

Saint Paul

Apostle to the Nations

A historical and hagiographic biography

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1 An Apostle Known in Relationship

Paul's sanctity cannot be built by making him less human than his letters. They preserve fatigue, fear, bodily weakness, anger, irony, tenderness, frustrated plans, dependence on co-workers, and the need to defend an apostolic calling others contested. They also preserve his confession that he persecuted the Church.

The result is not a solitary religious genius conquering the Mediterranean. It is an apostle called without merit, formed in communion, carried by households and collaborators, opposed by human and institutional power, and known above all through letters addressed to other people.

2 A Jewish apostle in the Roman world

Paul lived where Jewish diaspora, Greek language, Roman rule, and local civic identities met. His mission crossed provincial boundaries, but the empire was not a neutral road system built for evangelization. It supplied ports, associations, law courts, patronage, citizenship, taxation, prisons, soldiers, and the violence by which Paul would probably die. Synagogues, households, workshops, market networks, and assemblies offered the human routes through which the gospel actually moved.

2.1 Israelite, Benjaminite, Pharisee

Paul's most secure identity statements come from his own arguments. In Romans 11:1 he calls himself an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. In Philippians 3:5–6 he says he was circumcised on the eighth day, belonged to Israel and Benjamin, was a Hebrew born of Hebrews, and was a Pharisee in relation to the law. In Galatians 1:13–14 he remembers advancing in Judaism beyond many contemporaries and being extremely zealous for ancestral traditions. These claims are rhetorical—Paul is defending a point—but that setting makes the identity, not its abandonment, essential.

Acts calls him a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, raised or educated in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, and a Pharisee. Tarsus was a significant city, but being born there does not prove elite civic rank or attendance at its famous philosophical schools. Gamaliel's name locates Paul within respected Pharisaic teaching in Luke's portrait; Paul's letters do not name the teacher. His scriptural argument shows deep formation and regular use of Greek Scripture, while his letters show command of Greek epistolary and rhetorical practice. The precise institutions and languages of his education cannot be recovered.

Paul's Christ-centered rereading of Torah generated fierce first-century disputes, especially over circumcision and table fellowship for Gentiles. His argument unfolded among Jewish opponents and allies, drew upon Israel's Scriptures, and concerned God's fidelity and the admission of the nations through the Messiah.

2.2 Tarsus, citizenship, and work

Only Acts explicitly makes Paul a Roman citizen from birth. In its narrative the status prevents an unlawful flogging at Jerusalem, exposes the illegality of the Philippian magistrates' treatment, and underlies his appeal to Caesar. The claim is plausible but cannot be independently confirmed from the letters. Citizenship did not make Paul socially Roman in every respect, nor would it by itself guarantee a later sentence of beheading.

Acts 18:3 places Paul with Aquila and Priscilla because they shared a trade, using a term often rendered tentmaker or leatherworker. Paul's own letters repeatedly confirm manual labor: he worked night and day rather than burden communities and insists that his hands served his needs and those of his companions. The exact product is less certain than the pattern. Work gave him independence in some settings and placed mission inside workshop and household networks. Elsewhere he accepted support, notably from Philippi. His practice was not one universal financial rule but a pastoral negotiation of gift, obligation, credibility, and mutual care.

2.3 Social location and bodily presence

Paul could address civic elites, household heads, artisans, enslaved people, freedpersons, women patrons, and itinerant co-workers. That range does not prove that he possessed high social rank. He reports hunger, exposure, beatings, imprisonments, dangerous travel, and work. His capacity to write through secretaries, travel widely, and mobilize a multi-province collection shows substantial cultural competence and relational authority without turning him into either an impoverished isolate or a wealthy gentleman.

His physical appearance is unknown. Second Corinthians acknowledges criticism that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible, but this is an opponent's comparison, not a portrait. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* later describes a short, balding, bow-legged man with joined eyebrows and a large nose, alternately human and angelic in expression. The description is ancient reception, not an eyewitness likeness. No controlled art-historical corpus or earliest visual witness was inspected for this study, so later visual types are not dated or interpreted as historical evidence here.

2.4 Saul and Paul

The Hebrew or Aramaic Saul evokes Israel's first king, a Benjaminite; the Latin *Paulus* was at home in the Roman world. Acts uses both without narrating a divine name change. The apostle does not become Paul because Saul was too Jewish for a Gentile mission. He is already Paul in every surviving letter and remains an Israelite while bearing the name.

Claim: Paul was a deeply formed diaspora Jew and Pharisee whose mission operated in Greek within Roman structures.

Witness: Rom 11:1; 1 Cor 9; 2 Cor 11; Gal 1; Phil 3; 1 Thess 2; Acts 16, 18, 21–23.

Limit: Tarsian birth, Gamaliel, citizenship, and exact trade are explicitly Lukan; institutional education, wealth, languages, family, and appearance cannot be reconstructed in detail.

3 Persecutor, called apostle

Paul never allowed the Church to forget that he had persecuted it. Galatians says he persecuted the assembly of God violently and tried to destroy it. First Corinthians calls him least of the apostles and unfit for the name because he persecuted the Church; Philippians places zeal and persecution beside his former confidence in inherited standing. The admissions come from Paul, not from a later enemy. They make grace, rather than heroic preparation, the interpretive center of his vocation.

3.1 What Paul says happened

Paul does not narrate a road scene in his letters. He says that God, who had set him apart before birth and called him through grace, was pleased to reveal the Son to him so that he might proclaim him among the Gentiles (Gal 1:15–16). He asks the Corinthians whether he has not seen Jesus the Lord and places himself last in a received list of Resurrection appearances (1 Cor 9:1; 15:3–11). The event was revelation, appearance, call, and commission. Its reality grounded his apostleship; its graciousness exposed his former violence.

The language echoes prophetic calls, especially a servant set apart from the womb. Paul did not infer his mission from private spiritual achievement. Nor did he claim that independence from human authorization meant independence from the Church. The gospel and call came from Christ; Paul was baptized, visited Cephas, met James, received and transmitted traditions, sought fellowship with the pillars, and later organized a collection as a sign of communion.

3.2 Three accounts in Acts

Acts tells the encounter three times: as third-person narrative in chapter 9, as Paul's Temple-stair defense in chapter 22, and as his hearing before Agrippa in chapter 26. All place it near Damascus amid persecuting activity. A heavenly

light, a fall to the ground, the voice of Jesus, and a commission form the common center. The accounts vary in wording and narrative allocation. The companions hear a voice in one formulation and do not hear or understand it in another; they see light or no person; Ananias mediates healing and commission in chapters 9 and 22, while chapter 26 places the mission directly in Jesus' address.

These differences are not repaired by inventing a transcript. Luke retells one event for different audiences and theological purposes. Acts 9 emphasizes Paul's dependence on Ananias and the frightened Damascus community. Acts 22 locates his testimony within a Jewish defense and Ananias's devout observance of the law. Acts 26 condenses the commission for a royal hearing. None of the accounts mentions a horse. Later visual use of a horse was encountered only as an uncollated art-historical lead.

Acts also sets Paul near Stephen's death, approving it and guarding garments, then describes house-to-house arrests and authority sought from the high priest. Paul's letters independently secure persecution but do not name Stephen, Ananias, warrants, companions, blindness, or the Straight Street. Those are elements of Acts' canonical testimony, not autobiographical details that can be assigned the same source grade.

3.3 Baptism, Arabia, and first contacts

In Acts, Ananias lays hands on Saul; sight returns; Saul is baptized, eats, and immediately proclaims Jesus in Damascus. Galatians instead stresses that Paul did not immediately consult human beings or go to the earlier apostles. He went to Arabia and returned to Damascus; only after three years did he go to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, seeing also James. The accounts can coexist if Acts compresses a longer period, but Acts never mentions Arabia, and Galatians does not mention Ananias. The responsible biography preserves both.

"Arabia" probably refers to Nabataean territory, but neither purpose nor route is known. It may have involved mission, retreat, conflict, or several activities. Second Corinthians 11:32–33 says the ethnarch of King Aretas guarded Damascus and Paul escaped in a basket through a window. Acts also narrates the escape but assigns the plot to opponents among the local Jews. The difference warns against producing a single police report from two theologically shaped memories.

3.4 Conversion, call, and continuing identity

Paul experienced a reversal profound enough to describe previous gains as loss in comparison with knowing Christ. The persecutor became the persecuted; the one who tried to destroy assemblies became responsible for them. Yet the God who called him was the God of Israel, the gospel fulfilled promises made beforehand, and the nations were grafted into Israel's olive tree. Paul continued to call himself an Israelite, and Romans 9–11 joined the mission to the nations with grief and hope for his kin.

Grace remembered truthfully

Paul neither hides persecution nor makes violence the source of his authority. His apostolic self-understanding holds judgment and mercy together: what he did was real, what he received was unearned, and grace became labor for communities rather than a private exemption from accountability.

4 Mission and communities

Paul's mission is often drawn as arrows radiating from one heroic traveler. His letters show something more social. He entered cities through existing roads and relationships, worked and lodged with others, proclaimed Christ, formed assemblies in households, moved on before every problem was solved, and then governed at a distance through messengers, letters, return visits, delegates, and prayer. The communities were not trophies. They were agents whose gifts, conflicts, endurance, and material support carried the mission beyond Paul's presence.

4.1 Antioch, Barnabas, and an expanding field

Galatians places Paul in Syria and Cilicia after his first Jerusalem visit and later associates him closely with Barnabas. Acts supplies the fuller account: Barnabas brings Saul from Tarsus to Antioch; both teach there; the church sends them with relief for Judea and then, under the Spirit, commissions Barnabas and Saul with John Mark. They travel through Cyprus and southern Anatolia, proclaiming first in synagogues and then among Gentiles. On Cyprus Acts begins to call Saul by the name Paul. In Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe it narrates mixed response, signs, violent opposition, and the appointment of elders.

