

PAUL

Architect of the faith

Key question

Who was Paul the apostle?

Key text

Galatians 1:1

“Paul, an apostle - sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead”

Introduction

1. Perhaps the most significant figure in the Christian tradition apart from Jesus is Paul of Tarsus.
2. He, more than anyone else is responsible for shaping the message of the cross and resurrection for church. Without his letters we would not have a clear understanding of the gospel and much of the ethic of Christianity.

A. Saul (Paul before his conversion).

1. **His early background**
 - a. **Ancestry and youth**
 1. Born and raised in Tarsus. Acts 21:39
 2. Of the tribe of Benjamin. Rom 11:1
 3. A Hebrew of Hebrews. Phil. 3:5
 - b. **Education**
 1. Taught by Gamaliel. Acts 22:3
 2. A Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. Acts 23:6, Gal. 1:13, Phil. 3:6, Eph. 2:2-3, I Tim. 1:13-14, Titus 3:3
 - c. **Character**
 1. He was an uninformed blasphemer. I Tim. 1:13
 2. He displayed great zeal in outward keeping of the Law. Phil. 3:6
 3. He attempted to destroy the church. Phil. 3:6
2. **His war against the church.**
 - a. He took part in Stephen's death. Acts 7:27-58, 8:1, 22:20
 - b. He made havoc of the church. Acts 8:3

- c. He threw Christians in prison. Acts 8:3
- d. He hounded Christians to their death. Acts 22:4
- e. He beat Christians. Acts 22:19
- f. He voted to put them to death. Acts 26:10
- g. He compelled them through torture to blaspheme. Acts 26:11
- h. He persecuted the church beyond measure and wasted it. Gal.1:13

B. His conversion

1. The Damascus road experience. Acts 9:1-18, 22:5-16, 26:12-20, I Cor.15:8-10, I Tim.1:12-16

- a. He was in route to Damascus to persecute believers.
- b. He was knocked down and blinded by a heavenly light.
- c. He heard Christ speak to him.
- d. He was led to Damascus where he remained alone for three days.
- e. He was ministered to by a Damascus believer named Ananias.

2. His baptism

- a. Paul's conversion is best understood as a process that began on the Damascus road and was finalized at his water baptism.
- b. It was at his baptism that he washed away his sins calling on Jesus' name, Acts 22:16 and was filled with the Spirit Acts 9:17-18.

3. His reception by the Apostles.

- a. Preached Christ in the synagogues in Damascus. Acts 9:19-21
- b. He retired to the Arabian desert for a period of several years. Gal.1:16-17
- c. He returned to Damascus with greater knowledge and preaching power. Gal.1:17,18, Acts 9:22-25
- d. He escaped from Damascus and visited Jerusalem for the first time since his conversion. Acts 9:26-29, Gal.1:18-20
- e. He was sent to Tarsus to escape a Jewish plot on his life. Acts 9:30, Gal.1:21
- f. He was brought down to help out in Antioch by Barnabas. Acts 11:24-26
- g. He visited Jerusalem a second time, bringing a love offering for he needy there. Acts 11:30, Gal.2:1-10
- h. He returned to Antioch to preach and teach the word. Acts 12:25-13:3

C. Paul's ministry as a missionary.

1. Paul's first missionary journey.

- a. In Cyprus Acts 13:4-12
 - 1. The team consisted of Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark.
 - 2. Paul works his first recorded miracle - the blinding of Elymas.
 - 3. Paul is first called by his Gentiles name at this time.
 - 4. Paul wins the deputy of Paphos to Christ.
- b. In Pisidia Acts 13:13-50

1. He preaches his first message which deals with:
 - a. The Exodus
 - b. The Wilderness wanderings
 - c. The conquest of Canaan
 - d. The rule of Saul and David
 - e. The ministry of John the Baptist
 - f. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ
2. The response:
 - a. Many Gentiles and some Jews receive his message.
 - b. The Jewish leaders reject it and run him out of town.
 - c. He then states his intention to turn to the Gentiles.
- c. In Iconium Acts 13:51-14:5
 1. Many also believe the gospel here.
 2. But again the Jewish leaders stir up trouble.
- d. In Lystra Acts 14:6-25
 1. Paul heals a man crippled from birth.
 2. An attempt is made by the crowd to worship Paul and Barnabas as the Greek gods Jupiter and Mercury.
 3. Paul refuses their honor, is stoned and left for dead.
 4. Upon being supernaturally raised, Paul continues preaching in Lystra and surrounding cities.
- e. In Syria Acts 14:26-28
 1. The team returns to Antioch with history's first "foreign field report."
 2. The possible writing of Galatians, Paul's first New Testament book, from Antioch.

