such conditions should be imposed—that Gentile Christians should simply be required to abstain from eating blood or the flesh of animals sacrificed to pagan divinities, and from fornication, including perhaps marital unions within bounds forbidden by Jewish rules (Acts 15:23–29). If Gentile Christians agreed to those terms, the barrier to table fellowship would be removed; and most of them agreed very readily.

Peter must certainly have welcomed this resolution of the dilemma. When Paul, however, was later consulted by his converts at Corinth about the eating of meat sacrificed to idols, he replied that eating such meat was harmless unless it violated one's own conscience or scandalized a fellow Christian. As for the ban on fornication, Paul agreed that fornication contravened the order of creation and frustrated the purpose of God in creating the human race male and female.

## **9. In Macedonia and Achaia**

One of the messengers chosen by the Jerusalem church to convey the findings of the Council to the Gentile churches of Syria and Cilicia was Silas or Silvanus, in whom Paul found a congenial companion. He invited him to join him in a missionary expedition to the west. Traveling by land through Asia Minor, they first visited the churches which Paul and Barnabas had planted a few years earlier. At Lystra Paul found Timothy, a young convert of his, whom he invited to accompany him; Timothy became his devoted and lifelong lieutenant. Their westward journey would have taken them to Ephesus, which may have been Paul's goal, but they were diverted from this course in circumstances which they recognized to be tokens of the Holy Spirit's guidance, and proceeded in a northwest direction until they reached the Aegean Sea at Alexandria Troas. There they took ship for Neapolis in Macedonia.

In Macedonia they preached the gospel and planted churches in three cities, Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea; but after a short stay in each they were forced to leave when riotous demonstrations had been stirred up against them—in Philippi because of their alleged interference with citizens' property rights and in the other cities through the activity of opponents within the Jewish community.

Philippi and Thessalonica stood on the great Egnatian Way, linking the Aegean with the Adriatic; and Paul may have thought of going on to its western terminus and crossing over to Italy. This would have been one of the many occasions when he planned to visit Rome (as he tells the Roman Christians in Rom 1:13). If so, his inability to continue farther west was providentially ordered, for had he gone on he would have met Jews (including Jewish Christians) traveling east because of Claudius's expulsion edict of AD 49 (see Acts 18:2). As it was, Paul had to turn off the Egnatian Way, and soon found himself compelled to leave Macedonia altogether. He was taken away from Berea for his own safety by his friends in that city and, after a short stay in Athens, proceeded to Corinth.

Paul's brief mission in Macedonia proved in fact to have been amazingly successful; the churches of Macedonia gave him much cause for encouragement and thanksgiving. But at the time the Macedonian venture must have seemed a failure, in spite of the clear signs of divine guidance which led him and his colleagues to undertake it. He left Macedonia in deep depression and arrived in Corinth, as he confessed, "in weakness and fear and much trembling" (1 Cor 2:3). If Macedonia had shown itself so unwelcoming, Corinth would surely be more so: its public reputation promised no receptive soil for the gospel seed. But nevertheless Paul was able to spend eighteen months in Corinth, preaching the gospel and building up the church, with no serious molestation.

Here Paul met Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple who had left Rome when Claudius expelled the Jews of the city. In them he found helpful and devoted friends for life (cf. Rom 16:3–5).

One serious attempt was made to put an end to Paul's activity during his Corinthian ministry. Some Jewish leader in the city charged him before Gallio, lately arrived as proconsul of the province of Achaia, of propagating a form of religion not authorized by Roman law. A decision by so authoritative an imperial officer would have much greater weight than a ruling by a city magistrate. Had Gallio sustained the charge, the progress of the gospel would have been impeded not only in Achaia but elsewhere throughout the empire. Having heard the charge, however, he concluded that it involved a dispute about interpretations of the Jewish Law and refused to take it up. Negative as Gallio's action was, it worked to Paul's advantage: he continued his work unhindered.

The mention of Gallio in Acts 18:12 provides a fixed point for the chronology of Paul's career. An inscription at Delphi, recording a directive issued by Claudius within the first seven months of AD 52, refers to Gallio as recently

proconsul of Achaia. The implication is that he became proconsul in the early summer of 51. We know from other sources that because of poor health he did not remain in the office long. Paul's eighteen-month stay in Corinth may safely be dated between the fall of 50 and the spring of 52.