The journey belongs to Acts' first missionary circuit. Paul's letters do not recount it as a unit. Galatians does confirm mission in Galatia, a severe illness at the first proclamation, the Galatians' welcome, and a subsequent crisis over circumcision. Whether "Galatia" names the southern Roman provincial territory visited in Acts 13–14 or ethnic Galatia farther north remains debated and affects the letter's date.

Acts follows the mission with the Jerusalem deliberation over Gentile believers and then a sharp separation: Barnabas wants to take Mark; Paul refuses because Mark had withdrawn earlier; Barnabas sails to Cyprus with Mark, while Paul leaves with Silas. Galatians confirms tension at Antioch and Barnabas's involvement in Peter's withdrawal but does not narrate the later split. Neither source permits Barnabas to vanish into the role of a failed assistant. He had advocated for Paul, shared danger and mission, and continued a ministry Acts no longer follows.

4.2 Macedonia and Achaia

Acts' next circuit brings Silas, Timothy, and eventually the narrator's "we" to Macedonia. It names Lydia, a dealer in purple goods, as the first baptized household at Philippi; narrates imprisonment, hymns, earthquake, and the jailer's household; and then follows conflict in Thessalonica and Berea. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians supplies the earliest surviving inside view. The community turned from idols, endured pressure, worried about members who had died, and became bound to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy through labor, affection, and hope. Paul compares his care both to a nursing mother and to an exhorting father.

At Athens, Acts presents the Areopagus speech as a model of address to pagan hearers through altar, creation, poetry, judgment, and resurrection. Paul himself later recalls arriving at Corinth in weakness, fear, and trembling, determined to know Christ crucified. The emphases are different, not mutually exclusive. Athens is a crafted Lukan speech; Corinth is Paul's rhetorical memory within a community dispute.

Corinth became the best-documented Pauline church. Paul worked with Aquila and Priscilla according to Acts, stayed through Gallio's proconsulship, and later answered reports and questions about faction, sex, marriage, lawsuits, idol-food, worship, gifts, Resurrection, and the Jerusalem collection. Visits and letters multiplied. Second Corinthians remembers a painful visit, a severe or tearful letter, reconciliation through Titus, continuing rivalry, and uncertainty over the collection. The correspondence reveals pastoral authority exercised amid mutual hurt, not effortless control.

4.3 Ephesus and Asia

Acts places Paul in Ephesus for more than two years and makes the city a hub from which the word spread through the province of Asia. It reports teaching, healings, failed magical imitation, burning of books, and a theater riot arising from the silver trade associated with Artemis. First Corinthians, written from Ephesus, independently discloses a wide field: many adversaries, an "open door," daily danger, co-workers moving between cities, and a plan to remain until Pentecost. Paul says he fought with beasts at Ephesus, but whether this is literal arena exposure or metaphor for violent opponents is disputed.

Communities in the Lycus valley—Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis—belong to the Pauline mission's wider network even where Paul may not have founded or visited them. Colossians and Philemon name Epaphras and a household circle; the disputed authorship of Colossians means its biographical use must remain qualified. Paul was not the sole traveler. Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Phoebe, and many unnamed bearers carried teaching, money, letters, and news.

4.4 The collection for Jerusalem

The multi-province collection for poor believers in Jerusalem occupied years of Paul's work. Galatians remembers the pillars' request that he remember the poor. First Corinthians establishes a weekly saving practice; Second Corinthians negotiates readiness, generosity, equality, accountability, and a delegation; Romans asks prayer that the service be accepted. The gift was material relief and a sign that Gentile communities shared in Israel's spiritual blessings. It was also risky: money creates suspicion, and Paul's anxiety about reception shows that unity could not be announced into existence.

Acts narrates Paul's arrival with representatives from the mission and then his arrest, but it does not describe a ceremonial reception of the collection. Silence does not prove rejection. It leaves the outcome less visible than Paul's investment in it.

4.5 Travel, suffering, and signs

Second Corinthians gives the severest first-person inventory: imprisonments, beatings, lashings, stoning, shipwrecks, danger from rivers, robbers, cities, wilderness, sea, and false brothers, as well as hunger, cold, and daily pressure for the churches. Written before Acts' final shipwreck, it proves how selective any narrative itinerary must be. Paul turns the catalogue against boasting in strength. Apostolic credibility appears in endurance and weakness, not invulnerability.

Acts reports exorcisms, healings, extraordinary signs, rescue from prison, survival after stoning, and the raising of Eutychus. Paul refers more tersely to signs and wonders and to the power of the Spirit. This publication neither supplies naturalistic mechanisms nor transfers these reports to later relics. In both corpora, signs belong to proclamation and divine action, while Paul's body remains vulnerable.

Claim: Paul built and sustained a translocal mission through communities and co-workers from Syria to Achaia and Asia.

Witness: The seven undisputed letters, read beside Acts 11–21 and the Gallio anchor.

Limit: Acts' three circuits are a useful theological itinerary, not a complete travel diary; several locations, visits, letter dates, and reported miracles have source-specific limits.

5 Relationships, cooperation, and conflict

Paul wrote with an emphatic first-person voice, but seldom as a man without partners. Letters name co-senders, emissaries, hosts, patrons, household churches, laborers, prisoners, competitors, and people he had wounded or who had wounded him. His apostolic identity was tested in these relationships. Communion never meant an absence of conflict; conflict never proves that every relationship ended in schism.

5.1 Cephas, James, John, and Jerusalem

After the interval he calls three years, Paul went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed fifteen days; he also saw James, the Lord's brother. The visit joined a newly called apostle to the principal Easter witnesses without making Paul their delegate. At a later meeting James, Cephas, and John, recognized as pillars, perceived the grace given to Paul and Barnabas and extended the right hand of fellowship. Their differentiated missions toward the circumcised and Gentiles did not divide two gospels; Paul immediately says they shared concern for the poor.

Antioch exposed a serious failure in that fellowship. Paul says Cephas had eaten with Gentiles but withdrew when people came from James, fearing the circumcision group. Other Jewish believers, including Barnabas, joined the withdrawal. Paul opposed Cephas publicly because table separation contradicted the truth of the gospel. Galatians records no reply, reconciliation scene, or permanent rupture. First Corinthians later treats Cephas as a recognized apostle and rejects a Corinthian faction using either apostle's name. Roman memory eventually pairs their witness.

The dispute concerned the terms of Gentile incorporation in Christ and what shared meals embodied. Paul did not require Titus or Gentile believers generally to be circumcised. Acts says he did circumcise Timothy, whose mother

was Jewish, in a different pastoral setting. Whether every detail can be synchronized is less important than preserving the different questions.

Paul's relationship with Jerusalem remained costly. He defended his mission's independence, gathered aid, carried the collection, accepted a purification proposal in Acts, and repeatedly sought unity. He also faced suspicion from believers and lethal opposition. Neither romantic harmony nor an invention of two unrelated religions does justice to the sources.

5.2 Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and Titus

Barnabas appears in Acts as Paul's advocate, teacher, co-delegate, and first major mission partner; Galatians presents him as known to the churches and trusted in Jerusalem. His withdrawal at Antioch hurt precisely because the partnership mattered. The later disagreement over Mark was sharp enough to separate their routes. No source gives Paul the last word on Barnabas's subsequent fruitfulness.

Silvanus or Silas shares the address of both Thessalonian letters and travels with Paul in Acts. Timothy is co-sender of six undisputed or disputed letters, Paul's envoy to anxious communities, and one whose welfare mattered intensely. Titus, absent from Acts by name, is indispensable in Galatians and Second Corinthians: an uncircumcised Greek whose status tests Gentile freedom, a delegate in a damaged Corinthian relationship, and an organizer of the collection. The difference between Acts and the letters is a warning against equating narrative prominence with historical importance.

Mark is the object of the Acts dispute with Barnabas. Later canonical letters associated with Paul speak positively of Mark, but Colossians and Second Timothy have disputed authorship. Philemon, an undisputed letter, includes Mark among Paul's co-workers and securely prevents the disagreement from being turned into proof of lifelong enmity.

5.3 Women as patrons, apostles, and laborers

Paul's undisputed letters name women in the mission with concrete verbs and offices. Phoebe is a deacon of the church at Cenchreae and a benefactor or patron of many, including Paul; Romans commends her to its recipients and therefore makes her a plausible bearer and interpreter of the letter, though the delivery role is an inference. Prisca or Priscilla is named before Aquila in several greetings, hosts a house church, risks her life, and is called a co-worker. Junia is a fellow Jew and prisoner, described with Andronicus as prominent among the apostles or well known to them; the grammar and scope are debated, but the ancient female name should not be silently masculinized.

Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, and Julia appear in Romans 16. Euodia and Syntyche struggled beside Paul in the gospel and are urged to reconciliation. Chloe's people bring the report that triggers much of First Corinthians. Apphia shares the address of Philemon. The women who pray and prophesy in First Corinthians 11 are not hypothetical, even though Paul regulates their appearance. These witnesses make an all-male picture of Pauline mission historically untenable.

They also sharpen the hard texts. First Corinthians 14:34–35 tells women to be silent, creating tension with chapter 11; scholars dispute whether the verses address a particular speech, were displaced, or are a later interpolation. First Timothy 2 restricts women through an argument from creation, but the Pastorals' direct authorship is disputed. Historical honesty requires both the women whose labor Paul celebrates and the restrictive reception that Pauline texts have supported.

