



Caravaggio, "Conversion on the Way to Damascus"

9. Ministry, Letters, and Theology of Paul

"You have surely heard how I lived in the past, within Judaism, and how there was simply no limit to the way I persecuted the Church of God in my attempts to destroy it; and how, in Judaism, I outstripped most of my Jewish contemporaries in my limitless enthusiasm for the traditions of my ancestors. But . . . God, who had set me apart from the time when I was in my mother's womb, called me through his grace and chose to reveal his Son in me, so that I should preach him to the gentiles."

(Gal 1:13-16 NJB)

"Ye Who Are Called to Labor" (hymn no. 321)

1. Ye who are called to labor and minister for God,
Blest with the royal priesthood, appointed by his word
To preach among the nations the news of gospel grace,
And publish on the mountains salvation, truth, and peace:

2. Oh, let not vain ambition nor worldly glory stain
Your minds so pure and holy; acquit yourselves like men.
While lifting up your voices like trumpets long and loud,
Say to the slumb'ring nation: "Prepare to meet your God!"

3. Then cease from all light speeches, light-mindedness, and pride;
Pray always without ceasing and in the truth abide.

The Comforter will teach you, his richest blessings send.

Your Savior will be with you forever to the end.

<https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/ye-who-are-called-to-labor-men?lang=eng>

Paul's Background and Ministry

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*AN OBSERVANT JEW RAISED IN A GREEK CITY WHO HELD
 ROMAN CITIZENSHIP, PAUL WAS UNIQUELY PREPARED TO BE
 THE "APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES"*

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The Three Worlds of Paul

Wallace and Williams' *The Three Worlds of Paul of Tarsus* (Routledge, 1998)

- **Jewish Background**

- "If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless." (Phil 3:4-6 NIV)
 - Trained "at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3) could be a general statement
 - No indication that Paul was in Jerusalem during the ministry and death of Christ

- **Greek Culture**

- "Paul replied, 'I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city.'" (Acts 21:39 NRSV)
 - Important Greek city on the route between Asia Minor and Syria
 - Noted for its schools of Greek rhetoric—important for Paul's later preaching and writing style

- **Roman Citizenship**

- "The tribune answered, 'It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship.' Paul said, 'But I was born a citizen.'" (Acts 22:28 NJB)
 - Paul's father or earlier ancestor had received the citizenship (more below)
 - Afforded Paul due process and certain other legal rights

Two Descriptions of Paul

- Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla
 - Thecla was a supposed virgin convert of Paul at Iconium
 - “At length they saw a man coming (namely Paul), of low stature, bald (or shaved) on the head, crooked thighs, handsome legs, hollowed eyes; had a crooked nose; full of grace. For sometimes he appeared as a man; *sometimes he had the countenance of an angel.*”
- *The Teachings of Joseph Smith* (1997 edition), 466–67
 - “[Paul] is about 5 feet high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, *penetrating as eternity*; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembles the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator . . . Active and diligent, *always employing himself in doing good to his fellowmen.*”

Paul's Conversion

- **Three Accounts of the Road to Damascus**
 - Acts 9 (narrative)
 - Acts 22 (speech to hostile Jewish crowd)
 - Acts 26 (speech before Herod Agrippa II)
- **Paul's conversion and Alma the Younger**
 - Three accounts (cf. Mosiah 27; Alma 36, 38)
 - Each sought to destroy the Church
 - Visions, being struck down, etc.
- **Paul's vision and Joseph Smith's First Vision**
 - Details not described or written early
 - Multiple, sometimes differing accounts
 - Nevertheless absolutely pivotal for each
 - Cf. JS-H 1:24