By the time the work in Corinth was finished, Paul had left behind a large and gifted Christian community, although there were times in the following years when he had to regret its deficiency in moral ballast.

## **10. In Ephesus and Proconsular Asia**

Paul's next base of operations was the city of Ephesus, in the province of Asia, where he settled for the greater part of three years. Those years mark one of the most fruitful phases of his whole apostolic ministry. The evangelization of the province was accomplished through the activity of Paul and several of his colleagues. One of these, Epaphras, served as the evangelist of the Lycus valley, where his labors resulted in the founding of churches in Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossae (Col 1:7–8; 4:12–13).

The work was not accomplished without hazards; some of these are recorded by Luke, and others are alluded to by Paul himself. They may have included one or two of the frequent imprisonments which he mentions in 2 Corinthians 11:23. It is doubtful, however, if any of his prison letters is to be dated during an Ephesian imprisonment. Luke describes in graphic detail the riotous demonstration against Paul and his preaching in the great theater of Ephesus (Acts 19:19–41). Paul's activity was perceived as an economic threat to those tradesmen who depended for their livelihood on the cult of Artemis, the great goddess of the city whose temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. But the greatest personal danger which he encountered in those years, toward the end of his Ephesian ministry, is referred to by Paul himself in 2 Corinthians 1:8–10. He speaks of a situation so threatening that death seemed inevitable, and when, against all odds, deliverance finally came, he greeted it as a token of God's power to raise the dead. It has been argued that this perilous occasion was connected with the crisis resulting from the assassination of M. Junius Silanus, in the latter part of AD 54. The situation was probably so unfavorable for Paul that an appeal to Caesar, the course which normally lay open to a Roman citizen, would have been counterproductive.

It was almost certainly this experience that brought home to him the likelihood that he would not survive to witness the Lord's Parousia. In earlier references to the Parousia and the attendant resurrection he tends to include himself among those who would still be alive then; from now on he

tends to include himself rather among those who will be raised from the dead. For the first time, so far as the evidence goes, he considers seriously what his condition will be immediately after death: his conclusion, as set out in 2 Corinthians 5:1–10, is that he will not remain in a state of “nakedness” for one moment; he will be “clothed upon” forthwith with the housing even now reserved for him in heaven. By “nakedness” he means the lack of all means of communication with the environment, and for Paul the believer’s environment immediately after death is summed up in the words “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8).

Some Pauline students, notably C. H. Dodd, have envisaged what they describe as Paul’s “second conversion” around this time. This is not simply a matter of the shift in eschatological perspective just mentioned: Dodd draws attention to a change of temper in the later letters. Paul is less sharp in his polemic, less insistent on his status, more relaxed in his attitude toward those fellow Christians who tried to make his apostolic task more difficult than it need be. The contrast has often been pointed out between Paul’s unrestrained denunciation of the intruders in the churches of Galatia (Gal 1:6–9; 5:10, 12) and his charitable reference to those Christian opponents (in Rome, possibly) who thought they could rub salt into his wounds by taking advantage of his imprisonment to preach the gospel the more energetically (Phil 1:15–18). True, the difference in the two situations must not be overlooked, but the change of temper is unmistakable. Whether the change was gradual, or precipitated by some crisis like that described in 2 Corinthians 1:8, cannot be said with confidence. But a passage like Philippians 3:7–16 helps us to “see most clearly what experience had made of this naturally proud, self-assertive, and impatient man” (Dodd, 81).

Another experience which profoundly influenced Paul’s attitude to life was one which he dates several years before this, although it is only now—at the end of his Ephesian ministry—that he records it (2 Cor 12:2–10). A mystical experience left him with a physical disability, which he calls a “thorn in the flesh.” Whatever its precise nature was, it evidently threatened to incapacitate him from continuing his apostolic activity, and he prayed three times that it might be taken away. Instead of having his prayer answered, he received the assurance that the grace of Christ would enable him to live with it; in fact, he learned to rejoice in it because it helped him to be more completely reliant on the power of Christ at work in his weakness.

