

Paul & the Corinthian Church

A Comprehensive Chronological Timeline

c. AD 49 – AD 58

Primary Source: Holy Scripture · noblemind.study/apostle-paul/

*This is a focused timeline. For the broader chronology of Paul's life, consult the parent timeline
([Paul_Life_Timeline.pdf](#)).*

Phase 1 — Founding the Church · Second Missionary Journey (c. AD 49–52)

~AD 49

Context

Claudius expels Jews from Rome; Aquila & Priscilla arrive in Corinth

 *Acts 18:2*


Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, causing Aquila and Priscilla to relocate to Corinth. Paul would meet them there and work alongside them as tentmakers — a providential connection that shaped the founding of the Corinthian church.

Suetonius, Life of Claudius 25.4; Orosius, History 7.6.15 (dates expulsion to c. AD 49)

~AD 49–50

Context

Paul completes early phase of 2nd journey: Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens


 *Acts 16:11–17:34*

On his second missionary journey, Paul traveled with Silas and Timothy through Macedonia, planting churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, before being sent ahead to Athens. From Athens, he came to Corinth.

~AD 50 (Winter)

1st Visit

Paul arrives in Corinth; meets Aquila & Priscilla; works as tentmaker

 *Acts 18:1–3; 1 Cor 2:3*

Paul arrived in Corinth — the Roman province's commercial capital — from Athens. He found Aquila and Priscilla, recently expelled from Rome, and lodged with them, sharing their trade of tentmaking (or leatherworking). He was, as he later admitted, 'in weakness and in fear and with much trembling' (1 Cor 2:3).

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 393 (arrival c. winter AD 49–50)

~AD 50

1st Visit

Paul preaches in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading Jews and Greeks

 Acts 18:4

Following his customary pattern, Paul began in the synagogue, reasoning from Scripture and persuading both Jews and God-fearing Greeks. This continued each Sabbath.

~AD 50-51

1st Visit

Silas & Timothy arrive from Macedonia; Paul devotes himself fully to preaching


 Acts 18:5; 2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:15

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia — likely bringing financial support from the Philippian church (cf. Phil 4:15) — Paul was freed from tentmaking to devote himself completely to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.

~AD 50-51

1st Visit

Paul writes 1 & 2 Thessalonians from Corinth

 1 Thess 1:1; 3:6; 2 Thess 1:1

With Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy beside him in Corinth, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians soon after Timothy returned with news of that church (1 Thess 3:6), and 2 Thessalonians shortly after. These are his earliest surviving letters. They are addressed to Thessalonica, not Corinth, but they were physically written here during the 18-month founding visit — which is why they appear on this timeline.

Both letters open with the names of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy — the same team present in Corinth in Acts 18:5.

~AD 50-51

1st Visit

Jewish opposition; Paul turns to the Gentiles

 Acts 18:6

When Jewish opposition became abusive, Paul dramatically shook out his garments — a symbolic act of disavowal (cf. Neh 5:13) — and declared: 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.'

~AD 50-51

1st Visit

Paul moves to house of Titius Justus, next door to the synagogue


 Acts 18:7

Paul relocated his teaching base to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile worshiper of God whose house was right next door to the synagogue. The deliberate proximity was likely both strategic and provocative.

~AD 50-51

1st Visit

Crispus (synagogue ruler) believes; many Corinthians baptized


 Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his entire household. Many other Corinthians also believed and were baptized. Paul later mentions personally baptizing Crispus (1 Cor 1:14), indicating his prominence in the new community.

~AD 50-51

1st Visit

Divine vision: 'Do not be afraid... I have many people in this city'

 Acts 18:9-10

The Lord spoke to Paul in a night vision, commanding him not to be afraid, not to be silent, and to keep speaking — promising divine protection and indicating that 'I have many people in this city.' This vision emboldened Paul to remain in Corinth for an extended stay.

~AD 50-52

1st Visit

Paul remains 18 months, teaching the Word of God

 Acts 18:11


Paul remained in Corinth for a year and six months — one of his longest recorded stays anywhere. During this time the church was established and grew, rooted in the teaching of the Word.

This 18-month figure is one anchor point for dating; Finegan, p. 393

~AD 51 (Summer)

1st Visit

Jews bring Paul before Gallio at the bema; charges dismissed

 Acts 18:12-16


The Jewish leaders brought Paul before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, at the bema (judgment seat) in the Corinthian agora, charging him with persuading people to worship God 'contrary to the law.' Before Paul could even speak, Gallio dismissed the case as an internal Jewish dispute about words, names, and their own law — refusing to be a judge of such matters. He drove the accusers from the tribunal. In practice this set a significant precedent: a senior Roman magistrate had declined to treat Paul's preaching as a crime. (It is best not to overstate this as a formal grant of legal status — Gallio simply refused to adjudicate.)

Delphi (Gallio) Inscription, c. AD 52: confirms Gallio as proconsul of Achaia in AD 51-52. This is the single most important chronological anchor in Pauline studies. See: Finegan, p. 393; Steinmann, Biblical Chronology; USCCB note on Acts 18:12.