5.4 Households, enslaved persons, and patrons

Assemblies met in homes, making household resources and status unavoidable. Gaius hosts Paul and the whole church; Stephanas's household devotes itself to service; Prisca and Aquila host assemblies in more than one city; Philemon and Apphia belong to a household church. Patronage could protect a mission and also create expectations Paul resisted. His refusal of Corinthian support and acceptance of Philippian gifts show context-sensitive judgment, not disdain for every benefactor.

Enslaved and free persons shared these assemblies inside a slave society. Philemon concerns Onesimus, whom Paul calls his child and beloved brother. Paul sends him and asks Philemon to receive him as he would Paul, offering to

absorb any debt. The letter destabilizes possession by invoking brotherhood, but it does not demand abolition of slavery as an institution, record Onesimus's manumission, or permit modern readers to ignore the coercive structure. Later household codes in Colossians and Ephesians address masters and slaves within that structure; their authorship and reception require separate study.

5.5 Rivals and wounded communities

Paul argues against teachers pressing circumcision on Gentiles in Galatia, against factional leaders at Corinth, and against "super-apostles" whom he believes preach another Jesus. We usually hear the opponents through Paul's polemic, so the concrete demands and actions he describes are more recoverable than stable identities or a complete account of their positions.

Paul's language can be fierce. Galatians uses bodily sarcasm; Second Corinthians attacks rivals' motives; Philippians calls some workers dogs. Ancient controversy explains rhetoric but does not make every tactic an imitable pastoral norm. The same letters show Paul apologizing for causing pain, fearing he has labored in vain, begging reconciliation, and refusing to lord authority over faith. His holiness lies neither in perpetual agreeableness nor in sanctifying every angry sentence, but in a ministry continually summoned back to the cross he proclaimed.

6 Gospel, teaching, and apostolic office

Paul did not write a systematic theology detached from pastoral life. His arguments arise from baptized Gentiles learning to share one table, grieving their dead, disputing honor, navigating marriage and celibacy, suing one another, eating idol-food, testing prophecy, collecting money, and facing suffering. The resulting theology is coherent around Christ but not reducible to one slogan.

6.1 The crucified and risen Messiah

The gospel Paul says he received and handed on announces that Christ died for sins, was buried, was raised, and appeared to witnesses (1 Cor 15:1–11). The cross exposes both human boasting and the wisdom of God; the Resurrection is not an optional symbol but the ground of proclamation, future hope, and the transformation of embodied life. Baptism joins believers to Christ's death and new life; the Eucharistic cup and bread communicate his blood and body and therefore judge a community that humiliates poor members at the meal.

Paul's favored phrases—"in Christ," "with Christ," Christ living in the believer, and the Spirit dwelling within—describe salvation as participation and new creation, not only acquittal from a distance. Reconciliation is God's initiative through Christ and creates an entrusted ministry of reconciliation. The apostle's own weakness becomes a theater in which power is recognized as Christ's rather than possessed as Paul's.

6.2 Grace, faith, works, and law

Galatians and Romans insist that Gentiles are justified through faith in Jesus Christ, not by "works of law." The precise scope of works of law remains debated. Paul directly opposes making circumcision and Torah observance the boundary Gentiles must cross to belong to Abraham's family. He also says the law is holy, spiritual, and fulfilled in love; depicts Gentiles as grafted into Israel's cultivated olive tree; and expects judgment according to works.

Grace, covenant, election, obedience, and mercy all arise within Israel's Scriptures. Paul's "faith apart from works" stands alongside his demand for a faith working through love, a Spirit-formed life, care for the poor, and patient endurance. Catholic teaching receives justification as entirely initiated by grace and as a real transformation that bears fruit, not a human achievement or an idle label.

Romans 9–11 is essential. Paul anguishes over his kindred, refuses the claim that God's word has failed, rejects Gentile boasting over broken branches, and calls Israel beloved because God's gifts and call are irrevocable. The meaning of "all Israel will be saved" is debated. God's fidelity, mercy, and the continuing vocation of Israel remain at the center of Paul's argument.

6.3 One body with many gifts

Paul addresses local assemblies as God's church and as the body of Christ. Membership is received in one Spirit through baptism; distinctions of gift remain, but honor cannot be allocated according to social prestige. Apostles, prophets, and teachers serve the body; gifts without love become noise. First Corinthians 13 is therefore not a decorative interlude. It judges charismatic competition and defines patient, non-possessive love as the more excellent way.

Paul's letters show emerging offices without a single late institutional chart. Philippians addresses overseers and ministers or deacons; Romans names Phoebe a deacon; First Corinthians emphasizes charisms and household service; Paul appoints and sends delegates. The Pastorals give a more developed ordering of overseers, presbyters, deacons, and widows, but their authorship and later setting are disputed. Catholic reception rightly hears apostolic ministry and succession in the whole canon; biography must still date the forms responsibly.

6.4 Authority in the form of the cross

Paul claims genuine authority: he has seen the Lord, was called as apostle, founded communities, hands on traditions, commands in some matters, and threatens discipline. He also distinguishes a command of the Lord from his own judgment, appeals rather than commands Philemon, seeks communal discernment of prophecy, and says that leaders work with believers rather than dominate their faith. He refuses a boast that hides weakness.

This tension should not be romanticized. Paul can be controlling, and a letter arrives without preserving every recipient's voice. Yet his stated norm is the crucified Christ who did not please himself. Apostolic office is exercised for building up, tested by the gospel it announces, and made accountable to other apostles, co-workers, and communities.

6.5 The Lord's coming and ordinary fidelity

First Thessalonians expects Christ's coming with vivid nearness and reassures believers that those who have died will not be excluded. First Corinthians holds imminent transformation together with resurrection of the dead. Romans can say salvation is nearer and also plan a western mission. Paul did not give a date. Second Thessalonians restrains claims that the day has already arrived, but direct Pauline authorship of that letter is debated.

Expectation produces neither panic nor withdrawal in the undisputed letters. Paul commands work, care, sexual integrity, generosity, hospitality, prayer, non-retaliation, submission of life to God, and discernment. Romans 13's call to subordinate oneself to governing authorities belongs beside Romans 12's rejection of vengeance and Romans 13's claim that love fulfills the law. The later political uses of this passage require a separate reception-history audit and are not treated as established findings here.

6.6 Bodies, marriage, and sexuality

Paul regards the body as for the Lord, a member of Christ, and destined for resurrection. First Corinthians 7 values both marriage and celibacy, requires mutual conjugal authority, permits separation in some mixed marriages, and speaks under eschatological pressure. Paul says he is unmarried at the time; the text does not reveal whether he had never married or was widowed.

Romans 1 and First Corinthians 6 contain condemnations of same-sex acts within ancient arguments about idolatry, passion, exploitation, holiness, and the kingdom. The exact reach of Greek sexual terms and their relationship to modern categories of orientation and identity are debated. Historical context may not simply erase the canonical moral text; neither may the text be lifted from Paul's universal indictment of sin, proclamation of mercy, and demand that Christians renounce judgmental superiority. A history of Catholic moral reception and modern disagreement requires sources not collated for this biography and is not claimed here.

Interpretive boundary. Paul belongs to the Church's canonical teaching, not only to historical reconstruction. Yet no isolated Pauline sentence is a complete Catholic doctrine. Read the undisputed letter in its argument, the letter within the canon, and the canon within the Church's received teaching; keep later applications visibly later.

7 Letters, authorship, and the Pauline voice

Thirteen New Testament letters bear Paul’s name; Hebrews circulated in close association with the Pauline corpus and was long attributed to him in parts of the Church. Canonical reception and modern literary judgment answer different questions. The Catholic Church receives all these books as inspired Scripture. A historical life must still ask which can function as Paul’s own first-person evidence.

7.1 The seven-letter autobiographical core

Broad critical agreement treats seven letters as directly Pauline. Dates and places below are responsible ranges, not colophons preserved in the earliest text.

Letter	Probable setting	Biographical contribution and limit
1 Thessalonians	c. 49–51, probably Corinth	Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy; recent mission, manual labor, persecution, affection, Timothy’s return, hope for deceased believers. Pastoral reassurance, not an itinerary.
Galatians	c. 48–55; destination and sequence disputed	Persecution, revelation, Arabia, Damascus, visits to Cephas and pillars, Titus, Barnabas, Antioch conflict, Galatian illness. Polemical self-defense shapes selection.
1 Corinthians	c. 53–55, Ephesus	Work and apostolic rights, Cephas and Apollos, Chloe’s report, Stephanas, moral and liturgical crises, spiritual gifts, Resurrection, collection, travel plans. Community questions are only partly recoverable.
2 Corinthians	c. 55–56, Macedonia; unity debated	Suffering, weakness, visions, thorn, escape from Damascus, painful relations, Titus, rivals, collection. Some scholars propose several letters combined; final-form sequence remains the published witness.
Philippians	c. 54–62; Ephesus, Caesarea, or Rome proposed	Imprisonment, possible death, gift partnership, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodia and Syntyche, Jewish identity, Christ-centered self-understanding. Prison location and possible compositional layers disputed.
Philemon	c. 54–62; prison location disputed	Paul, Timothy, Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, Onesimus, Mark and other co-workers; appeal within a slave household. Outcome is not narrated.
Romans	c. 56–58, probably Corinth/Cenchreae context	Mature mission retrospect, east-to-west horizon, Jerusalem collection, plans for Rome and Spain, Phoebe, Prisca, Aquila, Junia, and a large network. A plan is not proof of completed travel.