2. Paul's role in the Jerusalem council. Acts 15:1-35

- a. The problem: Should Gentile converts be forced to submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision?
- b. The sessions:
 1. First public session Acts 15:4-5,
 2. Private session consisting of the apostles and elders. Acts 15:6,
 3. Second public session. Acts 15:7-21,
 - a. Peter's report. Acts 15:7-11,
 - b. Paul and Barnabas' report. Acts 15:12,
 - c. James' report. Acts 15:13-21
- c. The decision: "Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them, who from among the Gentiles are turned to God; But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood." Acts 15:19-20
- d. The letters: Formal letters were drafted and sent to all local churches informing them of the Jerusalem Council decision. Acts 15:22-35

3. Paul's second missionary journey.

- a. Paul and Barnabas argue about John Mark. Acts 15:36-39
 1. Barnabas wants John Mark to accompany them on the second trip.
 2. Paul refuses; Barnabas and John Mark leave for Cyprus.
- b. Paul and Silas in Lystra Acts 16:1-5
 - b. Timothy joins the team.
 - c. He is circumcised by Paul.
- c. In Troas Acts 16:6-10
 1. Paul is forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in either Turkey or Bithynia.
 2. He receives his Macedonian vision.
 3. Luke now joins the team.
- d. In Philippi - Three thrilling salvation stories - a business woman, a demoniac girl, a prison-keeper. Acts 16:11-40
- e. In Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9
 1. Paul spend three weeks in the home of Jason.
 2. The gospel is once again opposed by some unbelieving Jews.
- f. In Berea Acts 17:10-14
 1. Here Paul finds a group of devout Bible lovers.
 2. He is again forced to flee because of Jewish troublemakers.
- g. In Athens Acts 17:15-34
 1. Paul goes to Athens alone
 2. Timothy and Silas are to join him later.
 3. He preached his famous sermon on Mars' Hill.
 - a. The title of his message: The unknown God
 - b. Point #1 - God is the Creator of all things. Acts 17:24-29
 - c. Point #2 - God is the Savior of all things. Acts 17:30
 - d. Point #3 - God is the Judge of all things. Acts 17:31
 - e. Threefold reaction: Some mocked, some delayed, some believed. Acts 17:32-34
- h. In Corinth Acts 18:1-18
 1. Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla, a Christian couple, also tentmakers.
 2. Silas and Timothy now rejoin him.
 3. He states for the second time his intention to go to the Gentiles.
 4. Crispus, chief ruler of the synagogue, is saved.
 5. Paul is encouraged by the Lord in a vision.
 6. Sosthenes, the new synagogue ruler, attempts to have Paul arrested, but is himself beaten.
 7. Paul remains here for eighteen months.
 8. He writes I and II Thessalonians from here.
- i. In Ephesus Acts 18:19-21
 1. He remains here but a short time.

2. He is accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, who remain at Ephesus.
- j. In Antioch - He returns to his home church. Acts 18:22

4. Paul's third missionary journey.

- a. At Ephesus
 1. The ministry of Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth. Acts 18:24-28
 2. The ministry of Paul in Ephesus. Acts 19:1-41 I Corinthians written.
- b. At Troas he raises Eutychus from the dead. Acts 20:6-12
- c. At Miletus
 1. He reviews the past
 - a. He had been with them two years. Acts 20:19,31
 - b. He taught publicly and from house to house. Acts 20:20,21
 - c. He had declared the whole counsel of God. Acts 20:27
 - d. He had coveted no man's silver. Acts 20:33
 - e. He had exemplified Christ. Acts 20:35
 - f. He was therefore pure from the blood of all men. Acts 20:26
 2. He views the present. Acts 20:20,28
 3. He previews the future. Acts 20:24,29-30
- d. At Tyre he is warned by the Holy Spirit not to go to Jerusalem. Acts 21:4
- e. At Caesarea
 1. He visits Philip and his four daughters. Acts 21:8-9
 2. He is warned by Agabus not to Jerusalem. Acts 21:10-11

D. Paul's imprisonments and death.

1. Paul's final visit to Jerusalem. Acts 21:17-23:30
2. Paul imprisoned in Caesarea. Acts 23:31-26:32
 - a. Before Felix. Acts 23:33-24:27
 - b. Before Festus. Acts 25:1-12
 - c. Before Agrippa. Acts 25:13-26:32
3. Paul's testimony in Rome. Acts 27:1-28:31
 - a. En route to Rome. Acts 27:1-28:13
 - b. Imprisoned in Rome. Acts 28:14-31 He writes Ephesians, Colossians, Philippeans, Philemon
4. Paul's release from prison. He writes I Timothy, Titus
5. Paul's second imprisonment. He writes II Timothy