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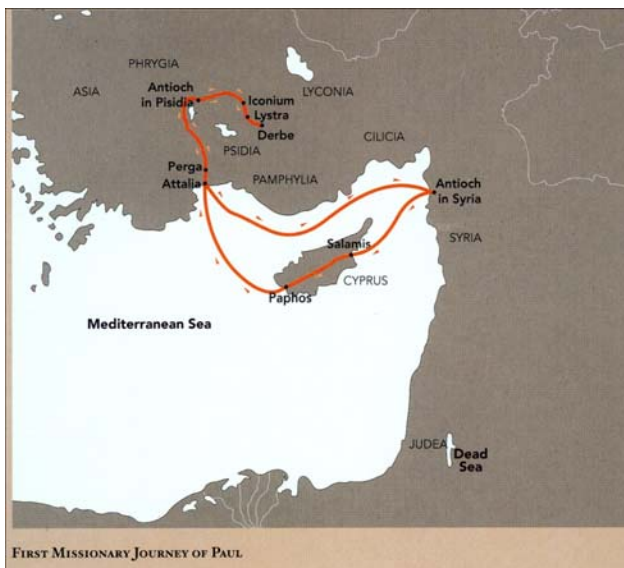
From Damascus to Antioch

R. Anderson "Appendix A: Chronology of Paul's Life," *Understanding Paul*, 390-98

- **A.D. 33 Conversion**
- **A.D. 33-36 Preaches in Damascus, "Arabia," and back to Damascus**
- **A.D. 36 First visit to Jerusalem**, meets Peter and James the Lord's brother
 - *Jewish hostility leads to Paul's being sent back to Tarsus*
- **A.D. 37-44 Preaches in Cilicia and Antioch**
 - Barnabas had brought him to this major church center in Acts 11:25-26

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Jerusalem and the "First" Missionary Journey

Only the first of Barnabas and Paul together (better the First Gentile Mission) AD 45-47

- **A.D. 44 Second visit to Jerusalem** bringing relief
 - possible apostolic ordination (Acts 14:4, 14)
 - Yet not clear reference to ever being one of the Twelve
 - Dated by reference to Claudius
- **A.D. 45-47 "First" Missionary Journey** (better First Gentile Mission)
 - Paul takes lead after Cyprus
- **A.D. 49 Council in Jerusalem over Gentiles**

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“Second” Missionary Journey



- “Second” Missionary Journey AD 49–52
- Corinth a base for 18 months
 - Arrival in Corinth dated to A.D. 50 by Gallio’s governorship
 - Writes **1** and **2 Thess** from Corinth
- Returns to Jerusalem to keep a feast, returns to **Antioch** (Acts 19:21)

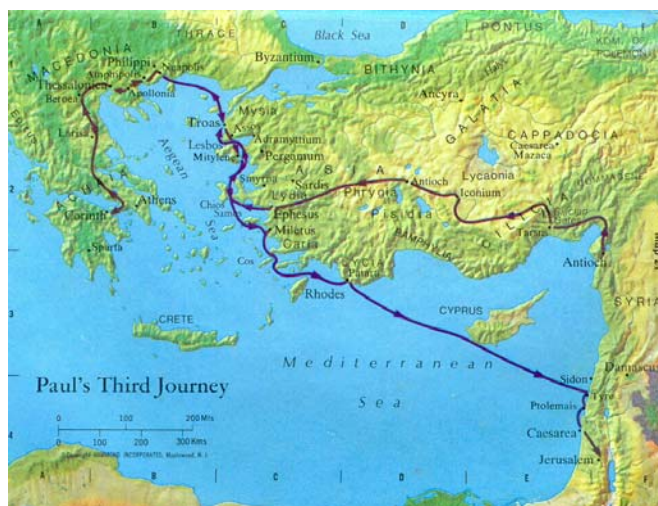
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“Third” Mission and Arrest in Jerusalem

- A.D. 53–58 “Third” Missionary Journey
 - **Ephesus** headquarters for first part of mission, followed by tour of Greek churches
 - Writes many **early letters** (Gal, **1** and **2 Cor**; Rom written from Corinth)
 - Perhaps **early imprisonment letters** (Phil, Phlm)
- Returns to Jerusalem with financial aid from Gentile churches
 - A.D. 58 Jerusalem visit and arrest
 - A.D. 58–60 Imprisonment in Caesarea



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Voyage to Rome and Imprisonment

- A.D. 60–63 **Voyage to and imprisonment in Rome**
 - **Later imprisonment letters** (Col, Eph, 1 Tim, Tit)
- [So-called “**Second Career**” of Paul might account for change of style in later letters]
 - [A.D. 64–66 Possible western missionary journey]
 - [A.D. 66–67 **Possible second Roman imprisonment and execution**; 2 Tim?]