## **11. The Collection for Jerusalem**

Toward the end of his Ephesian ministry Paul was busily engaged in organizing in the churches he had planted east and west of the Aegean a collection for the relief of the chronic poverty of the Jerusalem church. On the occasion when he and Barnabas met James, Peter and John in Jerusalem, those three “pillars” urged on them that they should “remember the poor” in the mother church (Gal 2:10). Paul treated this as a solemn obligation both then and subsequently throughout his ministry. As for this special collection, one impelling force behind it was his strong desire to bind the Gentile churches and the Jerusalem church more closely together. The Gentile churches probably imagined that they could get along quite well without Jerusalem, and many members of the Jerusalem church looked with serious misgivings on Paul’s preaching of a Law-free gospel and on the Gentile churches founded on the basis of that preaching. If a bond of gratitude, confidence and love could be forged between Jerusalem and the churches of his own mission field, Paul would feel that his ministry had been truly worthwhile. A generous gift would persuade the mother church that the Gentile’s commitment to the gospel was genuine and practical. So he urged his converts by letter and, where practicable, by personal visits to give as generously as possible to this good cause. He also encouraged a spirit of competition when, for example, he depicted the Macedonian churches’ sacrificial generosity in glowing terms to the Corinthians, and praised the Corinthians’ prompt response to the Macedonians.

In Paul’s eyes, moreover, the delivery of the collection in Jerusalem would be the climax of his apostolic service thus far, the visible sign of that “offering of the Gentiles” which he planned to present to God in Jerusalem as the crown of his “priestly service” (Rom 15:16). He hoped to consummate his thanksgiving for the past and his dedication for the future by an act of worship in the Temple, where the Lord had appeared to him many years before and sent him “far away to the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21).

## **12. Arrest in Jerusalem; Trial in Caesarea; Journey to Rome.**

After his long and fruitful ministry in the province of Asia Paul revisited the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. He and some of his colleagues, especially Titus, helped them to complete their contributions to the collection. It was probably at this time, too, that he traveled west along the Egnatian Way and turned north in the direction of Illyricum (Rom 15:19).

After spending the winter of 56–57 in Corinth he set sail for Judea in company with representatives of the Gentile churches appointed to carry their churches' contributions to Jerusalem. The presence of these men, Paul hoped, would be a further witness to the Jerusalem church of the divine blessing on his Gentile mission. But Paul's final visit to Jerusalem turned out disastrously. In the Temple precincts he was set upon by some of his old enemies from proconsular Asia who accused him of sacrilege (polluting the sacred area by bringing Gentiles into it). He was taken into custody by the commander of the Roman garrison in the Antonia fortress and sent to Caesarea to stand trial before the procurator Felix. After two years' procrastination on the part of his detainers, he exercised the privilege of a Roman citizen and appealed to have his case transferred to the hearing of the emperor in Rome, and was sent there to have his appeal dealt with. After two years under house arrest in Rome, he was summoned to appear before the supreme court when at last his case came up for hearing. What the outcome was cannot be determined with certainty. The record of Acts comes to an end just before the hearing. Paul's letter to the Philippians, written apparently when court proceedings were imminent, shows that he was equally prepared for a favorable or unfavorable outcome—acquittal (followed by liberty for further ministry) or conviction (followed by execution)—although he thought it more probable that he would be acquitted.

That he was in fact acquitted and eventually realized his hope of preaching the gospel in Spain is assumed or implied by several writers from Clement of Rome onward (Clement does not actually mention Spain, but it is difficult to see what else he could have meant by "the limit of the west" which, in *1 Clement* 5.7, he says that Paul reached before he was "taken up into the holy place"). But it is not clear that any of these had firm evidence for this belief, other than an inference from Romans 15:23–29, where Paul speaks of his plan, after the delivery of the Jerusalem relief fund, to begin the evangelization of Spain and to visit Rome on the way.

There is a tradition (accepted by Eusebius and Jerome) that after being acquitted when his appeal was heard, Paul was arrested again and subjected to the more rigorous imprisonment and trial in Rome to which reference is made in 2 Timothy 1:16–18; 4:16–18. There was no acquittal this time; he was convicted and beheaded with the sword at the third milestone on the Ostian Way, at a place called *Aquae Salviae*, and buried on the site covered by the basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls—a probably authentic location. These last proceedings against him may well have been an incident in Nero's proceedings against Christians about AD 65.