E. Paul's ministry as a writer.

1. His letters are of two general types. It must be noted that not every epistle falls completely in one category or the other but rather lies along a continuum.
 - a. **Tractates** - letters that address more general and universal theological issues. (Romans)

- b. **Occasional** - letters that are addressed to specific issues in one place and time. (I Timothy) This is not to say that these letters do not have broad implications for the whole church but they must be understood as examples of pastoral instruction to rather specific issues.

2. His style

The first part of the epistle	The second part of the epistle
Identity	Responsibility
Wealth in Christ	Walk as Christians
Security	Significance
Justification	Sanctification
Indicative	Imperative

3. A list of his letters

- a. Journey epistles - written while on missionary trips

GALATIANS

I & II THESSALONIANS

I & II CORINTHIANS

ROMANS

- b. Prison epistles - written while in prison

PHILEMON

COLOSSIANS

EPHESIANS

PHILIPPIANS

- c. Pastoral epistles - written to individual disciples

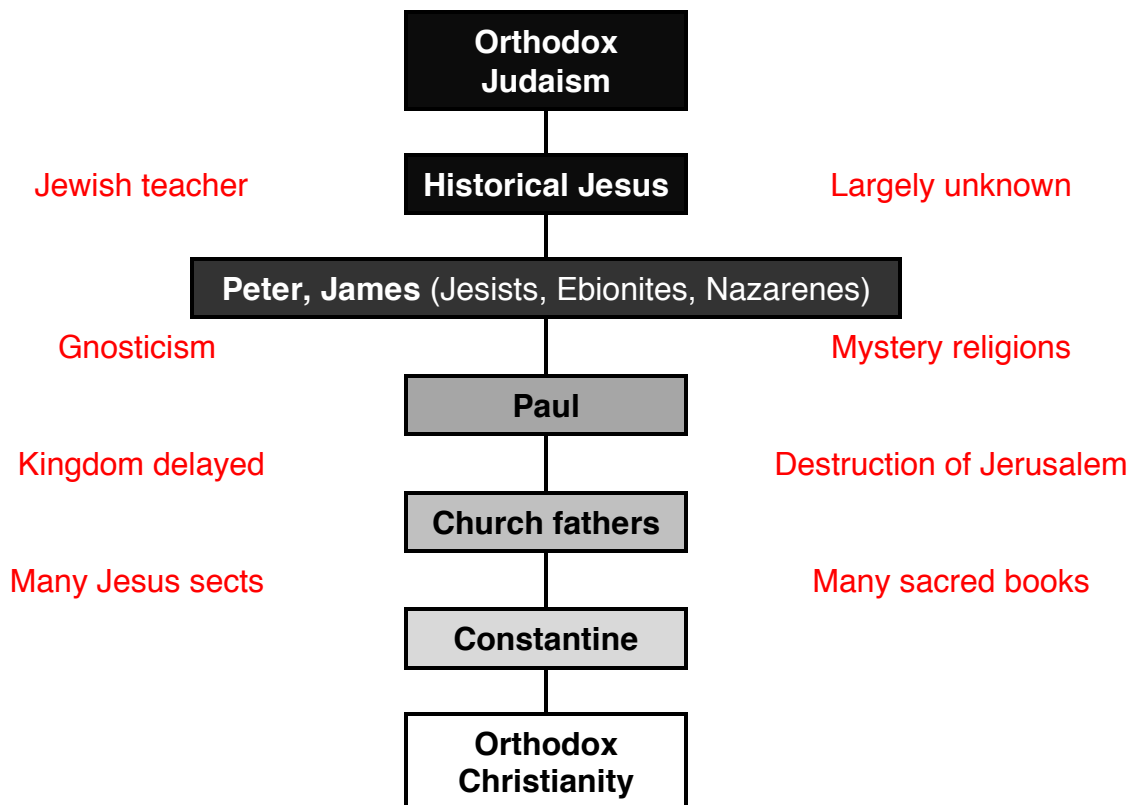
I & II TIMOTHY

TITUS

F. Paul and historical critical theories of the origin of Christianity.

1. It cannot be deigned that Paul is the architect of the Gospel story as we understand it today. It is not that he invented the Gospel but rather that he explains it for us. Without Paul's letters we would have a very different understanding of the Gospel.
2. Historical Critics have not failed to suspect that Paul's role (in inventing the Gospel) was far more significant than traditional Christianity has understood it to be. In short, it might be suggested from a critical perspective that there were three important people in the formation of Christianity as we know it.
 - a. **Jesus** – a mysterious Jewish prophet of whom we know very little. It is assumed that the Gospels are historically unreliable being the creative work of the early Christian community in its development of a justification for its existence in following the theology of Paul. The earliest followers of Jesus (Peter and James) represented a sect within Judaism known as Jesists, Ebionites, or Nazarenes.