~AD 51

1st Visit

Greeks beat Sosthenes before the bema; Gallio unconcerned

 Acts 18:17; cf. 1 Cor 1:1


Following Gallio's dismissal, the Greeks (or Jews — manuscripts differ) turned on Sosthenes, the new synagogue ruler, and beat him before the bema. Gallio paid no attention. Interestingly, a 'Sosthenes' is co-listed with Paul as author of 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 1:1), possibly the same man who later converted.

Phase 2 — Correspondence & Crisis · Third Missionary Journey, Ephesus (c. AD 52-55)

~AD 51-52

1st Visit

Paul departs Corinth; takes Nazirite vow at Cenchreae

 Acts 18:18; Num 6:1-21


After remaining 'many more days' following the trial, Paul set sail for Syria with Aquila and Priscilla. Before departing from Cenchreae (Corinth's eastern port), he had his head shaved, having completed a Nazirite vow (cf. Num 6:1-21). Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him as far as Ephesus, where he left them.

NASB reads the vow as Paul's. Note that the Greek word order places the participle nearer Aquila, so a minority of interpreters take the vow to be his — the grammar is genuinely ambiguous, and the timeline simply follows the NASB.

~AD 52

End / Between

Paul visits Ephesus, Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch; 2nd journey ends

 Acts 18:19-22

Paul stopped briefly at Ephesus (where he left Aquila and Priscilla), promised to return, sailed to Caesarea, went up to greet the church (likely Jerusalem), then returned to his home base at Antioch — concluding his second missionary journey.

~AD 52-53

3rd Journey

Paul sets out on 3rd missionary journey; strengthens churches in Galatia & Phrygia


 Acts 18:23

After spending some time in Antioch, Paul departed again, traveling through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, systematically strengthening all the disciples he had made on previous journeys.

~AD 52-55

3rd Journey

Paul in Ephesus: synagogue (3 months) then Hall of Tyrannus (2 years)

 Acts 19:1-10; 20:31

Paul arrived in Ephesus for a sustained ministry: three months in the synagogue, then — after opposition hardened — two years daily in the Hall of Tyrannus, so that 'all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.' It was from this Ephesian base that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and the 'lost letters.'

~AD 53-54

Lost Letter

Lost 'Previous Letter' (Corinthians A): warning against immoral people

 1 Cor 5:9-11


Paul explicitly references a prior letter in 1 Corinthians 5:9 ('I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people'). This letter — scholars call it 'Corinthians A' — is no longer extant. Some scholars suggest a fragment of it may survive embedded in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, though this remains disputed.

Scholars label this 'Corinthians A.' Its existence is stated by Scripture itself (1 Cor 5:9); it is not extant. The label is a convenience, not a separate authority.

~AD 54

3rd Journey

Reports from 'Chloe's people': factions, immorality, lawsuits in the church


 1 Cor 1:11; 5:1

Paul received oral reports from members of Chloe's household describing serious divisions in the Corinthian church: factions rallying behind Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ; cases of sexual immorality (including incest); and Christians taking each other to secular courts. These reports prompted Paul's response.

~AD 54-55

3rd Journey

Delegation from Corinth arrives with formal letter of questions for Paul


 1 Cor 7:1; 16:17

A delegation — Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus — arrived in Ephesus, bringing a formal written letter from the Corinthian church asking Paul's guidance on: marriage and celibacy, food sacrificed to idols, conduct at worship, spiritual gifts, the resurrection, and the collection for Jerusalem.

~AD 55 (Spring)

3rd Journey

Timothy dispatched to Corinth to represent Paul


 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10-11

Paul sent Timothy to Corinth to 'remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church' (1 Cor 4:17). He urged the Corinthians to receive Timothy well. Tragically, Timothy appears to have been rebuffed and returned to report the worsening situation.

~AD 55 (Spring)

3rd Journey

1 Corinthians written from Ephesus

 1 Cor 16:8 (written from Ephesus, before Pentecost); 1:1–2


Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, comprehensively addressing: the factions (chapters 1–4), the incest case (chapter 5), lawsuits (chapter 6), marriage and celibacy (chapter 7), food offered to idols (chapters 8–10), head coverings and the Lord's Supper (chapters 11), spiritual gifts and love (chapters 12–14), the resurrection (chapter 15), and the Jerusalem collection (chapter 16). He mentions staying in Ephesus until Pentecost.

Spring is fixed by the text itself ('until Pentecost,' 1 Cor 16:8); the year (AD 55) follows from the Gallio anchor and the length of the Ephesian ministry. Finegan, p. 393; Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, ch. 24.

~AD 55

Painful Visit

Paul makes brief, unplanned 'Painful Visit' (2nd Visit) to Corinth

 2 Cor 2:1; 2:5; 7:12; 13:2


When 1 Corinthians did not resolve the crisis and Timothy was rebuffed, Paul made a hurried personal visit from Ephesus to Corinth to confront the situation directly. It went badly: Paul was personally humiliated — 'caused grief' — by a specific individual, and the church took no action to defend him. He left wounded and later wrote that he resolved 'not to make another painful visit' (2 Cor 2:1), implying this visit had been painful indeed. This visit is not recorded in Acts but is firmly implied by Paul's own language.

