

People with Paul in Rome

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/144-pauls-two-year-roman-imprisonment>

Accompanying Paul on the voyage to Rome were Luke and Aristarchus.

Though **Luke** is not mentioned by name in the book of Acts, his association with Paul can be established by a detailed argument showing that he is the author of the narrative, and thus, by the use of first person pronouns in the historical record, his movements may be traced (cf. Acts 16:10-12; 20:5-21:17; 27:1-28:16). He was a Greek physician (Col. 4:14) who may have joined himself to Paul to help care for the apostle's physical infirmities (cf. Gal. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:7ff), and, as a premier historian, to document the labors of the great apostle to the Gentiles.

Luke journeyed with Paul to Rome (Acts 27:1ff), and was even with him at the very end when, during a second Roman imprisonment, the apostle awaited execution (2 Tim. 4:11). When Paul writes to the Colossians, Luke sends greetings (Col. 4:14; cf. Phile. 24).

Aristarchus was a Jewish convert from Thessalonica (Acts 27:2; Col. 4:10-11). At some point he joined Paul on the apostle's third missionary journey as a "traveling companion," and, in Ephesus, was "ruffed up" by an unruly crowd (Acts 19:29). He accompanied Paul back to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4), and then finally on to Rome (Acts 27:2). In some sense, he became a "fellow-prisoner" with the apostle in Rome (Col. 4:10)—perhaps voluntarily. He was also a "fellow-worker" who brought Paul comfort in his distress (Col. 4:11).

Timothy was probably closer to Paul than any other person on earth, and on several occasions he is warmly commended by the great apostle (1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 2:19ff; 2 Tim. 3:10ff). A native of Lystra, one may infer that he was converted by Paul when the apostle first visited that city (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:1). He was selected to be a traveling companion with Paul when the apostle passed through the region on his second missionary campaign (Acts 16:1ff). His wide range of movements can be seen in the book of Acts, together with references in Paul's letters. In spite of the fact that apparently he had a less-than-aggressive personality (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18ff; 4:6ff; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:7ff), he made his way to Paul's side in Rome, and the apostle pledged to send his young friend to Philippi to assist the brethren there (Phil. 2:19-20). At some point Timothy himself was imprisoned, but then released (Heb. 13:23). During his final Roman imprisonment, when Paul knew that the executor's sword was imminent, he called for Timothy to hurry to him (2 Tim. 4:9). Whether the young man made it in time, we do not know.

Tychicus joined up with Paul in Greece on the latter's third missionary tour (Acts 20:4), and he journeyed east with the apostle to Jerusalem. He was likely a church messenger, responsible for conveying a portion of the benevolent contribution to Judea. He was Paul's emissary to transport letters, both to the Colossians (Col. 4:7-9), and to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21-22), hence was in the apostle's company at Rome. Paul appears to have considered him as a possible relief for Titus on Crete (Tit. 3:12). And there may be evidence that Tychicus bore Paul's second letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:12). This gentleman is given high praise by Paul as "the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord," who was capable of comforting the saints at Colossae (Col. 4:7-8), and certainly Paul himself.

A most unlikely candidate as an apostolic associate was a slave from Colossae whose name was **Onesimus**. Onesimus had abandoned his master, Philemon, and fled to Rome, probably hoping to lose himself in that crowded metropolis, perhaps stealing money from his owner in the process (Phile. 18). In the providential scheme of things—note that “perhaps” (Phile. 15)—he encountered Paul and was led to the Lord (Phile. 10). Eventually, Onesimus (whose name means “useful”) made himself so “useful” (NASB) that Paul was loath to part with him. But the apostle would not retain his services under these circumstances (Roman law required returning a slave to his owner), especially without the permission of Philemon (Phile. 11-14).

And so Paul was sending Onesimus home (in the company of Tychicus) with high praise; he was a “faithful and beloved” kinsman in the Lord (Col. 4:9). Moreover, Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus “no longer as a servant, but more than a servant”—as “a beloved brother” (Phile. 16). Indeed, he is encouraged to embrace his servant with the same spirit he would have extended to Paul himself (Phile. 17). If this disposition was adopted, then Onesimus would have remained a slave no longer—at least practically speaking. This is virtually a “proclamation of emancipation” without the specific words, “free him,” being spoken. There may be no document in all history that has done more to remedy the evil of slavery than has Paul’s letter to Philemon.

Another unlikely associate of Paul in Rome was **Mark**. Mark was the son of Mary (Acts 12:12) and the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). He had started out with Barnabas and Saul on the first missionary journey, working as their “attendant” (Acts 13:5), but along the way (at Perga in Pamphylia), he left them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). It is clear that Paul felt the abandonment was unjustified, for when he and Barnabas were planning a second campaign, the latter wanted to take John Mark again. Paul resisted, however, and a contention so “sharp” developed between the two that these friends went their separate ways (Acts 15:36-39).