- b. **Paul** – He was a frustrated Jewish teacher who, invented a new movement that was less legalistic (more accepting) and open to Gentiles. Christianity is not so much the religion of Jesus (the religion that he himself proclaimed) as the religion about Jesus (the religion that is based on his death and resurrection as invented by Paul.) The delayed coming of the end of the world and the destruction of the Temple (ce70) led to a modification of Paul’s theology shaped by the church fathers.
- c. **Constantine** – Historical critics tell us that Christianity, as such, was not firmly established as a religion until the time of Constantine the Great, who needed a national religion to solidify his empire. (Same as Jeroboam 1 Kings 12; 26-33) He, therefore, adopted the new religion then going into apostasy, and made it into a national sect. He not only caused its acceptance as the one and only religion of the empire, but he formulated its policies, and caused to be accepted its doctrines, and stigmatized as heretics those who would not accept the new religion, banishing them from his kingdom, or putting them to death.



3. While much of this theory is pure conjecture based on naturalistic assumptions, it is the way in which some, who reject the Biblical narrative, understand and tell the story of the origin of Christianity.
4. Paul’s Christian myth had roots in three traditions (two Greek and one Hebrew).
- Gnosticism** – a world of hellish darkness yearning for light from heaven. This is viewed as the source of Paul’s hostility toward sex.
 - Mystery religions** – sacrificial death of a savior at the hands of evil. The Mithras-cult was thought to provide the origin for the Eucharist.

- c. **Judaism** – a sense of moral law code and history, a Messiah, a community of the saved, and in some groups an apocalyptic resurrection of the dead.
5. The Damascus Road experience of Paul focused these three elements in his thinking, meeting his need for personal fulfillment, separating him from his Jewish roots, and endearing him more to Gentile culture.
6. The Gospels were written to give a “historical” foundation to Paul’s theology. Critics point out that there is evidence in the NT that Paul was at odds with the Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem (called Nazarenes and later in the 2nd century, Ebionites who rejected the deity of Jesus yet believed he was the Messiah).
7. Critics also emphasize the tension between Paul and Peter (along with James) suggesting that the Pauline Christian Church and the Jerusalem (Jewish) Christian Church (Nazarenes – later Ebionites) were quite distinct and at odds with each other.
8. It was believed that during the first 4 centuries of the Christian era, what came to be known as the orthodox Christian position, evolved through many redactions.
9. For a critical review of the Historical Critical method see **apptoteach.org** theology file #212.

G. The new perspective in the study of Paul’s theology

1. Recent studies of Paul (by E.P. Sanders, N.T. Wright, and others) challenge a number of traditional views associated with Paul’s teaching. The studies suggest that:
 - a. Justification by faith was not a new idea.
 - b. Faith did not replace works as a part of salvation.
 - c. Law does not stand in opposition to grace.
 - d. Paul’s focus was not on the individual but the community.
 - e. Judaism was not a religion of merit.
 - f. Judaism did resolve Paul’s burden of guilt.
2. This perspective draws heavily upon extra biblical material concerning the history of Palestinian Jewish thought at the time of Paul’s writing. E.P. Sanders’ work summarizes this perspective. Source: Cornelis P. Venema (www.wrfnet.org/articles/printarticle.asp ID=629)
 - a. The traditional Protestant view of (Palestinian) Judaism seriously distorts its true character. Judaism, at the time of the writing of the New Testament and of Paul’s letters, did not teach that a person is saved through works or human achievement. Rather, Judaism taught that God saved his people Israel on the basis of his gracious election and mercy.
 - b. The traditional Protestant claim that the teaching of Roman Catholicism was a new version of the old error of Pharisaism (which teaches salvation through works) is, therefore, incorrect.
 - c. Palestinian Judaism exhibited a pattern of religion that is best termed “covenantal nomism” (E. P. Sanders). In this pattern of religion, one becomes a member of God’s covenant community by grace, and one remains a member by works performed in obedience to the law. “Getting in” the covenant is by grace; “staying in” (and being vindicated at the last judgment) is by works.

