



## The Life of the Apostle Paul

Since the apostle Paul wrote almost half of the New Testament, we should get to know him intimately. The best way to do that is to move through the passages in the book of Acts where we see his name. Let's also try to learn some little known facts about this great apostle.

**The Bible mentions some of Paul's relatives.** Five possible relatives are mentioned in the last chapter of Romans (Romans 16:7, 11, 13, 21) Andronicus, Junia, Herodion, Rufus, his mother, Lucius, Jason (Acts 17:5), and Sosipater. And, in Acts 23:16-22 we read of Paul's sister's son, who helped Paul while he was in prison.

**What food did Paul eat?** Meat is seldom mentioned, except for Lamb so we can assume it was eaten. But most likely the main staple 'meat' was fish. The Sea of Galilee was a busy place. The historian Josephus says there were around 230 fishing boats working during the early first century. One of the largest catches were Catfish, yet Paul would not have eaten those, at least early in his life due to the Jewish dietary laws (See Deuteronomy 14:10).

**Paul was ruthless and passionate about destroying Christians.** He was devoted to his Jewish heritage (Philippians 3:5,6). He oversaw the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:54-8:1). He sought out Christians in their homes and put them into prison (Acts 8:3-4). He secured official papers from Jerusalem's high priest requesting that Damascus synagogues hand over members of "this way" to stand trial in Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2).

**Paul was saved through a personal visible and audible appearance by Jesus.** On his way to extradite the Christians in Damascus, Paul saw a blinding light and heard the voice of Jesus speaking directly to him (Acts 9:3-8).

**He was the apostle to the Gentiles.** But he had a lot of opportunity to preach to Jews too, which he did. Historians estimate there were four to five million Jews living away from Israel in the first century. Every major city has at least one synagogue, and Rome is said to have had at least eleven. The Jewish population of Rome was 40,000 - 50,000.

**Paul read pagan poets and writers.** Epimenides of Crete (Titus 1:12), Aratus of Cilicia (Acts 17:28), and Menander, the author of Greek comedy Thais (1 Corinthians 15:33).

**Paul may have recorded some of the New Testament's church hymns for us.** Many scholars think Paul is quoting hymns in passages like 1 Corinthians 13 and Philippians 2:1-11.

**Paul's letters, not the Gospels, give us the earliest information we have about Jesus.** All of Paul's letters were written, probably, before the first Gospel was written. The earliest reference to the sayings of Jesus come from 1st Thessalonians, written about A.D. 50 (e.g. 1 Thess. 5).

**Paul was a Roman Citizen from Birth.** It carried with it certain privileges—the right to a fair trial, and exemptions from cruel punishments like whipping. As a Roman citizen he also had the right of appeal. (Acts 22:25-30; 25:

**What took place in a Jewish synagogue?** The synagogue was, a school for children, a Court of Jewish law, a Hall for political gatherings, A hotel for Jewish travelers, merchants, and the poor, a treasury for money used for charitable purposes. In synagogues outside of Israel, money was collected annually for donation to the Jerusalem Temple. It was the place of activity for the Jews. Paul chose to use this strategic place to begin his missionary efforts.

**Paul traveled on the best and safest roads.** The Roman road system was incredible. By A.D. 300 the Romans had built a network of over 53,000 miles of roads, primarily for military purposes. The roads gave Paul access to all major centers. The average traveler in Paul's day, on Roman roads, walked about three miles per hour for about seven hours a day—or about 20 miles per day. Paul does mention in 2 Corinthians 11:26 that he had been "in danger...from bandits..." He also traveled by sea and was shipwrecked three times (2 Corinthians 11:25).

**Paul had a lot of friends, but his inner-circle are noted in his letters.** Aquila and Priscilla, Silas, Luke, Timothy, Barnabas, John Mark, Titus.

**What did Paul look like?** The Bible doesn't tell us, except to say,

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." 2 Corinthians 10:10.

The word contemptible means "utterly despised" or "of no account."

A second century Christian document called The Acts of Paul, gives a physical description but there is no way of knowing if it is representative of his actual appearance:

"A man of middling size, and his hair was scanty, and his legs were a little crooked, and his knees were far apart; he had large eyes, and his eyebrows met, and his nose was somewhat long."

The Epistles of Paul | Date of Writing\*

Letter	Date of Writing	Place of Writing
1st Thessalonians	54 A.D.	Corinth
2nd Thessalonians	54 A.D.	Corinth?
1st Corinthians	59 A.D.	Ephesus
2nd Corinthians	60 A.D.	Philippi
Galatians	58 A.D.	Corinth
Romans	60 A.D.	Corinth
Philemon	64 A.D.	Rome - In prison
Colossians	64 A.D.	Rome - In prison
Ephesians	64 A.D.	Rome - In prison
Philippians	64 A.D.	Rome - In prison
1st Timothy	65 A.D.	?
Titus	65 A.D.	?
2nd Timothy	66 A.D.	Rome - In prison (2x)?

\*Adapted from Dr. C.I. Scofield, The Old Scofield Reference System, The Scofield Study Bible, 1917

[This chronology is subject to minor changes over the course of our study]