“Directly Pauline” does not mean solitary composition. Sosthenes, Timothy, and Silvanus appear as co-senders. Romans 16:22 names Tertius as the person who wrote the letter, showing dictation or secretarial production; Galatians draws attention to Paul’s own large-letter handwriting near the close. Letters were performed aloud and carried by trusted people. Their “voice” is Paul’s within a collaborative ancient practice.

Questions of integrity remain. Some scholars read Second Corinthians as a collection of originally separate letters and Philippians as composite. First Corinthians mentions an earlier letter, and Second Corinthians refers to a tearful communication not securely identifiable with the canonical text. The lost correspondence cannot be reconstructed verbatim. This biography uses the canonical final forms while noting where a chronology depends on hypothetical partition.

7.2 Disputed Pauline letters

Second Thessalonians is defended as an early clarification by Paul and questioned because of its relation to First Thessalonians, eschatological sequence, and style. Colossians is defended as Paul writing with secretarial or associate contribution and questioned because of vocabulary, style, and developed cosmic and ecclesial formulations. Ephesians appears closely related to Colossians, speaks in a more general voice, and lacks “in Ephesus” in important early witnesses; many scholars place it in a Pauline school, while others defend direct or mediated authorship.

First and Second Timothy and Titus present Paul in later travels, regulate offices, and combat teaching in language unlike the seven-letter core. Many critical scholars judge them post-Pauline works from a later generation; others argue for release after Acts, new settings, and substantial secretarial freedom. Because the issue remains disputed, this biography does not use the Pastorals to prove a Spanish mission, a second Roman imprisonment, or a detailed post-Acts itinerary. Their canonical witness to Pauline ministry and martyr readiness remains part of ecclesial reception.

Pseudonymity, if it explains any letter, should not be reduced without argument to modern forgery, nor excused by asserting an ancient convention that settles every ethical question. It names a historical hypothesis about how authorized Pauline teaching continued. Canonical authority does not depend on proving modern stenographic authorship; historical attribution still matters for biography.

7.3 Hebrews

Hebrews does not name Paul as sender and differs markedly in style, argument, and self-presentation. Its closing greetings created associations with the Pauline circle, and ancient churches differed over authorship. That ancient authorship dossier, including Eusebius’s report of Origen, was not directly collated for this revision and carries no exact claim here. The checked modern Catholic introduction does not use Hebrews as a directly authored Pauline letter. It is inspired, canonical, and deeply important; it is not an autobiographical source for Paul’s travels or ideas unless an argument is independently established.

7.4 Acts and the letters

Acts knows themes compatible with the letters: persecutor turned witness, Damascus, Jerusalem relationships, Gentile mission, manual work, suffering, collection journey, and Rome. It also differs. Acts never mentions Paul writing letters, greatly reduces some conflicts, gives him repeated synagogue speeches and legal defenses in Lukan form, and narrates citizenship, Gamaliel, three call accounts, many miracles, and the final voyage. Paul’s letters say little about the episodes Acts most vividly narrates.

Neither corpus should be used merely to patch the other. Where they converge, the convergence matters. Where one alone speaks, its genre is named. Where sequences resist synchronization, uncertainty remains. This protects Acts from being treated as a defective modern biography and the letters from being flattened into footnotes to Luke.

7.5 A corpus larger than one life

Under the conventional late-first- and early-second-century sequence, whose precise witness dates were not independently audited here, Pauline letters circulated as a recognizable corpus. Second Peter refers to Paul’s letters and their difficult passages; First Clement echoes or knows Pauline teaching in writing to Corinth; Ignatius writes within a world shaped by Pauline communities. The corpus allowed Paul’s voice to outlive his journeys, but it also generated new interpretations, arguments, and attributions. The historian must ask which Pauline Paul is in view; the Church hears the whole canonical collection while not requiring every book to answer the same historical question.

Authorship rule. Seven undisputed letters carry the direct autobiographical load. Acts supplies independent canonical narrative. The disputed letters establish canonical Pauline reception and may preserve historical information, but disputed first-person settings do not become biographical facts merely because a reconstruction needs them.

8 Final years, martyrdom, and burial

Paul's last well-documented plan and Acts' last scene do not meet in a surviving execution narrative. Romans looks forward: he has completed a phase of work from Jerusalem around to Illyricum, intends to carry the nations' collection to Jerusalem, hopes to visit Rome, and wants Roman support for Spain. Acts looks back over the collection journey and forward from an unresolved Roman custody. Early Christian witnesses then remember martyrdom. The gaps between those horizons are where later lives have most readily become overprecise.

8.1 Jerusalem and arrest

Romans asks the recipients to pray that Paul will be rescued from unbelievers in Judea and that his service will be acceptable to the saints. Acts narrates his determination to go despite prophetic warnings. At Jerusalem, James and the elders receive him and propose that he join men completing a vow to answer reports that he teaches diaspora Jews to abandon Moses. Paul accepts. Jews from Asia then accuse him of teaching against the people, law, and Temple and of bringing Greeks into the sacred precinct. Acts says they had seen Trophimus with him in the city and assumed Paul had brought him inside. A Roman tribune intervenes as the crowd attacks.

The Acts sequence is theologically dense. Paul addresses the crowd in Hebrew or Aramaic, recounts his call, claims Roman citizenship when flogging is prepared, appears before the Sanhedrin, and receives a promise that he will witness in Rome. A plot leads to transfer under guard to Caesarea. Hearings before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa display Christianity as connected to Israel's hope and not a simple civic insurrection. Paul appeals to Caesar; Festus sends him to Rome.

The letters do not independently narrate these proceedings. Acts' named officials and local details give the story historical texture, while the speeches remain Lukan compositions. Paul's appeal depends on the citizenship Acts attributes to him. It cannot be used to construct the wording of a lost trial record.

8.2 Voyage and the open ending of Acts

Acts 27–28 gives an unusually detailed sea voyage: changing ships, delayed sailing, storm, shipwreck on Malta, winter, and the journey through Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli. Roman believers meet Paul at the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns. Under guarded lodging he explains himself to local Jewish leaders, insists that he is chained for Israel's hope, and proclaims for two years to all who come. The final sentence emphasizes unhindered proclamation, not the prisoner's legal fate.

That ending has been read as evidence that Luke wrote before a verdict, as a deliberate theological conclusion, or as a sign that Paul was released. The text alone does not decide among them. It records neither acquittal nor execution. The traditional language of a "first Roman imprisonment" already assumes a second and should be used only within the hypothesis that Paul was released and rearrested.

8.3 Release, Spain, and a second arrest

Paul intended to go to Spain after Rome (Rom 15:24, 28). Intention is secure; completion is not. First Clement says that Paul reached the "limit of the West" before bearing final witness. From a Roman author's perspective the phrase may point to Spain, but it can also function rhetorically or describe Rome as the western goal of the mission. It is valuable early evidence, not a passport stamp.

Eusebius reports that after defending himself Paul was sent again to the ministry of preaching and then returned for martyrdom. The Pastorals imply travels to Crete, Ephesus, Macedonia, Miletus, Troas, and Nicopolis not easily fitted before Acts' end and present Second Timothy as a final Roman testament. Defenders of direct authorship use them to reconstruct release and a second arrest; critics place the letters in post-Pauline reception. No combination reaches certainty.

This publication leaves both responsible possibilities open. Paul may have been released, perhaps traveled west or east, and later returned to Roman custody. He may instead have died after the custody with which Acts ends. Spain is a meaningful intended horizon and an ancient received claim, not an established chapter of the life.

8.4 The early Roman martyr memory

First Clement is treated here as the earliest located external witness to Paul's completed course, although its precise date was not independently audited in this generation. It remembers chains, exile, stoning, preaching in east and west, witness before rulers, and his departure from the world after reaching the boundary of the West. The chapter pairs him with Peter as an example from the preceding generation. It does not name Nero, describe a trial, say "beheaded," or give a calendar date.

Ignatius tells Roman Christians that he does not command them as Peter and Paul did; this study did not independently audit the letter's precise date or recensional history. Dionysius of Corinth links both apostles' teaching in Italy and martyrdom at about the same time; Irenaeus associates them with the foundation and ordering of the Roman church. Gaius points to apostolic memorials at the Vatican and on the Ostian Way. Tertullian explicitly associates Paul's Roman death with beheading. Origen, as preserved by Eusebius, says Paul suffered martyrdom at Rome under Nero but does not specify the manner in the checked passage.

This convergence makes Roman martyrdom under Nero probable, commonly in the range 64–68. Tacitus supplies the hostile context of Nero's punishment of Christians after the fire of 64 but does not name Paul. The later year 67, a same-day execution with Peter, a named judge, last words, and a detailed road to the scaffold are not secured by the earliest witnesses. Beheading is early received tradition and plausible. No Roman-law authority inspected for this study links the citizenship attributed by Acts to that manner of death, and no sentence survives.

8.5 The Ostian memorial and sarcophagus

Gaius's report of a Pauline *tropaion* on the Ostian Way is the earliest located textual pointer to the place later monumentalized by the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. The term can mean memorial or trophy and does not by itself prove intact remains. A fourth-century basilica was built over the remembered grave and soon enlarged; despite rebuilding after the 1823 fire, the sanctuary retained its relation to the ancient memorial. A marble sarcophagus bearing a Pauline dedicatory inscription lies beneath the papal altar and is officially venerated as the apostle's tomb.

During modern investigation a small probe entered the sarcophagus. Benedict XVI announced on 28 June 2009 that minute bone fragments, tested by experts who did not know their provenance, produced a radiocarbon range consistent with a person who lived in the first or second century. The probe also found textile and incense traces. That public announcement is an official account of a scientific result; this study did not locate a complete peer-reviewed laboratory report, calibration data, individual profile, or independent chain of custody sufficient to identify Paul.