- d. The apostle Paul's argument with Judaism (and therefore the Judaizers) was not aimed at its legalism. Nor was Paul's argument with Judaism based upon the assumption that the law can only condemn Jews and Gentiles alike as sinners. The starting point for Paul's quarrel with Judaism was that it was not Christianity. Since salvation comes to all (for Jews and Gentiles) who believe in the crucified Christ, the great problem of Judaism is its exclusivism, not its legalism. The problem with Judaism was not so much its insistence upon the necessity of obedience to the law, but its insistence that Gentiles must become (through obedience to the law) Jews in order to be saved.
 - e. The apostle Paul developed his doctrine of the human plight (of sin) from his doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ. Because faith in Christ is the only basis for salvation, obedience to the (Jewish) law may not be imposed upon anyone as the basis for inclusion among God's people.
 - f. Paul's doctrine of justification is not the principal focus or emphasis in his writings. Justification by grace through faith in Christ was Paul's explanation of how God is fulfilling his promise to embrace Gentiles as well as Jews among his people. God's righteousness, which is the basis for the believer's justification, is his gracious act of including Gentiles among the number of his people. Justification is about who belongs to God's covenant people, not how a sinner can find favor with God through the perfect obedience and substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.
 - g. Justification, though it has to do with our standing before God or being numbered among his covenant people, does not require that God graciously grant and impute the perfect righteousness of Christ to believers.
3. **N.T. Wright's position** from his book: *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision*
- a. Fundamental to Wright's view is his contention that the "righteousness of God" must be understood as God's faithfulness to his covenant promises.
 - b. Justification by faith is the way in which God unites Jew and Gentile into the one people of God through whom, in faithfulness to his covenant with Abraham, he will redeem the world. Thus it is faith in Christ not the "works of the law" (Jewish identity markers), that distinguish the people of God.
 - c. Justification must be comprehended within a larger picture of God's purposes for his people fulfilled in Christ for the renewal of Creation.
 - d. The justification of the individual is understood in terms of God's covenant with Abraham and his final redemption of all things as well as in terms of the court of law.
 - e. God justifies persons in the present because of their trust in Christ by declaring that they are pardoned and thus "righteous" before the court of divine justice, and are incorporated into his covenant people. He does this on the basis of the faithfulness of Jesus embodied in his obedient death on the cross.
 - f. This verdict in the present assures those so justified that God will pronounce a like-verdict upon them at the Judgment **on the basis of the life that they have lived**. How can this initial justification by faith alone become a justification based on "works" at the last Judgment? Those justified and joined to Jesus the Messiah as part of the people of God have died with him to sin and risen with him to new life. Thus they are empowered to walk according to the Spirit in newness of life and not according to the "flesh."
 - g. While this life in the Spirit is neither perfect in obedience nor meritorious, it is an

- essential characteristic of those who live by faith** and an appropriate basis for final vindication.
- h. God's covenant people are identified by faith in the promise of God fulfilled in Jesus and by the Spirit-empowered life. Their Spirit-directed life as the people of God is an anticipation of the coming renewal of all things. Their vindication at the resurrection will be an instrument and integral part of that renewal. All boasting is excluded because this life is lived in complete dependence on Christ and by the power of the Spirit.
4. In response to this "new" interpretation of Paul's writings the following points might be made. (for a more detailed critique see *The Future of Justification* by John Piper, Crossway Books)
- a. The new interpretation (NT) draws on extra Biblical documents (Qumran 4QMMT) that are automatically assumed to be more representative of the times than the New Testament writings.
 - b. The statements in 4QMMT are not so clear as to be obvious to those who do not share the new perspective of Paul.
 - c. The teaching of Jesus seems to clearly picture the Pharisees in a way that suggests self-righteousness based on both ethnic superiority (God's chosen sons of Abraham) and moral self-sufficiency (keepers of the Law).
 1. Jn.8:42,44
 2. Matt.23:5-7
 3. Jn.5:44
 4. Matt.23:25,27-28
 5. Lk.18:9 "He also told this parable to some who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and treated others with contempt."
 - d. The teaching of Paul seems to present the same picture.
 1. By his own testimony, Paul saw himself as a Pharisee who did not walk by grace but by confidence in his flesh. Phil.3:5 "
 2. Paul insisted that the righteousness that justifies is Christ's righteousness that is imputed to the believer by faith.
 - a. Rom.4:3-8
 - b. Rom.5:18-19
 - c. Phil.3:8-9
 - d. I Cor.1:30
 - e. II Cor.5:21
 3. I Tim.1:13
 4. Rom.3:27