But time passes and people change. Now Paul is imprisoned in Rome and Mark is there as a “fellow-worker” (Phile. 24). This is a circumstance that no writer would have invented, and then left “hanging,” without ample explanation. Apparently Paul had plans to send Mark to Colossae and so bade the brethren to “receive” him should the plan materialize (Col. 4:10). During his final imprisonment, the apostle instructs Timothy to bring Mark with him when he comes to Rome, for, says Paul, “he is useful to me” (2 Tim. 4:11). The past was forgotten. Mark had redeemed himself.

Who was Jesus Justus? A companion of Paul’s in Rome. But nothing more is known of him except the fact that he was a valued Jewish co-worker, and the apostle considered him a source of comfort (Col. 4:10-11).

Epaphras was from Colossae, but he was serving with Paul in Rome as a “slave for Christ” (Col. 4:12). This brother was a powerful instrument in spreading the gospel of Christ, apparently having established the churches in Colossae (Col. 1:7), and perhaps in Laodicea and Hierapolis as well (Col. 4:13). Since Paul characterizes him as a “fellow-prisoner,” one may conclude that he was held by the Roman authorities even as the apostle was. It may be that he voluntarily submitted to the incarceration in order to minister to Paul. Apparently Paul’s knowledge of certain problems in Colossae was conveyed by Epaphras, thus motivating the apostle to write his epistle to this church (Col. 1:7-8). Epaphras was a deeply spiritual man (Col. 4:12-13), who obviously was a source of strength to Paul.

Demas is a sad case indeed. This brother is thrice mentioned in the letters of Paul. First, he was with the apostle at some point during Paul’s initial Roman imprisonment. His salutation is conveyed to Philemon, and he is complimented as Paul’s “fellow-worker” (Phile. 24). When the apostle penned his

letter to the brethren at Colossae, he strangely says, “Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you” (Col. 4:14). Luke is “the beloved,” but Demas, at this point, is just plain Demas. There appears to be a distance—a stiffness—in that. Noted scholar J. B. Lightfoot remarked that the language here is possibly a “foreshadowing” of things to come in connection with Demas. He comments that in this context Demas “is dismissed with a bare mention and without any epithet of commendation” (1892, 240).

In the last epistle he ever wrote before being led to his execution, Paul urged Timothy to “give diligence to come shortly to me.” The reason for the urgency is stated: “[F]or Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica” (2 Tim. 4:9-10). Paul’s word for “loved” is from *agape*. Scholars have associated this term with an action that tends “to choose its object deliberately . . . a calculated disposition” (Turner 1981, 263). Did Demas grow tired of giving so much of his time to the Lord? Did he resent the deprivation of income? Was he weary of an association with a prisoner? It is not fanciful to conclude that probably he finally tired of the sacrificial life, and so made a calculated decision to follow his heart back into the pleasures of that wicked era.

Finally, there was Epaphroditus, mentioned only in the Philippian letter. He was out of a pagan background (note the relationship of his name to Aphrodite, a heathen goddess), but was somehow converted to Christ. A native of Philippi, he had journeyed to Rome, bringing financial support to Paul on behalf of the Philippian congregation (Phil. 2:25; 4:18). This reveals the esteem in which he was held by his brethren in Philippi. This church had “fellowshipped” with the apostle since he first established the cause in that city (Acts 16:12ff)—a span of some ten years (Phil. 1:5). After delivering the gift, Epaphroditus stayed on, assisting Paul. The apostle characterizes the brother as a “fellow-worker,” “fellow-soldier,” and “minister to my need” (Phil. 2:25). It likely is the case that Epaphroditus labored so diligently that his health was impaired; indeed, he was so ill that he almost died (Phil. 2:26-27, 30). Paul pays high tribute when he says that this brother was “hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service to me” (Phil. 2:30). It is virtually certain that Epaphroditus subsequently returned to Philippi, bearing this letter to the beloved brethren there (Phil. 2:28).

Conclusion

So it is, by weaving together the data found in Paul’s “prison epistles,” one can get some feeling for how things fared for the apostle in Rome. Somewhere along the way, Paul began to get the impression that he would be released from his confinement and be able to freely move about again. To the Philippians he wrote, “I trust in the Lord that I myself also [as well as Timothy] shall come shortly” (Phil. 2:24).

In addition to visiting Philippi, he planned to travel to Colossae, even suggesting that Philemon get “lodging” ready for him (Philemon 22). We know from the material in 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy, that Paul was released. He preached several years more, perhaps going all the way to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:24), before being imprisoned again, finally departing to be with the Lord in his “heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18).

Saints Archippus, Philemon and Apphia,

Apostles of the Seventy were students and companions of the holy Apostle Paul. In the Epistle to Philemon, the Apostle Paul names Saint Archippus as his companion, and mentions him again in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col. 4:17).