The finding is therefore consistent with the ancient tradition and does not authenticate a named person. The date range is wider than Paul's lifetime; there is no genetic comparator; the contents' depositional history is not an unbroken modern forensic record. Official veneration, an ancient fixed cult site, and personal scientific identification remain three different claims.

8.6 Execution-site and later relic claims

Tre Fontane, the Mamertine Prison, and dispersed relic claims were encountered as research leads, but no exact witness for them was inspected in this generation. Their local narratives and provenance therefore remain uncollated and are not published here as established devotional history or as parts of a reconstructed execution route. The Ostian memorial concerns the received burial site; it does not authenticate a separate place of custody, execution, or relic merely by association.

Claim: Paul probably died as a martyr at Rome under Nero and was remembered on the Ostian Way in Gaius's ancient report.

Witness: 1 Clem. 5; Ignatius, *Rom.* 4; Dionysius, Gaius, and Origen in Eusebius; Irenaeus; Tertullian; the Ostian memorial and basilica.

Limit: Acts ends before a verdict. Release, Spain, second arrest, exact year, beheading scene, execution site, particular remains, and same-day death with Peter carry different grades.

9 Cult, liturgy, and reception limits

Paul was remembered before a complete martyrdom narrative existed. First Clement presents his endurance to Corinth; Ignatius assumes his authority at Rome; a collection of letters preserves his voice; Gaius points to an Ostian memorial; and the basilica eventually makes that memory monumental. Text, shrine, calendar, and later visual or patronal reception establish different claims and require different controls.

9.1 The early Roman calendar and current liturgy

The *Depositio martyrum* transmitted with the Chronography of 354 records on *III kalendas Iulias*—29 June—“Peter in the Catacombs and Paul on the Ostian Way,” adding the consulate of Tuscus and Bassus, 258. This is direct evidence that fourth-century Roman calendar memory paired the apostles on that date and distinguished their cult locations. It does not say that they died together on 29 June, and its compact wording cannot by itself decide whether Peter’s Catacombs notice records a temporary relic translation or a commemoration without bodily transfer.

The USCCB’s *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America 2026* lists 29 June as the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles. This establishes the current joint observance in the United States. It does not establish that both apostles died on the same day or in the same year.

The joined title is a present liturgical fact, not a first-century chronological record. The ancient and current controls establish two dated stages of reception without filling the centuries between them.

9.2 Other observances left as leads

The Conversion of Saint Paul on 25 January, a November basilica dedication, the 2008–2009 Pauline Year, pallium customs, and ecumenical practices were encountered as research leads. No exact official calendar or program texts controlling their scope, history, and current status were collated for this generation. They are therefore not presented here as established liturgical or historical findings. The title of Benedict XVI’s inspected 28 June 2009 homily locates that address at the close of the Pauline Year, but this study used the homily only for its report about the sarcophagus investigation.

9.3 A textual portrait and visual questions

The inspected opening of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* gives Paul an ancient literary appearance: short, balding, bow-legged, with joined eyebrows and a large nose, his expression alternately human and angelic. This is later reception, not an eyewitness likeness.

Books, scrolls, swords, chains, baskets, ships, vipers, horses, and paired apostolic portraits are familiar research leads for Pauline art. No controlled art-historical corpus or earliest visual witness was inspected here, however. The study therefore neither dates those conventions nor assigns them a fixed symbolic meaning. It establishes only the narrower canonical point that none of Acts’ three call accounts places Paul on a horse.

9.4 Patronage claims deferred

Claims that Paul is patron of particular professions, movements, cities, or nations require exact official, institutional, or local controls. None were inspected for this generation. This publication therefore does not issue a patronage catalogue or infer a place’s current identity from Paul’s ancient route. His mission among the nations, teaching, writing, travel, and collaboration remain secure biographical themes without being converted into unaudited patronage titles.

9.5 A sacred geography with graded claims

Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Miletus, Caesarea, Malta, Puteoli, and Rome belong to Acts' narrative; many are independently illuminated by letters. A city's place in those sources does not authenticate every later church, cave, road, well, prison, pulpit, house, or marked stone.

At Rome the inspected evidence supports an Ostian memorial in Gaius's report and the present basilica's official identification of the shrine beneath its altar. The Mamertine Prison, Tre Fontane, Lateran relic claims, and other local routes were not tied to an inspected witness in this generation. They remain uncollated leads and are not joined into a published last-day itinerary.

What the audited cult evidence establishes

The audited sources establish an ancient Ostian memorial, an officially identified present shrine, and a current U.S. solemnity shared with Peter. They do not independently date Paul's call or death, authenticate a particular execution site or relic, establish a patronage title, or turn a later visual motif into a first-century object.

10 Tradition under review

Paul's life invites memorable completion. This study encountered later claims about a horse, completed trials, an achieved Spanish mission, springs, last words, and a precise death day. It publishes a tradition as reception history only when an exact witness was inspected; the rest remain explicitly uncollated leads.

10.1 Jesus changed Saul's name to Paul

Acts uses Saul through the early mission and then says "Saul, also known as Paul" before consistently preferring Paul. None of its Damascus accounts includes a renaming, and Paul's letters never narrate one. The two-name pattern fits a diaspora Jew in Semitic- and Roman-speaking settings.

10.2 Paul fell from a horse

Acts says Paul fell to the ground when the heavenly light surrounded him. No horse, donkey, or other mount appears. A horse was encountered as a later visual lead, but no controlled art-historical corpus was inspected here. The historical finding is therefore limited to its absence from all three Acts accounts.

10.3 A modern "religious conversion"

"Conversion" properly names the reversal from persecutor to apostle, even though the calendar history of the observance was not audited here. Paul calls the event a revelation and call, continues to call himself Israelite, and presents the gospel as fulfillment of Israel's promises. His conduct, Christological vision, and vocation were radically reordered within that continuing scriptural and covenantal identity.

10.4 Three missionary journeys contain all his travel

The three journeys organize Acts 13–21 and remain excellent orientation. They do not count Paul's Arabia, Syria, and Cilicia years from Galatians, every Jerusalem journey, or all the dangers and shipwrecks listed in Second Corinthians. Nor does Paul name the circuits. A map should be labeled "according to Acts," not presented as Paul's own three-part mission plan.

10.5 Gamaliel made Paul a rabbi or Sanhedrin member

Acts 22:3 says Paul was educated at Gamaliel's feet and Acts 26 depicts authority connected with chief priests; Paul's letters call him a Pharisee. No source gives him the later formal title and office of an ordained rabbi, names him a voting member of the Sanhedrin, or proves his age through the Acts description "young man" at Stephen's death. His real Jewish learning needs no invented diploma.

10.6 Paul was married, widowed, or abandoned

First Corinthians 7:7–8 places Paul among the unmarried at the time of writing and describes celibacy as a gift. It neither says he had never married nor calls him a widower. Arguments from presumed Pharisaic norms or eligibility for a council cannot recover a wife. Later imaginative spouses and domestic stories remain unsupported.

10.7 The thorn in the flesh has been diagnosed

Second Corinthians 12 names a thorn or stake in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, given to prevent exaltation; Paul says he prayed three times for its removal and received the sufficiency of grace. Proposals include eye disease, malaria, epilepsy, chronic pain, speech difficulty, depression, sexual temptation, opponents, and persecution. The text identifies none. A modern diagnosis can become stigmatizing and should not be presented as recovered medical history.

10.8 Paul wrote fourteen New Testament letters

Thirteen letters bear Paul's name. Broad critical agreement directly assigns seven to him; six have varying degrees of dispute. Hebrews is anonymous, though ancient and later Christians sometimes placed it under Paul's name. Catholic canonical authority does not depend upon calling Hebrews his fourteenth letter. "Fourteen" remains reception history, not a secure author count.

10.9 Thecla traveled with Paul

The ancient *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, whose precise date was not independently controlled here, tells of a woman who hears Paul's preaching, rejects an arranged marriage, survives executions, baptizes herself in a perilous arena scene, and receives a commission. The work preserves powerful early Christian debates about chastity, women's agency, teaching, and apostolic authority. It is not near-contemporary evidence for a historical companion named Thecla, and its physical portrait of Paul is not an eyewitness sketch. The later cult and visual reception were not collated here.

10.10 Paul corresponded with Seneca

A collection of short letters between Paul and the philosopher Seneca circulated in late antiquity and was known to Jerome, who mentions it in *De viris illustribus* 12. This research did not collate the letters or a modern critical edition, so the exchange is retained only as a later attribution. It shows a Christian desire to place Paul in direct conversation with Roman philosophy and court culture; it cannot establish a Neronian friendship or exchange of manuscripts.

10.11 Paul reached Spain

Romans gives a clear intention. First Clement's "limit of the West" and later tradition make completion possible and anciently received. The phrase is ambiguous and no letter from Spain, local first-generation witness, or secure itinerary survives. Spain belongs between possible history and early reception, not among the fixed mission stations.

10.12 Paul was released and imprisoned twice at Rome

Acts ends after two years without a verdict. Eusebius reports release and renewed preaching; the Pastorals provide a possible later eastern itinerary and Second Timothy a final imprisonment. If the Pastorals are post-Pauline, that reconstruction loses its principal first-person support. Release and a second arrest remain coherent hypotheses, not facts required by Acts.

10.13 Citizenship guaranteed death by beheading

Acts gives Paul Roman citizenship, while Tertullian supplies the inspected explicit beheading witness. No Roman-law authority or sentence was inspected that connects those two claims. Citizenship therefore cannot function here as independent proof of the manner of death.