## PAUL'S LETTERS

*Thirteen letters in the New Testament bear the name of Paul. They inform us about Paul, his beliefs, his ministry, and his activity. The letters generally focus on issues within the life of the church. As various issues and problems developed, help from the apostles was often sought. Sometimes messengers brought word to Paul of problems in the churches. His letters responded to these concerns. As a result the writings contain instruction; advice; rebuke; and exhortation in theological, ethical, social, personal, and liturgical matters.*

Holman Bible Handbook

*The Epistles play a crucial role in the grand story, both defining how the plot resolution works out and how God's newly redeemed and reconciled people are to live in the present age, as they hopefully and joyfully await the final chapter of the story. Collectively, the Epistles presuppose the story of Jesus as told in the Gospels; their main concerns lie in the instruction, encouragement and exhortation of God's people.*

Gordon Fee

*These letters are the nuts and bolts of the Christian life. They tell us all that is involved in mastering the mystery of Christ and the Christian life. Through these letters, the Holy Spirit shows us how to discover and explore the deep truths and the deep experience of **knowing and following Jesus Christ**.*

Ray Stedman

*Many questions would arise as to the meaning and application of the gospel for Christians... the Epistles answer these questions, give the interpretation of the person and work of Christ, and apply the truth of the gospel to believers.*

Hampton Keathley

### **13 NT Epistles Attributed to Paul**

- **Purpose: for the instruction, encouragement & exhortation of God's people that they may know & follow Jesus**
- **Nature: occasional letters, to address issues in the church, to correct behaviour, doctrine, misunderstanding, etc; theology applied to a particular need**
- **Theme: significance of Jesus' death & resurrection, work on the cross**

## 1. Purpose

Letters were a common form of communication in the first century. Paul wrote them to encourage, warn, and instruct the churches he had founded (1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians). He also wrote letters to churches that he had not visited (Romans, Colossians) and to individuals (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon).

Through his letters, Paul's ministry was extended not only to those directly addressed in his writing, but also to readers of the Bible throughout the centuries. And through his epistles, many questions concerning the meaning and application of the gospel for Christians are answered as Paul gives his readers the interpretation of the person and work of Christ and applies the truth of the gospel for believers.

*The **occasional nature** of the letters must be taken seriously. This means that they were occasioned, or called forth, by special circumstances, either from the reader's side or the author's. Almost all of Paul's letters were occasioned from the reader's side (except for Philemon and perhaps Romans). Usually the occasion was some kind of behaviour that needed correcting, or a doctrinal error that needed setting right, or a misunderstanding that needed further light.*

*The occasional nature of the epistles also means that they are not first of all theological treatises, nor are they summaries of Paul's theology. There is theology implied, but it is always "task theology" - theology being written for or brought to bear on the task at hand. One must always keep in mind that they are not primarily written to expound Christian theology. It is always theology applied to or directed toward a particular need.*

Gordon Fee

## 2. Themes

The Epistles typically reflect more deeply on the significance of Christ's death and resurrection than the Gospels do. The implications of the fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus Christ are explored and applied to the readers in the Epistles. The Epistles have played a major role in the formation of doctrine and Christian theology throughout church history precisely because they expound on the great themes of God's saving work on the cross.

Among the major themes in the Epistles are the following:

- a) Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises in redemptive history. He is Messiah, Lord, the Son of God, and the true revelation of God.
- b) The new life of believers is a gift of God, anchored in the cross and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- c) Christians experience salvation by faith, and faith expresses itself in a transformed life. The Epistles spend considerable space elaborating on believers' newness of life.
- d) Believers belong to the restored Israel, the church of Jesus Christ, which must live out her calling as God's people in a sinful world.
- e) In this present evil age believers suffer affliction and persecution, but they look forward with joy to the coming of Jesus Christ and the consummation of their salvation.
- f) False teachers dangerously subvert the true gospel of Christ.