Not recorded in Acts. The visit is a necessary inference from Paul's own words — 'this is the third time I am coming to you' (2 Cor 13:1) — set against the single visit Acts records. The conclusion rests on the text itself, not on later commentary. Cf. Bruce, ch. 26.

~AD 55

Severe Letter

Paul writes the 'Severe/Tearful Letter' (Corinthians C); sent via Titus

 2 Cor 2:3–4; 7:8; 2:13


Returning to Ephesus after the painful visit, Paul wrote a third letter 'out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears' (2 Cor 2:4) — sometimes called the 'severe letter' or 'sorrowful letter.' He sent it via Titus rather than going himself, hoping to spare them another painful confrontation. In it he apparently demanded that the church discipline the offending individual. Paul later said he almost regretted sending it (2 Cor 7:8), but it achieved its purpose.

Scholars label this 'Corinthians C.' Its existence is stated by Scripture itself (2 Cor 2:3–4; 7:8); it is not extant.

~AD 55

3rd Journey

Paul leaves Ephesus (riot of Demetrius); travels to Troas seeking Titus


 Acts 19:23-20:1; 2 Cor 2:12-13

The Demetrius riot forced Paul's departure from Ephesus. He traveled north to Troas, where he had an open door for ministry but could not settle because his spirit was restless — he had no news from Titus about Corinth. He moved on to Macedonia.

~AD 55-56

3rd Journey

Paul meets Titus in Macedonia; receives good news from Corinth

 2 Cor 7:5-7, 13-16


In Macedonia, Paul finally encountered Titus. The news was overwhelmingly positive: the Corinthians had repented, disciplined the offender, and were longing to see Paul again. Titus reported their 'mourning,' 'ardent care,' and 'zeal' for Paul (2 Cor 7:7). Paul was 'comforted' and 'overjoyed' (2 Cor 7:7, 13).

Phase 4 — Third Visit, Romans & Departure (c. AD 56-58)

~AD 56 (Fall)

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians written from Macedonia (likely Philippi)

 2 Cor 1:1; 7:5; 8:1; 13:1


Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia, probably Philippi. Chapters 1-7 express relief, reconciliation, and profound theology of weakness and suffering. Chapters 8-9 carefully instruct on the Jerusalem collection. Chapters 10-13 shift to a sharp defense of Paul's apostolic authority against 'super-apostles' who had infiltrated the church, challenging his credentials. Paul announces his third visit: 'This is the third time I am coming to you' (2 Cor 13:1).

Written from Macedonia (2 Cor 7:5; 8:1; Acts 20:1), AD 56 (or late 55). Finegan, p. 394; Bruce, ch. 26.

~AD 56-57

3rd Visit

Paul's 3rd Visit: arrives in Corinth (Greece), stays three months


 Acts 20:2-3; 2 Cor 12:14; 13:1

Paul traveled through Macedonia and arrived in Corinth — referred to in Acts as 'Greece' (Hellas). He stayed three months, the most peaceful period of his relationship with the Corinthian church. He was hosted by Gaius. During this stay he wrote the letter to the Romans.

~AD 57 (Winter)

Romans

Letter to the Romans written from Corinth

 Rom 16:1 (Phoebe of Cenchreae), 16:23 (Erastus); 15:25-27

During his three-month stay in Corinth, Paul composed the letter to the Romans — his most systematic theological exposition, addressing justification, election, the role of Israel, and Christian ethics. He mentions Phoebe of Cenchreae (Corinth's port) as the letter's carrier, and Gaius as his host. He references Erastus, 'the city's director of public works,' and Quartus. The collection for Jerusalem is nearly complete (Rom 15:25-27).

Erastus Inscription: a limestone pavement found at Corinth in 1929, in which a man paid for the paving in return for his aedileship. Paul calls his Erastus the city's oikonomos (treasurer/steward, Rom 16:23). Aedile and oikonomos are not the same office, so the identification is plausible but not certain. Hemer, The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History, pp. 234-235.

~AD 57

Departure

Jewish plot discovered; Paul changes route — goes overland through Macedonia


 Acts 20:3

When Paul was about to sail directly from Corinth to Syria, a Jewish plot against him was uncovered. He changed his travel plans, returning overland through Macedonia instead.

~AD 57

Departure

Paul departs with large team of Gentile-church representatives carrying the collection

 Acts 20:4-6; Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9

Paul departed with a team representing the Gentile churches: Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia. They carried the collection for the Jerusalem saints — the great ecumenical project Paul had been organizing for years across all his Gentile churches, including Corinth.

~AD 57-58

Departure

Journey to Jerusalem: Troas, Miletus, and onward; Paul arrested in Jerusalem

 *Acts 20:6-21:33*

The company sailed from Philippi after Passover, stopped at Troas (where Eutychus fell from a window and was raised), Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, and finally Miletus — where Paul gave his farewell address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17–35). They pressed on to Tyre, Caesarea, and Jerusalem, where Paul was arrested in the temple (Acts 21:27–33), ending his free missionary activity.

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