10.14 Tre Fontane fixes the execution scene

Tre Fontane and its associated springs story were encountered only as research leads. No exact witness, date, or provenance was inspected for this generation, so the publication does not narrate the episode or use it to identify the execution site. The better-attested Ostian memorial concerns received burial memory and cannot fill that separate gap.

10.15 Peter and Paul died together on 29 June 67

Dionysius of Corinth says they suffered at about the same time. The fourth-century *Depositio martyrum* already pairs their cult on 29 June, placing Peter at the Catacombs and Paul on the Ostian Way under the consular year 258; the USCCB 2026 calendar establishes the current U.S. solemnity. The ancient entry is a cult calendar, not an execution docket or proof of a relic transfer. None of these witnesses provides one execution scene or the year 67.

10.16 The Ostian bones have been scientifically proved to be Paul's

The sarcophagus occupies an ancient and officially venerated Pauline memorial. The 2009 papal announcement reports bone fragments radiocarbon-dated to the first or second century. That is consistency, not unique identity: the range includes many people, no genetic comparator exists, and a full scientific publication was not located in this research. “Traditionally identified” and “forensically proved” must not be exchanged.

Devotional integrity. A historical limit does not decide every devotional or cultural question. It does require this study to separate the canonical absence of a horse, Paul's Spanish intention, the inspected Thecla narrative, the Tertullian beheading witness, and uncollated local leads rather than merging them into one continuous life.

11 Contested legacy and final synthesis

Paul's letters raise questions about women and authority, hierarchy, empire, embodied life, and resurrection. Some tension lies within the letters and some comes from disputed authorship. This generation did not inspect the reception-history sources needed to trace later uses of these texts. It can therefore map the questions and the canonical evidence without claiming an unaudited history of effects.

11.1 Paul and Israel

Paul's argument against requiring Gentile circumcision operated within a Jewish and Jewish–Gentile apostolic dispute. His own Israelite identity, grief for his kin, dependence on Israel's Scriptures, warning to Gentile branches, and insistence that God's call is irrevocable control the interpretation.

Paul made radical claims about Christ, Torah, and the admission of Gentiles, and those claims generated real Jewish disagreement. Taken together, the evidence places the mission to the nations within an account of God's fidelity to Israel.

11.2 Women and authority

The directly Pauline evidence includes women praying and prophesying, financing and hosting mission, contending beside Paul, carrying responsibility between churches, and receiving titles such as deacon, patron, co-worker, and possibly apostle. It also includes veiling arguments, a difficult command of silence, and household assumptions. The disputed Pastorals intensify formal restrictions, but their relation to the undisputed letters cannot be resolved by assigning every line to one moment in Paul's career.

No honest synthesis calls Paul simply a modern egalitarian. No honest history calls his mission exclusively male. The later ecclesiological reception requires a separate source audit. Biography can keep Phoebe, Prisca, Junia, Euodia, Syntyche, and the Corinthian women visible while refusing to explain restrictive texts away by assertion.

11.3 Slavery and freedom

Paul uses slavery and freedom as theological metaphors, proclaims one body in which slave and free receive one Spirit, and asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother and as Paul himself. These are real pressures against a social order of ownership. Yet Paul never issues a surviving demand to abolish Roman slavery, and later Pauline household codes command enslaved persons to obey. How Christians later used either set of texts, including in debates over chattel slavery, remains a future research question rather than a historical finding of this publication.

It is inadequate either to call Paul an abolitionist before abolitionism or to declare brotherhood meaningless because it stopped short of a later political program. The letter to Philemon shows transformative moral pressure inside an unabolished institution. Its limit is part of the first-century evidence; a history of later complicity or abolitionist reception was not collated here.

11.4 Sex, bodies, and exclusion

Paul places sexual conduct within arguments about the body, marriage, celibacy, worship, and holiness. Ancient practices, status relations, idolatrous settings, and vocabulary do not map neatly onto modern sexual identities. How these passages later shaped pastoral care or caused harm requires a reception-history record not assembled here. Their later doctrinal and pastoral application is likewise outside this biography's audited source set.

Responsible reading refuses two shortcuts: treating every modern question as explicitly answered by one ancient term, or treating context as proof that the text can have no continuing claim. Paul's argument places sexual conduct within creation, worship, the body of Christ, resurrection, universal sin, and offered mercy. The biography can establish that argumentative setting without claiming an unaudited history of pastoral application.

11.5 Empire, obedience, and resistance

Romans 13 instructs its recipients concerning governing authorities. A history of how later political actors used that instruction, whether to defend order or domination, requires sources not inspected here and is left as a future research question. Paul elsewhere calls Jesus Lord, proclaims a crucified victim of Roman power as the world's true ruler, names powers that will be subjected to Christ, and expects creation's liberation. He uses citizenship and law when useful yet dies, according to strong tradition, at imperial hands.

Paul's communities practiced a different allegiance and material sharing while seeking peace. Later political conclusions require argument through the whole canonical and moral tradition.

11.6 Paul within the apostolic Church

Paul exercised enormous literary and missionary influence within communities and an apostolic movement that preceded his call. He persecuted them, received traditions about Jesus' death and Resurrection, visited Cephas and James, and sought fellowship. He interpreted the Messiah's death and risen life with extraordinary power and carried the Gentile mission through a network larger than himself.

Nor was Paul the uncontested master of every church. He argued, lost immediate control, revised plans, feared rejection, and depended on others. The later canonical corpus receives both his singular vocation and the plurality of apostolic witnesses.

11.7 Paul and Peter

Peter and Paul should not be fused into one Roman biography. Paul knew Cephas, received fellowship, rebuked him, and continued to recognize his apostolate. Peter's evidence begins with Jesus' ministry and the Twelve; Paul's richest evidence is his own later correspondence. Their Roman deaths have different routes of attestation and different manners in tradition. The joined solemnity does not require one execution day. The inspected U.S. calendar joins their names and calls both apostles; it supplies no common execution docket.

11.8 The shape of Paul's sanctity

The historically recoverable Paul was a diaspora Jew and Pharisee who violently persecuted the assembly of God. He experienced the risen Christ as revelation and call, entered the community he had attacked, and undertook a mission among Gentiles without ceasing to identify with Israel. He founded and sustained assemblies across the eastern Mediterranean through labor, preaching, letters, money, tears, argument, delegates, women and men co-workers, enslaved and free believers, and repeated dangerous travel. He was neither physically invulnerable nor pastorally infallible. His strongest boast became weakness in which Christ's power could dwell.

The letters make him one of antiquity's most audible Christians, yet leave his birth, appearance, family, many journeys, and last verdict unknown. Acts gives a grand canonical movement to Rome and stops with the word unhindered. Early memory then converges on martyrdom under Nero and an Ostian memorial; beheading is ancient and plausible, while Spain, the second arrest, exact day, uncollated execution-site traditions, and bone identity remain lower-tier claims.

The hagiographic Paul is not merely the sum of doubtful stories. This study's source-grounded synthesis sees persecuting zeal overcome by grace and made missionary charity; the gospel crossing boundaries without making peoples disposable; and a chained apostle's word remaining free. Potential visual emblems such as sword, book, ship, and basket require art-historical control before this publication can date or interpret them; letters, roads, and the basilica rest on separately graded textual or material claims. Critical grading protects reception from depending on invented certainty.

Grace made communal

Paul's call was singular, but its test was not private intensity. Grace became communities, shared meals, a collection for the poor, patient correspondence, reconciliation after pain, and a mission entrusted to others. The apostle to the nations is most himself not alone on a road, but bound to the body he once tried to destroy.

A Scope, Chronology, and Evidence

This biography asks how Saul, also known as Paul, can be known as a first-century Jew, a persecutor of the assembly of God, a witness called by the risen Jesus, an apostle among the nations, a founder and correspondent of communities, and a martyr remembered at Rome. Paul is unusually well documented for an ancient apostle because several letters widely accepted as his survive. Yet the abundance is deceptive. The letters answer crises, defend decisions, teach, plead, and sustain relationships; they are not a continuous memoir. Acts gives the only surviving extended narrative,

but it was written later and arranges Paul’s mission within Luke’s account of the gospel moving from Jerusalem to Rome. The two bodies of evidence overlap without becoming interchangeable.

The historical core therefore begins with the seven letters for which broad modern critical agreement accepts direct Pauline authorship: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, First Thessalonians, and Philemon. Acts is read as a distinct canonical witness. Second Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, the Pastoral Letters, and Hebrews receive separate authorship treatment rather than being silently used as Paul’s diary. Early Christian memory, Roman monuments, liturgy, and later legend then show how the apostle was received after his death.

The geographic frame runs from the eastern Mediterranean to Rome: Tarsus and Jerusalem according to Acts; Damascus and Arabia in Paul’s own account; Syria, Cilicia, Antioch, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia; and finally Jerusalem and Rome. The life probably began in the first decade of the first century and ended under Nero in the 60s, but neither boundary has an exact date. Reception history continues through 16 July 2026. Catholic doctrine and liturgy form the principal ecclesial frame, while Paul belongs to the Scriptures and memory of Christians far beyond the Roman Catholic Church.

A.1 Names and controlling identity

Paul’s letters call him Paul; Acts first calls him Saul and then says, “Saul, also known as Paul” (Acts 13:9). The text does not say that Jesus renamed him on the Damascus road. A Jew moving through Semitic- and Greek-speaking worlds could bear both names, and Acts begins to prefer the Roman name when the mission turns conspicuously toward Gentiles. This publication uses Paul in its own prose and Saul when following an Acts scene before that transition.