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Another Schema: Phases of Paul's Life and Ministry

Pauline Chronology: His Life and Missionary Work by Prof. Felix Just, S.J. - Loyola Marymount University

- **Pre-Christian Phase** (ca. AD 10–35)
- **First Phase of His New Christian Life in the East** (c. AD 35–49)
 - Damascus–Arabia–Jerusalem–Cilicia–Antioch
 - Antioch–Cyprus–southern Galatia–Antioch (“First” Missionary Journey with Barnabas, AD 45–47)
 - Council in Jerusalem in AD 49 (Gal perhaps written before this)
- **Early Independent Missionary Phase in Macedonia and Greece** (c. AD 49–53)
 - Break with Barnabas–Galatia and Troas–Macedonia and Greece (“Second” Missionary Journey, AD 49–52)
 - headquartered in Corinth, where he writes 1–2 Thess
- **Mature Missionary Leadership Phase in Asia Minor** (c. AD 53–58)
 - Asia–Antioch–Asia (“Third” Missionary Journey, AD 53–58)
 - headquartered in Ephesus, where he writes 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Phil, Phlm, and probably Gal
- **Final Missionary Travel Phase to the West** (c. AD 58–63)
 - plans on visiting Rome and Spain, writes Rom
 - Goes first to Jerusalem–arrest, trials, taken to Rome as captive
 - under house arrest for two years, writes Col and probably 1 Tim, Tit, and Eph
- **Second Career?** (c. AD 63–64/67)
 - *Early Christian tradition agrees Paul was executed during the reign of Emperor Nero; but we cannot be sure whether it was at the end of his first Roman imprisonment (AD 62–64), or after his return from Spain (c. AD 67, suggesting a “Second Career”), since his death is not recorded in Acts. 2 Tim*

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The Letters of Paul

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PAUL WROTE LETTERS TO DIFFERENT GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS, EACH UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES. IN THEM HE BEARS FERVENT TESTIMONY AND TEACHES MUCH DOCTRINE, BUT THESE ARE BEST UNDERSTOOD WHEN STUDIED IN CONTEXT.

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The Pauline Corpus

- **Eschatological expectations** made letters preferred form of communication
 - No Christian “scripture” in earliest years of the apostolic church
- **Usually “organized” in the NT by length, not date!**
 - Slight exceptions in order to keep multiple letters written to the same community or individual together
- **Scholarly disputes over Pauline writings**
 - **Genre**
 - *Not all are the same kind of letter . . .*
 - **Unity**
 - *some letters are conflation of more than one letter, have been subsequently edited*
 - **Integrity**
 - *some letters seem to include non-Pauline passages, perhaps inserted by an editor or copyist*
 - **Authorship:** some seem significantly different in style or subject material
 - *“DeuteroPauline” letters and epistles supposedly written by students or a school of Paul in his style and citing his authority*
 - *The issue of Hebrews*

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Some Preliminaries

- Be aware of **the structure of a letter** and something of how it was composed, sent, and read
- Know **the genres or types of letters** they represent
- Be aware of **the order they were written**
- Understand **the “occasional nature”** of his writings
- Recognize that **Paul’s terminology and insights changed over time**
 - *Grace meant more for Paul in Ephesians, written late, than it did in Galatians, written early*
 - In early letters Paul writes about “**sin**” in a **generic sense as a fallen state**, while later letters refer to “**sins**” in the **sense of individual transgressions**
- *While detailed theological discussions developed over time and in response to the occasion, Paul’s basic message remained the same . . .*