Thomas Schreiner (ESV Study Bible)



### 3. Audience, Place & Date

In the NT canon, Paul's 13 letters are arranged in order of length, from Romans to Philemon.

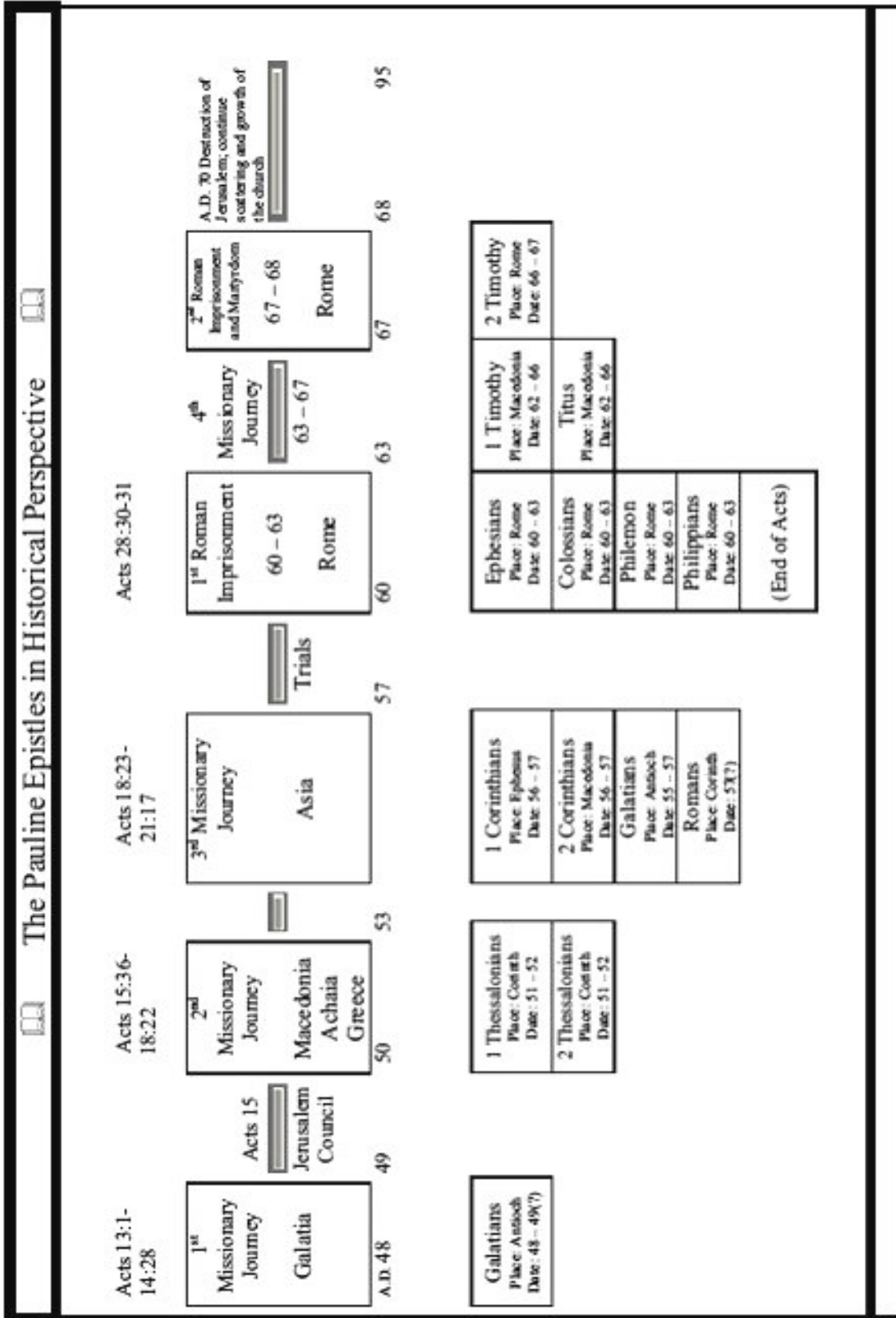
a) They can be divided into two categories according to audience:

- 9 epistles written to churches  
(Romans to 2 Thessalonians)
- 4 pastoral epistles written to individuals  
(1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon)

b) They can also be grouped into two other categories according to place:

- 8 **travel** letters written during Paul's active ministry  
(1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, 1 Timothy, Titus)
- 5 **prison** letters written when he was in prison  
(Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Timothy)





**A Survey of the Pauline Epistles (in Chronological Order)**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Date Written</b>	<b>Place Written</b>
1 Thessalonians	Church in Thessalonica	AD 50 or 51 (2 <sup>nd</sup> missionary journey)	Corinth
2 Thessalonians	Church in Thessalonica	AD 51 (2 <sup>nd</sup> missionary journey)	Corinth
1 Corinthians	Church in Corinth	AD 53-54 (3 <sup>rd</sup> missionary journey)	Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8)
2 Corinthians	Church in Corinth	AD 54-55 (3 <sup>rd</sup> missionary journey)	Macedonia, likely Philippi (2 Cor 2:13; 7:5)
Galatians	Churches of northern Galatia	AD 53-55 (or 47-48?) (3 <sup>rd</sup> missionary journey)	Uncertain
Romans	Church in Rome	AD 57 (3 <sup>rd</sup> missionary journey)	Corinth (cf. Rom 15:25-26; 1 Cor 16:1-7)
Colossians	Christians in Colosse	AD 60-61 (1 <sup>st</sup> imprisonment in Rome)	Rome
Philemon	Philemon	AD 60-61 (1 <sup>st</sup> imprisonment in Rome)	Rome
Ephesians	Christians in Ephesus & Asia Minor (circular letter?)	AD 61-62 (1 <sup>st</sup> imprisonment in Rome)	Rome
Philippians	Christians in Philippi	AD 62 (1 <sup>st</sup> imprisonment in Rome)	Rome

1 Timothy	Timothy (& the church in Ephesus)	AD 62-63 (Final missionary journey)	Macedonia, likely Philippi or Thessalonica
Titus	Titus (& the churches in Crete)	AD 62-63 (Final missionary journey)	Macedonia (Titus 3:12)
2 Timothy	Timothy	AD 64 (2 <sup>nd</sup> imprisonment in Rome)	Rome (cf. 2 Tim 4:17)

#### 4. Structure

*Paul's letters adhere largely to standard forms of everyday letters or epistles, but like a Christian King Midas, everything Paul touches turns to gospel. Paul is the first to use the letter in a theological way.*

Rikk Watts

Paul's letters follow a relatively fixed structure as that of a typical Greco-Roman letter and consist of 6 parts:

a) Name of writer

- Paul

b) Name of recipient

- E.g. to the church of God in Corinth

c) Greetings

- The normal Greek greeting was similar to their word for "grace." "Peace" was the usual Jewish greeting.
- Paul combines the two in a specifically Christian form: "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ" (e.g. Gal 1:3).
- God's grace in Christ brings reconciliation with God, harmony among people, and wholeness of life.

d) Prayer, wish and/or thanksgiving

- This part often introduces the main concerns raised in the body.
- Paul's burden for the addressees is revealed in his thanksgivings for the spiritual progress of his readers (e.g. 1 Thess 1:2–10) and his intercessions for their continued growth (e.g. Phil 1:8–11).
- In Galatians, where Paul was deeply concerned about his converts following false teachers, he skips the thanksgiving and intercession, going directly to the problem at hand.
- In 2 Corinthians and Ephesians, this thanksgiving turns into a doxology.

e) Body

- This part conveys the primary information Paul intends to communicate where he usually deals with doctrinal questions and then with their application to life.
- It also includes a section of requests or exhortation of the recipients when needed.

f) Final greeting and farewell

- Paul normally closes with greetings from his companions and with added greetings to various people in the churches to which he writes.
- His letters conclude with a benediction, e.g. the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you (e.g. 1 Cor 16:23).

***Paul's writings continue to fascinate countless individuals and they always reward those who would carefully study them. His cruciform perspective on the Christian life still scandalizes those who follow the philosophies of the fallen wall, all of which ultimately elevate humanity beyond its rightful place under God. But Paul practiced what he preached and those who believe in the unique authority of Scripture must give his work a central place in their reflection and obedience.***

Craig Blomberg