Paul describes himself as an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews, and, with respect to the law, a Pharisee (Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). His encounter with Christ radically reordered his life and his account of righteousness. It did not make Jewish identity a costume he discarded. “Conversion” remains useful as the traditional name of a decisive reversal; “call” and “revelation” preserve Paul’s own prophetic language. No one term should be used to deny either the rupture or the continuity.

A.2 Evidence key

The codes below identify kinds of witness, not levels of inspiration or sanctity. A source can be close to Paul and still be rhetorical; a later source can establish early reception without supplying an eyewitness scene.

Code	Meaning
A	Autobiographical or subject-authored witness: above all the seven undisputed letters, read as occasional correspondence rather than a neutral memoir.
N	Near-contemporary external witness: evidence from another early witness, including Acts as a distinct canonical theological history and material anchors such as the Gallio inscription when mediated through critical study.
E	Early received tradition: First Clement, Ignatius, Dionysius, Irenaeus, Gaius, Tertullian, Origen as preserved by Eusebius, and other ancient memory.
L	Later hagiographic or devotional tradition: apocryphal journeys, developed martyr scenes, local sacred geography, physical portraits, sayings, relic itineraries, and popular motifs.
M	Magisterial or official ecclesial reception: Catholic teaching, liturgy, papal catechesis, and official shrine interpretation, limited to what each act establishes.
K	Modern critical reconstruction: identified historical arguments about chronology, letters, social world, mission, death, and material evidence.
S	Source-grounded project synthesis: this study’s explicit inference from named evidence, not wording placed in Paul’s mouth.

Terms such as *secure*, *probable*, *possible*, and *unsupported* compare available explanations. “Undisputed” describes

a strong scholarly judgment about literary authorship; it does not mean that every reconstruction from a letter is certain. “Disputed” does not diminish a writing’s canonical authority in the Catholic Church.

A.3 A historical and hagiographic life

Hagiography begins responsibly with Paul’s remembered life under grace, then follows how Christians interpreted it through preaching, martyrdom, feast, image, shrine, and legend.

This approach neither explains away Paul’s encounter with the risen Christ nor uses Acts’ miracles as movable proof for every later tale. It reports each claim within its source and genre.

Controlling distinction. Paul’s own letters have chronological priority for his self-understanding and relationships. Acts remains an inspired canonical witness with its own theological design. Later tradition may illuminate Christian memory, but it cannot be inserted backward to fill every silence in either source.

A.4 Publication boundary

This Triptych study was prepared from Paul’s undisputed letters, the other canonical Pauline letters, Acts, early Christian witnesses, official Catholic sources, material evidence, and specifically audited historical controls listed in the references and accompanying research records. Books listed only for specialist follow-up were not treated as evidentiary support. Sources and mutable claims were checked through 16 July 2026.

This is a source-first work of historical and hagiographic synthesis, not a new critical edition, an archaeological authentication, or a substitute for the Church’s liturgy and teaching. It gives Paul’s own letters chronological priority, while preserving the distinct testimony of Acts and the growth of later tradition.

A.5 Quotation, rights, and review boundary

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The modern research leads listed in the references are copyrighted and were not quoted. The Acts–letters chronology, Gallio inscription, authorship spectrum, Roman social world, and martyr tradition still require independent specialist review against critical editions.

A.6 Chronological orientation

Paul supplies relative intervals but almost no absolute dates. Acts supplies an extended sequence, titles officials, and connects the mission to known places, yet its itinerary cannot simply be used to date every letter. The firmest commonly used external anchor is Paul’s appearance before Gallio at Corinth (Acts 18:12–17). A checked 2008 papal catechesis reports that the Delphi inscription places Gallio’s proconsulship in 51–53. This study did not independently collate the Greek inscription or an epigraphic edition, so it uses only the early-50s range rather than claiming an exact month. From that point historians count backward and forward, while preserving alternative placements for the Jerusalem meetings and letters.

Paul’s call is usually placed in the early-to-mid 30s. Galatians says that he then went to Arabia, returned to Damascus, and after three years visited Cephas in Jerusalem for fifteen days. Afterward he went to the regions of Syria and

Cilicia. A second Jerusalem visit came “after fourteen years,” but ancient inclusive counting, the starting point of the interval, and its relationship to Acts 11 or 15 remain disputed. Paul then appears through his letters in a dense missionary decade from the later 40s through the later 50s. He wrote Romans while planning to carry the collection for Jerusalem and then travel through Rome toward Spain.

Acts narrates arrest in Jerusalem, custody under Felix and Festus, appeal to Caesar, shipwreck, and two years of guarded proclamation in Rome. It stops without verdict or death. Early Christian memory makes a Roman martyrdom under Nero probable. A date between 64 and 68 is responsible; an exact day, the year 67, release before a second arrest, and a completed Spanish mission all require lower evidentiary grades.

A.7 The principal horizons

Horizon	Principal witness	What it can establish
Before the call	Phil 3:4–6; Gal 1:13–14; Rom 11:1; Acts 7–9, 22, 26	Jewish and Pharisaic identity, zeal, persecution, and—in Acts—Tarsian origin, Jerusalem education, and participation in the Stephen sequence.
Early-to-mid 30s	Gal 1:11–24; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8–10; Acts 9, 22, 26	Revelation and call by the risen Christ, cessation of persecution, mission to the nations, Arabia and Damascus, baptism and Ananias in Acts, then a brief visit to Cephas.
Later 30s–40s	Gal 1:21–2:14; Acts 9:26–15:41	Work in Syria and Cilicia; relationship with Barnabas and Antioch; Jerusalem recognition; Gentile inclusion; conflict with Peter; expanding mission. Correlation remains disputed.
c. 49–57	Undisputed letters; Acts 16–20; Gallio inscription	Communities in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia; letters, co-workers, conflict, collection for Jerusalem, sufferings, and plans. This is the best-documented period.
Later 50s–early 60s	Rom 15–16; Acts 20–28	Journey toward Jerusalem, arrest and hearings, voyage, Malta, arrival and two-year Roman custody. Acts supplies the narrative after Romans and ends open.
64–68	1 Clem. 5; Ignatius, <i>Rom.</i> 4; later Roman witnesses	Probable martyrdom in Nero’s Rome. The convergence is stronger for Roman death than for release, Spain, exact year, trial, or manner.
Late first–third century, conventional	1 Clement; disputed Pauline letters; Acts; Ignatius; Irenaeus; Gaius; Tertullian; Origen/Eusebius; apocryphal acts	A received witness sequence for the Pauline corpus and Roman martyr memory; precise witness dates were not independently audited here.
Later reception	Inspected basilica page, USCCB 2026 calendar entry, and 2009 papal report; other calendar, art, patronage, relic, and local-site leads uncollated	The named controls establish a shrine, one current U.S. solemnity, and a reported test result; they do not validate the uncollated leads.

A.8 The three-journey map and its limits

The familiar first, second, and third missionary journeys are a useful map of Acts 13–21. They are Luke’s literary organization, not headings found in Paul’s letters and not a complete count of his travel. Paul reports journeys before and between the narrated circuits, and Second Corinthians’ catalogue of shipwrecks and dangers shows that Acts does not recount every episode. Readers may use the three journeys for orientation so long as they do not turn them into the whole biography.

A.9 What remains unknown

No source gives Paul’s birth date, age at call, appearance, full education, or complete family history. His marital past is unknown. The location meant by “Arabia,” the date and exact object of several Jerusalem meetings, the number and boundaries of visits to Corinth, the place from which some letters were sent, the identity of opponents, and the nature of the “thorn in the flesh” remain disputed. Acts ends before the imperial decision. We cannot demonstrate whether Paul was released, reached Spain, returned east, or was arrested only once in Rome.

These gaps prevent a day-by-day life. They do not erase the unusually dense network preserved in the letters: named people, local disputes, travel plans, money, work, illness, imprisonment, and a theology forged within pastoral responsibility.

A.10 Detailed timeline

The dates below are orientation ranges. Absolute years depend on the Gallio anchor and on disputed synchronization of Galatians with Acts. Plans, later traditions, and material commemorations are marked as such.

Date	Place	Event and evidence	Status
First decade AD, possible	Tarsus / diaspora	Paul is born into a Jewish family; he later identifies as Israelite, Benjaminite, Hebrew, circumcised on the eighth day, and Pharisee. Acts names Tarsus.	A/N; birth year unknown
Before the call	Jerusalem / Jewish communities	Paul advances in ancestral traditions and persecutes the assembly of God. Acts places him at Stephen’s death and gives him high-priestly authority for arrests.	A secure core; Acts details N
Early-to-mid 30s	Near Damascus	Paul experiences the risen Jesus as revelation, appearance, and call to proclaim among the nations. Acts narrates light, fall, voice, blindness, Ananias, healing, and baptism in three forms.	A/N; exact year and details differ
After the call	Arabia and Damascus	Paul says he goes to Arabia, returns to Damascus, and later escapes. Acts narrates Damascus preaching and escape but not Arabia.	A/N; purpose and location range disputed
After “three years”	Jerusalem	Paul visits Cephas for fifteen days and sees James; Acts narrates Barnabas introducing him to apostles.	A/N; inclusive count and correlation disputed
Later 30s–40s	Syria and Cilicia	Paul says he works in these regions; Acts eventually places Barnabas bringing him from Tarsus to Antioch.	A/N; duration uncertain
40s	Antioch, Judea, Cyprus, Anatolia	Acts presents teaching at Antioch, relief for Judea, commissioning with Barnabas, and a first circuit through Cyprus and southern Anatolia.	N; Acts organization
After “fourteen years”	Jerusalem	Paul goes with Barnabas and Titus; James, Cephas, and John recognize the Gentile mission and ask remembrance of the poor.	A; absolute date and Acts correlation disputed
Mid-century	Antioch	Cephas withdraws from Gentile meals; Barnabas and other Jewish believers follow; Paul publicly rebukes Cephas.	A; Peter’s response unknown
Later 40s	Jerusalem / Antioch	Acts 15 narrates communal resolution on Gentile admission; Paul and Barnabas later separate over Mark.	N; relation to Galatians disputed
c. 49–51	Philippi and Thessalonica	Acts narrates mission with Silas and Timothy; Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy establish and correspond with the Thessalonian community.	A/N; 1 Thess earliest surviving letter