Possible Order of Letters

- **From Antioch?** (after “First” Missionary Journey 45–47)
 - [Galatians, early dating]
 - **From Corinth** (during “Second” Missionary Journey AD 49–52)
 - 1 Thessalonians
 - 2 Thessalonians
 - **From Ephesus** (“Third” Missionary Journey, AD 53–58)
 - Galatians, late dating
 - Philippians*
 - Philemon*
 - 1 Corinthians
 - 2 Corinthians
 - Romans
 - **From Rome** (during “first” imprisonment, AD 62–63)
 - Colossians*
 - Ephesians*
 - Titus*
 - 1 Timothy*
 - **From Rome** (during “second” imprisonment, AD 67?)
 - 2 Timothy
 - Hebrews?
- *So-called “Imprisonment Letters”**
- Traditionally all from Rome, these letters could have been written from any of the places Paul was held in bonds

Occasional Nature

Most letters were written for a particular situation or “occasion,” which helps with their interpretation

- **Thessalonians (A.D. 50 or 51)**
 - Christians obsessed with the Second Coming
- **Galatians (mid A.D. 50's but perhaps earlier)**
 - Gentile Christians who were being led astray by “Judaizers”
 - Explains Paul's discussion of faith (of Jesus Christ) versus works (of the law)
- **1 Corinthians (A.D. 56–57)**
 - Problems with factionalism, doctrine, and behavior
- **Romans (A.D. 57–58)**
 - An introduction of Paul and his theology—the most “systematic” and comprehensive of his letters
- **Ephesians (probably A.D. 61–63)**
 - Actually an “encyclical” or circular letter meant for a broader audience, deals less with an occasional situation but with the Church in universal terms and illustrates how God accomplishes his purposes in the Christian community
 - Discussions of grace and predestination reach their final form
- **1 Timothy (A.D. 63–64 or at the end of the “second imprisonment” c. A.D. 66–68)**
 - A pastoral letter dealing with issues of church governance but also treating issues specific to Ephesus, where Timothy presided

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Paul's Letters

- **Brown's working distinction between “letters” and “epistles” (INT, 410)**
 - **Letter:** nonliterary communication between a writer and a “real” correspondent
 - *Epistle: artistic literary exercise presenting a moral lesson to a general audience*
- **Paul was a prolific and lengthy writer**
 - The average ancient letter was 87 words; the literary letters of Cicero were an average 295 and those of Seneca 995 words long
 - *Paul's average letter was 2,495 words long!*
- **Pauline Genres for this class**
 - **Real Letters**
 - *addressing practical and theological issues relevant to particular communities (most of Paul's)*
 - **Epistles/Encyclicals** - more stylized literary works in letter format
 - *“circular letters” intended for broader audiences (1 & 2 Peter, Jude; perhaps Colossians and Ephesians foreshadow)*
 - **Pastoral Letter** (regulatory letters or “church orders”)
 - *collections of instructions for the practical organization of religious communities (1 Tim, Titus)*
 - **Testaments**
 - *a document that gives a dying person's last wishes and instructions for his/her successors (2 Tim & 2 Peter)*

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Structure of a Pauline Letter

See Huntsman, "The Occasional Nature, Composition, and Structure of Paul's Letters," 200–203 (packet 208–217)

- **Opening Formula**

- Address noting **sender** and **recipient** (a local church, members of a church, or an individual)
- Example: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, **unto the church of the Thessalonians** which is in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: **Grace be unto you**, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess 1:1)
 - *Paul changes the typical Hellenistic greeting **chairein to charis (grace)***
- Rather than refer to his earthly household (e.g., "Paul, son of X, of Tarsus . . .") he **identifies himself with a new household** (e.g., "Paul, a servant or apostle of Jesus Christ . . ." (1–2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Col, 1–2 Tim, Tit)

- **Thanksgiving** (all but Gal and Tit)

- Paul expands the usual Hellenistic or Roman reference to the gods with a lengthy prayer of thanks and blessing

- **Body**

- **Pauline Indicative** (teaching section)
- **Pauline Imperative** (Admonition or *Paranesis* section)