Saint Archippus was bishop of the city of Colossae in Phrygia. Saint Philemon was an eminent citizen of this city, and the Christians gathered in his home to celebrate church services. He was also made a bishop by Saint Paul and he went about the cities of Phrygia, preaching the Gospel. Later on, he became archpastor of the city of Gaza. Saint Apphia, his wife, took the sick and vagrants into her home, zealously attending to them. She was her husband's co-worker in proclaiming the Word of God.

During the persecution against Christians under the emperor Nero (54-68), the holy Apostles Archippus and Philemon and Apphia were brought to trial by the ruler Artocles for confessing faith in Christ. Saint Archippus was brutally slashed with knives. After torture, they buried Saints Philemon and Apphia up to the waist in the ground, and stoned them until they died.

Epaphras

The few bits of information we can glean about Epaphras make us want to learn more. Not only did Paul call him "my fellow prisoner," as in our text, but also "our dear fellow servant" and "a faithful minister of Christ" (Colossians 1:7), as well as "a servant of Christ" (Colossians 4:12). He had been a member of the church at Colosse ("one of you," 4:12) and had eventually become associated with the apostle Paul in his ministry in that region. He had brought word to Paul concerning the church while Paul was a prisoner at Rome, and had somehow, probably as a direct result, been imprisoned there himself.

He had brought a most encouraging testimony about the church to Paul, assuring him that the Lord "bringeth forth fruit" in Colosse, testifying of their "faith in Christ Jesus" and "love in the Spirit" (Colossians 1:6,4,8). Paul, in turn, sent word to the Colossians "that he hath a great zeal for you" (Colossians 4:13). Even though he was now in prison, he was "always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12).

Epaphras was a faithful witness and minister, strong in faith, great in zeal, fervent in prayer, loving in spirit, and willing to suffer for his faith. According to tradition, he later became a pastor at Colosse and eventually was martyred there.

That's about all we know about Epaphras, that great hero of the faith, but his life would surely be an inspiration if we knew it all; and it will be a joy to meet him in the age to come—as well as a host of other faithful believers who have served the Lord in various times and places through the ages. HMM

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<https://www.icr.org/article/epaphras/>

Aristarchus

One of the 70 disciples

Saint Aristarchus was one of the Seventy Apostles, whom the Lord Jesus Christ sent to proclaim the good news of the Gospel (Luke. 10:1-24).

Saint Aristarchus, a co-worker of the holy Apostle Paul, became bishop of the Syrian city of Apamea. His name is repeatedly mentioned in the Acts of the Holy Apostles (Acts 19:29, 20:4, 27:2) and in the Epistles of Saint Paul (Col. 4:10, Philemon 1:24). He accompanied Saint Paul on his travels (Acts 16:29).

Saint Aristarchus is also commemorated on April 15 with Saints Pudens and Trophimus and on January 4 with the Seventy Apostles.

Mark

Rope around neck and dragged through the streets.

Luke

The Martyrdom of Saint Luke the Evangelist

On this day, St. Luke the Evangelist and physician, was martyred. He was one of the 70 disciples mentioned in the tenth chapter of his gospel. He accompanied the Apostles Peter and Paul and wrote their account.

After the martyrdom of these two Apostles, he went through Rome preaching. Those who worshipped idols and the Jews in Rome agreed among themselves and went to Nero the Emperor accusing St. Luke of attracting many men to his teaching with his sorcery. Nero commanded that St. Luke be brought before him. When St. Luke knew that, he gave all the books he had to a fisherman and told him, "Take these and keep them for they will be useful to you and will show you God's way."

When St. Luke came before Nero the Emperor, the Emperor asked him, "How long will you lead the people astray?" St. Luke replied,

*"I am not a magician, but I am an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God." The Emperor commanded his men to cut off his right hand saying, "Cut off this hand which wrote the books." The saint replied to him, "*We do not fear death, nor the departure from this world, and to realize the power of my Master.*"*

He took up his severed hand and made it reattach to its proper place, then he separated it. Those who were present marvelled and the head of the Emperor's cabinet and his wife believed as well as many others and it was said that they numbered 276.

The Emperor wrote their decree and ordered that their heads be cut off together with that of the Apostle St. Luke; thus their martyrdom was completed.

They placed the body of the saint in a hair sack and cast it in the sea. By God's will, the waves of the sea brought it to an island. A believer found it, took it and buried it with great honor. This saint wrote

the Gospel bearing his name and the "Acts of the Apostles" addressing his words to his disciple Theophilus who was a gentile.

His blessings be upon us and Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

Timothy

80 years old in 97 AD

The apocryphal Acts of Timothy states that in the year 97, the 80-year-old bishop tried to halt a procession in honor of the goddess Diana by preaching the gospel. The angry pagans beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death.