Date	Place	Event and evidence	Status
c. 50–53	Athens and Corinth	Acts gives the Areopagus speech, then Paul’s work with Priscilla and Aquila at Corinth and hearing before Gallio. A checked papal catechesis reports the Delphi range as 51–53.	N/M control; primary epigraph not collated
Early-to-mid 50s	Ephesus and Asia	Paul uses Ephesus as a mission and correspondence hub; Acts narrates prolonged teaching, signs, and the Artemis-related riot.	A/N; exact sequence debated
c. 53–55	Ephesus / Corinth	First Corinthians addresses faction, bodies, marriage, meals, worship, gifts, Resurrection, and the collection. Visits and an earlier letter are already in view.	A
c. 55–56	Macedonia / Corinth	Second Corinthians reflects painful relations, Titus’s mediation, rivals, suffering, and renewed collection work.	A; letter unity debated
c. 54–62	An uncertain prison	Philippians and Philemon are written from custody, naming Timothy, Epaphroditus, Onesimus, and other co-workers.	A; Ephesus, Caesarea, Rome proposed
c. 56–58	Probably Corinth / Cenchreae	Romans presents Paul’s gospel, the Jerusalem collection, eastern mission retrospect, Phoebe and a large network, and plans for Rome and Spain.	A; Spain is a plan
Later 50s	Jerusalem	Acts narrates Paul’s reception by James and elders, vow, Temple accusation, crowd violence, Roman intervention, speeches, and plot.	N; collection outcome not narrated
Later 50s	Caesarea	Paul remains in custody under Felix and Festus, appears before Agrippa, and appeals to Caesar as a citizen.	N; Acts-only legal narrative
c. 59–60	Mediterranean / Malta	Acts narrates the voyage, storm, shipwreck, winter on Malta, signs, and onward journey.	N; conventional dating
c. 60–62	Rome	Acts ends after two years of guarded but unhindered proclamation to Jewish leaders and other visitors.	N; no verdict or death
After Acts, possible	Spain and/or eastern Mediterranean	Release, Spain, renewed eastern travel, and a second arrest are reconstructed from 1 Clement, later tradition, and the disputed Pastorals.	E/L/K; unresolved
64–68	Rome	Paul probably suffers martyrdom under Nero; beheading is early received and plausible.	S from E convergence; exact year unknown
c. 96, conventional	Rome to Corinth	First Clement recalls Paul’s sufferings, east–west preaching, witness before rulers, western limit, and completed course.	E; precise dating not independently audited
c. 107–110, conventional	Ignatius en route to Rome	Ignatius says he does not command Roman Christians as Peter and Paul did.	E; date and recension not independently audited
c. 170–212, conventional	Mediterranean churches / Rome	Dionysius and Irenaeus pair Roman apostolic memory; Gaius points to the Ostian memorial; Tertullian names the Roman manner as beheading.	E; precise witness dates not independently audited
Early third-century report	Rome / source preserved by Eusebius	Origen says Paul suffered martyrdom at Rome under Nero; the checked passage does not specify beheading.	E; indirect transmission
Ancient reception; precise date not audited	Asia Minor and wider Church	The <i>Acts of Paul and Thecla</i> supplies a literary physical type and expanded companion narrative.	L; not first-century evidence
Fourth century	Ostian Way, Rome	A basilica monumentalizes the received grave and is soon enlarged while retaining the Pauline center.	M/material evidence

Date	Place	Event and evidence	Status
1823–nineteenth century	Ostian Way	Fire devastates the basilica; reconstruction retains the shrine and papal altar over the received tomb.	M/material
2009	Ostian Way	Benedict XVI announces probe findings and a first-to-second-century radiocarbon result from minute bone fragments in the sarcophagus.	M report of science; consistent, not identifying
Through 16 July 2026	United States / Rome	The inspected controls establish a current U.S. 29 June solemnity and the official Ostian shrine; other current liturgical, patronal, visual, ecumenical, and local claims remain uncollated.	M for named controls; other leads unpublished

B References

B.1 Scripture

Principal loci: Acts 7:54–9:31; 11:19–30; 13–28; Rom 1–16, especially 1:1–17; 3–8; 9–13; 15–16; 1 Cor 1–16, especially 1–2; 7–15; 2 Cor 1–13, especially 1–2; 4–6; 8–13; Gal 1–6; Phil 1–4; 1 Thess 1–5; Phlm 1–25. Disputed-letter controls: 2 Thess 1–3; Col 1–4; Eph 1–6; 1 Tim 1–6; 2 Tim 1–4; Titus 1–3; Heb 1–13; 2 Pet 3:15–16. Online edition and introductions, reviewed 16 July 2026: USCCB Bible; Acts introduction; Romans introduction; First Corinthians introduction; Second Corinthians introduction; Galatians introduction; Philippians introduction; First Thessalonians introduction; Philemon introduction; New Testament letters introduction; Hebrews introduction.

B.2 Early Christian and Roman witnesses

- Clement of Rome / the Roman church. *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 5.5–7. Translated by John Keith in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, edited by Allan Menzies (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1896). Public-domain English translation at Wikisource, chapter 5, reviewed 16 July 2026. Under the conventional witness sequence, whose precise dating was not independently audited here, this is the earliest located external account of Paul’s completed witness; “limit of the West” remains geographically disputed.
- Ignatius of Antioch. *Letter to the Romans*, 4.3. Precise dating and recensional history were not independently audited. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1. Public-domain patristic translation in revised web presentation at New Advent, reviewed 16 July 2026. The line establishes early paired authority at Rome, not an itinerary.
- Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies* 3.1.1 and 3.3.2–3. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1. Public-domain English translation at CCEL, 3.3, reviewed 16 July 2026. Used for Roman apostolic and corpus reception, not the claim that no Christians preceded the apostles at Rome.
- Eusebius of Caesarea. *Ecclesiastical History* 2.22.2–8 (reported release and renewed preaching); 2.25.5–8 (Dionysius and Gaius); 3.1.1–3 (Origen on Paul under Nero). Translation by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 1 (1890), public domain. Online text: book 2 and book 3, reviewed 16 July 2026. Eusebius preserves earlier witnesses but writes centuries after Paul.
- Tertullian. *The Prescription Against Heretics*, 36; and *Scorpiace*, 15. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3 (1885), public-domain English translations. Online text: Prescription and Scorpiace, reviewed 16 July 2026. Used for the early explicit Roman beheading tradition.
- *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, especially the opening portrait and the trial sequences, within the ancient *Acts of Paul*; precise dating was not independently audited. Translation by Alexander Walker, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, 1886), public domain. Revised web presentation at New Advent, reviewed 16 July 2026. Used for ancient reception of Paul’s appearance, women, celibacy, and mission; not as a contemporary life.
- Tacitus. *Annals* 15.44. Translation by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (1876), public domain. Online at Wikisource, book 15, reviewed 16 July 2026. Tacitus supplies the Neronian persecution context and does not name Paul.

Jerome’s witness that a Paul–Seneca correspondence was widely read was checked at *De viris illustribus* 12 in Ernest Cushing Richardson’s public-domain NPNF translation, New Advent, reviewed 16 July 2026. The letters themselves and a modern critical edition were not collated, so they support reception history only and no claim of friendship.

B.3 Magisterial, liturgical, and institutional sources

- Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* (21 November 1964), 19–20. Vatican English text: *Lumen gentium*, reviewed 16 July 2026.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, especially 442, 787–795, 1987–2029. Vatican English edition at Catechism index, reviewed 16 July 2026. Used for ecclesial reception of Paul’s confession, the body of Christ, and justification; not as an independent chronology.
- Benedict XVI, general audiences “Life of Saint Paul before and after Damascus,” 27 August 2008, and “St Paul’s ‘Conversion’,” 3 September 2008. Vatican English texts: 27 August and 3 September, reviewed 16 July 2026. Official theological synthesis is distinguished from direct ancient evidence.
- Benedict XVI, homily at First Vespers closing the Pauline Year, 28 June 2009. Vatican English text at Vatican, reviewed 16 July 2026. This is the located public source for the sarcophagus probe and radiocarbon announcement; it is not a full scientific report and was not used to audit the wider Pauline Year program.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Liturgical Calendar for the Dioceses of the United States of America 2026*, entry for 29 June. USCCB calendar, reviewed 16 July 2026. Used only to establish the current U.S. solemnity, not a universal calendar or the date or origin of the ancient cult.
- *Depositio martyrum*, in the Chronography of 354, June entry, Mommsen, ed., MGH *Chronica minora* 1 (Berlin, 1892), pp. 71–72, Latin text and edition locus; reviewed 17 July 2026. Used for the 29 June pairing, Peter at the Catacombs, Paul on the Ostian Way, and the consular notice for 258; not used as proof of a joint death date or bodily translation.
- Papal Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. “The Tomb of the Apostle.” Official institutional presentation at Vatican basilica site, reviewed 16 July 2026. Used for the shrine’s official identification and architectural presentation; its traditional execution and burial details were not treated as independent first-century proof.

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