- **Closing Formula**

- final blessing, greetings, peace wish, postscripts

Writing an Ancient Letter

See E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer*

- Paul did not sit alone in a quiet study writing his letters . . .
- The role of the **secretary**
 - Most ancient letters were written by professional scribes
 - Some were directly dictated, others followed standard set forms
 - *Some scribes rewrote the ideas of the "author" into more polished style*
 - Letters went through several drafts before the author applied his seal
- The **cost** of the finished letter included both the cost of the papyrus and secretarial labor (Richards, 169)
 - According to some calculations, *Romans (979 mss. lines) would have cost \$2,275 in today's dollars!*
 - Even Philemon (44 lines) would have cost \$101
- Paul's letters frequently included **co-writers and missionary companions** who left greetings at the end and probably reviewed the letter and added ideas
- Letters were delivered by **private carriers**
 - Paul frequently used missionary companions
 - *The carrier usually read the letter aloud to the audience and would be able to clarify meaning and add nuance*
 - Performance (facial expression, tone, gesture, and voice) were part of the reading process

Inspiration and the Writing Process

- Paul regularly cites his authority as “an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ” to establish the inspiration of his letters
- In addition, co-authors, secretaries, readers, and audiences could have been inspired to convey the teachings and doctrines effectively to the original audience
- *Likewise, we need the spirit as we read them!*

Diagram at right from Richards, 227

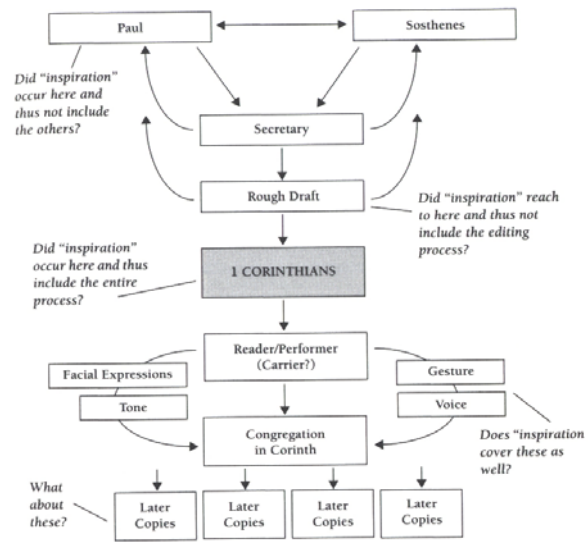


Figure 15.2. Where did inspiration occur?

“Christ and Him Crucified” The Theology of Paul

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ONLY ROMANS COMES CLOSE TO PRESENTING A “SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY” OF PAUL. NEVERTHELESS, AS DIFFERENT AS THE LETTERS AND THEIR SITUATIONS MAY BE, PAUL CONSISTENTLY TAUGHT CERTAIN CORE PRINCIPLES AND TENDED TO HAVE THE SAME CONCERNS

Paul's Fundamental "Christ Message"

- **The *kērygma* or "apostolic proclamation"**
 - God had sent his Son
 - Christ was crucified for mankind
 - He was raised from the dead and exalted to heaven
 - He would return soon
 - Those who belonged to him would live with him forever
- **The Implications**
 - *Christians must live according to the highest ethical and moral standards*—this is the frequent topic in the paranses (Pauline imperative) of all his letters
- Paul's writings actually preserve little of Christ's own teachings (the "**dominical sayings**") and relate few of his deeds: "Paul's message focused on God's saving action in sending his Son and in raising him" (Sanders, 29)
 - *Contrast with the *kērygma* of Peter, especially "[Jesus] went about doing good . . ."*

Pauline Concerns

- **Defending the Christ message:** only *God's sending his Son* and *Christ's crucifixion* did not become the subject of debate in Pauline congregations
 - **Thessalonians worried about Christ's return**
 - Galatians and Romans reflect the disagreement over who belonged to Christ
 - **Corinthians challenged implications of the resurrection**
 - **Christians disagreed over what constituted ethical behavior**
- **Personal apologetics**
 - Defended himself against attacks (Judaizers, proto-Gnostics, etc.)
 - Defended his teaching of doctrine and perspective
 - *Evolves and changes over time: for instance, his eschatology (timing of the second coming), and his way of describing sin (singular and part of the fallen state in early letters, plural and referring to individual sins in the later)*